

## 3 new roads

**FROM PAGE 16** Mohammad Mainuddin said the project to construct a 5.33 km long and 20 feet wide road stretching from Hazaribagh Kalunagar to Bheribadh was sent back to the LGRD ministry from planning commission in 2008.

Recently, LGRD ministry asked DCC to submit the proposal to the ministry after revising the estimated cost.

"We have prepared the development project proforma (DPP) of the road, including some of the components estimating the cost at Tk 11 crore, which was Tk 7.81 crore initially," he said, adding that they will submit the proposal soon.

The construction work of two roads—Star Gate Ramna to Janapath via Notre Dame College and Kamalapur and Hosaf Tower, Malibagh and Janapath, which were taken in 2005, are also yet to be started.

Rajuk constructed the road partially from Romna Gate to Notre Dame College but could not construct the road from Notre Dame College to Janapath via behind the Bangladesh Bank Colony as it is on land of other organisations, said an official at Rajuk.

The initiative of constructing the road remains uncertain also for not filling up a portion of retention area of the pumping station of Wasa at Janpath, he said.

The DPP of the Malibagh to Janpath road is in the housing ministry but it is yet to be approved as the alignment of the road has been changed under the draft of detailed area plan, said another official of Rajuk.

The construction work of 6.30 km long and 60 feet wide road stretching from Zia Colony of Dhaka cantonment to Mirpur cantonment via behind Section-12 of Mirpur has been going on since 2006.

The work will take yet more time to be completed though it was supposed to be completed by January 2008, sources said.

The works of Hatirheel ring road is also going on, which is scheduled to be completed by June 2010.

Prof Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology whose team conducted the feasibility study on the project said 70 percent work of road embankment has so far been completed (7km out of 11km) and the rest will be done by June 2010.

The land acquisition work except of a few places has

## Australia stops boat carrying 83 asylum seekers

AFP, Sydney

A boat carrying 83 suspected asylum seekers was intercepted yesterday off Australia's northwest coast after being spotted from the air by a military patrol plane, officials said.

The vessel was spotted around midnight about 80 nautical miles south of Ashmore Island and initially appeared to be in distress, said Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor.

"The people on board the vessel are safe and have indicated that they wish to come to Australia," he said. "Initial indications suggest 83 passengers and four crew are on board."

## 2 killed in 'shootouts'

**FROM PAGE 16** the passengers tried to escape defying them, Rab sources said. The criminals opened fire on the Rab personnel as the team chased them. The Rab team retaliated that ensued a gunfight.

After the incident, Shahar Ali was found bullet-hit in head at the spot and sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctor on duty declared him dead.

His accomplices, however, managed to flee the scene on a microbus.

An assistant sub-inspector of Rab was also injured in the gunfight, Rab sources said.

Maj Khandaker Golam Sarwar of Rab-4 told The Daily Star that Ali was convicted in several cases including seven for murder with different police stations in the city.

There are cases against Ali for realizing extortions from Shempara, Rokeya Sarani, Shewrapara, Kazipara and Monipur, headed.

Earlier, the authorities concerned issued a red notice through Interpol as he was in neighbouring countries at large for long time, police said.

In another incident, a notorious pirate of the Sundarbans was killed at about 12:30am on the bank of river Bhadra under Dakop upazila of Khulna district.

Farukh was accused in two murder cases, two robbery cases and three other cases under arms act filed with Dakop

already been done and it is expected to be completed after Ramadan, he said.

The excavation of the lake will also be done by June next year and the completion of the project will take time as it needed time to settle the embankment for constructing the road, he said.

Bijoy Sarani to Tejgaon road will again miss the timeline, as the construction of the overpass will not be completed by next December. The road is scheduled to be open in December this year.

It will take March 2010 to complete the whole work of the road while 70 percent work of overpass has already completed, said an official of Rajuk.

The 1,114 metres long and 60 feet wide connecting road was inaugurated on December 16, 2008. But it was not open for public at that time as the overpass on railway line could not be completed and was supposed to be opened on March 26 this year, but Rajuk has missed the deadline and extended the time till December.

Construction work of a 300 feet wide road stretching from Kuril Biswa Road to Purbachal by Rajuk is also going on.

## Rainfall

**FROM PAGE 16** levels', Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdul Razzaque said ground-water situation -- mainly gets recharged from rain and floodwater -- is completely different this year.

Postgraduate Programme in Disaster Management of BRAC University organized the seminar at BRAC Center Inn in collaboration with Kagawa University and Nagoya University, Japan and Gram Bangla Sangstha.

According to water experts, country's annual groundwater table recedes by 5 metres due to lifting of water by tube wells, but one metre of that gap is recharged by rainfall within the country and four metres by floodwater.

The recharging is very crucial, as Boro rice, the main crop in the country now, is highly dependent on ground-water during dry season of the December-April tenure.

