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## TRADE, CONNECTIVITY IN SA \$1.03b WB project to boost national income by 16pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has launched a \$1.03 billion inter-country connectivity project in the South Asia region that will lead to an increase in national income by over 16 percent in Bangladesh.

At present, Bangladesh and Nepal are the participants of the flagship regional programme titled Accelerating Transport and Trade Connectivity in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS).

Of the \$1.03 billion allocated for the programme, Bangladesh will get \$753.45 million and Nepal \$275 million. The project was launched yesterday in Bangladesh, two days after it was unveiled in Nepal.

"This project is part of a flagship regional programme aimed at increasing the efficiency and resilience of transport and trade -- not just in Bangladesh -- but across the eastern South Asia region," said Guangzhe Chen, the WB's vice-president for infrastructure, at the event.

In the second phase of the programme, the WB will give \$100 million to Bhutan. The lender is in discussions with India to get the largest country in the region on board.

Trade and regional transport connectivity in South Asia is critical, especially for Bangladesh.

The forthcoming graduation from least-developed country status is a testament to its development success, Chen said, adding that LDC graduation will help it attract



Plants grow on a diesel electric multiple unit (DEMU) train left out in the open at Chattogram city's Pahartali railway workshop. Many of these China-made trains have broken down over the years and they cannot be repaired locally. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Summit to set up third floating LNG terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Summit Group is set to establish the country's third floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) in Maheshkhali of Cox's Bazar, a development that will increase the country's capacity to process imported liquefied natural gas by as much as 60 percent.

LNG that arrives from abroad needs to be converted back to the gaseous state to be used as fuel, power generation, heating, cooking etc. That can be done at FSRUs, which are multi-function vessels that combine LNG storage and built-in regasification systems onboard a ship or barge.

At present, there are two FSRUs that have the capacity each to regasify about 500 million cubic feet of gas (mmcf) a day. This is not enough to

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investment and spur economic activity.

However, it will also bring challenges caused by the phasing out of preferential market access, which could lead to an annual reduction in exports by as much as 11 percent. Bangladesh will therefore need to find new drivers of exports and growth.

The intra-regional trade could offer a new, and largely unexploited avenue for growth.

In South Asia, regional trade is about 5 percent of total trade. This compares poorly with East Asia, where intra-regional trade accounts for 50 percent of total trade. Each country in the region has unexploited potential for regional trade; for Bangladesh, the unexploited potential is estimated at 93 percent.

This low level of intra-regional trade reflects the high cost of connectivity.

Bangladesh and other countries in the region trade on better terms with distant economies than with their neighbours.

For example, the WB's Connecting to Thrive report found that it is less expensive for a company in Bangladesh to trade with a company in Germany than with a company next door in India.

Enhanced trade and transport connectivity can bestow significant gains for Bangladesh.

Estimates by the WB suggest that Bangladesh's exports

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## China lauds Hasina's remarks on US sanctions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina spoke not just about "the strong position of the Bangladeshi people, but also the mind of large part of the international community, especially the developing world" when she talked about the US sanctions on Rab, a spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry said yesterday.

Wang Wenbin, the spokesperson, said this at a regular briefing while replying to a question about PM's recent remarks about the US sanctions and her comment that Bangladesh should stop buying from countries that impose sanctions.

"We have noted the recent remarks by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Indeed, while turning a blind eye to its own racial discrimination, gun violence and drug proliferation problems,

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## JASMINE'S DEATH IN CUSTODY It tarnished the image of country, govt, Rab

Rab DG tells JS body

RASHIDUL HASAN

Rab Director General M Khurshid Hossain has said Jasmine's "murder" in Naogaon has tarnished the image of the country, the government and the force.

He also said "the thing was done from the (local) camp; the battalion or the headquarters knew nothing about it".

The minutes of a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry quote the Rab chief as making the remarks.

The meeting was held on April 4, and its minutes were approved at another meeting of the JS body yesterday.

