

# 'Bangladesh to benefit from Asian Highway

Staff Correspondent

The proposed Asian Highway, once implemented, would allay Bangladesh's current political fears that the longer route linking West Bengal and northeastern India would give India political control of both ends of the highway, said Dr Robert Bradnock, a South Asian geopolitics expert.

Bangladesh has fears that through the longer route its goods would be forced to pass on to Southeast Asia, he said at the inaugural session of Third Bangladesh-India Dialogue for Young Leaders.

A cursory examination of the highway map shows that on economic grounds alone, Bangladesh would benefit from a direct route linking it with Southeast Asian economies through Myanmar, he said in his keynote paper on 'Bangladesh and India: The Geopolitics of Cooperation'.

The current disagreements over

the routing of the proposed highway illustrate the way in which immediate political concerns can override wider geostrategic interests, he said.

Dr Robert, a senior research fellow of King's College, London, said one of the intractable features of Bangladesh-India disputes over water is the difficulty of reaching agreement over any of the objective variables of the water system.

"The most crucial strategic objectives of water management would be an attempt to agree a common programme of data collection and analysis," he suggested.

Speaking at the session, Reaz Rahman underscored the need for strengthening the bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh side by side expediting the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) activities for regional development.

Describing environmental degradation, drug trafficking, new diseases

and organised crimes as negative elements in the region, he said both the countries should remove the mistrust and work towards cooperation for regional development.

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury said terrorism is an alarming problem for the world today and it is not possible to combat the menace without regional and international cooperation.

Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri hoped that more open and friendly relationship would be built through dialogues among the young leaders and professionals and people-to-people contact between the two countries.

Prof Obaidul Haque, Asif Nazrul, Prof Mahendra P Lama, Dr Sanjay Bhardwaj, Assistant Editor of The Daily Star Zafar Sobhan and Senior Sub-Editor of The Telegraph Sreyashi Dasidhar will give presentations at the dialogue today and tomorrow.

## Appointment of 2 election commissioners condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties yesterday condemned the appointment of two new election commissioners (ECs).

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) slated the government for its decision to appoint Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria as election commissioners.

In a statement, CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the countrymen would not accept their appointment creating obstacles to hold free and fare election in the country.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) said the appointment is part of a conspiracy of the government to manipulate the next general election.

In a statement, JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Zafar Sajjad also rejected the appointment of the election commissioners.

Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju and Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam said the way the government appointed two more election commissioners is mysterious and it would deepen political crisis.

"Appointment of two ECs in a mysterious way has made stronger the opposition's apprehension of manipulating the next general election by the government," said the JPL leaders in a joint statement.

"We want to tell the present rulers that any election without people's participation would not be accepted," they added.

Workers' Party and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal also condemned the appointment of two new election commissioners.



Newly appointed election commissioners Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria talk with the Election Commission staffs at their office in the city yesterday.

## Cheating case against BNP lawmaker Mongu

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A union parishad (UP) chairman yesterday filed a cheating case against ruling BNP lawmaker Mosharrat Hossain Mongu, elected from the constituency-3 of Barisal.

Md Belal Hossain, the UP chairman from the same area, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, accusing the lawmaker of embezzling Tk 18 lakh.

In his complaint, Belal alleged that Mongu borrowed a total of Tk 18 lakh from him on different dates during the period from July 13, 2001 to April 24, 2002 for election and business purposes, but now he has been dilly-dallying in paying back the money.

The UP chairman also stated that he sent a letter on December 25 last year asking Mongu to pay back the money. In response, Mongu gave him a death threat over cellphone, said Belal who sent a general diary (GD) to Muladi Police Station by post on January 3.

The same day the complainant's lawyer Dr Tuhin Malik sent a legal notice asking the lawmaker to pay back the money within seven days. But Mongu again gave him a death threat over cellphone on January 15, said the complainant.

After a hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mizanur Rahman recorded the statements of the complainant, took the complaint into cognisance and directed the Officer-in-Charge (OC) to take necessary steps against the accused after an investigation.

Advocate Khondaker Mohammad Ismail moved the case on behalf of the complainant.

When contacted, Mongu told The Daily Star that the charges brought against him are false, baseless and concocted. The complainant filed the case only to harass him and tarnish his image in society, he added.

