

## UPGRADING LAND TRANSPORT \$23m deal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Asian Development Bank (ADB) will sign a \$23 million technical assistance loan agreement today to upgrade the country's land transport infrastructure to increase sub-regional trade.

The loan signing will take place at the NEC Conference Room of Economic Relations Division (ERD).

A number of regional cooperation and integration (RCI) transport projects have been chalked out for implementation of which will enhance trade among South Asian countries, specially to, from and through Bangladesh.

Under the loan deal, ADB will provide funding for feasibility studies, detailed design preparation, procurement assistance and ensure implementation of the projects.

Communications ministry officials said the focus will be on priority transport corridors identified in the Saarc Regional Multimodal Transport Study.

Transport corridors linking with Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) countries such as Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway network will also be targeted, they said.

Priority road projects include Chittagong-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf road, 374-kilometre Petrapole (India)-Benapole-Jessore-Magura-Daulatdia-Paturia-Dharkar-Akhaura-Agartala (India) road, 664-kilometre Phulbari (India)-Banglabandha-Hatikumrul-Mongla, 286-kilometre Dawki/Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka, 215-kilometre Akhaura-Dharkar-Comilla-Chittagong, 138-kilometre Burimari-Rangpur and 219-kilometre Sonamasjid-Rajshahi-Jamuna Bridge.

These roads will either be constructed or upgraded. The priority sub-regional railway projects are construction of Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga-Jessore rail link, single line metre gauge railway track from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar via Ramu and Ramu to Gundum near Myanmar border, railway bridge with provision of dual gauge double track over Jamuna river and strengthening/re-construction of Hardinge Bridge to allow Trans Asian Traffic.

Bangladesh has the potential to become a transport and transshipment centre in the region due to its borders with India and Myanmar as well as the geographical location with Bhutan, Nepal and Kunming the key transportation hub in southwest China.



Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury visits the ailing teacher of Dhaka University, Rumana Manzur, at LabAid hospital in the city yesterday. Rumana lost her eyes in a wild attack by her husband early this month. Inset, women parliamentarians form a human chain in front of the hospital protesting oppression against women.

PHOTO: STAR

## Literacy rate up

DU CORRESPONDENT

The literacy rate and enrolment rate in the primary schools in the country have increased over the past five years, said a survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics yesterday.

Literacy rate of population aged 7 and above rose from 51.9 percent in 2005 to 57.91 percent in 2010, revealed "Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)-2010".

The BBS launched the survey report at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

It says school enrolment rate of children aged 6-10 in primary schools at national level has risen by 4.37 percent and of children aged 11-15 by 7.86 percent in the five years.

Girls under 6-10 years age group have higher enrolment rate and lower dropout rate, showing an advancement of women education.

The ratio of the number of the students enrolled at the primary level stands at 108.81 in 2010 compared to 105.06 in 2005, according to the HIES report.

The report adds 41.99 percent of the children attended the state-run schools at national level, 45.18 percent government-subsidised primary schools, 4.8 percent non-subsidised primary schools, 1.18 percent NGO-run schools, 5.29 percent government-approved madrasas, and 1.56 percent Qaomi madrasas.

## Women MPs stand by Rumana

### Punishment to her husband Sayeed demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations, politicians, academics, professionals and women's rights activists yesterday demanded exemplary punishment to Hasan Sayeed Sumon, who brutally tortured and damaged the eyes of his wife Rumana Manzur, a teacher of Dhaka University.

Around 30 Awami League-backed woman lawmakers formed a human chain in front of the LabAid Hospital in the city.

"We want to express our solidarity to Rumana and assure her that we are beside her during this tough moment in her life," said

lawmaker Tarana Halim.

Demanding exemplary punishment to the culprit, lawmaker Shagufta Yasmin Emily said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very much concerned about the issue and directed the authorities concerned to ensure exemplary punishment to the accused so that such incident may not occur in future.

At the human chain, Rumana's father Manzur Hossain thanked everyone for the support for his daughter and demanded exemplary punishment to Sayeed.

Meanwhile, ADCs Masudur Rahman and Mehdi Hasan visited Rumana Manzur at the hospital

yesterday to listen to her accounts of the torture.

Quoting Rumana, Masudur said that Sayeed attacked on her from the behind and pushed his thumbs into her eyes.

They also visited Rumana's father's residence in Dhanmondi in the city yesterday to collect evidence.

