

Road network crumbling for lack of regular maintenance

Say experts

UNB, Dhaka

The road network of the country, a key component of economic development, is gradually deteriorating due to lack of regular maintenance of roads, according to experts in the sector.

Besides, delay in taking decisions and lack of coordination among the Ministry of Communication, Roads and Highway Department (RHD) and the Ministry of Finance lead to misuse of huge government funds in the road construction sector.

Talking to UNB, experts placed a set of proposals for better roadways to ensure smooth communication system. They suggested regular annual maintenance, strict monitoring of 'weight control' during movement of vehicles on roads and bridges and introduction of 'Road Fund' by realising money from vehicle users in fees, tolls and licence fees.

They said that if the RHD can be made an autonomous body, it would be able to take decisions quickly without involving the Ministry of Communication. The RHD should be directly linked to the Prime Minister's office for better result, they felt.

The experts said the 'Road Fund'

would only be utilised for road maintenance and managed by an independent body. "This will reduce inexcusable inefficiencies and corruption."

It is time for Bangladesh to introduce 'Road Fund' as its road network is crumbling under the heavy volume of vehicles, they said.

"I believe it's much more cost-effective to do regular maintenance each year than carrying out some major reconstructions after five or ten years," said an expert preferring anonymity.

"As the government is not maintaining the roads properly, we, as a country and as an economy, are losing about one million US dollar each day, just in terms of decreasing value of the roads themselves," he said.

Referring to the deteriorating condition of road network, he observed that business in Bangladesh would become less competitive as transport costs will rise due to bad shape of roads and travel times become more difficult to predict.

The expert said over one-fourth of district roads are in poor condition and that 16 Upazila headquarters are still not connected with the RHD road network by district roads.

"The regional roads have deteriorated

over the last five years and underlying pavement strength of the majority of these roads is poor."

Routine maintenance is not carried out properly on these roads and inadequate funds are allocated for the purpose, he said. "Unless routine maintenance is treated as priority, the value of any rebuilding and periodic maintenance will be severely eroded."

Replying to a query, the expert said there are almost 15,000 structures on the RHD network, 715 of which have major structural damage and require full or partial replacement. And 2,600 more structures have major elemental damage, which need to be urgently addressed.

He said overloading of trucks and buses causes excessive damage to pavements, particularly on national and regional roads.

He suggested that the government should improve the strength of national highways and regional roads, take up recovery programmes for district roads and ensure road safety.

He also recommended introducing fully computerised and controlled toll collection in the country.

Chhinnamul Hawkers' Samity office looted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of criminals stormed Bangladesh Chhinnamul Hawkers' Samity office at Gulistan in the city on Thursday and looted its valuables, leaving two people injured.

The miscreants took away Tk 10,000 and a digital camera. They also beat up Joint Secretary Sheikh Enran and Joyal Abedin of the Samity that left them wounded.

Hawkers' Samity General Secretary Kamal Siddiqui told The Daily Star that a gang of 40-50 criminals led by Mantu Mia equipped with sticks attacked the office as the goons were not paid Tk two lakh they demanded a few days ago.

He also alleged that they also threatened them with vacating the office as the attackers known as Gopalganj group wanted to set up their office grabbing the hawkers' office.

Two killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Narail and Kushtia yesterday and Wednesday.

A Correspondent from Narail reports: One minor girl was killed in a road accident on Narail-Khulna road yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Shampa Mollik, 3, daughter of Deb Kumar Mollik of Narail Sadar upazila.

Police and locals said when Shampa was crossing the road near Agdia Bazar at 2:30pm, a Narail-bound passenger bus ran over her leaving her dead on the spot.

UNB from Kushtia adds: A woman was crushed under the wheels of a truck while trying to save her child in front of Qutubuddin Filling Station in Kushtia on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Moriam, 26, wife of Qudus Ali of Mojompur under Sadar upazila.

Witnesses said when Moriam was going to Kushtia General Hospital to vaccinate her four-year-old son Ramjan by a van at 12:00noon, a rickshaw hit them from behind and Ramjan fell down onto the ground.

As Moriam jumped to rescue her son, a speedy truck coming from opposite direction, ran over her killing her on the spot.



