

## IMPROVING ROAD, RAIL NETWORKS Govt, ADB sign \$142m deals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday signed two agreements for the improvement of country's road and rail networks.

The \$100 million agreement of concessional loan was signed to expand the coverage of an ongoing rural road network improvement project, connecting the rural population to agricultural land, markets and services.

Another \$42 million agreement in concessional loan was signed for a project to prepare road and railway sector projects to promote multi-modal transport, and connectivity.

Fatima Yasmin, secretary to the Economic Relations Division (ERD), and Manmohan Parkash, country director of ADB, remotely signed the loan agreements, said an ADB press release.

Talking about the first agreement, Parkash said, "The project will contribute to the government's efforts for faster socio-economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic."

"The expanded project will benefit around 90 million inhabitants in 34 districts with access to better health services, education, employment opportunities, markets and other government services," he said.

"In addition to generating 1.73 million person-days of employment through infrastructure spending, the additional financing will also widen the opportunities for women and children to have easier and safer access to education, emergency health services, and other essential social services in any weather condition," he added.

This additional financing will scale up the current road network development, under the Rural Connectivity Improvement Project, from 1,700km to 2,630km of rural roads. It will build on the \$200 million financial package approved in 2018 aimed at upgrading rural roads in 34 districts to all-weather standards with climate resilience and safety features. The expanded project will benefit around 92 million people, read the press release.

About second agreement, the ADB country director said, "Bangladesh needs to boost connectivity between different transport modes, strengthen multi-modal and arterial transport corridors, as well as construct bypass and

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## Wari to be locked down from July 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parts of Wari in Old Dhaka is set to be locked down from July 4, authorities said yesterday.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh made the announcement at Nagar Bhaban, after holding a coordination committee meeting.

The areas which will be under complete lockdown from 6am on Saturday are Tipu Sultan Road, Jahangir Road, Dhaka-Sylhet highway (Joykali Mondir to Boldha garden), Lalmini Road, Hore Road, War Road, Rankin Road and Nowab Road under ward-41.

Taposh said there are 46 infected coronavirus patient at the areas, and they hope the number will come down to zero after the lockdown.

The mayor said they will follow the experience of Razabazar, to make it successful.

He added that people will be able to get food through e-commerce services, and DSCC will also distribute food to poor if necessary.

Taposh said they will ensure treatment facilities for Covid-19 patients; Mohanagar Hospital of

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## Unwanted pregnancy, abortion may increase

Warns UNFPA; Data shows drop  
in contraception usage

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Unwanted pregnancy and abortion could see a rise in Bangladesh amid the coronavirus pandemic as use of modern contraceptives has gone down, said the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) yesterday.

Cumulative data from January to May 2020 compared with the same period of 2019 shows that, uptake of oral pill decreased by 20 percent, use of condom decreased by 34 percent and injectables by 23 percent.

UNFPA Health Systems Specialist Dr Dewan Md Emdadul Hoque revealed the information based on data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) during the release of UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2020 in a virtual programme.

Use of other long-term contraceptives including IUD (intrauterine contraceptive device), implants, NSV (scalpel vasectomy) and tubectomy decreased between 25 to 64 percent, he said.

"It does not mean that the stock of the contraceptives is inadequate. It is there, but the service recipients are not able to access either because they cannot go to the health facilities amid shutdown or other reasons," Dr Emdad said.

Besides, if delivery at facilities by skilled healthcare providers decreased, the rate of maternal and child mortality could increase, Dr Emdad said.

There is also the possibility that number of child marriages will shoot up, because of deepening poverty and closure of schools due to Covid-19. Child marriage in Bangladesh is 51 percent, one of the highest in the world, he said.

"Covid-19 has significant impacts on population and family planning. With people staying home, and under quarantine in some cases, there is also a rise in domestic and gender-based violence," said UNFPA Representative in Bangladesh Dr Asa Torzellson.

She said it is imperative that the authorities make sure that the people needing family planning materials and maternity-related services get them on time.

According to UNFPA's annual State of the Population Report, there is a variety of practices that discriminate

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## HOLEY ARTISAN CASE HC yet to start hearing on death reference

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court is yet to start hearing on the death reference and appeals of the sensational Holey Artisan Bakery attack case, although the trial court has finished the case proceedings and delivered the verdict seven months ago. The HC, which is now scheduled to deal with the case for examining the lower court judgement, could not begin the proceedings as the case's paper book has not been prepared due to the ongoing pandemic.

A paper book contains all the case details, trial proceedings, statements, evidence, orders, verdict and other relevant documents. The book is necessary for the HC to hear and dispose of a death reference or an appeal. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, if a lower court orders death penalty, the verdict is examined by the HC for confirmation of the punishment.

