Pabna-Dhaka direct train service from November 19

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Pabna will get its first direct train service to Dhaka from November 19, meeting a longstanding demand from residents.

The Ministry of Railways approved a proposal from Bangladesh Railway for the two trains and issued a notice on Thursday, said its public relations officer Md Rejaul Karim Siddiki in a press release.

Under the approved schedule, the Pabna Provati Express (Train No 808) will leave Pabna at 8:00am and reach Dhaka at 2:10pm.

The return service, Pabna Godhuli Express (Train No 807), will depart Dhaka at 3:25pm and arrive in Pabna at 9:20pm.

Rail Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam will inaugurate the service at Pabna Railway Station on November 19, after which commercial operations will begin, said Md Abu Hena Mostafa Alam, divisional railway manager of Paksey.

Initially, each train will have 12 coaches and stop at 10 stations along the route, he added.



PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

Customers examine food items at stalls during the fifth edition of the Indigenous Food and Crops Fair 2026, jointly organised by Nagorik Uddyog and Adibashi Suhridbrindo, at the Parbatya Bouddha Sangha in Mirpur-13, Dhaka, yesterday.

COAST GUARD

Vessels named after 4 nat'l leaders and Joy Bangla renamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has approved new names for five Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) vessels, including four previously named after the national leaders assassinated inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

According to a home ministry letter issued on Thursday, BCGS Syed Nazrul has been renamed BCGS Firoz Kabir, BCGS Tajuddin as BCGS Nurul Islam, BCGS Mansur Ali as BCGS M Humayun Kabir, and BCGS Qamaruzzaman as BCGS Ashraf Siddiqui. BCGS Joy Bangla has been renamed BCGS Adomya Bangla.

The letter, signed by Masfika Hossain, senior assistant secretary of the ministry's Border-3 Branch, said the changes had received approval from the appropriate authority. It was sent to the Coast Guard director general in response to a letter dated October 27.

A home ministry source said the ministry had instructed the Coast Guard to rename the vessels. The Coast Guard then submitted proposed names for approval. The ministry's letter did not explain the reasons for the changes.

Lt Commander Sabbir Alam Suzan, assistant director (intelligence) of the Coast Guard, told The Daily Star that the four men whose names were chosen were Coast Guard personnel who died in the line of duty.

Firoz Kabir, a lieutenant commander, died during a nor'wester, he said. Nurul Islam was killed in an attack, while M Humayun Kabir died fighting pirates. Ashraf Siddiqui died during an operation, he added.

Dengue threat unlikely to ease before December

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institutions. It submits weekly reports to DNCC to support mosquito control activities.

According to the surveillance findings, nearly 70 percent of Aedes breeding sites are concentrated in a limited number of locations, including household drums and buckets, building basements, spaces between buildings, car parking areas, water meter facilities and water tanks.

"The key recommendation is community engagement. These containers are mostly located around people's homes. Therefore, effective Aedes mosquito control will not be possible without active community involvement," Bashar said.

Bashar identified the absence of targeted control measures and comprehensive, regular surveillance as major reasons behind Bangladesh's continued failure to contain dengue.

He said surveillance findings should guide dengue control policies and action plans for the coming year.

He also called for regular surveillance nationwide, saying breeding patterns and risk factors differed between localities such as Barguna and Bandarban.

"Every locality needs a regular surveillance system. Based on surveillance data and scientific evidence, we must develop specific action plans for each locality, city corporation and municipality," he said.

He suggested that the Ministry of Local Government coordinate surveillance and targeted interventions through local government institutions and specialised expert teams.

Bashar said around 20 percent of Aedes mosquitoes breed in household water containers such as drums and buckets. A regular water supply could reduce dependence on such storage.

He also questioned the need to install WASA meters inside water reservoirs, which can accumulate water and become breeding sites.

Other neglected sites include basement parking areas, stagnant water left after vehicle washing and spaces beneath buildings under construction.

"Through surveillance, we are identifying these breeding sites and making recommendations. But the problem is that the necessary action is not being taken. If effective action were taken based on these findings, mosquito breeding would decline," he said.

He warned that routine spraying and awareness campaigns alone would not contain dengue unless authorities acted on surveillance findings and eliminated specific breeding sources.

A slip of the tongue cracks 5-year-old murder mystery

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suspicion. I focused on him and brought him in for questioning," SI Anisur told The Daily Star.

During interrogation, Akash broke down and named three accomplices, triggering a nationwide manhunt. CID officers eventually arrested all five suspects, including the alleged mastermind, Hira Lal.