According to the meeting minutes, the Rab DG said, "The organisation [Rab] will not bear the responsibility of any person, regardless of who committed the crime in this incident. The government will not take any responsibility. Appropriate legal action will be taken no matter who the culprits are."

The Daily Star has a copy of the minutes.

Sultana Jasmine, 38, a land office employee in Naogaon, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on March 24 while in Rab custody.

Rab officers told the doctors that Jasmine had suffered a fall.

Rab-5 picked her up on March 22 when she was on her way to Chandipur Union Land Office where she was an office assistant.

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## Help ensure free, fair polls in Bangladesh

6 US Congress members write to Blinken

STAR REPORT

Six members of US Congress have written to Secretary of State Antony J Blinken, asking to know what steps the US government is taking to help ensure free and fair national elections in Bangladesh.

In the letter, they expressed concern about the "deterioration of human rights" in Bangladesh as elections approach in January 2024.

"We urge the State Department and other US agencies to continue to call for accountability for serious violations committed by law enforcement agencies, including the recently sanctioned Rapid Action Battalion, a paramilitary unit of the Bangladesh Police created in 2004," the letter reads.

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## 'LETTING JAMAAT RETURN' Will be suicidal for the nation

Say freedom fighters, families of martyrs, war crimes researchers

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government's decision to allow Jamaat-e-Islami back in active politics, instead of bringing it to book for its 1971 role, will be suicidal for the ruling Awami League and above all, the country, said freedom fighters, families of the martyrs and war crimes researchers.

The government is abandoning the spirit of the Liberation War by taking such a decision just to stay in power, they alleged.

These observations came against the backdrop of Jamaat holding a rally in the capital after a decade with permission from the police. The party's previous public rally was held in February 2013 following the first verdict by a war crimes tribunal.

Jamaat's registration as a political party was declared illegal by the High Court in 2013 and the Election Commission cancelled its registration in October 2018.

Families of the Liberation War martyrs and war crimes trial campaigners have long been demanding Jamaat be tried as a party for committing crimes against humanity in 1971. Even the war crimes investigators found proof against the party and recommend that charges be pressed against it.

Law Minister Anisul Huq on many occasions had said that the government would amend the International Crimes (tribunals) Act-1973 to try

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## BNP to go for one-point movement from July

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLA

The BNP plans to go for a one-point movement from next month demanding resignation of the government and national election under a non-partisan interim administration.

The opposition party will make an announcement in this regard from a public rally in the capital next month, said party sources.

The BNP standing committee, the party's policy-making body, in a meeting on Monday prepared a draft on the one-point movement.

BNP leaders said the final decision on the timing of the announcement and the movement programmes will be made on Friday after another meeting of the standing committee.

The party on Wednesday held meetings with its partners in the anti-government movement.

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Workers unloading cattle from a truck at the capital's Gabtoli cattle market yesterday. With the Eid-ul-Azha only about two weeks away, the supply of sacrificial animals to the city's biggest permanent cattle market is growing.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## CRIMINOLOGY DEPT AT DU Dogged by irregularities

Students write to VC, get 'threatened by teachers'

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

The Criminology Department of Dhaka University is apparently plagued by so many irregularities that students wrote to the vice-chancellor and even pleaded before the High Court for remedy.

The students alleged that the teachers do not hold the required number of classes, deliberately delay publishing sessional marks, and fail to submit evaluated answer scripts on time, resulting in the delay of results publication and graduation.

They alleged that some teachers indulge in favouritism while giving grades.

Two letters, one anonymously, were sent to the VC and pro-VC but they got no solution to their problems.

Rather, their letters resulted in the criminology department forming two committees, comprised of teachers the students have complaints against, to probe who wrote the anonymous letter and why four students bypassed the department and reached out to the pro-VC.

Those who wrote one of the letters have now alleged that they have been threatened with consequences by the teachers.

The anonymous letter to Pro-VC Prof ASM Maksud Kamal in December brought a slew of allegations against the teachers. The Daily Star spoke to eight students who said that the letter spoke the truth.

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