PLOT ON ROAD

More budgetary funds on cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the government contemplating more budgetary outlay for expansion of social safety net programmes (SSNP), a research initiative was formally launched yesterday to find out the best modality to transfer assistance under such projects.

State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury launched the joint research initiative of UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the Washingtonbased think tank International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) at a hotel in the capital.

According to government statistics, Bangladesh provided 2.3 percent of its GDP and over 12 percent of its annual national budget to implement as many as 90 SSNPs, reaching the assistance in the form of cash, food, training and nutrition to six million ultra-poor families last year.

With the government's support, the one-year-long IFPRI-WFP joint study would assess the impacts of five different safety net transfer modalities on household income, food security and child nutrition. Commencing this May, the research will continue till mid-2013.

State Minister for

Women and

The research will try to identify which of the five transfer modalities, under which some 4,000 ultrapoor women receive a monthly assistance of Tk 1,500, best serve the purposes. The transfer modalities are cash-only, foodonly, cash and food combined, cash and nutrition training, and food and

Children's Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury launches research initiative nutrition training.

Dr Shirin said a move was underway to bring all SSNPs under one umbrella mechanism, create a central data bank and remove incidents of overlapping among the programmes. Warning against feminisation of poverty in Bangladesh,

she said, "Cash assistance might not be effective all the time particularly when the recipient women didn't have the right to take decision on how best they can spend the cash." Dr Akhter Ahmed, chief of the party of IFPRI's USAID-

funded Policy Research and Strategy Support Programme (PRSSP), said there were many safety net programmes in operation in Bangladesh but yet the total coverage of beneficiaries was not that large. "There are incidents of leakage, errors in targeting the right group of people as beneficiaries. There are poor left out of SSNPs while there are cases of inclusion of nonpoor in the beneficiary lists of different SSNPs," he said.

WFP representative to Bangladesh Christa Rader and Disaster Management and Relief Division's Joint Secretary Fazlur Haque also spoke at the programme with Relief Division's Secretary Dr M Aslam Alam in the chair.

Says Prof Talukder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Now 12 more children in

every 1,000 live births are able

to celebrate their fifth birth-

day while nine more infants

per 1,000 live births make it to

their first year, said noted

child health expert Prof MQK

mortality per 1,000 live births

went down from 65 to 53

between 2008 and 2010 while

the rate for newborns in their

first year reduced from 52 to

43 during the period, he said,

referring to government

Meanwhile, the rate of

underweight under-fives

reduced from 41 to 36 per-

cent while the rate for exclu-

sive breast feeding up to six

months of age rose from 44 to

Centre for Woman and Child

Health, was addressing the

second session, "Hunger,

health equity and sustainable

development", of a two-day

international conference at a

meet on determinants of

sustainable development:

Road to Rio+20", was organ-

ised by Eminence, a non-

government organisation,

The conference, "Global

Prof Talukder, chairman of

64 percent, he added.

The under-five infant

Talukder yesterday.

statistics.

city hotel.



Participants at a roundtable discussion, 'Safe Motherhood: Achievements and Challenges,' held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. (Story on Page 20)

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday sentenced three people to death and another person to life imprisonment and fined each Tk 1 lakh for raping and murdering a Santal woman in the district last year.

The body of Moriam Murmu, 48, wife of late Hopna Mardi, was found stripped of clothing, hanging by the neck from a tree some 100 yards off her Shimla Dighipara village residence in the district's Godagari upazila on July 10, 2011.

There were numerous bloody wounds on the body, indicating that she was tortured before being murdered. Her son, Wilson Mardi, filed a murder case with Godagari Police Station that day.

One of the death convicts, Andrias Murmu, (28) who is also Moriam's cousin, had an enmity with the indigenous woman, who was a teacher of a local school for adults, over a piece of land.

Under-five child mortality now lower

He hired the remaining three convicts, who are all locals, to steal from Moriam's house to financially cripple her. Shawkat Iqbal (30) and Johan Marandi

(30), sentenced to death, and Amar Kisku (19), sentenced to life, accepted Tk 10,000 each to carry out the crime. But instead of only stealing, the four gang-raped and then strangulated the 48-

year-old and hung the body from the tree to make it look like a suicide. They left after looting valuables and cash worth Tk 20,000 from the house. For committing the robbery, the court jailed all four men for life and individually

fined Andrias Tk 50,000, Shawkat Tk 20,000, Johan Tk 10,000 and Amar Tk 5,000. Judge AKM Enamul Haque announced the verdict of the case held under the

Woman and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000, said Public Prosecutor Sayeda Morjina Parveen.