The other accused are Liakat Ali alias Jhanthu, 69; Shikal Saiji alias Liton Pagla alias Rubel, 40; and Niranjan Kumar Das, 43.

Rubel was apprehended from Dhaka's Shah Ali Mazar on July 15 with assistance from the then RAB-4, now SRB-4.

According to the CID, the parents of Manik and Hira had worked as government cleaners. Following their deaths, Hira allegedly embezzled their entire pension, fuelling resentment between the brothers.

Their relationship deteriorated further over a piece of ancestral land allocated to Manik by their parents, which is embroiled in a legal dispute involving the Red Crescent Society.

According to the CID's investigation findings, Manik frequently mistreated Hira over these disputes. Driven by humiliation, Hira allegedly decided to eliminate his brother.

He recruited four men who harboured their own grudges against Manik over the purchase, sale and consumption of narcotics. Manik had once slapped Jhanthu during an altercation, the investigating officer (IO) said.

According to the CID's findings, based on confessional statements made by two of the accused, Akash and Rubel, under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the four hitmen entered Manik's bedroom around 4:00am on June 30, 2021.

Akash pinned Manik down by the legs while Rubel and Niranjan held down his arms and chest. Liakat muffled his mouth, dragged him onto the floor, and slit his throat with a heavy cleaver (dao). The assailants fled after confirming that Manik was dead.

With all five suspects in custody and their confessional statements recorded, the CID has concluded its investigation recently.

"I have already sent a draft of the charge sheet to CID headquarters for final review before filing it in court," IO Anisur told The Daily Star.

Malaysia lists 51 medical centres for Bangladeshi workers

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Meanwhile, the government has fixed the medical examination fee for Malaysia-bound workers at Tk 8,000 and warned against overcharging and harassment.

Under an October 31 directive, selected workers can undergo examinations at any authorised centre, regardless of their recruiting agency. No centre can operate under the exclusive control of an agency.

Medical centres involved in overcharging, harassment or other irregularities will face legal action.

At a meeting on Thursday, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury expressed hope that the first two or three flights under the government's zero-cost recruitment initiative would depart for Malaysia in December.

The initiative aims to send 10,000 workers through BOESL without migration costs.

The minister also welcomed a proposal from recruiting agencies to keep private recruitment costs between Tk 2.5 lakh and Tk 3 lakh.

How Zia rose to the centre of power

FROM PAGE 1

guard with a Sten gun. Zia was sitting on a sofa.

Moinul walked directly to the bedroom, where he found a visibly worried Khaleda sitting silently, alongside their two young sons, Tarique (now the prime minister) and Arafat.

Moinul instructed the captain to leave the drawing room and sat beside Zia.

In his memoir, "Ek generaler nirab shakkhya: Swadhinatar ek dashak" (it roughly translates to The Silent Testimony of a General: First Decade of Independence), Moinul recalled that Zia's first question was: "Where is Colonel Shafayat Jamil? I want to talk to him."

"You are now a prisoner on the orders of Colonel Shafayat Jamil. What will be the use of talking to him?" Moinul replied, urging the army chief to remain calm.

Moinul, who later rose to the rank of major general, provided a rare account of the early hours of November 3, when Zia was placed under confinement.

The detention was part of a coup launched by the chief of general staff, Khaled Mosharraf, aided by the Dhaka brigade commander, Shafayat Jamil.

The events unfolded amid the turmoil following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975. Zia had become the army chief five days later.

The self-confessed killers consolidated their influence from Bangabhaban without holding formal government positions. Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmad had assumed the presidency, although largely ceremonial.

To many officers in the cantonment, the situation had become untenable. A section of senior officers organised to remove the rebels from Bangabhaban, by force if needed, under Khaled Mosharraf.

Documentation of what transpired in Bangladesh during the first week of that November of 1975 remains scarce. Much of what is known today comes from the recollections and testimonies of individuals from different quarters who witnessed or played a role in those tumultuous events. In some instances, internal investigations were reportedly conducted within the military, but the findings have rarely been made public.

NOVEMBER 3 COUP

In his book "Ekattorer muktijuddho, roktakto moddho August o shorojontromoy November", Shafayat Jamil wrote that the officers involved in the November 3 operation were planning a coup to restore discipline within the army and curb the undue influence of Bangabandhu's assassins who continued to reside at Bangabhaban.

"In reality, the November 3 coup was an armed protest against the August 15 assassination and the illegal usurpation of state power," he wrote.

