



# News

Issue 23

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## News Highlights

### *China to expand rural road network*

A total length of 300,000 kilometres of rural road in China will be built and upgraded in 2007 to facilitate local transport, according to the communications authority. A glut of ferries and bridges will also be revamped in order to better protect the local areas from natural disasters, according to the Communications Minister Li Shenglin. He announced, "The Ministry of Communications will continue to invest heavily in extending the road notably in the west and central regions, and improve the efficiency of the fund using. About 260,000 kilometres of roads have recently been built or upgraded in rural areas, dramatically improving local transport for 30 million people living in 30,000 villages. In 2006, 8,711 bus stations were added in rural areas, offering millions of residents in about 20,000 villages the chance to ride a public bus for the first time.



### *Egypt to adopt global system for coding highways*

According to KUNA (Kuwait News Agency), Egyptian Minister of Transport, Mohamed Lotfi Mansour, announced earlier this month that his Ministry would introduce a global system for coding the highways to facilitate traffic for the first time. Under the new system, more traffic signs will be added to ensure safety for all passengers and motorists. This way, motorists will be more able to recognize the types of roads and their directions. The Ministry is to conduct a survey on all highways nationwide using geological maps to maximize the road network.

The new coding system will use two similar digits for vertical highways and will add more numbers to the digits for branching roads. The horizontal highways will be marked by three similar digits with the addition of more numbers to them for branching roads. The ring roads around big cities will be marked by four digits.

Due to the rise in the number of traffic accidents on Egypt's highways in recent years, the Ministry introduced more safety rules and tightened up penalties for irregularities.



### *The IFRTD Opinions Fair is now open!*

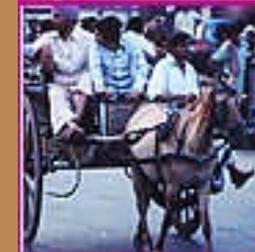
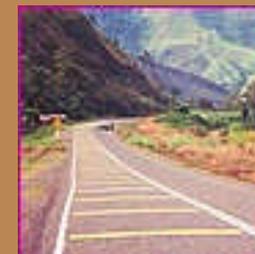
See your opinions published online and win prizes with IFRTD's new monthly writing competition.

Each month, the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) will be posting a new rural transport and development theme and, inviting you to submit a short opinion piece examining the issue from the perspective of your own working experience or studies. January's theme is 'Bicycles'. The deadline for submission is 31st January 2007.

Please click [here](#) for competition link.

### *Asia's greenhouse gas 'to treble'*

Asia's greenhouse gas emissions will treble over the next 25 years, according to a report commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The report provides detailed analysis of the link between transport and climate change in Asia. It says that its estimate of future levels of greenhouse gas could even be an optimistic assessment. Air pollution and congestion will seriously hamper the ability to move people and goods effectively, it warns.



The report, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change: Considerations for On-Road Transport in Asia, says that Asia currently has low levels of personal motorized transport, which in many cases are motorcycles. But it says that these levels are likely to increase significantly as incomes in these countries grows and the urban population becomes bigger. The report points out that China is already the world's fourth largest economy, and the number of cars and utility vehicles could increase by 15 times more than present levels to more than 190 million vehicles over the next 30 years.

In India, traffic growth is likely to increase by similar levels over the same time period, the report says. Carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles could rise 3.4 times for China and 5.8 times for India.

"Progress toward reducing the growth of greenhouse gases from the transport sector will require partnerships and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders," Bindu Lohani, director-general of the ADB's sustainable development department, wrote in the foreword to the report.

He said that addressing these problems would mean "changing existing travel behaviour patterns and modifying urban development patterns to minimize the type, length, and frequency of trips that people need to take".

