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ASIAN HIGHWAY NETWORK

Alternative route bid abandoned

Govt decides for links as per original UN-Escap plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abandoning the country's previously proposed routes, the government decided to connect Bangladesh to the Asian Highway Network (AHN) accepting routes proposed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-Escap).

"We decided to connect Bangladesh to the Asian Highway Network for the welfare of the country," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told reporters after a meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat. Officials of the communications, foreign, home, defence, and finance ministries attended the meeting.

"If we could be connected to the Asian Highway Network, our communication and trade with Asian countries will improve," said the minister, adding, "It would also boost our tourism industry."

He said the previous governments did not look at the best interest of the country and did not link the country with the communication network. In the meantime the country faced losses, he added.

He said a summary regarding the

Asian Highway would be placed before the next cabinet meeting for the government's approval. "Our government's decision will be conveyed to the UN-Escap so that Bangladesh can be connected by signing the agreement as per the routes proposed by the UN-Escap."

The UN-Escap drafted an Intergovernmental Agreement on the AHN for the development of Asian Highways, which include three routes in Bangladesh.

The proposed routes are Benapole-Jessore-Kanchpur-Dhaka-Sylhet-Tamabil (AH1), Banglabandha-Hatikamrul-Dhaka-Kanchpur-Sylhet-Tamabil (AH2) and Dhaka-Kanchpur-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf-Myanmar border (AH-41). The third route is a sub-regional one.

AHN, a proposed network of 1,41,000km of standard roadways criss-crossing Asian countries and linking them with Europe, was conceived in 1959 with an aim to promote development of international road transport in the continent.

Bangladesh failed to become a mem-

ber of the network as its successive governments failed to understand the highway's immense potential and importance. The main reason behind Dhaka's reluctance to join the Asian Highway club is its reservations about giving transit to India.

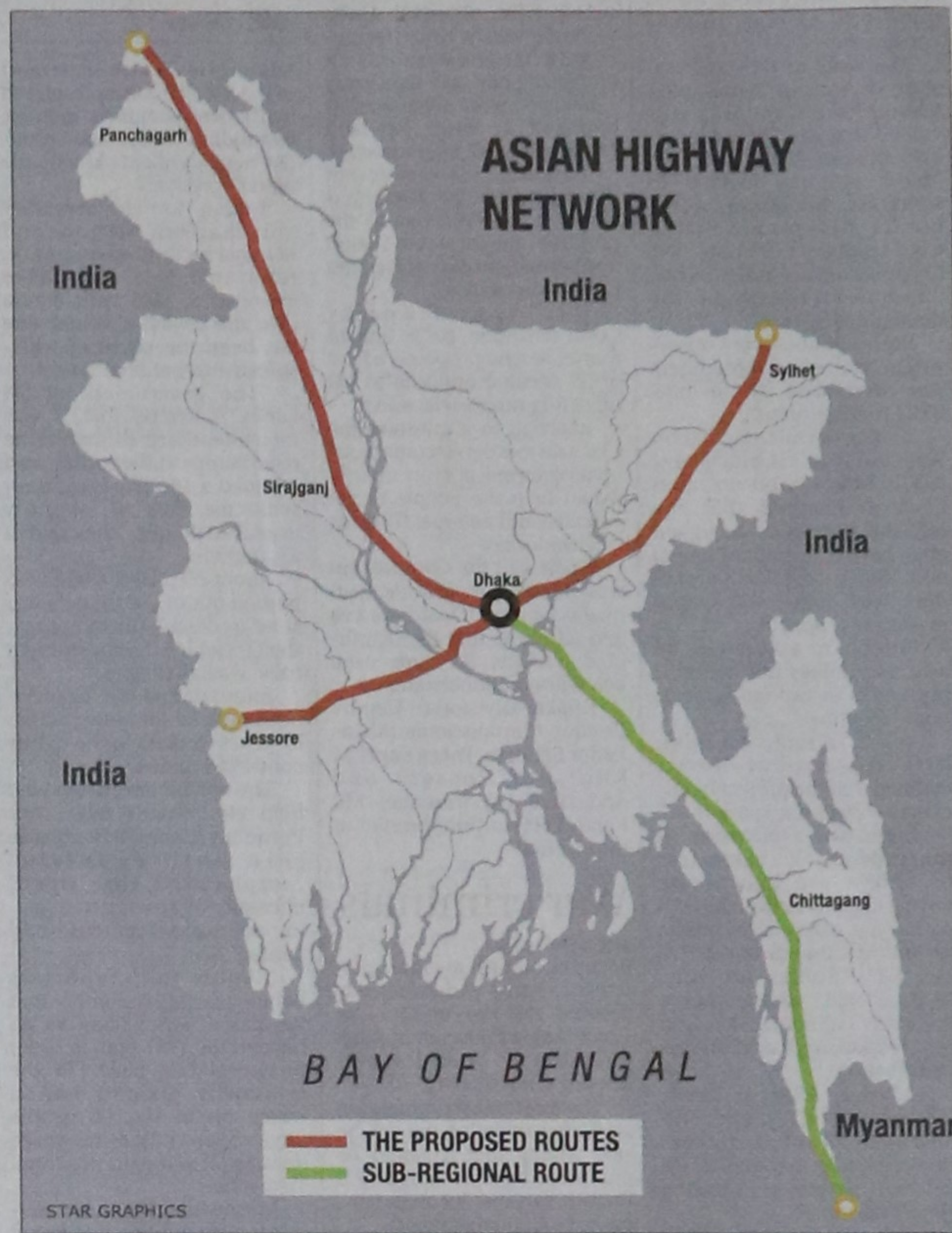
Bangladesh had said the first two routes proposed by the UN-Escap enter Bangladesh from India and exits to India. Bangladesh has been pressing for Dhaka-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf route. A number of moves in this regard proved futile as Dhaka failed to convince UN-Escap.