Retired Brigadier General, M Sakhawat Hussain, in his book "Roktakto Dingulo: 1975-81", described the confrontation between the killers and Khaled Mosharraf as a "cold war" that began on November 3.

Khaled set several conditions for the officers at Bangabhaban: unconditional surrender of those involved in the August 15 coup, Zia's removal as army chief and appointment of a new chief, and dissolution of the cabinet followed by fresh appointments.

At one point of discussion Lieutenant Colonel Khandaker Abdur Rashid, who was among Mujib's assassins, and still residing in Bangabhaban, agreed that the tanks stationed at Bangabhaban and Suhrawardy Udyan would return to the cantonment. But he rejected the demand that the assassins vacate Bangabhaban and return to their respective units.

It was decided that Mushtaque would no longer remain president from that morning, in accordance with the ultimatum.

Khaled assured him that Zia would remain safe and firmly stated that he would not stain his hands with blood.

At one point, to exert psychological pressure, two fighter jets and two well-equipped helicopters began flying low over Bangabhaban, creating deafening noise. Tanks remained stationed at Bangabhaban and Suhrawardy Udyan. With no news broadcast on the radio for two days, people remained unaware of developments while rumours and speculation intensified.

RESIGNATION OF ZIA

Four national leaders were brutally killed inside Dhaka Central Jail in the early hours of November 3 in a pre-planned operation coinciding with the coup, wrote Sakhawat.

Realising that the murders could not remain concealed for long and would not be covered by the earlier indemnity ordinance, Rashid decided to flee Bangladesh immediately. The assassins secured Khaled's approval for their departure.

Earlier that day, Fourth Bengal officers had also obtained Zia's resignation letter from his residence.

According to Shafayet Jamil, Zia submitted his resignation at around 2:00pm.

"Our thinking was that, once the situation had stabilised and we had consolidated control, Zia could be appointed Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations," he wrote.

With Zia's resignation secured, there was no obstacle to Khaled becoming army chief any more, Sakhawat wrote. When the president was approached, however, he said the matter would be decided at the next day's cabinet meeting.

It was November 4 when Khaled and Shafayat learnt about the jail killings. Rashid, Farooq, Dalim and other August 15 assassins, along with their families, had already left for Bangkok the previous evening.

Shafayat became furious, describing Mushtaque as not only "an illegal president but also a murderer". He no longer wanted him to remain in office.

Khaled went to Bangabhaban the next day around noon, waiting for cabinet approval of his appointment as army chief. Tensions escalated when Shafayat arrived. Khaled and others were sitting silently while Mushtaque delayed the decision through a cabinet meeting.

Under mounting pressure, the president eventually approved Khaled's appointment as army chief.

After Khaled's promotion was approved, Mushtaque was informed about the jail killings. He feigned shock, infuriating Shafayat, who stormed into the cabinet room with several officers and confronted him.

Shafayet wrote he called Mustatque as "murderer and a usurper" and he cannot remain president and placed Mustaque under arrest. Shafayat also arrested several ministers.

Meanwhile, Awami League supporters took to the streets demanding justice for the jail killings. On November 5, Khaled formally received the insignia of army chief.

Later that evening, he briefed the chiefs and senior officials of the other armed services. After discussions, they agreed that Chief Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem would become president.

According to Lieutenant Colonel (retd) MA Hamid's book "Tinti sena abbutthan o na bola kichhu kotha", Sayem took the oath on the morning of November 6.

NOVEMBER 7

As these developments unfolded, leaflets issued by the Biplobi Sainik Sangstha, an affiliate of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and led by former Lieutenant Colonel Abu Taher, circulated widely in Dhaka Cantonment. They carried anti-officer slogans and sought to turn soldiers against the military leadership, writes Hamid in his book.

That night, Khaled was preoccupied with securing the position of chief martial law administrator (CMLA), despite repeated attempts by others to persuade him to remain deputy CMLA. The president would then become CMLA.

Meanwhile, the cantonment grew restive. JSD-led forces were also seen assembling at Ibrahimpur, Balurghat, Banani and other strategic locations close to the cantonment.

Then came the counter-coup.

As the sepoy mutiny began around midnight, a group of soldiers first appeared at Zia's residence and overpowered the guards. The area echoed with slogans such as "Sepai, Sepai, Bhai Bhai" and "General Ziaur Rahman Zindabad".

Some soldiers lifted Zia onto their shoulders and carried him to a waiting jeep. More soldiers and revolutionaries gathered as the news spread. Khaleda Zia stood on the balcony, watching the historic moment with anxiety and joy, wrote Hamid.