Last month, the British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett urged India to help in efforts to tackle climate change. She made the call ahead of a report commissioned by the British government which said that rich nations must act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Meanwhile a conference in Indonesia has heard that while some Asian governments should be praised for toughening vehicle emissions standards, with many phasing out leaded gasoline, much work still needs to be done. "Transport is growing faster in most cities so transport emissions are a big part of the problem," Lew Fulton, a transport expert with the UN Environmental Programme, told the three-day Better Air Quality Conference 2006 in the city of Yogyakarta. "We're not only seeing increases in pollutant emissions. We're seeing huge increases in fuel consumption which is coupled tightly with (carbon dioxide) emissions," he said. "It's costing cities and countries ever increasing amounts of foreign exchange with the high oil prices that we've got."

The World Health Organization said increased pollution in Asia is estimated to cause as many as 537,000 premature deaths each year, as well as a rise in cardiopulmonary and respiratory illnesses.

Click [here](#) to link to the original BBC article.

## ***Transaid challenges the industry with "Cycle Kenya 2007"***

International development agency Transaid is searching for 30 individuals from across the road transport and logistics industry to take part in its 2007 challenge – Cycle Kenya - with the potential to raise over £90,000.

The event will take place from November 10-19, 2007, and will see the Transaid group cycle over 400 km across Kenya's stunning Rift Valley, raising money to help people in the developed world benefit from safe, affordable and efficient transport.

Chris Saunders, Chief Executive of Transaid, says: "This trip represents an opportunity of a lifetime for people to see a unique part of the world and to set themselves both a mental and physical challenge, whilst helping to benefit a charity that is making a real difference in Africa.

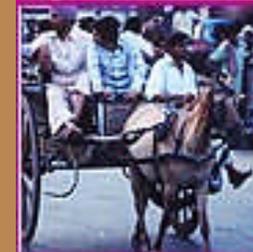
"In the UK it's hard for us to imagine living for a week without cars, trains and buses. Most people would find getting to work, buying food or getting the kids to school difficult or impossible. But this is the reality of everyday life for thousands of people in rural Africa and often where transport is available, it's expensive, inefficient or unsafe, which wastes money, time and lives," he adds.

Places on the expedition are strictly limited, and participants will be required to pay a registration fee of £299 plus commit to raising a minimum of £2,750 in sponsorship. This covers the air and ground costs, and will help secure more lives through access to safe, affordable and efficient transport.

Participants will need to train in the UK prior to leaving for Kenya in November, including specific cycle training and stamina building exercises to establish a good level of fitness. Classic Tours, the specialist organising company appointed by Transaid, will provide high specification mountain bikes in Kenya for all participants.

The launch of Transaid's Cycle Kenya Challenge follows a similar event run in 2006, which saw 12 industry representatives complete a gruelling 460 km bike ride alongside Lake Malawi, raising over £40,000.

Those interested in finding out more information about Cycle Kenya should visit [www.transaid.org](http://www.transaid.org)



## A Quiet Revolution in Bangladesh

“Stealthy Positive Deviances in Rural IMTs: A case study from Bangladesh” is a recent paper by Scott Justice describing a rural transport revolution taking place in Bangladesh that, until now, has escaped international and even national attention.

A big national innovation system has developed entirely outside government regulations and policies, where locally manufactured motorised rickshaws and *tempos* or auto-rickshaws, numbering in the tens of thousands, have silently changed the face of rural road transportation in Bangladesh.

The paper describes how the cultural and academic fascination with urban transportation comes at the expense of the much more far reaching and fascinating spread of rural transportation technologies and their impacts. An example of such a technology is the urban rickshaw's country cousin, the flatbed rickshaw (*vanghadi*). Despite numbering in the hundreds of thousands in rural Bangladesh there is still little or no data on the *vanghadi*. Another example is the now ubiquitous Chinese two-wheel tractor (power tiller), with a trailer attachment, that probably numbers close to one hundred thousand. Little or no formal studies have looked at this widespread use and tremendous impact on the lives of the rural poor that both of these technologies have had.



Yet another rural transport technology that is slowly appearing on the public radar screen, and the subject of this paper, is the stealthy rural based thoroughly unorthodox locally manufactured, no two being the same, Chinese motorised IMT, the *botbordi*. They are so named for the distinctive sound their single cylinder diesel engines make. Their stealthiness, as compared to the *vanghadi* and the power tiller, stems from the fact that no government agency or international project has ever been involved in the promotion of these IMTs and they apparently exist in contradiction to all traffic rules, regulations, and norms.