Asked whether the country would have to face any security threats from neighbouring countries, the communications minister ruled out the possibility.

The Asian Highway, also known as the Great Asian Highway, is a cooperative project among countries in Asia and Europe and the UN-Escap for improving the highway systems in Asia.

It is one of the three pillars of Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project endorsed

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WAR CRIMINALS

Law to be updated for fair trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government has taken initiatives to update the existing International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 for holding trial of war criminals on charge of committing offences against humanities during the liberation war in 1971.

"The International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973 under which the war criminals to be tried should be updated for

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HC asks govt to produce personal file on Zia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to produce before it on May 27 the personal file on late president Ziaur Rahman to examine whether he had any involvement in the proclamation of independence of the country.

An HC bench gave the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

MP-UPAZILA PM pledges balance of power

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the local government system would be strengthened through striking balance of power and coordination in function between members of parliament and upazila chairmen.

She also said her government believes in decentralisation of administrative power

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UPAZILA PARISHAD CHAIRMEN

Conflict with MPs to hinder development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current conflict between lawmakers and upazila chairmen may lead to political unrest and impasse in the country's development unless a mutually convenient policy is undertaken, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar entitled "The conflict between members of parliament and upazila chairmen: Recent crisis in local government," and hosted by Neeti Gobeshona Kendra was held at Jatiya

Press Club in the morning. It was presided over by political scientist Prof Emajuddin Ahmed.

"If the existing conflict between lawmakers and upazila chairmen tends to a settlement in the court of law, it will definitely create political unrest and impasse in development activities in the country," said Prof Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman.

"Around 60,000 representatives of people in upazila parishad have been manacled by

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Govt targets Tk 80,000cr revenue in next budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The revenue-earning target has been fixed at Tk 80,000 crore in the next fiscal year without imposing new tax burden on the people, said Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday.

He told this to journalists after a meeting with the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on revenue-earning

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Congress, allies yet to agree on cabinet berth

Manmohan takes oath today

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Efforts by India's ruling Congress to form a coalition ran into trouble last night with key ally DMK refusing to join the government as talks on allocation of ministerial berths and portfolios were deadlocked.