"Bangladesh is dependent on both surface water and groundwater, but 93 percent of surface water of Bangladesh comes across the border from China, Nepal, Bhutan and India," said Dr Razzaque, who is also an agriculturist by profession.

Referring to experts' view that withdrawal of water from the upstream by India will destroy Bangladesh's ecosystem, he said the government is discussing the issue with India.

He called upon the local and international experts to find out solutions to the problems that are arising out of climate change, which may affect millions of people.

BRAC University's Vice Chancellor Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) Executive Director Giasuddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Charge De Affaires of Japan in Dhaka Harumitsu Hida also spoke.

Academics and students from Japan and Bangladesh took part in the seminar.

Hasan Mahmud informed the reporters the government has decided to recruit around 450 officials to step up DOE operations across the country against hill cutting and environmental pollution.

Besides, he said, the government will set up DOE offices at district level.

He also informed that around 7.58 lakh acres of land across the country would be brought under social afforestation to ensure ecological balance.

BSF also took the bodies into Indian territory.

Ashraf and Aminul were returning home from near Hamjapur of south Dinajpur in India where they had gone to see their relatives, said victims' family sources.

BDR officials of Dinajpur-2 Battalion admitted the incident and said they had lodged a strong protest against the killings. They also sought cooperation from their counterpart so that a calm prevails on the India-Bangladesh border.

BDR also urged the BSF to return the bodies.

A tension mounted on the bordering areas following the killings.

Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS), an NGO, also filed a complaint against the leaders and workers with the police station.

## They run

**FROM PAGE 1** children working at four rope factories under the Buriganga Bridge in Aganagar in Keraniganj at daily wages ranged between Tk 35 and Tk 100.

One of them is six-year-old Mamun, who joins work in the morning and runs at least for 12 hours throughout the day.

Like the other children, Mamun starts his run as if he were running to win the title of a sprint competition. But unlike sprinters he has to cross the same track again and again throughout the day to hang jute strings.

Mamun has to run on a track of 10.16 metres, the distance between two pillars, between which jute strings are hung repeatedly for producing rope.

The little children have to run, or at least walk very fast, but can't stop in the process.

Mamun's eight-year-old brother Suman also work at the same factory and both of them earn Tk 100 per day.

"We both give our mother Tk 600 every week. Our family runs on our income, while our father's earning is used to pay back loans," this is all Mamun could say while running with a jute string on his back.

"My mother borrowed money to pay back the loans taken by my father on different occasions," Suman mumbled while explaining the reasons for their work.

Rakibul, aged around eight, said he hangs the strings only for Tk 35 a day. He said they got a new colleague Ismail who was yet to know his wage.

None of these children has a fixed income as their daily wages vary on performance and none of them knows if they will be working tomorrow. Yet these poor kids continue to bear the burden of their families.

"I have a debt of Tk 50-60 thousand in my locality. I cannot bear the expenses of my seven-member family and had to send my child to the factory," said Sirajul Islam, day labourer and father of child labourer Sohag.

"The guardians can't engage their under-14 children in work. They also can't strike any deal with anyone for employing their children in any work when they are under 14," says Sultana Uddin Ahmad, assistant executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, quoting the Bangladesh Labour Law, 2006.

As the twilight approaches, the children look like working at an oil mill, all exhausted and wearing greasy shine of sweat.

And as they slouch back home, they all look strange as the whitish jute particles stick to all over their bodies.

## Hill plunderers

**FROM PAGE 16** against the contractors engaged in levelling hills.

He also asked the authorities concerned to demolish the structures made by cutting hills, a UNB report said.

A huge portion of a 200-feet hill on around six acres of land adjacent to Baitul Aman residential area at North Khulshi has been levelled to make way for housing in last one month, sources said. A signboard at the spot reads that a mosque is under construction. Locals informed that over 50 workers are involved in razing the hill allegedly owned by Major Solaiman.

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## Prisoners of ropes

**FROM PAGE 1** Sohag, who works at one of these factories, to suffer respiratory ailments twice or thrice every month.

"Sohag suffers from inhaling problems, fever, itching, abdomen pain," and skin diseases routinely each month," says his day labourer father Sirajul Islam. Whenever his son's condition deteriorates, Siraj buys him some cheap pills from the local pharmacy. And that's all he can afford.

Siraj realises that he should have sent his kid to school, but instead he engaged him in the hazardous task as he is unable to run his family alone.

Now at this tender age Sohag also suffers from hernia, which intensifies so much a few times every month that he can't help crying in unbearable pain.

Sohag and other children risk all these health hazards for wages ranging between only Tk 35 and Tk 100 per day.

The wages are not fixed and paid based on their daily performance, satirising all the national and international laws regarding child labour and human rights.

"Besides jute particles, these children are also exposed to micro-fibres that might cause fibrosis in the lungs. The fibres affect the normal spongy and elastic features of the lungs, gradually making it stiff and non-functional in performing its main duty of exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide," says Asif Muztaba Mahmud, associate professor, National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital.