To find out more, please click this [here](#).

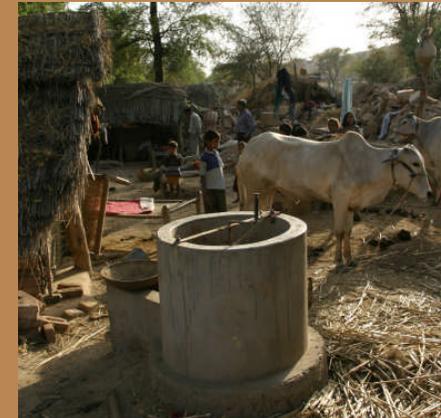
## Mauritius makes a green leap: public buses to use compressed biogas

The tiny Indian Ocean island state of Mauritius is giving us a great example of what 'energy leapfrogging' is all about. The island has only one large public transport service, namely the autobuses which carry some 200,000 people around each day.

The Mauritian State Trading Corporation (CNT), which operates 525 buses, is launching a project to convert its vehicles in such a way that they can operate on compressed biogas (CBG). Currently, only in Europe, and most notably in Sweden, France, Germany and Austria, biogas is being used on a large scale as a transport fuel. Many developing countries can benefit from the paradigm and the technologies that make this possible.

Biogas is the cleanest and most efficient of all biofuels, second-generation biofuels included and when produced from municipal or industrial waste, it can be carbon negative. For the renewable gas to be used as compressed biogas in transport - in a way similar to how compressed natural gas (CNG) is used -, it must be purified first. New technologies allow biogas to be scrubbed and cleaned in such a way that the methane content approaches natural gas standards (around 96%).

Some developing countries have succeeded in converting diesel and gasoline fleets into CNG-fleets in an impressive way: in Pakistan, 1 million CNG-vehicles hit the road in a program that lasted two years. Likewise in the Indian capital Delhi, all public transport vehicles (94,000 buses and taxis) now use CNG; in Mumbai, 154,000 public vehicles do the same, the consequence of a law aimed at reducing air pollution. Once a CNG-fleet and a gas distribution infrastructure is in place, it should be possible to feed biogas into it. And indeed, following in Europe's footsteps, India has already expressed interest in feeding biogas into the natural gas grid, and ultimately into the CNG-infrastructure to get a fleet of biogas vehicles on the road soon. For Mauritius, a switch from fossil fuels and inefficient first-generation biofuels to CBG would be a green leap forward. It would allow the country to manage its industrial, municipal and agricultural waste-streams more efficiently, and to diversify away from expensive fossil fuels, which are a heavy burden on its economy. The state's buses spend some



€460,000/US\$600,000 per month on diesel fuel - not much to Western standards, but for a tiny island state that has to import all its fossil fuels, savings on these expenditures are more than welcome.

The project requires interventions on several fronts: the CNT will convert the engines of its diesel-fleet, and coordinate the construction of filling stations that are coupled to industrial-scale biogas digesters. The biogas stations will deliver compressed biogas in large high-pressure canisters that are then picked up by the buses.

Besides converting the existing diesel-fleet, the CNT will import 80 new vehicles capable of using CBG. (In the French city of Lille, to which the Mauritian government refers as a prime example, the European BiogasMax project has been running for several years, involving the use of compressed biogas in 100 buses, in this case vehicles developed by Renault. The project extends to Stockholm, where buses have been running on CBG for years too.)

The Mauritian government expects that once the current project is successful and the infrastructure in place, all other bus operators will step in and start using biogas.

To see full article click [here](#).

