



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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20 PAGES PLUS SHOUT PRICE : Tk 12.00



REGD. NO. DA 781 | VOL. XXIII No. 214 | BHADRA 7, 1420 BS | SHAWAL 14, 1434 HIJRI

WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

SHOUT

NEW BANKING LAW

BB can't appoint independent directors to private banks

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MYSTICAL INDEED

Former pope Benedict said God had told him to resign

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Priority high, progress slow

Only 30pc work of four-lane Dhaka-Ctg highway project done in seven years

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In its election manifesto, the ruling Awami League had attached high priority to upgrading the Dhaka-Chittagong highway into four lanes. Four and a half years down the line, the party has claimed the project to be "successful" on the city billboards grabbed overnight.

But in reality, the project has fallen flat on its face, with only 30 percent work done in the last seven years. It is now anybody's guess as to when the project will be finished.

A study by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry in June this year found that an unprecedented delay of four years just to appoint a contractor is mainly responsible for the slow progress.

But there are many other reasons that have led to the present state of the project, considered to be vital in improving road links between the capital and the port city.

If the government wants to complete upgrading the highway in line with the second revised schedule, the 70 percent work left to be done has to be finished within one and a half years.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader said the major challenge for the project had been acquiring land for widening the highway. Now that the problem is no more there, he believes the work will now progress swiftly.

He also held out the assurance that there was no problem with funds.

Communications Secretary MAN Siddique yesterday told The Daily Star that the authorities hoped the work could be completed within the stipulated time.

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This photo taken about six months ago shows a culvert being built at Sitakunda in Chittagong as part of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway dual-carriageway project. The construction work has not progressed much there since.

PHOTO: FILE

PMO bins Star report, editorial

The Daily Star received at 7:30 pm last Tuesday a rejoinder signed by Abul Kalam Azad, the press secretary to the prime minister, on two items published by this paper, a news item "PM on Star: Our comments", and an editorial, "PM's emphatic 'no', a rude jolt", both published on Monday, 19 August 2013.

The covering letter of the press secretary says, "We found the report and the editorial as imaginary and baseless. So we are sending herewith our response to your distortion of facts."

Below we publish the unedited full text of the "PMO's response". The readers will note that though the response refers to our news item, "PM on Star: our response", it does not cite a single instance of distortion in our reports, in spite of our urging the PMO to do so.

The "PMO's response", on the other hand, deals entirely with our editorial and terms it a "glaring example of distortion of truth".

We will publish our response to the above rejoinder tomorrow, Friday, 23 August 2013.

However, we would like to point that according to journalistic practice a "rejoinder" is meant for a particular paper for a specific published item. It usually is not a matter for any other news media.

"PMO'S RESPONSE"

Our attention has been drawn to the news item published in your daily on August 20, 2013 titled "PM on Star: Our comments" by the Editor of the daily and one of its today's editorials titled "PM's emphatic 'no', a rude jolt".

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JU VC kept confined to office

A group of teachers presses for his resignation

JU CORRESPONDENT

Around 50 Jahangirnagar University teachers have kept their Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain confined to his office since 11:00am yesterday demanding his resignation or removal.

The teachers, under the Sadharon Shikkhak Forum banner, did not let the VC out as of filing of this report at 1:30am today.

Yesterday, the teachers were on the second day of their three-day strike. They staged a sit in in front of the VC's office since 5:00am. They also got involved in altercations with the VC, pro-VC, treasurer and proctor.

PHOTO ON PAGE 4

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NEWS ANALYSIS

LOCAL GOVT, JS POLLS

Justification not justified

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has continuously been portraying her government's success in holding free and fair polls to local government bodies and by-elections to some parliamentary constituencies as a major justification for holding the next general election under her administration.

But her justification is not valid in the perspective of the scale of elections to local government bodies and the by-polls to parliamentary constituencies.

As a change in state power was not involved in the local elections, political parties were not desperate about winning those polls, which were staggered and held over years, allowing the EC adequate scope to focus on them.

Therefore, the way the success was achieved cannot be compared with the way a general election is held. Local and

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EGYPTIAN EMBASSY

'Shibir' activist held for threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives arrested a suspected activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir in the city's Farmgate yesterday for threatening to blow up the Egyptian embassy in Dhaka.



Shaukat Afsar

A team of Detective Branch of police (north) rounded up 18-year-old Shaukat Afsar around 12:30pm when he was entering the Focus Coaching Centre, said Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam of the DB at a press briefing at the DMP media centre on Minto Road.

He studied at the coaching centre for taking university admission tests. During primary interrogation, Shaukat admitted to be a Shibir activist, added Monirul.

Introducing himself as a supporter of

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday tries to console a victim of the August 21, 2004, grenade attack on an Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue. She also handed the victims financial aid at her party office nearby. PHOTO: BSS

Attackers can return

AUGUST 21 PM asks all to stay alert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon all to remain alert against the "BNP-Jamaat-Hefajat", saying these elements would resort to terrorism, militancy and killings if they came to power.

"Those who can attack a political party's rally in broad daylight aiming at eliminating opponents will turn

Bangladesh into a den of militants and terrorists and will consequently destroy the country.

"So you [people] have to remain cautious about them," she said.

Hasina, president of the Awami League, was addressing a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue to mark the ninth anniversary of the gruesome grenade attack on an AL rally on August 21, 2004.

Altogether 24 leaders and workers of AL, including late president Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed and more than 300 others were injured on the day.

Many of the injured were maimed for life. Hasina, a prime target of the attack, narrowly escaped the blood-bath.

Yesterday, family members of the

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Tarique's name included with political motive

Fakhrul on Aug 21 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the government had included the name of Tarique Rahman in the August 21 grenade attack cases with a political motive.

"The government changed charge sheets and investigation officers of the cases several times to include Tarique's name,"

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'Hundreds' killed in Syria gas attack

Opposition accuses govt of killing 1,300 near Damascus; govt denies use of chemical arms

REUTERS, Beirut/Amman

Syria's opposition accused President Bashar al-Assad's forces of gassing many hundreds of people - by one report as many as 1,300 yesterday in what would, if confirmed, be the world's worst chemical weapons attack in decades.

Western and regional countries called for UN chemical weapons investigators - who arrived in Damascus just three days ago - to be urgently dispatched to the scene of one of the deadliest incidents of the two-year-old

civil war.

Images, including some taken by freelance photographers and supplied to Reuters, showed scores of bodies including of small children, laid out on the floor of a clinic with no visible signs of injuries.

Reuters was not independently able to verify the cause of their death. The Syrian government denied that it had used chemical arms.

George Sabra, one of the leading opponents of Assad, said the death toll was 1,300

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Labour leader murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals stabbed to death a Sramik League leader in the capital's Malibagh area yesterday morning.

Moktar Hossain, 40, was the joint general secretary of Ward No 23 of the Dhaka city unit of Sramik League, workers' wing of Awami League.

A group of four to five youths swooped on Moktar with sharp weapons at a tea

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Family members of Moktar Hossain, right, cry their eyes out after the Sramik League leader was stabbed to death by criminals at Malibagh yesterday.