"I never took money from him (Belal) for election and business purposes. Even I am not involved in any business," he said.

Mongu also said his lawyer has replied to the legal notice sent by Belal.

# Six killed, 65 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 65 others injured in separate road accidents in Jessore, Mymensingh and Sirajganj yesterday.

UNB from Gazipur kills, at least three people were killed and 40 others injured yesterday when a Dhaka-bound fell into a roadside ditch in Gorgaria under Sreepur upazila.

Witnesses said the Balaka Paribahan bus from Mymensingh met the accident while trying to overtake another bus at about 4:15pm.

Passenger Aklam, 30 and Helel, 25, and an unidentified young man died on the spot.

Of the injured, nine were rushed to the Gazipur Sadar Hospital in critical condition. They included Rafiqul Islam, 25, Sabina, 23, Jesmin, 20, Suma, 20, Firuj, 13,

Fakrul Islam, 26 and Ridoy.

Our Jessore correspondent reports, a woman bus passenger was killed and 25 others were injured in a road accident on the Jessore-Satkhiria Road at Kuada Bazary yesterday.

The dead was identified as Nazma Begum, 30, wife of Shamsul Alam of Farashpur village under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidaid. Of the injured, 16 were rushed to Jessore General Hospital.

Police said the Satkhira-bound bus collided head-on with a speeding truck.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds, one person was crushed under the wheels of a passenger bus at Digarkanda in Sadar upazila on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at 11:30am yesterday. The victim was identified as Minto, 30, a resident of Akua in the town.

Police said the accident

occurred when a Mymensingh-bound passenger bus from Dhaka knocked a motorcycle from behind, killing Minto, a motorcycle rider, on the spot and injuring Sumon critically.

Sumon was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

Police seized the bus but the driver managed to escape.

The body was sent to MMCH for autopsy.

Our Sirajganj correspondent says, a man was crushed under the wheels of a Dinajpur-bound train coming from Dhaka at Mohanpur Railway Station area in Ullapura upazila of the district on Monday night.

The victim was identified as Zahurul Haque, 30, of Halishpur village. Parbotipur police sent the body to hospital morgue for autopsy.



Musicians perform in front of the National Museum in the city yesterday as part of the inaugural ceremony of the 9th Dhaka International Film Festival.

## TV artiste, college girl commit suicide in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A TV artiste and a college girl have committed suicide in two separate incidents in the city.

Kazi Israt Jahan Goldi, 21, an artiste of Ekushe Television (ETV) and a resident of Rampura, committed suicide by hanging herself from a

ceiling fan with her scarf in a closed room.

Breaking the door open, her husband A T M Rezaur Rahman Tunak freed her from the loop and rushed her to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) at around 1:15am.

Doctors at DMCH declared her dead.

Israt had long been suffering from mental disorder, says her father.

Her mother Amena Begum lodged an unnatural death case with Khilgaon Police Station in this regard.

Shaheen Sultana Kakon, 22, a student of Demra Dania College, also committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan with a scarf at her room at around 8:00pm on Monday.

Her brother Monir Hossain said Kakon was mentally disturbed and committed suicide after she had a quarrel with her mother.

## 9th Dhaka Int'l Film Festival begins in city

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The 9th Dhaka International Film Festival began in the city yesterday.

Organised by Rainbow Film Society, the festival will continue till January 25.

About 200 films from 30 countries including Bangladesh will be screened in five venues.

The main venue of the film festival is Shaukat Osman Memorial auditorium at the Central Public Library. The other venues are Shaheed Zia auditorium at the National Museum, German Cultural Centre auditorium, Russian Science and Cultural Centre auditorium and Star Cineplex.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan formally inaugurated the festival at Shaheed Zia Auditorium.

Chaired by Syed Margub Murshed, the chairman of the festival committee, the inaugural function was also addressed by High Commissioner of Norway Wood Lice Norham, Acting High Commissioner of Australia Richard Rogers, founder general secretary of Rainbow Film Society Mostafa Kamal and festival director Ahmed Muztaba Jamal.