Mountaineers of North Alpine Club Bangladesh express their jubilation by raising their hands at an experience sharing meeting at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. They conquered Langsisa Ri peak in Nepal on December 1 last year. They now have set a new target of conquering the 24,682-foot-high Annapurna IV peak in April.

Langsisa Ri conquerors now eye Annapurna IV peak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mountaineers of North Alpine Club Bangladesh, who conquered the 20,700-foot high Langsisa Ri peak in Nepal on December 1 last year, shared their experiences in the city yesterday.

4th convocation of Brac varsity held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac is playing a vital role in providing quality education along with its other activities like micro-credit, health service and poverty alleviation, said renowned academic and historian Prof AF Salahuddin Ahmed at the fourth convocation of Brac University on Thursday.

"The Brac University, an innovative step of the world's biggest NGO Brac, is now known to all for its quality education," said Salahuddin while speaking as chief guest at the convocation held at Rajendrapur Brac Centre for Development Management.

Brac University President and Brac Founder Fazle Hasan Abed said the Brac University will create country's future leadership through providing quality education.

Brac University Vice-chancellor Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said,

"We started our university eight years ago. Meanwhile, the number of students has reached 3000 due to its quality education."

A total of 553 students got the certificates at the convocation. Of them, 362 received under-graduate and the rest graduate certificates.

The team, led by Musa Ibrahim, took 24 days to reach the peak. Now they have set a new target of conquering the 24,682-foot high Annapurna IV peak in April.

Musa at an experience sharing meeting at the National Press Club yesterday said, "We have set a target of conquering Mount Everest by 2010, the highest peak of the world. Conquering of Annapurna is a step towards achieving the target."

Other members who were also in the expedition team include Rafiq Uddin Siraji, Touhid Hossain, Mir Shamsul Alam, Afrin Khan and Riman Khan.

President of the alpine club and noted writer Anisul Haque said it is not possible to achieve a dream without

nurturing it.

He hoped that the club members would increase the country's image abroad by conquering the Everest.

General Manager of Destiny Group Md Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Tipu assured the mountaineers of providing further support for their next adventure.

Chief Executive Officer of Matra Anisur Rahman Mahmud said the mountaineering expedition of the club could be a strong medium of standing against drugs.

A video documentary was showed at the programme and distributed certificates among the participants in a cycle rally to create a unity among the youths against drugs and AIDS.

'Raise awareness about AIDS'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme underscored the need for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS among the young generation, who constitutes a major portion of the population, to prevent the spread of the deadly disease.

Although HIV prevalence is low in Bangladesh, it is still considered a high-risk country for HIV/AIDS infection, they said.

The speakers also said HIV/AIDS is not only a big problem to the public health, it is also a big obstacle in the way of development. It is imperative to disseminate accurate information about the disease among young generation as prevention is the only way to prevent HIV infection.

Matra, an advertisement firm, organised the programme titled 'Janar Angkar, Jananor Angkar' at a city hotel to present the progress and achievement of the project titled 'Prevention and control activities among the vulnerable and highly vulnerable young people'.

Save The Children, USA with the financial assistance of

Global Fund is implementing the project as a managerial organisation. It is a part of the National AIDS/STD Programme which is being implemented by the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Speaking as the chief guest, Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque said, "Though HIV prevalence is low in the country, we need to study its percentage as the HIV prevalence is high in neighbouring countries."

Praising the initiative, he said that apart from preventive measures, treatment of the HIV/AIDS positives needs to be ensured.

He called on all the stakeholders to come forward in raising awareness about the disease.

Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali, Information Secretary ATM Fazlul Karim, DGHS Director General Dr Shah Monir Hossain, Board Chairman of Global Fund Rajat Gupta and Country Representative of Save The Children, USA Kelland Stevenson also spoke.



Children engrossed in drawing pictures on the Bangla Academy premises in the city yesterday. The academy organised the drawing competition for children on the occasion of Amar Ekushey.

Work for poverty-free Bangladesh

Dilip urges charities

BSS, Chittagong

Industries Minister Dilip Barua yesterday called upon the members of the voluntary organisations to put in their best efforts for establishing a hunger- and poverty-free Bangladesh.

