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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

LIFE style

ENEMY MORALE DETERIORATING

Major Khaled Musharrof's confidential letter dispatched to Colonel Osmani in August 1971

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TED CRUZ TWEETS

The high-profile Republican senator announces 2016 US presidential bid

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Consultant set to become builder

Govt bending rules in favour of the company for construction of Karnaphuli tunnel

SHARIEF KHAN

In complete violation of procurement rules, the government is going to award the construction of the Karnaphuli tunnel to the consulting firm of the project.

Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) in December, identifying it as the builder of the tunnel, which is likely to revolutionise communications in the Chittagong region.

Under the Public Procurement Rules (PPR), if a company is hired as consultant for preparation or implementation of a project, it cannot supply goods or perform physical works resulting from its own consultation services.

Though the CCCC is the consultant for the nine-kilometre-long tunnel project, the BBA went for the construction deal with it bypassing the PPR, allegedly under the influence of a strong political lobby.

The BBA had earlier awarded the same company and its partners with a Tk 13 crore feasibility study for the tunnel in April 2011. In its feasibility report, the CCCC sug-

gested that the project would cost \$674 million and recommended building it at Patenga after reviewing three sites. The cost, however, has been hiked to \$720 million in the project proposal.

As per the study, the tunnel would significantly facilitate transit traffic and relieve the existing bridges of traffic pressure. It would also promote regional economic growth and enhance joint development of the regional economy.

"It will provide convenient transport conditions for the planned Deep-Sea Port in south Bangladesh, thus exerting a significant role in promoting development of the transportation industry in Bangladesh and improving the state highway network," says the study.

According to the government project proposal, the dual two-lane tunnel, first of its kind in Bangladesh, will improve the Dhaka-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway network.

It can later be linked to the planned Asian Highway Network, enabling road connections with Myanmar and India.

The tunnel would also attract downtown

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KARNAPHULI TUNNEL

KEY FEATURES

Tunnel with link road length	Recommended location	Tunnel features	Design speed
9 km	PATENGA	DUAL 2 LANES	80 km/h
Original project cost	Annual operation cost	Annual maintenance cost	
\$74.23m per km	Tk 17 crore	\$1.8m	
Construction to end	Contribution to GDP	Land acquisition	
2018-19	0.166%	29 hectare (2487 persons to be affected)	

Govt to set up two medical universities in Ctg, Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more medical universities would be established in Rajshahi and Chittagong to create more specialist doctors and nurses.

A cabinet meeting, held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair yesterday, approved in principle the drafts of "Chittagong Medical University Act, 2015" and "Rajshahi Medical University Act, 2015".

Briefing the press about the meeting afterwards, Cabinet Secretary M. Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said the universities would be established according to the National Health Council's decision of last year.

They would offer post-graduate-level studies and bachelor's degrees in nursing, he added.

All medical colleges in Chittagong and Rajshahi, including Chittagong Medical College and Rajshahi Medical College,

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CITY CORPORATION ELECTIONS 2015

North smooth, South not

Discord within AL over backing Khokon in DSCC

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

In Dhaka North City Corporation, things look settled for businessman Anisul Huq as the Awami League-backed mayor candidate. But in Dhaka South, hurdles remain for Sayeed Khokon as some ministers and AL leaders are opposing Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's decision to endorse him.

At the cabinet meeting yesterday, Food Minister Qamrul Islam and Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan expressed their reservations about Khokon, saying they had doubts whether the city AL leaders and activists would join Khokon's campaign, cabinet sources said.

Shajahan said the party should throw its weight behind someone with unquestionable dedication and huge popularity.

At least two ministers, however, favoured Khokon for his "clean image," the sources added.

Hasina, who chaired the meeting, kept mum all the while. She then asked her cabinet colleagues to make all-out preparations to campaign for the party-sponsored candidates.

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Though undecided on polls, party searching for trusted ones

RASHIDUL HASAN and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

The BNP is searching for competent and loyal candidates for backing in the upcoming elections to the Dhaka and Chittagong city corporations.

The party, however, is yet to announce whether it will endorse any candidates in the three city polls.

"Though the party is yet to make any announcement on backing candidates in city polls, its main focus now is to find heavyweight and trusted ones. That is why madam [Khaleda Zia] is making delay in endorsing candidates," said a BNP leader, who has been staying at Khaleda's Gulshan office since January 3.

"Since the chief is convinced that the party should back candidates in the city polls, our main target is to ensure victory for the party-backed ones to prove that the government has no popularity. It will help intensify our ongoing anti-government movement," the BNP leader told The Daily Star.

A member of the BNP standing committee last night told this

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Can Khaleda become game changer?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Khaleda Zia is in the spotlight now! It largely depends on her whether or not the upcoming elections to three city corporations will be participatory and competitive. Whether her archrival Sheikh Hasina's Awami League will get a walkover in the city polls also depends on her.

If Khaleda decides to let her party men join the battle of ballots, it will offer the people of Dhaka an opportunity to choose their representatives in a festive mood after more than 20 years as they had last done in 1994.

This will also bring back memories of those times when Khaleda and Hasina, then premier and opposition leader respectively, had engaged in hectic electioneering for their party-backed mayoral candidates in the polls to four city corporations, including the one in the capital.

In that prestigious battle, AL-backed

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Passing of a great leader

Lee Kuan Yew, architect of modern Singapore, dies at 91

REUTERS, Singapore

Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, died yesterday aged 91, triggering a flood of tributes to the man who oversaw the tiny city-state's rapid rise from a British colonial backwater to a global trade and financial centre.

US President Barack Obama described Lee, who ruled Singapore for three decades, as "a true giant of history"

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MG!

"Many people in my area say they will commit suicide if I don't run in the city polls."

DHAKA-7 MP **HAZI SELIM**

NBR member shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals shot an NBR official in the capital's Banani yesterday evening.

Injured Jahangir Hossain, a member of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), was hit by a bullet in his waist and was undergoing treatment at United Hospital.

Bhuiyan Mahbub Hasan, officer-in-charge of Banani

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Throughout the day, they care for their near and dear ones grappling with severe burns. At night, they are back to the ground floor of the burn unit at Dhaka Medical College Hospital to rest and get some sleep. The photo was taken early Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Restrictions in CHT to go

Only foreign researchers have to take home ministry permission for visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is withdrawing the wholesale restrictions banning foreign nationals and Bangladeshi citizens from meeting or talking unsupervised with indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

However, foreign researchers will still need to seek the home ministry's permission to visit the region.

The decision came at a meeting at the home ministry on Sunday. The meeting, chaired by State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Kamal, was attended by high officials of different ministries and chiefs of different law enforcement agencies.

In a circular issued in January, the home ministry said any Bangladeshi or foreign individual or organisation can meet or talk with indigenous people in the CHT only in the presence of a magistrate or security personnel.

"We have withdrawn the circular that was issued recently. From now on, the foreign tourists will be able to visit the CHT districts just like before by seeking permission from the district administration," Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star.

The restriction on Bangladeshi citizens has also been lifted, the minister said.

"Only the foreign researchers will have to take prior permission from the ministry and they have to apply at least

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