



'FOOLHARDY' TIPAI DAM

Why the hydropower project is a threat for both Bangladesh and India

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ZIA'S 12TH

The grand master wins the national chess title for the 12th time

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POPE'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The head of Roman Catholic Church calls for peace in conflict-torn world

PAGE 7

Rail projects derail

28 major schemes involving Tk 14,000cr remain stagnant for lack of funds

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

As previous governments failed to invest adequately in railway causing projects to stumble, this government took up 28 new projects with an estimated cost of Tk 14,000 but it too is holding on to the money tight.

The negligence over the decades has left the sector with a very poor capacity to serve the people. The slow or no release of funds has been a key factor in the stagnation of the sector while red tape has put many projects on hold.

Less than a half of the Tk 14,000 crore this government wants to spend in the projects is supposed to be met by taking credit from India,

and the rest from Japan with the government filling the deficit.

Rail officials were initially excited believing that finally the sector would see some much-needed money coming in. But that was not to be.

Officials, tired of waiting, say that even though the government has finally woken up to the urgent need to revive the sector, the pace of fund release remains as slow as ever.

This is evident in the fact that the present government is releasing only Tk 480 crore this year for ongoing projects against a demand for Tk 3,549 crore.

Over the last two decades, govern-

ments chalked out 10 projects worth Tk 3,700 crore and released a measly Tk 1,345 crore mostly from donors' funds. This severe lack of funding has hampered work, railway officials say.

Previous governments have also shelved vital proposals to buy locomotives, coaches, wagons, rehabilitation of tracks and improve the signal systems. As a result, Bangladesh Railway operates with obsolete locomotives and wagons and worn out tracks causing frequent derailments.

Railway has lost passenger and freight-carrying capacity as the

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People from all walks of life throng the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to pay their last tribute to Awami League veteran and Liberation War organiser Abdur Razzak.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

CJ, minister differ on use of ADR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday differed on the government's plan to amend the relevant laws for disposal of both criminal and civil cases through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

ADR system can be effective in disposing of family-related cases but not criminal cases, the chief justice said as the

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FENCHUGANJ

Bapex starts extracting gas from new well

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) yesterday experimentally started extracting gas from a newly dug well at Sylhet's Fenchuganj Gas Field, reports private TV

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Poor show in communications

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

If a ministry stands out for its poor performance in the last three years, the communications ministry is up there on the chart.

Over the last three years, it planned a plethora of ambitious projects, none of which has come through. Metro Rail, elevated expressway, Padma Bridge, upgrading Dhaka-Chittagong highway are all pointers to what was planned and what was, ironically, not to be.

When Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appointed Syed Abul Hossain as communications minister three years ago, many questioned his ability to do the job on the ground of his being more a businessman than a politician. Their fears came true when the communications ministry, three years on, emerged as a failed ministry of the Awami League-led grand alliance government.

The communications ministry under Syed Abul Hossain undertook 167 projects at an estimated cost of Tk 60,000 crore but demonstrated abysmal performance in implementing the projects.

The ministry's negligence left half the country's 21,000km roads and highways in appalling conditions. An already ailing Bangladesh Railway continued to lose tracks, stations, locomotives and trains owing to a lack of initiative and funds.

With projects aimed at improving the capital's perennial traffic congestion now stalled, it now appears that the situation will deteriorate in the days ahead.

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3 YEARS OF GOVERNMENT

• **167 projects undertaken with little or no progress**

• **Railway continues its downhill trend**

• **Roads are left in appalling condition**

Metro Rail, elevated expressway, Padma Bridge, Dhaka-Chittagong highway upgrade remain unimplemented

Disappointing progress in RHD and BBA projects

Primary school final exam results today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of primary and Ebtedai (madrasa) terminal examinations 2011, the largest public examinations for class-V students of general and madrasa education in the country, will be published

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7pc growth achievable

Says BB governor

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman yesterday said the current fiscal year's targeted 7 percent economic growth would be achieved as he finds the macroeconomic indicators positive.

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Last respects paid to Razzak Burial today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tens of thousands of people flocked to the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday to bid farewell to Abdur Razzak, one of the organisers of the Liberation War, hours after his body was

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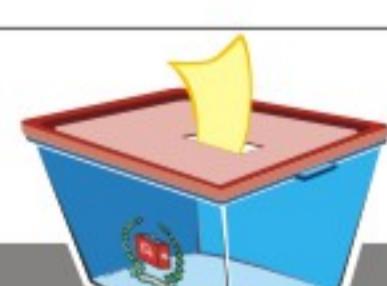
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61st Branch of Bank Asia Limited opens at Barisal, the birthplace of Sher-e-Bangla.

FROM TODAY

COMILLA CITY ELECTION 2012



Big promises beyond candidates' capacity

Most candidates have criminal records

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN, from Comilla

With the Comilla City Corporation polls just nine days away, mayoral and councilor candidates are making big promises to woo voters.

In what many say is a farce, some of the candidates are making commitments even to solve the city's power and gas

crises and improve law and order although none of those are within the jurisdiction of a city mayor.

"This [making such pledges] is not fair. They are just confusing the people. City corporations have nothing to do with the power and gas crises and the law and order," says Dilnasheen Mohsen, former

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PRESIDENT'S TALKS
Workers Party to seek law on EC formation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers Party of Bangladesh today will propose enacting a law under which a committee will be formed to search for individuals "eligible and accepted to all" to constitute a new Election Commission.

The left party, also a component of Awami League-led ruling coalition, will place the proposal during talks with President Zillur Rahman at his official residence Bangabhaban, party sources said.

Taking part in the dialogue later the same day, Anwar Hossain Manju-led Jatiya Party will suggest appointing a chief election commissioner and commissioners on the prime minister's advice, said a party source.

Initiated by the president, the second round of

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