



Visiting Asian Development Bank President Takehiko Nakao meets Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhavan yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PMO

# A potential economic power in Asia

ADB president says about Bangladesh during meeting with Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Asian Development Bank President Takehiko Nakao yesterday highly praised Bangladesh's tremendous socioeconomic success, saying that the country has immense potential to emerge as an economic power in Asia.

The ADB president's appreciation came when he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Gonobhaban.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

He said the ADB president mentioned that Bangladesh has immense potential to emerge as an economic power in Asia like China and India.

He said that many countries are now considering investments in

Bangladesh seeing its huge potential.

Mentioning that the ADB has been working with Bangladesh for its socio-economic development since 1973, Takehiko Nakao said his organisation is ready to assist in power, transport and other sectors for boosting the country's economy further.

Welcoming the ADB president in Bangladesh, the prime minister said the aim of her government is to ensure development of the grassroots people and various welfare-oriented initiatives have been undertaken to this effect.

Hasina said the government has given top priority on education to achieve the desired development goal and it is encouraging students to pursue science and technical education to this end.

While talking about steps taken to resolve traffic congestion, she said her

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# 3 lakh yaba pills recovered

Six Myanmar nationals held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh Coast Guard has detained six Myanmar nationals on a fishing boat in the deep sea at Saint Martin's Island, and recovered three lakh yaba tablets from them in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of coast guards, led by Station Commander Lt Commander Faizul Islam Mandal, carried out a raid on the south east side of Chhera Dwip.

The Myanmar nationals, all from the Rakhine community, were detained for the possession of the yaba tablets, the value of which amounts to approximately Tk 15 crore, says a press release from Bangladesh Coast Guard. The team also recovered three swords.

The six Myanmar nationals, Chowna Barua, 25, Lamsing, 50, Mongsha, 45, Chowna, 38, Monchata, 50, and Ouilai, 32, were handed over to Teknaf Police Station. A case has been filed for infiltration

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# Saudis building \$500b mega-city

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local construction companies for the development of five palaces. Set to be located on the Red Sea coast, the palaces will be for the king, crown prince, and other senior royals. According to Reuters, the buildings will feature traditional Moroccan-style architecture, Islamic designs, and colourful ceramic tiles. The complex of palaces will include a marina, helipads, and a golf course.

The business and industrial-focused city will span 10,230 square miles. To put that size in perspective, 10,230 square miles is more than 33 times the land area of New York City.

NEOM's larger goal is to lessen Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil exports, which could expand the country's economy beyond oil, bin Salman said at the conference in October. The city will focus on a variety of industries, including energy and water, biotechnology, food, advanced manufacturing, and entertainment. Saudi Arabia hasn't released a master plan yet for what it will look like.

The country appointed Klaus Kleinfeld, a former chief executive of Siemens AG and Alcoa Inc, to run the NEOM project. Officials hope that a funding program, which includes

selling 5% of oil giant Saudi Aramco, will raise \$300 billion for NEOM's construction.

The project could make NEOM one of the largest cities to run without fossil fuels. In the US, one of the largest cities to run on 100% renewable energy is Burlington, Vermont, which doesn't come close to the planned size of NEOM. Cities in Iceland and Norway also claim to be close to achieving entirely renewable electrical grids with help from natural resources like hydropower and geothermal heat.

Saudi Arabia expects to complete NEOM's first section by 2025.

# Consequences may be grave

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"These terrorists have been designated under a combination of regimes, including as Specially Designated Global Terrorists Under Executive Order 13224 and as Foreign Terrorist Organisations under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act," said Nathan A Sales, Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism, while making the announcement.

The organisation linked to Bangladesh is "ISIS-Bangladesh," according to the list.

Dhaka has not made any official comment on the decision yet, but the government maintains there is no IS presence in the country.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat told reporters yesterday that Washington's designation of "ISIS-Bangladesh" as foreign terrorists did not indicate the existence of the terrorist outfit inside Bangladesh.

"The designation is not about saying ISIS is here...these groups have individuals who have declared or claimed their violent acts in the name of ISIS," she said replying to a question.

The decision will remain in force until it is revoked or the Executive Order

lapses or is terminated in line with the US law.