The authorities concerned are at the final stage for preparing the paper books for the HC's hearing, Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star on Monday.

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## A day to celebrate Faraaz, and heroes who keep inspiring us

ZARAF AWAT HOSSAIN

Today marks four years since the terrorist attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery, we find ourselves in a moment of darkness yet again. A pandemic that has crippled not just Bangladesh, but the entire world.

Such unprecedented times of darkness call for heroes that shine the path ahead for the rest of us. We are able to continue moving forward with confidence from those who rise to the challenge.

We, Faraaz's family, look upon the impact he has left behind with a sense of immense pride. Faraaz has been a moral compass, the spirit of courage, friendship and humanity that continues to inspire us. An example of a core human value, to stand up for others in times of peril, no matter how daunting the consequence. Even if that means laying down your life in a selfless act of bravery.

With Faraaz's spirit in our hearts, today as we, humanity, fight the battle of COVID-19, we salute the fearless heroes of our country who continue to serve the nation.

It is because of those who are selflessly and courageously carrying out their responsibilities towards others and to the country, that we are able to keep ourselves afloat during these troubling

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## Govt mulling law to keep virtual courts open: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will convert the temporary ordinance into a permanent law in order to continue operating the virtual court system after the Covid-19 pandemic, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

"We enacted an ordinance allowing courts to operate virtually. We now want to maintain this momentum, institutionalized some of the best practices we have gathered during this period and trigger a systematic transformation of the justice system. As an immediate first step, we intend to convert the temporary ordinance on the virtual court to a permanent law -- which will then operate post-Covid," he said.

He was presenting a

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This resident of East Rajabazar in the capital was caught looking like the watchful protector of gate-6 in the area, but in reality, he was just climbing up the gate as lockdown is in full force at the high-risk zone. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## 99TH ANNIVERSARY OF DU Academic quality falls behind amid political influence

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Bangladesh's oldest and largest university, one that is closely interconnected with the country's history, its politics and liberation -- University of Dhaka -- turns 99 today.

However, in the present day, there is a question over the quality of education at the university.

The university has slipped 200 places, from 601 bracket to 800-1000 bracket in the QS World University rankings, between 2012 and 2020.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said, "The standard of the university has not improved much."

"Dhaka University always has to carry out two responsibilities, first one is of education and second one is of society. It performed responsibilities with the society, had various disputes with the state at different times," he explained.

"Many times the state has taken meritorious teachers for various jobs, from where they never returned to the teaching position," said Prof Serajul.

"Loyalty towards any political party is nowadays being considered in teachers' recruitment. In general, the practice of knowledge in Bangladesh is being devalued," he added.

The university currently has at least 2000 teachers but the number of research works has decreased over the years.

In 1988-1989 academic year, a total of 208 research

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## Bidyandondo- CMP hospital to open today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTC

The CMP-Bidyandondo Field Hospital is going to be inaugurated today, with hopes amid increasing number of Covid-19 patients in Chattogram city.

Bidyandondo Foundation and Chattogram Metropolitan Police jointly organised the community centre-turned hospital in Patenga, with 100 beds.

Fifty beds have been readied with arrangement of high-flow nasal cannula, central oxygen system, and oxygen concentrator.

Jamal Uddin, a volunteer of Bidyanondo and coordinator of the initiative, told The Daily Star, "The rest 50 beds will be readied as soon as possible. We got 12 doctors and 18 nurses. Some 50 volunteers will help doctors and nurses."

A committee led by Additional Divisional Commissioner Mizanur Rahman inspected the facilities on Monday and gave nod to go ahead.

## COPYRIGHT CONTROVERSY

### I created the series, characters

Masud Rana, the valiant Bangladeshi spy, who travels the world on secret missions, has been attracting readers new and old alike since 1966. The name -- Masud Rana -- is synonymous to Qazi Anwar Hossain. We cannot talk about one without mentioning the other. However, a recent ruling of Bangladesh Copyright Office awarded rights of 260 Masud Rana books to its ghostwriter Sheikh Abdul Hakim. The decision sparked an unrelenting debate with some even questioning the ethical position of Qazi Anwar Hossain for carrying his names on books written by someone else. Amid the ongoing debate and many unanswered questions, The Daily Star's Golam Mortaza turned to Qazi Anwar Hossain for an exclusive interview, and he happily complied.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Questions have been raised that you are not the writer of Masud Rana series, its Sheikh Abdul Hakim. You have carried your name as writer when others actually wrote for you. Why are you facing such serious allegations after all these years?

**Qazi Anwar Hossain (QAH):** I have never concealed anything and told many times before, in interviews, I did not write all the books of the series. So, there should be no question of ambiguity about that. My younger brother and two sons have written (some) books of the series. A physician from Sylhet also wrote. I told everyone (ghostwriters) that it was not possible for me to write each and every book. I told them I'm outlining the story, and it will be mine.