RAPE, MURDER OF SANTAL WOMAN 3 get death, one life there is guarantee of no accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan yesterday threw out a challenge to his critics, saying that he would quit if it was guaranteed that no accident would happen after his resignation.

speech for drivers, please give me the guarantee that no further accident will take place, and I will resign", he said.

requested the critics not to use the words "ghatak" or "khan sena", both used to refer to killers, for drivers involved in an accident. No driver deliberately makes any accident, he asserted.

the reception to the representatives of different local government bodies, who are also transport workers. The programme was

Shipping minister

urges the

transport owners

not to appoint

unskilled drivers

or helpers without

valid licence

Academy in the capital. Describing himself as a

was his real identity beyond his identity as a minister. The shipping minister urged the transport own-

ers not to appoint unskilled drivers or help-

Khan said the labourers might have different political views, but they were all equal and they must be united for their own

tion, slated the speech of lawmaker Tarana Halim in parliament for her demand of severe punishment to the drivers and the comment of historian Prof Muntasir Mamun describing them as "khan sena".

been termed yellow journalists for their criticism only

He alleged that a section of journalists and intellectuals were hatching plot against the shipping minister, which in actuality was against the leaders and activists of the federation.

Wajeuddin Khan, president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, chaired the programme, while many leaders and activists of the federation were

PHOTO: STAR

Says Shajahan Khan

"I urge those who demand my resignation because of my

Speaking at a reception ceremony, the minister also

Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation accorded

held at Bangladesh Shishu

member of the transport workers' federation, Shajahan Khan said this

ers without valid licence and urged drivers to be more careful while driving. Talking about problems in the transport sector, Shajahan

Mohammad Osman Ali, general secretary of the federa-

He also slammed the role of some journalists who had against the drivers for occurrence of any accident.

present.

Shafik Rehman faces court May 22 STAFF CORRESPONDENT The High Court yesterday

summoned journalist Shafik Rehman to appear before it on May 22 for receiving a plot on the proposed 60-feet-wide road under Begunbari-Hatirjheel project in the capital "illegally and improperly." During hearing on a suo

moto rule, the court asked former BNP state ministers--Ziaul Haque Zia and Kamrul Islam--to submit separate reports before it by May 22 mentioning their and their family members' total number of plots in Dhaka and the way of getting the plots. The HC also asked deputy

secretary (development) of the Public Works Department (PWD) to submit a list of plot holders at the project to it by May 22.

Ziaul Haque and his son Joy and Kamrul Islam will have to appear in the court on the day. Ziaul, Joy, and Kamrul and

his wife Nazma Islam yesterday appeared before the HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim, as per its May 9 summons over the same allegation. The bench requested Buet

professors--Sarwar Jahan, Aminur Rahman and Zubayer Rahman, and Abul Hasnat to give their opinion before it on May 22. PWD deputy secretary

(development) and Rajuk director for Begunbari-Hatirjheel project have to explain their role over allocating the plots before the bench on that day. The court yesterday called

Shafik Rehman to appear in it on the day after Rajuk's lawyer AKM Saifuddin Ahmed informed that the senior journalist also got a plot "illegally and improperly" in 2004, Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain told The Daily

Following a report published on the daily Samakal on March 24, 2010, the HC bench on May 9 issued a rule upon the authorities concerned to explain why the allocation of the plots should not be cancelled.

The report said the BNP-led four-party alliance government allocated the plots to the state ministers in 2006 by

violating a Rajuk plan of 1994. A 10-katha plot was given to Nazma, director of Famous Fashions Limited, and two plots on one and a quarter bighas of land were given to Joy at a very minimal cost, said the newspaper report.

Joy and Nazma got the land at Tk 1.25 lakh per katha though then the market price was around Tk 1 crore, it added.

Zia and Kamrul yesterday told the court that Joy and Nazma had purchased the plots through due process.

Advocate TH Khan and Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun appeared for Kamrul and his wife, and Ziaul and his son.



Centre for Women and Child Health Chairman Dr MQK Talukder addresses a conference, 'Global meet on determinants of sustainanble development: Road to Rio +20,' at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital yesterday. Sitting from right are Institute of Public Heath Nutrition Bangladesh Director Prof M Akhlasur Rahman, Dr Amenul Haque, Nijera Kori Executive Director Khushi Kabir and Health Ministry Additional Secretary Dr Makhduma Nargis.

and over a dozen similar while more than 50 percent system in Bangladesh to organisations.

The conference aimed at creating awareness among key global actors into including the importance of health in the agendas of the Rio+20 summit, scheduled to be held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from June 20 to 22.

Presenting a keynote, social activist Khushi Kabir said poverty is the main cause behind hunger and malnutrition in Bangladesh.

Over 9.5 million preschool children are stunted

of women suffer from chronic energy deficiency,

she said.

Health ministry's Additional Secretary Dr Makhduma Nargis and Institute of Public Health Nutrition Bangladesh Director Prof M Akhlasur Rahman also spoke at the session.

Addressing the inaugural session as chief guest, Food Minister Abdur Razzaque stressed the need for improving the disaster management

ensure sustainable socioeconomic development, whose three components are society, economy and environment.

An initiative to automate the country's hospitals was taken to attain sustainable development, said Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad, additional director general of Directorate General of Health Services.

Addressing the third session, "ICT, Health and Sustainable Development", chaired by UNDP Bangladesh Assistant Country Director KAM Morshed, he said the automation process will begin from this fiscal.

The government will also create a database for patients, enabling doctors to easily and quickly get an overview of the patient's history. The data collection might take two to three years and will start off with rural people, he added.