Among the consequences, any transaction or dealing by US persons or within the United States in property or interests in property pursuant to the Order is prohibited. This includes making or receiving any contribution of funds, goods, or services to or for the benefit of designated individuals or entities, according to the US law.

"This [the inclusion] has unnecessarily highlighted Bangladesh very negatively...we don't need it," said former Bangladesh ambassador to the US Humayun Kabir.

According to him, it is a "cautionary note" for Bangladesh.

The US move may also have negative impacts on the ties with Western countries, especially those having close relations with the US. This will create a lot of hassles for Bangladeshis anywhere in the world, diplomats and experts said.

Dhaka should immediately sit with the US authorities with all necessary information, documents and evidence that there is no such entity (ISIS-Bangladesh) in Bangladesh, they added.

"It's very important and most urgent that Bangladesh take effective steps for

removing its name from the US sanctions list for global terrorism," said a Bangladeshi ambassador stationed in an important Western country.

Bangladesh is an important partner and friend of the US in countering terrorism. So the government should ask the US authorities why they branded Bangladesh this way, he added.

"Did the US alert Bangladesh? Did they help Bangladesh anyway so that it does not have to face such a satiation?" he asked.

According to him, it will not be easy to take Bangladesh's name off the list.

Another diplomatic source told The Daily Star that the US had long been seeking access to Bangladesh's internal system of sharing intelligence information, but the government denied the permission.

The source added the US wanted copies of the intelligence reports that various agencies submit to top government officials and authorities.

"Bangladesh shares information with the US and other important partners related to counter terrorism and extremism as part of its commitment to eliminate terrorism. But the country did not allow the US any access to the internal information sharing system," he

# Refer Rohingya genocide to ICC

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Bangladesh since late August last year, creating the world's fastest growing refugee crisis. The UN discussed the crisis several times since September, but could take no concrete action to address it due to objections from China and Russia.

Although a repatriation deal was signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh late November last year, Rohingyas are still coming to Bangladesh, prompting stronger calls for referring Myanmar to the ICC.

Shirin Ebadi, an eminent legal expert, said Myanmar was not a state party to the Rome Statute establishing the ICC. The UN Security Council can recognise Myanmar's crimes against humanity and then refer it to the ICC, she said.

"We want this case to be discussed at the UN Security Council and there is sufficient evidence for this to take place," she said.

However, China and Russia, which have veto powers as members of the Security Council, are likely to use the powers because of their interests in Myanmar, the Nobel laureate said.

She also said the solution, therefore, lies in creating world public opinion against the "genocide" being committed by the Myanmar authorities for long.

She said though China had economic interests in Sudan but thanks to journalists, the crimes against humanity in the African country created a huge public opinion worldwide, and then the UN Security Council referred Sudan to the ICC in 2005 for genocide.

"What is more important is that public opinion at an international level. It could actually force these states to think about humanitarian aspects," Shirin Ebadi said.

Contacted, Mizanur Rahman, a law professor at Dhaka University, said the "Rohingya issue lost its momentum due to Myanmar's signing of a bilateral

repatriation deal with Bangladesh."

"It was a trap by Myanmar, and Bangladesh fell into it," he said. The legal expert, however, agreed with the Nobel laureates about creating world opinion to take Myanmar to the ICC.

"These Nobel Laureates are important voices in the global civil society. Now that they are raising their voice, Bangladesh should join them to create public opinion globally against Myanmar's genocide," Mizanur said.

The Nobel laureates said the repatriation of the Rohingyas must be voluntary and safe and they should be granted citizenship in Myanmar.

"The Myanmar government should take immediate action to address the systematic discrimination of the Rohingyas in Rakhine and ensure their rights to nationality, land ownership, freedom of movement and other fundamental rights," they said in the statement.

Since 2007, China backed by Russia, has foiled several efforts by the UN Security Council on Myanmar with their veto powers.

The International Human Rights Clinic of the Harvard Law School in a report in 2009 said Myanmar perpetrated four types of crimes: forced displacement of population, sexual violence, murder and tortures.

Based on that, five jurists called on the UN Security Council to urgently establish a commission of inquiry to probe and report on crimes against humanity and war crimes in Myanmar.