This happened on the eve of swearing-in of Manmohan Singh as prime minister for a second consecutive term.

DMK announced Congress' "formula" on ministerial allocation was not acceptable, but it would extend support to the new government.

"My leader Karunanidhi has advised me to inform that DMK

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

SSC results on May 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of this year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC), SSC (vocational) and Dakhil examinations under eight education boards, Technical education board and Madrasa board will be simultaneously published on May 26.

The heads of the educational institutions have been asked to collect the result sheets from the secretaries of respective examination

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Continue zero duty on import of newsprint

Noab urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) yesterday urged the government to continue zero tariff on import of newsprint for the sake of newspaper industry.

"We have urged the finance minister to continue zero tariff facility for import of newsprint in the next budget," Noab President Mahbubul Alam told reporters after a delegation led by him met the minister at his office.

On the Noab proposal, Finance Minister AMA Muhith told journalists, "I have

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Cops' job gets tough

Over 100 out of 258 DMP officer posts vacant

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

Almost all the high-ranking officers of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) are burdened with hectic schedules due to manpower shortage.

From the level of assistant commissioner (AC) to DMP commissioner over 100 posts out of a total 258 are vacant in the DMP administration despite several major reshuffles over the last two months.

DMP sources said many officers have to rush to several workplaces in different parts of the capital for discharging their duties and officers can spare very little time to stay at their respective offices resulting in making a mess of everything.

One additional commissioner is working now against the demand of three posts, four joint commissioners against five, 15 deputy commissioners (DCs) against 25, 19 additional deputy commissioners (ADCs) against 38, and

116 assistant commissioners (ACs) against 186, DMP sources said.

DMP has a total 258 posts from the level of AC to DMP Commissioner but only 156 officers were posted while 102 posts are still lying vacant.

During a visit to DC Motor Transport (MT) in the second week of April it was found that DC (MT) Mosleh Uddin had to rush to DC (north) office at Uttara, DC (MT) office at Rajarbagh and DC (Discipline) office at Minto Road.

Amid severe traffic jam in the capital he had to spend most of his working time on his way to three different offices and besides he had to attend several meetings almost every day, his office sources said.

He told The Daily Star that he had to remain busy till 12:00pm every day.

DC (MT) office sources said he could spend less than one and a half hours at his office.

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Pollution makes river waters hard to treat: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water of the Buriganga and Shitalakhiya rivers has become difficult to treat due to high level of pollution, said Dr MA Taher Khandker, director general of Bangladesh Haor and Wetland Development Board at a seminar yesterday.

"Water in the Buriganga and Turag rivers have literally turned into poison," said Khandker in his presentation at the seminar titled 'Pollution of Rivers around Capital Dhaka: Mitigation Options' at Water Development Board (WDB) office.

Dissolved Oxygen (DO) level, an indicator of measuring river health and aquatic life in its water, stands at zero milligram (per litre) at different points of Buriganga, Turag, Tongi Khal and Balu during dry season, he said.

He said ideally it should remain seven to eight milligram (per litre) in the rivers' water. But the DO level is dropping significantly due to unabated dumping of wastes and toxic substances into rivers and water bodies.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Saydee files defamation suit of Tk100cr

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Saydee yesterday filed a compensation suit of Tk 100 crore against three lawyers, accusing them of tarnishing his image through filing a case to declare Saydee and 35 others war criminals.

The defendants are advocates Mohammad Liton Miah, Mohammad Safayat Hossain

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Prayer Timing

May 22

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-40	6-45
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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OnlinePoll ✓

Do you think an international assessment on the impact of the Tipamukh dam on Bangladesh should be conducted?

Yes (87.94%)
No (8.75%)
No Comments (3.31%)

Total votes: 423

TODAY'S POLL

The government is working on approval of coal policy, open-pit mining at Barapukuria and resettlement of affected people. Do you think the govt should go for open-pit mining at Barapukuria?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net