

## ANANTA MURDER

## Sylhet journalist remanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Sylhet court yesterday placed a photo-journalist on remand for seven days in blogger Ananta Bijoy Das murder case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Farhana Yesmin of Sylhet passed the order after the Criminal Investigation Department of police produced arrestee Idris Ali before the court. The CID prayed for 15 days' remand for him.

The thirty-year-old is a lensman of the local daily the Sobuj Sylhet. The CID was taking him to Dhaka last night.

Acting on a tip-off, a CID team picked up the photographer from his house at Fatehgar village under Sylhet Sadar upazila around 2:00am yesterday, said Mirza Abdullahil Baqui, special superintendent of CID in Dhaka.

However, Idris' family members said police detained him in Sylhet

city on Sunday night and raided his house later on.

CID inspector Arman Ali, the investigating officer in the case, said they have enough evidence of Idris' involvement in the killing.

Ananta was hacked to death near his Subid Bazar home in Sylhet city on May 12 around 8:15am.

The following day, Ananta's brother Ratshawar Das filed a case with Sylhet Biman Bandar Police Station accusing four unknown assailants of the murder.

Barely a month after the brutal murder of blogger Avijit Roy on the Dhaka University campus, blogger Oyasiquir Rahman was stabbed to death on March 30 in the capital's Teigaon in broad daylight.

Religious fanatics have been blamed for the murders.



Rescued trafficking victims entering Bangladesh from Myanmar through the Ghumdhum border point yesterday around 2:00pm while buses wait to take them to Cox's Bazar.

PHOTO: STAR

## VEHICLES BEYOND BORDERS OF 4 NATIONS

## Govt okays draft agreement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved the draft motor vehicle agreement between four South Asian countries that would allow trans-border movement of vehicles.

The approval came a week ahead of a meeting between the transport ministers of four countries in the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu to ink the deal on June 15.

As per the deal titled "Motor Vehicles Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal, and Cargo Vehicular Traffic with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN)", passenger, personal and cargo vehicles can run on designated routes in the four countries.

Once implemented, the agreement would enhance cross-border trade and people-to-people contact in the four nations.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said an agreement and a protocol would be signed after

signing of the framework agreement for the deal to come into effect.

According to the agreement, which contains 17 articles, four forms and three annexure, valid travel documents would be required for such vehicular movement. Fees and charges would be determined by the destination country and collected at its entry points.

If a vehicle travels from Nepal to Bangladesh through India, fees should be provided to both India and Bangladesh, Musharraf added.

He said the agreement was supposed to be signed at the Saarc Summit in Kathmandu last year, but one of the countries failed to complete its internal process in time.

There is a scope for inclusion of a new country in the agreement on consensus. The countries can review the agreement every three years or before on consensus and pull off from the agreement giving a six months' notice, the draft agreement says.

As per the agreement, vehicles are not allowed to take passengers or

board goods midway in any country; authorised officials of the travelling country can search the vehicles; and the vehicles would have to have insurance and follow the prohibited and restricted list of goods of the travelling country.

The number of vehicles would be set through discussion. Vehicles operators would be able to open branch office and appoint agents in any country. Act of a country would get priority in cases which are not mentioned in the agreement.

Any dispute can be resolved through discussion among the member states.

They also adopted a thanksgiving motion to Hasina for her dynamic leadership and also for successfully organising Modi's visit.

The cabinet ministers discussed the overall aspects of Modi's visit. "We believe that what he [Modi] has said, he has said it by meaning it," a minister told The Daily Star after the meeting.

It also approved the draft of the Navy (Amendment) Act, 2015.

## Back home after months of ordeal

FROM PAGE 1  
sector. The rest are believed to be Rohingya.

Yesterday, the 150 were brought back home following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting between the BGB and the Myanmar Immigration and Registration Department.

Lt Col Saiful Alam Khandaker, commanding officer of the BGB 17 battalion in Cox's Bazar; and Swo Mewing, deputy director of Myanmar Immigration department; led their respective sides at the meeting from around 11:00am in Dekhonia of Myanmar. Police, immigration, home ministry and foreign ministry officials were also

in the Bangladesh delegation.