He also said people from different quarters also brought out processions around Dhaka.

Mutinous soldiers took Zia to the 2nd Field Artillery Unit. Taher arrived and urged him to go directly to the radio station, but senior officers advised against it. Instead, a recorded address by Zia was broadcast on the radio.

Hearing of the counter-coup, Khaled and two companions fled Bangabhaban in civilian clothes and went to the 10th East Bengal Regiment in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, where soldiers and officers killed them. Shafayat injured his leg while climbing over a wall at Bangabhaban and went into hiding.

ZIA REINSTATED

On November 7, Zia was reinstated as army chief. Later that day, he addressed agitated soldiers at army headquarters as they raised various demands.

Initially, he tried to calm them. When his verbal appeals failed, he unbuckled his military belt, threw it to the ground and declared: "If you raise so many demands, I no longer want to remain as army chief," Moinul wrote.

The dramatic gesture stunned the soldiers into silence and helped restore order at army headquarters, he added.

However, unrest continued for several more days. Soldiers and their supporters raised various demands, while many army officers were killed. Fearing further attacks, many officers left their post while Zia went round different units to quell the tension.

Military discipline was gradually restored, and tensions had largely subsided by November 10. Authorities subsequently arrested key figures accused of instigating the uprising, including Abu Taher, Major Jalil and several senior JSD leaders. Along with a number of military personnel involved in the mutiny, Taher was later tried and punished.

At a November 7 meeting at army headquarters, a new administrative arrangement was introduced. President Sayem was appointed CMLA, while the three service chiefs became deputy CMLAs.

The final stage of the 'revolution' placed Zia at the centre of national leadership, Mahfuz Ullah wrote in his book "President Zia: Rajnaitik Jiboni".

"The united position of the sepoys and the people brought the state called Bangladesh back to its rightful place from a chaotic position, and in that case, the characteristics of Zia's leadership worked as a pole star. Through the course of the events of that time, Zia ultimately became a charismatic leader," he wrote.

On November 19, 1976, Zia assumed the position of CMLA after Sayem stepped down. He became president on April 21, 1977.

His rule ended abruptly on May 30, 1981, when he was assassinated in Chittagong during a failed military coup.

Four more die with measles-like symptoms

UNB, *Dhaka*

Four children died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, bringing the country's combined tally of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths to 1,276 this year.

The Directorate General of Health Services has classified all four latest fatalities as suspected measles deaths.

With these, the total number of suspected measles deaths has reached 1,171, while confirmed deaths from measles have remained the same at 105.

A total of 1,239 new suspected measles cases were reported during the 24-hour period, pushing the cumulative number of suspected cases nationwide to 2,36,714.

Meanwhile, 75 new confirmed measles cases were recorded, bringing the total number of laboratory-confirmed infections to 24,294.

The low-value trap

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11.75 percent to €29 per kg, while Chinese apparel prices experienced a minor 2.18 percent decline.

Among major EU apparel suppliers -- including China, Vietnam, Indiaa and Cambodia -- Bangladesh ranks second-to-last in unit export prices, sitting only above Pakistan, the cheapest supplier.

Conversely, international clothing retailers and brands demand low purchasing prices, citing cheap local labour, lower productivity, compliance gaps and the basic category of the apparel items manufactured in Bangladesh.

To compound matters, key regional competitors are already positioning ahead of Bangladesh in securing preferential market access.

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement took effect on August 1, 2020, eliminating 99 percent of tariffs, curbing red tape, and protecting geographic indications.

Meanwhile, negotiations for an EU-India FTA were formally announced on January 27, 2026, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation.

That deal is undergoing legal scrubbing ahead of a proposed signing in mid-December 2026, targeting full ratification by mid-2027 to eliminate tariffs on over 99 percent of Indian exports to the EU.

If Bangladesh cannot sign the FTA with the EU or secure the GSP Plus status soon, the local exporters will have to face 12.50 percent duty after the country's graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2029, when India and Vietnam would be enjoying zero-duty benefits.

Workers need to be reskilled and upskilled, and at the same time, Bangladesh should also shift production to high end garment items to pay more to the workers, said Nazma Akter, president of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation.

The salary of the Bangladeshi garment workers is lower compared with other countries mainly because of lower productivity, said Md Rezwan Selim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Without any improvement in productivity or higher unit prices, the 140 percent hike in minimum wage desired by the protesting garment workers seem unlikely and untenable.