## General News

### ***Mainstreaming labour-based methods in road contracting in Ghana***

In 1999, an IT Transport (ITT)/Scott Wilson (SW) joint venture was awarded a Department for International Development (DFID) contract to assist the Department of Feeder Roads (DFR) in Ghana to plan and implement a road improvement programme in nine districts on the northern side of Lake Volta. While, DFID had an open mind as to what type of contractors would be employed to execute the works, DFR and the ITT/SW Management Support Team (MST) saw this programme as an opportunity to maximise the livelihood impact of rural road construction by employing as many labour based contractors (LBCs) as possible. This was achieved using three approaches. The first involved limiting the size of contracts so that only small contractors could tender for the works. The first round of road improvements on 38 roads involved the award of 62 contracts with an average value of \$125,000. These improvements involved the construction of a fully formed road built to a six metre wide standard with appropriately sited cross drainage structures, raised low lying sections and a layer of gravel wearing course spread over sections where there was weak in situ sub-grade material.

The second pilot stage restricted the tender so that only LBC or Class C contractors could compete. The labour-based specialist on the team advised that there was a large enough group of labour-based contractors in Northern Region to form a competitive tender. So, after awareness raising, contractor meetings and training in competitive bidding, 13 lots of road improvement works were advertised in Nanumba District for competitive tender by some 26 pre-qualified labour-based contractors (LBCs) in late 2000. The outcome of this restricted bidding process was disappointing since the Northern Region LBCs failed to compete and formed a cartel. Only four of the thirteen contracts were awarded, and this only after negotiating the quoted rates to bring them to levels that were more realistic.

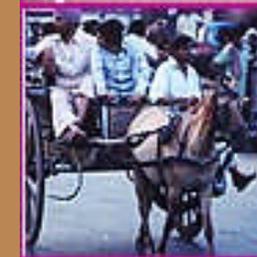


This failure of LBCs to rise to the challenge of competitive tendering obliged the DFR/MST programme to enter a third stage of widening those eligible to tender by including small equipment-based contractors (ECBs), referred to as A4 contractors as well as LBCs. Convinced of the importance of encouraging the labour-based approaches to enhance the livelihood impact of the works, the programme instituted a 10% margin of preference for LBCs to encourage them to compete for work against their small equipment based competitors. This financial preference enabled LBCs win contracts if their bids were up to 10% more than that of the lowest A4 bidder.

To read this article in full, please click [here](#).

### ***The decision making process for rural infrastructure development in Vietnam***

Research to analyze decentralization and the political landscape, including governmental and elected body structures, within which local decisions are made for rural infrastructure development was carried out in Vietnam. The role of elected officials in the planning, budgeting and procurement processes of the rural infrastructure programmes/projects was analysed. The Vietnamese decentralization experiences from a chronological point of view since the open-door policy came into effect in 1986 was reviewed. Existing regulations on decentralization in Vietnam address four aspects of the process:



- i administrative decentralization: the delegation of power from one administrative level to another;
- ii fiscal decentralization: the redistribution of intergovernmental fiscal responsibilities;
- iii political decentralization: the division of decision making and planning power; and
- iv investment decentralization: the authority of governments at central and local levels to decide on investment projects.

The research found planning and budgeting activities remain very much a “top-down” affair in most provinces. Planning and budgeting activities are viewed as a process of implementing not as a means of guiding and controlling private development/investment for the public interest.



There appears to be little in the way of systematic input from citizens or indeed from lower levels of the local government system (communes have little say in the district planning process, districts have little say in the provincial planning process). In addition, there are hardly any regular mechanisms in place or tools available for ensuring a “bottom-up” approach to planning and budgeting. With regard to procurement, prior to 1994 and the resumption of overseas development aid (ODA), there was no comprehensive open competitive bidding regulation. The establishment of modern procurement framework for public expenditure in Vietnam, including procurement plans, procurement methods, procurement procedures, bid evaluation based on the principles of competitive bidding, began with the first procurement review in 1994 and promulgation in 1996 of open competitive bidding as a key market mechanism for public expenditure. Despite some recent improvements, procurement procedures still fall short of best international practices.

Monitoring of Vietnam’s public investment programmes shows that good practices reduce costs and produce timely results, while poor practices

lead to waste and delays and are often the cause for allegations of corruption and government inefficiency.

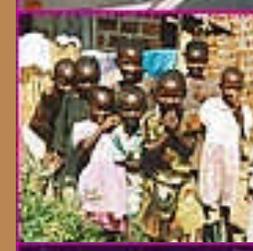
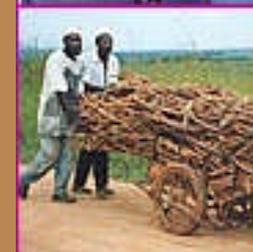
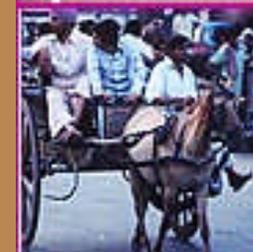
To read this article in full please click [here](#).

### ***The impact of constructing rural roads on livelihoods in one of the poorest provinces of Lao PDR***

In 2003, ILO ASIST-AP began collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to assist the Government of Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (PDR) develop capacity for labour-based rural road construction under the ADB supported Shifting Cultivation Stabilization Pilot Project (SCSPP) in Houaphan Province. As part of this project, the ADB financed the construction of two access roads in the province. The works on both these roads were classified as new construction and were completed in July 2004. The road construction was just one component of the ADB project, which was designed to be an integrated rural livelihoods development project. The project had five interrelated components:

- i capacity building of relevant Government departments;
- ii project management;
- iii diversified sedentary farming development;
- iv village based development, and
- v rural infrastructure development.

The project objective was to reduce poverty, increase food production, reduce production and consumption of opium and preserve natural resources. The SCSPP targeted the upland farmers who still practice slash and burn agriculture despite the growing population and resulting pressure on existing fallow land. These communities represent some of the poorest and most isolated in the country. Existing roads, trails and tracks were seldom accessible throughout the year and villages were regularly isolated during the wet season when these access roads became impassable due to flooding and landslides. This isolation led to unremitting poverty amongst the upland communities. The poor households in the villages targeted by the ADB project were characterised by isolation, vulnerability to fluctuations in income that often occur from economic shocks, sickness and natural disaster and poor access to services and facilities such as health care, markets and schools. Improving access to transport and greater mobility opportunities can help address some of these issues. Rural roads improve access to services such as schools, health care, markets and credit and



other social benefits. Improved access also enhances people's economic and social lives by enabling them to visit other family members and friends located further away more easily and frequently. Other benefits from rural roads accrue from reduced travel and transport costs and employment created during construction.

To read more on rural road development in the region, please click [here](#).

### **2006 IEEE Conference on Electric and Hybrid Vehicles**

The "IEEE conference on Electric and Hybrid Vehicles", organized by PES/IAS Chapter of the Bombay Section was held in Pune, India's automobile industry hub, between 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December 2006. The conference was aimed at providing a platform for manufacturers, research workers, academics and vehicle users to discuss various issues related to Electric Vehicles, Hybrid Vehicles and Fuel Cell Vehicles.

The ever increasing price of oil and the serious problems of environmental pollution have lead to the development of non-polluting electric and hybrid electric vehicles during last two decades. The global automobile industry will undergo a transition, from present IC-engine vehicle technology to Electric Vehicle (EV) technology, to Hybrid Vehicle (HEV) technology and then to Fuel Cell Vehicle (FCV) technology, using hydrogen as the main source of energy.

Please click [here](#) for more detail on the event.

### ***New gTKP web portal to be launched in early 2007***

The gTKP team is proud to announce that an enhanced and more user-friendly website will be launched over the coming months. The new portal will improve user access to transport information and will allow users to submit and comment on different transport resources, news, events and organisations.

The site will also feature three focus areas, which will be run by individual theme champions. The theme champions will run blogs and web discussion groups relevant to the areas, which are:

- Rural Transport
- Governance
- Environment, Health and Road Safety

Users will be able to sign up to these discussion groups, as well as post their own profiles on the site. More news to follow shortly....