Yale University documented atrocities by the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas that increased since 2012 and provided available evidence having all the elements of genocide in Rakhine, where Rohingyas are denied of citizenship and other basic rights including healthcare and right to movement.

The UN, however, could take no effective actions against Myanmar.

The three Nobel laureates have promised the Rohingyas that they would raise voice globally and fight to pursue justice on their behalf.

They also demanded a comprehensive arms embargo on Myanmar and an increase in the international community's support to Bangladesh's humanitarian response.

Bangladesh should ratify the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, as a major step to give protection to refugees and set an example in South Asia, they said in the statement.

PLANTO VISIT MYANMAR

The Nobel laureates said they had appealed to their fellow laureate Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi several times to speak out and stop the "genocide", but they received no response to it.

Tawakkol Karman said they would now ask Suu Kyi to grant them visa so they can visit the Rohingya land, speak with her and convince that she was responsible (for the 'genocide').

"You take action or resign," she said, asking Suu Kyi.

Shirin Ebadi said Suu Kyi was directly responsible for the "genocide" as she took no step to stop the atrocities in Rakhine.

"I am sorry to say that Aung San Suu Kyi has turned a blind eye to the crimes against Rohingya in her country," she said.

Mairead Maguire said it was important to spread the message of non-violence, path of dialogue and teachings of peace worldwide.

"We need to stand and speak the truth. We need to unite our voice together and create new consciousness that will be a global human family that can solve problems," she said.

Nobel Women's Initiative Executive Director Liz Bernstein and Shireen Huq of Naripokkho also spoke at the press conference.

# Toxic politics aided 'jihadist resurgence'

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violence in recent months might prove as a temporary respite.

"With elections approaching in December, politics could become even more toxic. The government's continued marginalisation of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and its forcing underground of opponents like Jamaat-e-Islami, risk sapping resources from efforts to disrupt jihadists," said the report.

The next parliamentary election is scheduled to be held by the end of this year. The BNP has been alleging that the government was trying to hold another "lopsided election" like the one held on January 5, 2014.

According to ICG, Bangladeshi jihadi landscape was now dominated by banned outfits, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh or JMB and Ansar-al-Islam.

"Attacks since 2013 have targeted secular activists, intellectuals and foreigners, as well as religious and sectarian minorities. The ruling Awami League has politicised the threat; its crackdowns on rivals undermine efforts to disrupt jihadist recruitment and attacks," the

report reads.

The international observer group said, "Bangladesh's antagonistic politics have played a part in enabling the jihadist resurgence. The state confronted groups responsible for an earlier wave of violence with some success from 2004 to 2008. Subsequently, especially since controversial January 2014 elections, bitter political divisions have reopened space for new forms of jihadist activism."

About the jailing of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a graft case, the organisation said it signalled the opening salvo of a new wave of political infighting reminiscent of January 2014 and 2015.

"Khaleda Zia's 8 February conviction and five-year sentence for corruption, whose timing suits the Awami League's electoral planning, could prohibit her from contesting the polls and widen divisions.

"At the same time, the government is making its own concessions to Islamists, notably Hefazat, whose views -- it opposes the principle of a pluralist, secular democracy; allowing women in the workplace; or appointing Hindus to

key government posts -- are arguably harder-line than those of Jel [Jamaat-e-Islami]," said the report.

It mentioned that alleged extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and indiscriminate government crackdowns on political rivals were occurring at the expense of a counter-terrorism strategy that was needed to address "growing jihadist activism and expanding links to transnational groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS."

The organisation called upon the government to forge broad social and political consensus and pressed for pursuing more accountability in law enforcement and justice system as well as stopping politically-motivated crackdowns.

"Instead of relying on indiscriminate force, including alleged extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, the government should adopt a counter-terrorism strategy anchored in reformed criminal justice and better intelligence gathering. Rather than cracking down on rivals, it should forge a broad social and political consensus on how to confront the threat," said the ICCG.

# Bangladesh's roads among worst in Asia

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Bhutan ranked 80th, with the need to develop the road infrastructure by leaps and bounds. It is followed by Vietnam and Laos, who have also not

invested much in developing road infrastructure to make travelling around the country easier.