The countries which are taking part in the film festival are Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Congo, China, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Iran, Ireland, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Café Transit of Iranian filmmaker Kambozia Paratvi was screened after the opening ceremony.

## Non-govt pry teachers' hunger strike from February 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Non-government primary teachers will go for indefinite hunger strike from February 28 demanding nationalisation of their services while community primary teachers will observe the same programme from February 6 demanding the national pay scale.

Non-government primary teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Non-Govt Primary Teachers' Association and community primary teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers' Association yesterday decided to go for series of tough programmes if their demands are not met by January 19.

The new programmes have been taken up as the grand rally of primary teachers scheduled for January 19 was postponed.

It was expected that non-government primary teachers' long-standing demands for more government grant would be realised through an announcement of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the rally.

Leaders of non-government primary teachers at a press conference said they will also observe token hunger strike at Muktangan on February 26.

"We have resorted to tough programmes as BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government did not meet our demands during its last four years," said Mohammad Mansur Ali, secretary general of Non-Govt Primary Teachers' Association while read-

ing out a statement at the press conference at the National Press Club.

He said they will also hold a teachers' rally at Muktangan on February 28, the day when they will begin their indefinite hunger strike.

Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers' Association will lay siege to prime minister's office (PMO) on February 6 and go for indefinite hunger strike from the same day if their demands are not met by January 19.

Leaders of the community teachers announced their programmes from a gathering on the premises of Shikha Bhaban to press home their demands.

There are about 100,000 teachers in 3,500 registered non-government primary schools and around 13,000 teachers in 3,778 community primary schools across the country.

Meanwhile, leaders of Jatiya Shikkhak Samity Oikya Jote, a pro-government primary teachers association, have met Education Minister Dr M Osman Faruk at his secretariat office.

The minister told them that a new date for the postponed teachers' rally would be announced on return of the Prime Minister from Kuwait.

## Kader Siddiqui adopts baby who survived miraculously

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangabir Kader Siddiqui MP has adopted a baby girl who miraculously survived after being buried in a sand field about a couple of months ago.

The child has been undergoing treatment at the Paediatric Surgery Department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) since then.

Kader Siddiqui along with his family members came to the hospital yesterday morning to take the child home. The DMCH's Social Welfare Department formally handed over the child to him.

At present, the condition of the child is good, said Dr Shah Alam Talukdar, an assistant professor of paediatric surgery, who treated her for the last two months.

"However, she will need a plastic surgery when she will be six-month-old," he added.

Local people rescued the newborn baby smeared with blood and covered in a polythene sheet from the sand field near Hazaribagh-Boubazar in the city on November 17 last year. Half of the baby's right chin and lower part of the left leg were eaten up by preying crows.

The two-day-old baby was soon rushed to the hospital where the doctors performed surgery immediately.

## Police attack on Patuakhali AL rally: 50 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 50 Awami League (AL) leaders and activists were injured at Dashmina, a upazila town in the district, when police attacked a protest rally organised by the local unit of the party yesterday.

Police also charged baton on them.

Of the injured, 15 were admitted to local hospital in critical condition.

Of them, Joint Secretary Goutam Roy, Organising Secretary Zakir Hossain, and Chhatra League leaders Enamul Haq and Kazi Shakil Bahauddin Labu are fighting for life.

The rally was organised to protest the death of Rehana Akter, an AL leader, in a road accident on Dashmina-Patuakhali Road on Sunday.

The organisers said they decided to submit a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner through Upazila Nirbahi Officer, but police attacked the peaceful rally illegally to disperse them.

When contacted, officer-in-charge of Dashmina thana said the AL activists were trying to put up barricade on Dashmina-Patuakhali Road in the name of protest rally.



## Appeal for help

Morshedia Begum, a 22-year-old woman, has appealed for financial assistance for her treatment as both of her heart valves have been damaged, says a press release.

Morshedia, who has also been suffering from breast tumour, is now under treatment at the National Heart Foundation Hospital in the city.

Her treatment, involving valve replacement, will cost around Tk four lakh. But she could not afford such an expensive treatment.

She has appealed to the generous people to extend a helping hand to save her life.

Contributions can be sent to Savings Account No.-5318/29, Sonali Bank, Mirpur Industrial Area Branch, Dhaka-1216.