Rumana, an assistant professor of the Department of International Relations, has lost her eyesight in the attack by her husband Sayeed on June 5.

She was readmitted to LabAid on her return from India on June 20 as the Indian doctors said there was no treatment available

there for her eyes at that moment. They also confirmed that Rumana's left eye has blinded while another eye did not respond to her brain.

Biplobi Nari Sanghati formed another human chain in front of the National Press Club at around 4:30pm.

Leaders of the women organisation also demanded punishment to Sayeed and shifting of the case under the women and children repression prevention act. They also urged the country's people to be united to stop all sorts of violence against the women.

Dhaka University Vice-

Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique also visited Rumana at the hospital and assured her of all kinds of assistance from the university.

The Soroptimist International Club in Dhaka in a protest meeting strongly protested the brutal torture on Rumana and demanded exemplary punishment to her husband.

In the evening, a group of students and teachers of Dhaka University lighted candles at Ruju Memorial on Dhaka University campus protesting the torture. They also demanded exemplary punishment to the torturer.



UK's Minister of State for International Development, Alan Duncan, calls on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP

## BNP won't join polls if e-voting introduced

### Says Moudud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed yesterday said his party won't take part in elections if the Election Commission will introduce Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in the polls.

"E-voting is not an acceptable system as neutral voting is not possible using this system and that is why BNP does not support it," he said while addressing a discussion meeting at Jatiya Press Club.

Jagroto Janata, a pro-BNP organisation, organised the discussion titled "Electronic Voting Machine: neutrality, acceptability and people's thinking."

"Existing system of the caretaker government must be continued in the constitution and then talks can be held to find out an acceptable person who will lead that govern-

ment," he said, adding that the government is hatching conspiracy to stop caretaker government system, as it knows it won't be able to win the elections if it is held under a caretaker government.

Meanwhile, party's acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday asked the prime minister to seek apology to the people admitting her "mistake" over caretaker government system.

"In 1996, Awami League had waged a vigorous movement for introducing the caretaker system that killed a number of innocent people but now she says it has no necessity. You [prime minister] should admit your mistake and apologise to people for that," he said.

He was addressing a discussion meeting at Jatiya Press Club organised by Jagpa-backed Chhatra League with its President Saiful Islam in the chair.

## Tales of drug addict children

HOSSAIN BIPOB

When his step mother abandoned him nearly two years ago Abdur Rahim found a new home at Kamalapur railway station.

It was not long before the 12-year-old boy began to take drugs like the other kids he met on the street.

"First we used to smoke bidis or cigarettes. Then we started taking drugs," said Rashid, who is now being treated for drug addiction at APON, a centre for rehabilitation of drug addicts in capital Dhaka.

Rahim told a seminar in Police Telecom Bhavan in Dhaka yesterday about his addiction and how he is being given the recovery therapy.

"I'm almost cured now...I'm now normal," the boy told the seminar organised by Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association, Bangladesh.

With him was another boy, Alam who too is being treated at the centre for drug addiction.

"I was introduced to different types of drugs by other children on the street," said Alam. He said they took drugs ranging from sedative to cannabis.

Police officials say drug addiction is increasing among the street children who live without a family, love and care.

Up to 17 percent of street children in capital Dhaka are addicted to drugs, Abdul Jalil, additional com-

missioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told the seminar.

Though some NGOs and social organisations are working for rehabilitation of these children, the efforts are far from the need.

"Our youths are mainly at risk as Bangladesh is being used as a corridor of drugs," said Mohammad Salam, former additional Inspector General of Police (IGP).

Salam, also the former director general of department of Narcotic Control, said that the number of drug-addicted children (8 to 12 years old) is around 14.5 percent in Bangladesh.

Inspector General of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandaker called for stronger anti-drug drive by law

enforcement agencies, narcotic control department and NGOs

He said especially the children have to be protected from drug addiction.

"We have to shape this drive as a social movement to save our children from taking drug", he added.

Khandaker Mohammad Ali, director general of Narcotic Control department said that 70 to 80 percent drug addicts in Bangladesh are aged between 15 to 20.

These youths take drugs due to unemployment, poverty and frustration, adverse family environment, easy access to drugs, he added.

Dr M Enamul Huq, former IGP, presided over the seminar.



Chowdhury Alam Mukti O Uddhar Sangram Parishad forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday demanding that Chowdhury Alam, a BNP leader who disappeared following his reported abduction on June 25 last year, be traced soon.

PHOTO: STAR