After the meeting, Khalequzzaman told newsmen that all the Bangladeshis rescued so far in Myanmar would be brought back home.

Asked about another 727 rescued victims, he said their identities could not be ascertained yet and therefore, he could not comment about their repatriation.

Swo Mewing thanked the Bangladesh government and other international organisations for assisting Myanmar in repatriating the victims.

The 150 people were first taken to

Ghumdhum High School premises by six buses. Later, BGB officials handed them over to Cox's Bazar Superintendent of Police Shyamal Kumar Nath in presence of Md Ali Hossain, Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar.

The buses reached Cox's Bazar around 4:00pm. The victims were taken to a temporary camp set up at a cultural centre in the town. They will be handed over to their families at the centre after legal formalities, said the SP.

"We'll talk to each of the 150 people separately and record their statements," he added.

## Sky the limit

FROM PAGE 1  
Not anymore. Latest developments show there is light at the end of the tunnel, as Dhaka and New Delhi look all set to resume that connectivity, in a rather ambitious way, through road, rail and sea between the two countries and also Nepal and Bhutan.

The horizon of opportunity is in fact greater still, because in future this region can easily get connected with China and other countries in Southeast Asia as India's northeastern seven states share 4,500km long borders with China, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has been pushing for better regional connectivity, including with India, since 2010. Over the past few years, there have been a number of breakthroughs, but it has gained momentum through Indian PM Narendra Modi's just-concluded Dhaka visit.

After the signing of the deals and MoUs between the two countries on Saturday, some of the vital questions now being asked are how will the region look, how would it benefit the people in the region and how can Bangladesh gain from connectivity?

The agreements include ratification of the land boundary demarcation, modalities for its implementation, coastal shipping line, renewal of bilateral trade deal, agreement between two countries' standard testing institutes, operation of passenger bus services, inland water transit and trade and cultural exchange programmes.

MoUs were signed in a number of areas that include \$2 billion Indian loan to Bangladesh, allowing the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports for movements of goods to and from India, cooperation on blue economy and maritime area, cooperation to prevent all forms of human trafficking, preventing and combating fake currency notes, establishment of Indian Special Economic Zone in Bangladesh and cooperation between the two coast guards.

All this will open up trade opportunities, boost investments and promote closer links between a host of other economic issues, say experts, analysts and businesspeople.

Most of the 22 deals and MoUs are related to wider trade and connectivity beyond Bangladesh and India, as Nepal and Bhutan can also take full advantage of the rail, road and water transit routes. This will cut export-import costs and as a result commodity prices.

"Many positive things will happen in India and Bangladesh. Economic activities will increase and new industries will be set up once the transport connectivity is established in the region," said Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Bangladesh will gain from the improved infrastructures to be built under the connectivity development initiatives, while its import and transport costs will significantly reduce.

In the 2014-15 fiscal, Bangladesh

imported goods worth \$6.5 billion from India while the export amounted to \$0.5 billion.

"If we can use India's \$2 billion credit intelligently to build our infrastructure to be used for trade facilitation and border crossing, more Indian investment will come to Bangladesh to reap the benefit of zero tariff export facility," said Mustafizur, also a business analyst.

But surely, this \$2 billion is but paltry for the massive job of developing the infrastructure needed to re-establish the multimodal transport connectivity system.

According to Debapriya Bhattacharya, an economist and a distinguished fellow at CPD, the job may cost between \$7 and \$10 billion.

"Bangladesh has to mobilise the funds jointly with India as the \$2 billion loan is little in this regard," he said.

Moreover, the experience of using conditional loans is not very encouraging for Bangladesh as a minimum of 75 percent of goods and services need to be of Indian origin and must be procured from India, even if these products are locally available.

To facilitate cross-border movement of goods and people, India is working on several infrastructure projects, including that for constructing a bridge over the Feni river to access Chittagong port, building a railway link between Akhaura and Agartala and a 70-km road from Sabroom to Chittagong port, and upgrading Ashuganj port in Bangladesh.