Cambodia, ranking 93rd, has sporadic road development in both

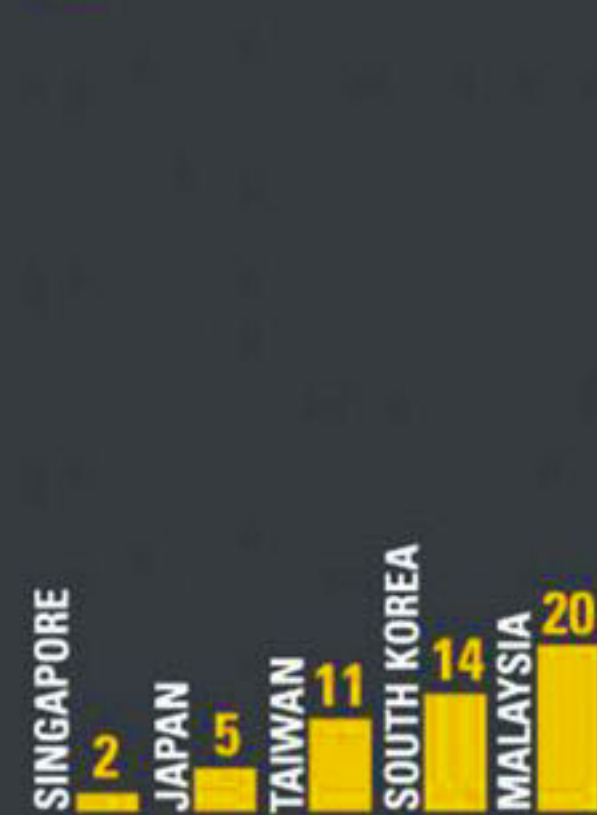
rural and urban areas. Philippines' roads are less developed compared to other East Asian countries. It is followed by Mongolia at 109 and Bangladesh at 113.

## BEST AND WORST ASIAN COUNTRIES FOR ROAD QUALITY

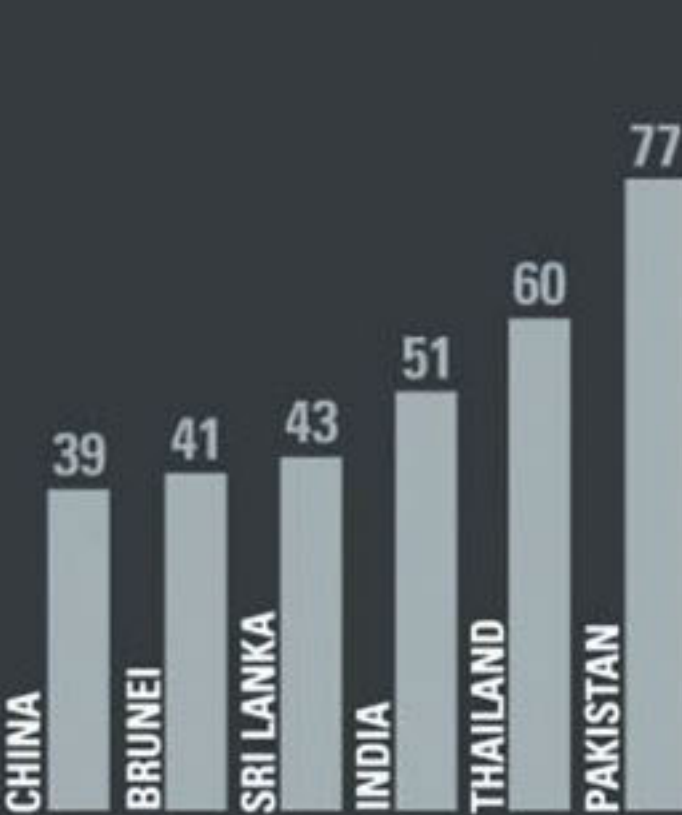
The graph shows global ranking of Asian countries according to the extensiveness and condition of road infrastructure. Singapore has the best road infrastructure, alongside Japan and Taiwan.

(Figures represent the global ranking)

### ASIAN COUNTRIES WITH BEST ROADS



### ASIAN COUNTRIES WITH GOOD ROADS



### ASIAN COUNTRIES WITH WORST ROADS



Compiled by: ANN/DataLEADS

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