He said the government is happy, prosperous and self-reliant "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman with active participation of the people.

The industries minister was addressing as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of 3-days "33rd national convention of Apex Bangladesh", a leading international voluntary club.

Mohammed Jashim Uddin, chairman of the national convention committee, presided over the function held at Chittagong Zila Krira Sangstha auditorium.



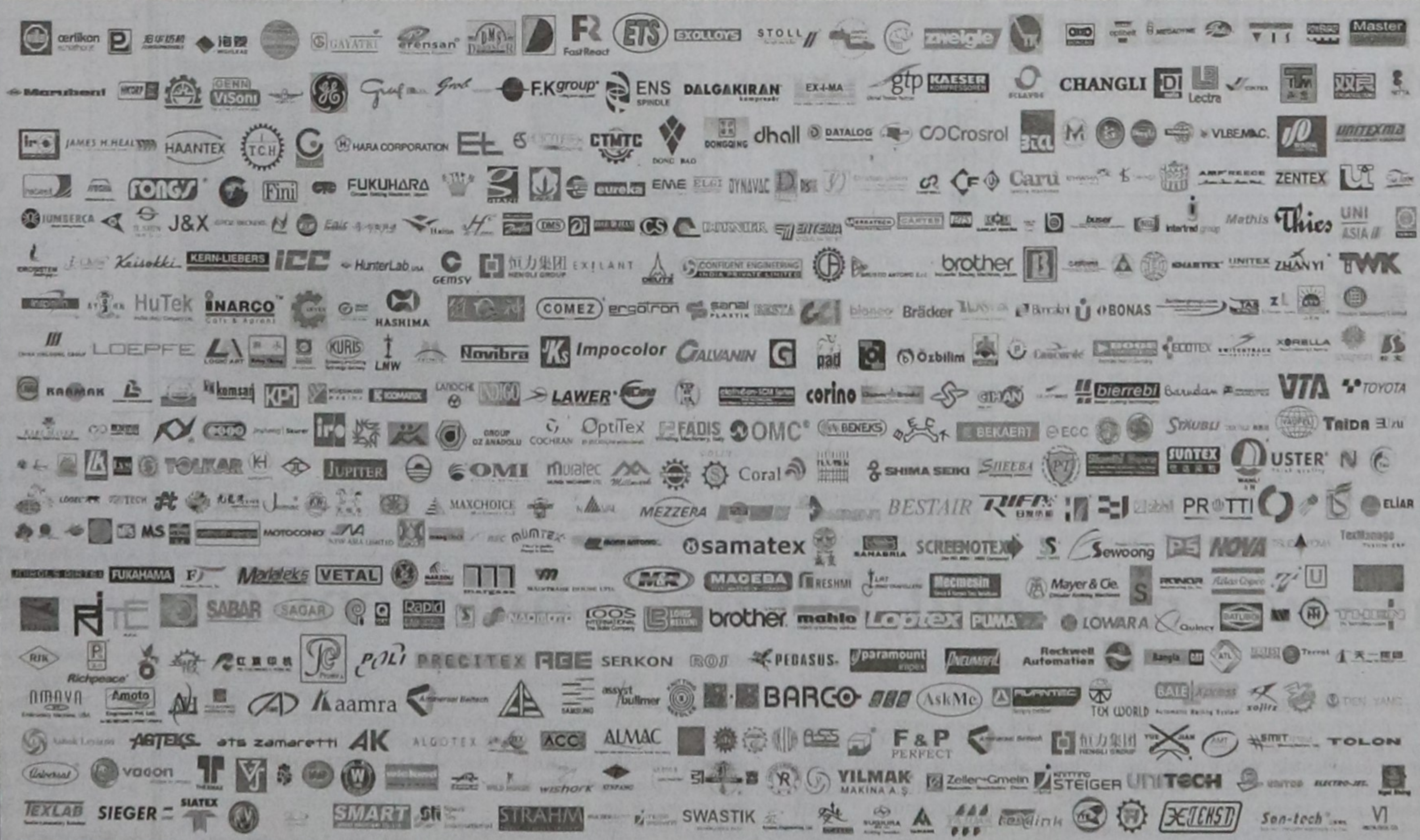
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