I select a story from western books, sometime from seven to eight of them, so that it fits the essence of the series/character. After that I prepare the plot (and sub plots) and talk to different writers, inviting them to write a story in line with that plot/script. I told them I don't have time to write. So, it was up to the writers to choose which story they'd prefer to write. My brother late Mahabub Hossain wrote, so did weekly Bichitra editor late Sahadat Choudhury and Abdul Hakim (and others).

The rules we followed were that the writers would prepare a draft story in line with my outlined plot. If I was convinced with that draft story, I would rearrange and fine tune it before publishing. If the draft was not up to the mark, it was sent back for a second draft. (This was the way) everyone including Abdul Hakim wrote in the series.

**"What should be their logic to write for 45 long years if I had not paid them? I have fulfilled my promise of paying onetime honorarium. They have signed and taken the money without any complaint."**

**TDS:** Is it a fact that every story of Masud Rana series was built around your created plots? Have some writers including Abdul Hakim written stories for the series out of their own imagination?

**QAH:** There is no doubt that I have

created every plot-story of the series, every character is my creation and every event (in a story) was played in line with my direction. Renowned journalist Rahat Khan is a friend of mine. I have created a key character by his name in the series. No ghostwriter has created a character. I have written 14 books of the series.

**TDS:** So, what prompted you to hire writers for the series?

**QAH:** When I started writing the series, it became very popular. Characters like Masud Rana and Sohana captured the imagination of readers. The popularity also carried along the demand for more books. Some readers even demanded a new book every month, which was virtually impossible for me to comply with. It was at that time I decided to turn to ghostwriters to quench the growing thirst of readers.

**TDS:** Your statement evokes two pertinent questions. Why the name of the person who wrote was not credited in the book? Why your name was carried alone instead?

**QAH:** It's not that I'm the only



Qazi Anwar Hossain

person who has started this trend. Ghostwriting has been an established universal practice for a long time. Hillary Clinton has employed someone to write her autobiography. The name of the person who wrote was not carried in the book. This is standard practice.

**TDS:** People generally don't know the name of a ghostwriter. But they know the names of your ghostwriters and many hold you accountable for that. How do you react to it?

**QAH:** I have never mentioned any name. Sheikh Abdul Hakim and others said I have mentioned names. In an interview with Prothom Alo, Asjadul Kibria mentioned some names and said probably those writers write for Masud Rana series. They (Prothom Alo) assumed that it was my statement. But I told them I'm not willing to mention any name because it might be disrespectful for them. They did the writing for someone else because they needed money.

**TDS:** Questions have been raised

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### Masud Rana known more for my style of writing

Following a recent ruling of Bangladesh Copyright Office, Sheikh Abdul Hakim has won the bragging rights of 260 books of Masud Rana series, previously belonging to Qazi Anwar Hossain. In an interview with The Daily Star, he shares why he wrote by the name of Qazi Anwar Hossain for all these years, what eventually prompted him to claim the rights and how it all started.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** When did you start writing for Masud Rana series and what was the agreement between you and Qazi Anwar Hossain?

**Sheikh Abdul Hakim (SAH):** It was probably in 1966 or 1967 when one day my brother came to my house and told me a plot. He said I can write a story out of it, I will be paid Tk 100. It was a huge sum at that time and I was desperately in need of money. I spent the night writing the story and gave it to my brother Sheikh Abdur Rahman before he was about to leave for office in the morning.

**Apart from a few characters of Masud Rana series, rest are created by me. There are around seven characters like Masud Rana, Rahat Khan, Sohana and Sohel Rana created by him. I will not keep those names.**

He was a bit surprised and told me: "You have already written it!". I nodded and reminded him that I need the money by the evening. That evening my brother gave me the promised money and told me that

Qazi Saheb (Qazi Anwar Hossain) liked my write-up. He also told me to write a story from my own imagination. I wrote that and they liked it. I had written a novel before, which I also sent to Qazi Saheb. After reading my novel, he showed interest in meeting me. When I went to his home, I saw Rahat Khan there. He appreciated my write-ups so much that I was really moved. He told me to keep on writing and I happily obliged.

**TDS:** Whose name was in the printer's line of those books?

**SAH:** Those books were published in the name of Qazi Saheb. My name was printed inside.

**TDS:** So, you have agreed to write this way. Why did you not oppose it?

**SAH:** I did not oppose at that time. After writing a few more books, I could realize that there was a lot of demand for my write-ups. So, I demanded Tk 300 for each write-up and he agreed. At one stage, I told him I will no longer write for him and returned home. After three months, he came to my

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