"As the lungs lose elasticity, its respiratory function will naturally be retarded and the person suffer from restrictive diseases. Thus the children might become respiratory crippled and ultimately meet early death from respiratory

failure," Mahmud adds.

Medical experts also say inhaling jute particles might cause cough and lung problems like asthma and also hamper normal physical growth.

"The atmosphere is risky for the children who are yet to develop immunity. Many other children might have sensitivity to the particles and might suffer from allergic problems if they continue this work," says Prof ARM Luthful Kabir, director, Institute of Child and Mother Health.

Explaining preference for the children, Deen Islam, head operator of a factory, said, "Employing children ensures more production than employing adults as the height of a child is more appropriate for operating the wheel and pulling thinner strings."

"The work is tiresome as it requires day-long running, which adults do not feel comfortable with. Secondly, employing children costs low wage," said Nahid, younger brother of Iqbal, who owns the factory.

"Many of the child labourers here are either orphan or abandoned by their fathers, while families of many others are indebted. These children are earning money for their families," Deen Islam added.

One of the factory owners says his factory produces eight to nine maunds of rope every day. He adds he sells the produce at Tk 120 per maund in the wholesale market in Imamganj.

Interestingly, neither the government nor the non-government organisations have any clear idea how many rope factories exist in the country.

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## Tiger dies

**FROM PAGE 1** The number of dead animals reaches 21 in one year showing poor health management at the zoo.

Acting Curator of the Zoo Bibekananda Chowdhury said Garjan was born and brought up in the zoo and recently had been suffering from old age complications.

"Generally a tiger survives for 15 years in a cage, but Garjan lasted more than 19 years," he said, adding, "We are properly taking care of the tigers."

Now the Dhaka zoo has 10 more Bengal Tigers, one of which is more than 17 years old.

Sources in the zoo said the authorities formed a medical board for Garjan's treatment and the board members examined the tiger Thursday.

The zoo officials said Garjan died around 4:30am yesterday and it was buried inside the zoo premises following an autopsy.

The lone Rhinoceros is also very sick and it is suffering from Pymetra disease for the last one and half years, said the zoo sources. Besides, a horse, a sambar (Neelgai) and a kudu (a deer-like mammal) are also ill. The zoo officer has applied to higher authorities to arrange proper treatment for the animals.

Following the death of the giraffe, the curator and deputy curator of the zoo had been suspended and a probe committee was formed to investigate the death. The probe committee is expected to submit the report by today.

Earlier in the first week of May, a sambar died while a baboon, a wildebeest and the last member of Malayan tapir died in March. One Bengal Tiger, two fresh water crocodiles, a zebra and a stork died in February.

The Dhaka zoo is located on 186 acres of land in Mirpur housing around 2,160 animals of 157 species. Of them 57 species are mammals, including elephant, Royal Bengal tiger, lion, cheetah, rhinoceros, zebra, monkey, chimpanzee, and hippo. There are 61 species of birds, 11 species of reptiles, including snakes and crocodiles, and 28 species of fish.

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## US offers

**FROM PAGE 16** affirmative steps towards denuclearisation," he said.

Crowley denied the move amounted to a significant policy change, but suggested it amounted to a tactical shift when he called it a "short-term" measure to bring the reclusive Stalinist state back to talks.

He said it is too early to say when and where envoys such as Stephen Bosworth, the pointman for North Korea in President Barack Obama's administration, and his deputy Sung Kim would meet their North Korean counterparts.

"Given the consultations that we have, given the invitation that was extended (from North Korea for direct talks), we'll make some decisions, you know, in the next couple of weeks," Crowley said.

He was referring to consultations that Bosworth had with his counterparts from China, South Korea and Japan during a tour of Asia in the last week. Kim stayed on in Asia to consult with his Russian counterpart.

Bosworth gave no hint of a change in plan when he spoke in Tokyo on Tuesday.

On August 25, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said the United States would sit down with the North Koreans only if they agreed to return to six-party disarmament talks.

North Korea quit the six-way talks grouping in April in protest at UN censure of a rocket launch. The UN Security Council then tightened sanctions on North Korea after it staged an underground nuclear weapons test in May.

The United States has long said that any bilateral talks would come only within the framework of six-party talks, which also include China, Japan, Russia and South Korea.

The six-party consultations came after North Korea began to soften its posture recently and sought bilateral talks with Washington, while attempting to scrap the six-way talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions.

But Pyongyang said last week it had reached the final stages of enriching uranium and was also building more

## PM's iftar

**FROM PAGE 1** Ruhul Amin, Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Law Minister barrister Shafique Ahmed, PM's advisers and high officials of the Prime Minister's Office were present among others.

US Ambassador James F Moriarty and British High Commissioner Stephen Evans were also present on the occasion.

Before the iftar, a munajat was offered seeking divine blessings for the people of Bangladesh as well as for the world humanity.

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