Interested persons can also contact Rokeya Akhter (mobile phone no. 0176-769861) in this regard.

## BSF hands over bodies of 2 Bangladeshis

UNB, Moulvibazar

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed over the bodies of two Bangladeshi day-labourers to Bangladesh police here yesterday.

Police said BSF gunned down Kaiser and Haris of Gonokia village near pillar No

1841 of Muraichhara border in Kulaura area on Sunday.

BSF handed over the bodies to the police in presence of BDR. Family members of Kaiser and Haris were also present.

Meanwhile, BDR have sent a letter to BSF protesting the killing.

## 5 shops gutted at Kalapara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least five shops were gutted in two separate fire incidents at Kalapara upazila in the district.

Two shops were gutted within municipal area of the town at about 4:00am. Properties worth about Tk 12 lakh were damaged.

Another fire incident took place at Mohipur Bazar where three shops were gutted. The damage has been estimated at Tk 8 lakh.

Both fires broke out due to electric short circuit.

# WEATHER TODAY

### Night temperature may rise

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may also occur during late night till morning over the country in this period, Met Office said, predicting slightly rise of night temperature.

Highest temperature 30.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 09.0 degree Celsius at Srirongal.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:35pm and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

| City/Town   | Temperature in Celsius |      | Humidity in percentage |         |
|-------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
|             | Max                    | Min  | Morning                | Evening |
| Dhaka       | 27.0                   | 12.8 | 76                     | 67      |
| Chittagong  | 28.2                   | 14.1 | 91                     | 86      |
| Rajshahi    | 26.0                   | 11.0 | 100                    | 74      |
| Khulna      | 29.5                   | 13.0 | 100                    | 64      |
| Barisal     | 28.2                   | 14.0 | 100                    | 72      |
| Sylhet      | 24.6                   | 13.1 | 79                     | 74      |
| Cox's Bazar | 24.6                   | 13.1 | 79                     | 74      |

## BAPA executives

Capt Syeed Mahbub Helal and Capt Mahbubur Rahman have been elected president and general secretary of Bangladesh Airlines Pilots' Association (BAPA) for 2006-2007, says press release.

Other office-bearers are Vice-president: Capt Abdullah Mamun Maruf, Joint Secretary (Admin): Capt Sajjadul Haq, Joint Secretary (Operation): Capt Tahmidul Islam and Treasurer: Capt Shoab Chowdhury.

The Executive Members are Capt Pasha Chowdhury, Capt Shah Alam, Capt AM Maqsood Ahmed, and First Officer Shahrir MG Alam.

## Qulkhwani of Mamtaz Jasimuddin held

Qulkhwani of Begum Mamtaz Jasimuddin, wife of Palli Kabi Jasimuddin, was held at the residence of her son-in-law Law Minister Moudud Ahmed at Gulshan in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Post and Telecommunication Minister Barrister Aminul Haque, Education Minister Dr M Osman Faruk, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Prime Minister's Advisor to Parliamentary Affairs Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury, Jatiya Party (Ershad ) lawmaker Rowshan Ershad, Former chief advisor to a caretaker government Justice Latifur Rahman, former Chief Justice Mostafa Kamal, Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, United States Charge d'Affaires Judith Chamas, ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries, political leaders and lawyers attended at the qulkhwani.

Special doa was offered for the salvation of the departed soul.



Awami League presidium member Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir speaks at a press conference organised by the Non-government Primary Teachers' Association at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

## One murdered in Savar

BDNEWS, Savar

Police recovered body of an identified young man from Aminbazar Union at Savar yesterday.

Sohrab Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Savar Police Station, said the miscreants might have lynched the young man aged about 27 since he bore marks of wounds in different parts of his body, including the head.

## Cake festival begins today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Nari Grantha Prabartana will organise a two-day Pitha Utsab (cake festival) beginning today at Prabartana Bhaban at Sir Syed Road in the city.

Variety of winter cakes made of molasses and rice husked by "Dhenki" (indigenous tool) will be exhibited and sold on the occasion.

Besides, discussions, songs, stories, jokes and musical soiree on cakes will be also arranged during the festival.

The festival will begin at 10:30am and will continue till 7:00pm.