Both countries are now working to establish new rail services through several border points for operation of passenger and goods trains within the next few years.

The two countries will also profit from the direct train service once it starts operating through Akhaura-Agartala and Rahanpur (Chapainawabganj)-Singabhad of India.

Currently, Bangladesh's goods trains operate up to Singabhad station while the Indian ones up to the Rahanpur station.

Direct bus services on Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati will also greatly benefit Indian citizens while the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala bus service will drastically cut travel time and hassle.

Northeastern India is virtually a landlocked territory, and vehicles from the area are required to travel 1,400-1,650km to reach Kolkata. The Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala route will bring the distance down to about 600km.

The coastal shipping agreement will promote two-way trade between India and Bangladesh through seas. Presently, cargo vessels ply through the countries through Colombo/Singapore/Klang ports.

The deal would have two direct impacts: It will ease congestion on the Land Customs Stations and contribute to the growth of the shipping industry in Bangladesh, as well as the support

## Miracle food made in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1  
or intellectually maim those who survive. The children suffering from it remain highly underweight and stunted either for lack of breastfeeding, supplementary food or diarrhoea.

Globally, close to 20 million children below five years suffer from SAM, and around one million of them die every year, according to the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr).

Most Asian countries don't have locally made RUTF, and some of them, including Afghanistan, Indonesia and Nepal, import Plumpy'Nut on a limited scale for children suffering from SAM.

With an aim to develop a RUTF that would be cheap and available, the icddr, initiated a research four years ago. A team of scientists led by Tahmeed first sorted out food items that are locally available and cheap.

They finally prepared two types of RUTF -- one is rice and lentil-based and the other is chickpea-based. Both the food items were separately mixed with lentil, powder milk, sugar and soybean oil. The rice and lentil-based one was named Sharnali-1 and the chickpea-based one Sharnali-2.

Each 100 grams of the two items

contain food value of more than 500 kilocalories.

As part of the study, Sharnali-1 and 2, and Plumpy'Nut were fed separately to 327 children suffering from SAM in three facilities -- Dhaka Hospital of icddr, a health facility of an NGO in Mirpur and Terre Des Hommes in Kurigram.

The children were also breastfed or provided with supplementary food.

"Their average weight gain was 9.3 grams against per kg a day." A child under five years should gain a weight of minimum 7.5 gram against each kg a day, said Tahmeed.

There was no significant difference in weight gain among the children who were provided with the three types of RUTF, he said.

Tahmeed said it was proved that the Bangladeshi RUTF was as good as Plumpy'Nut.

"What is needed now is effectiveness trial of the Bangladeshi RUTF in a real life situation."

It is necessary to undertake a pilot project at community level. Health workers need to be trained to identify children suffering from SAM and determine doses for them, he said.

Tahmeed warned that if a normal child is given this special food, he might suffer from indigestion, as it contains concentrated protein and

micronutrients.

"If the pilot project proves successful, this RUTF can be provided to children suffering from SAM in other parts of Bangladesh and even in other countries," he added.

Icddr, Executive Director Prof John D Clemens said the Bangladeshi RUTF could greatly help address the issue of child malnutrition not only in Bangladesh, but also in South Asia.

"The product, however, will need to be transitioned into programmes," he said at the inaugural ceremony of the two-day symposium on childhood acute malnutrition at the icddr, conference hall in the capital.

Allyson Bear, acting director of the Office of Population, Health, Nutrition and Education of USAID Bangladesh, stressed the need for special efforts to check SAM in Bangladesh, as it remains a serious problem despite the country's significant progress in child and maternal health.

Edouard Beigbeder, country representative of Unicef; Sarah Cooke, country representative of DFID; Dr Alamgir Ahmed, director at the Institute of Public Health and Nutrition; and Habib-e-Millat, lawmaker of the ruling Awami League, also spoke.



Suspected militants, after their arrest, are paraded before the media at the DMP headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR