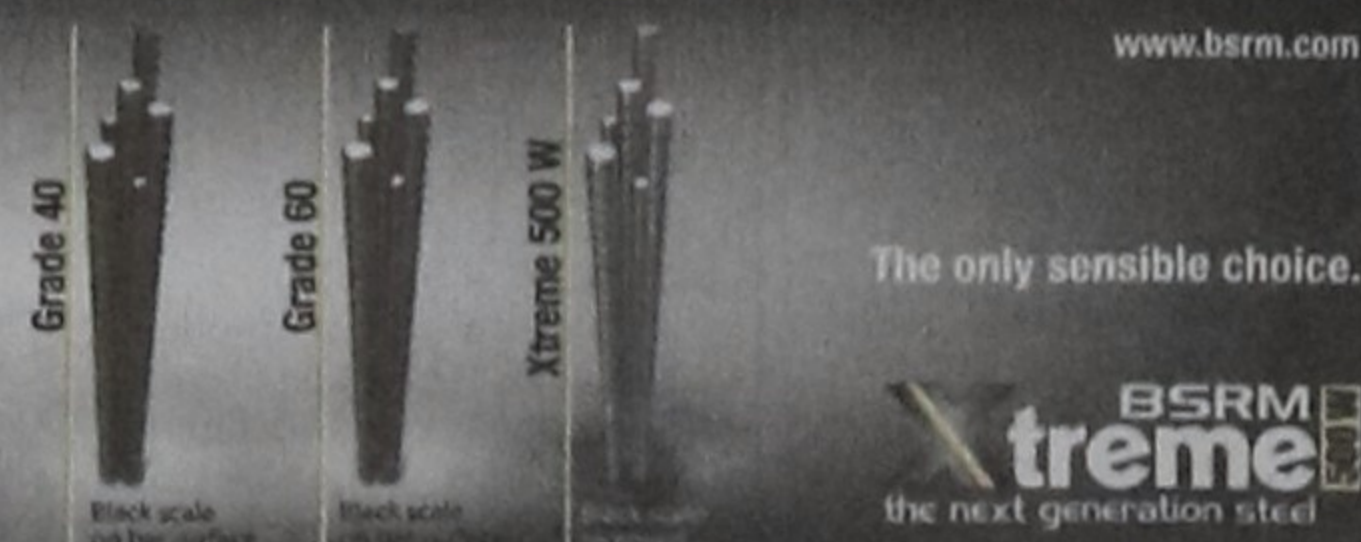


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Dhaka-Ctg road projects in limbo

Loopholes in tender process, lack of coordination hold back 2 crucial initiatives

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Two projects aiming to improve communications between Dhaka and Chittagong, the most vital road link for the country's economic growth, get entangled in loopholes in floating tenders and lack of coordination among the authorities concerned.

The projects -- upgrading the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway into a four-lane road and constructing a second Dhaka-Chittagong highway -- were initiated four years ago. But no headway could be made although the busiest yet narrow highway continues causing human casualties and economic loss every year.

The four-lane project aimed at upgrading the existing highway has been cancelled twice due to loopholes in the tender process and lack of coordination between the communications ministry and the Roads and Highway Department (RHD).

Although the present government took a fresh move for the four-lane project and floated a pre-qualification tender on June 11, the project file of the second highway is gathering dust for three years.

No-one at the two offices can say anything

about this project.

Experts say increasing number of traffic on the highway would cause more accidents, leaving more casualties as implementation of the projects may take years.

"The average daily traffic on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway is now 15,277 vehicles, while it was 13,720 last year," AKM Fazlul Karim, an executive engineer of the RHD database division told The Daily Star.

The second highway project is more or less buried as the government despite floating an international tender in 2006 failed to find a firm. Only one company, Malaysia-based construction firm Azimat Consortium, bid for it.

But the government as per rules cannot select a firm that alone bid for such projects.

RHD Executive Engineer Md Sabbir Hasan Khan is hopeful about the four-lane project. "The last date for submission of bid is August 11. We hope a number of qualified firms will come forward from which we can select one," he told The Daily Star.

The four-lane dual carriageway spanning 215 kilometres from Dhaka to Chittagong will be constructed on a build, own, operate and

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

People fish on the sidewalk around Dhanmondi Lake in the capital yesterday as heavy rain over the last few days left the lake overflowing.

Anwar denies 1/11 role

Tells The Daily Star that he backed the commitment to hold free, fair polls at earliest

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Former British high commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury yesterday denied any role in the events of 1/11, but said his government supported the clear commitment of the caretaker government to hold a free, fair and safe election.



what we always supported is something we've said for 40 years for Bangladesh to become a democratic, stable and prosperous country," Choudhury said in an interview with The Daily Star at the British High Commission.

Now Director of International Institutions at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he said he was very sad to hear the allegation that he had a role behind 1/11 in Bangladesh. Terming it unfortunate and regrettable, he said, "It is simply not true."

He said, "What was happening in Bangladesh was the decisions of Bangladeshi people. It is because of the internal mechanism and politics of Bangladesh. Our position has

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Militancy is a reality

People are not safe, says Tuku

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Home Affairs Shamsul Haque Tuku yesterday said people are not safe in the country now, no matter if they are on foot or in a car.

"We all are under the watch of militants; it is the reality," the state minister said while inaugurating Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station in the city.

Tuku called on the people to stand united with the law enforcers to root out militancy from the country.

He also said the government would take every measure to strengthen the hands

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Digital database of criminals in 3-4 yrs

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is set to prepare a digital database of criminals, which will be completed in three to four years.

Names and personal details of every single convict, accused and suspect in all criminal cases filed since January, 2000 till date will be in the database to be created under a project, officials in the CID said.

All cases and more than 100 different types of forms used in all 70 district and metropolitan courts will be digitised under the project scheduled to start very soon. Dry runs of the data entry process have already begun.

CID officials said the database will be "politically unbiased". It will be evidence based and not like the conventional list of criminals, which is either prepared afresh or updated

whenever a government changes and which is largely used for harassing political rivals.

Bangladesh police have already bought a software titled Criminal Data Management System (CDMS) under the project.

Under the Tk 5 crore project, the CID has already trained 300 people to make the move successful. CID officials also said more people would be trained, as more manpower will be needed for the project.

"Once the database is completed, all crime records and history of a criminal will be available with the press of a button," said a CID official seeking anonymity.

The official also said the automation will be used to monitor crime and criminals. It will also provide intelligence support to investigators.

Under the project the CID will appoint

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Mother, 2 kids crushed under train wheels

Locals suspect suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A mother and her two baby girls were crushed to death by an express train at Bhangura in Pabna yesterday afternoon.

Locals said Kulsum Begum, 35, wife of Pacha pramanik of village Samajgram in Nimaichara union, committed suicide.

Of the children, one was two years old and the other three years.

Police and the locals said Kulsum with her two children threw herself to the rail line as Dhaka-bound Chitra Express was crossing the Boral rail station at about 5:00pm.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

New pay scale after Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new pay scale may be implemented after the Eid-ul-Fitr so that prices of essentials do not go up during the month of Ramadan.

Finance ministry sources said the pay scale has been almost finalised but its implementation has been deferred following high-level directive.

Talking to reporters at his Secretariat office yesterday after a meeting with the visiting World Bank Vice President Isabel Guerrero, Finance Minister AMA Muhith however did not give any specific time for cabinet approval of the payscale.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

WB reluctant to fund road sector for graft

Muhith weighs in with counter argument

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) is unwilling to provide funds for road sector due to corruption in the sector although it is among the priority areas, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

"I have told the WB that it is linked to corruption in the road sector. That does not mean the WB has stolen (funds) but it gave approval to projects in the sector," Muhith told journalists following a meeting with WB Vice President Isabel Guerrero at his office.

The finance minister also said despite approving different road sector projects, they

(WB) later diverted the funds elsewhere. "We have told them that we are trying to curb corruption. We requested them to review the issue of financing road sector projects."

Replying to a question Muhith said, "If we go for clearing this kind of infestation (corruption) now, we cannot do other work. Our first task is delivering service to people."

The minister mentioned that the WB is going to increase its assistance to Bangladesh, and is likely to provide around three billion dollars in the next three years -- one billion dollars a year. The country now gets \$ 600-700

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Army officer's car hijacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals hijacked a car from an army officer in the city's Mirpur area early yesterday.

Police said a gang of three muggers in a car halted Major Saiful Haque Ahmed's car near Purabi Super Market in Mirpur-11 while he was going to Mirpur-10 from Defence Services Command and Staff College at Mirpur Cantonment at about 4:00am for refueling his vehicle.

Major Ahmed was in civil outfit during the incident, police said.

The snatchers got down

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Australia foils plot to storm military base

Four Australians of Somali or Lebanese descent detained

AFP, Melbourne

Australian police said yesterday they had arrested four people after foiling a Somali-linked suicide plot to storm a military base in what would have been the country's worst extremist attack.

About 400 police swooped on homes around Melbourne, netting four Australian men of Somali and Lebanese descent who were allegedly planning to attack a Sydney army barracks

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Businessman abducted in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A band of armed miscreants kidnapped a businessman in Bandarban yesterday noon.

Faruque Ahmed, 58, has been abducted from his fishery at Saingya village under Roangchari upazila, a place few meters away from the town where armed groups allegedly show up even in broad daylight.

Any organisation or group is yet to claim responsibility of the kidnapping, but an unknown voice demanded

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Online Poll

Do you support a parliamentary body's decision to investigate the violence involving army personnel and students on the Dhaka university campus during last caretaker government rule in August 2007?

Yes (56.2%)
No (41.1%)
No Comments (2.7%)

Total votes: 1193

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam that the tenure of the parliament should be reduced?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

August 5

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:20	5:55
Zohr	1:45	2:15
Asr	6:00	6:15
Maghrib	7:47	7:50
Esha	9:15	9:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Zia murals gone from BNS

Khaleda's name struck off foundation stone of Dinajpur medical

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At the directive of National Sports Council authorities, three mosaic portraits of late president Ziaur Rahman were removed from the Bangabandhu National Stadium and destroyed early yesterday.

Meanwhile, unknown criminals Monday evening vandalised the foundation stone of the "under-construction" main building of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital. Former prime minister Khaleda Zia had laid the stone while inaugurating the building on October 10, 2006.

Over telephone administrator of Bangabandhu National Stadium Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star that the mosaics were removed as per the directive of the council. He refused to make any further comments.

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The mosaic portrait of late president Ziaur Rahman used to be on the right of the giant torch. The file photo, inset, shows the two leaders' mosaics. The vandalised foundation stone, left, at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital building.

PHOTO: STAR

PIRATES' FIREFIGHT 5 bodies floating in canals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Five bodies were found floating in the canals of Sundarbans yesterday following Sunday's fierce gunfight between two pirate groups.

Of the deceased, four were identified as Masum, 40, and Khalil, 38, of Sharankhola upazila, Bachchu, 35, and Faruque, 37, of Mongla upazila in Bagerhat.

The body of a man aged over 50 and wearing uniform of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) could not be identified yet.

Local sources said the bodies were not recovered till 5:30pm yesterday for an unknown reason although those corpses were seen at Dudmukhi, Lathimara and

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