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Gathering dust for years

36 projects worth over Tk 20,000cr remain halted; planning ministry to decide fate today

HASAN JAHID TUSHER and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Back in July 2006, the Ministry of Shipping took up a Tk 58 crore project to dredge the outer channel of the Pashur river. It was scheduled to be completed by June 2011.

Bids were invited five times, but no one submitted any documents. When the tender was called for the sixth time in 2008, a French company submitted its proposal. But since then, there has been no progress though Tk 15 crore had been allocated for the project from the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

The project remained stalled for over 10 years, but the government on May 11 this year took up another project involving Tk 166.50 crore to dredge the outer bar of the Pashur channel. Last month, the cost of this project had been set at Tk 179 crore.

This is not the sole instance of a project getting stuck for years. Currently, there are 36 such projects involving over Tk 20,000 crore that have either remained stalled or have seen slow progress.

Non-confirmation of finance, delay in preparation and approval of projects, difficulty in land acquisition and complexities in appointing and selecting bidders were the main reasons behind this stagnant situation of the projects, according to a planning ministry report.

The ministry decided to cancel these projects but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting in May this year directed the planning minister to review the projects for

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A wounded Syrian child looks on from inside a vehicle following a reported airstrike on Kafr Batna in the rebel-held Eastern Ghouta area on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus. The photo was taken on Friday. Story on page 8.

PHOTO: AFP

SMART NID CARD PM to open distribution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the long-awaited smart national identity cards today at the Osmani Memorial Hall.

The ceremony will begin at 10:30am, said Asaduzzaman Arzu, director (public relations) of the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat.

After inauguration, smart NID cards would be delivered to President Abdul Hamid, the prime minister and members of national cricket team, Arzu told The Daily Star last night.

A day later, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad will start distribution of the cards at a village of Phulbari upazila in Kurigram.

Simultaneously, the distribution of the cards will start in the two city corporation areas of the capital on Monday.

The first smart NID cards people would get in exchange for their old cards will be free.

"As per our plan, we will first distribute the smart NID cards to the capital on Monday." SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

SECURITY TALKS Bangladesh, US officials sit in Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Government and military officials of Bangladesh and the United States meet in Dhaka this morning to discuss enhancing collaboration in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The security dialogue with the US has special significance as it is taking place against the backdrop of the terrorist attack on Holey Artisan Bakery, killing 22 people, mostly foreigners.

This is the fifth such dialogue between Dhaka and Washington since 2012.

The annual dialogue will feature regional cooperation, traditional and non-traditional security, counterterrorism, military-to-military engagement, disaster management, cyber security and peacekeeping, said diplomatic sources.

Additional Foreign Secretary (Bilateral) Kamrul

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Change draft digital law drastically

Citizen's rights body asks govt, terms it unacceptable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the draft of Digital Security Act 2016 unacceptable, a citizens' platform yesterday called upon the government to bring extensive changes to the proposed law.

The Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights said many sections in the draft contain vague wordings, leaving room for misuse or misinterpretation, which will ultimately curb people's liberty and rights.

The organisation came up with the observation and the demand at a discussion titled "Legal Review: Proposed Digital Security Bill and Citizens' Rights" which it organised with eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik in the chair.

It also called for an exchange of view with competent people and civil society representatives before the draft is finalised so that citizens' freedom of expression and privacy are protected.

The cabinet on August 22 approved the draft as the government wants a new law to ensure national digital security and prevent rising digital crimes.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the law minister to scrutinise the proposed Digital Security Act, the ICT Act and other relevant laws to make sure there is no repetition, contradiction or inadequacy in the new law.

According to the draft, anyone spreading negative propaganda against the Liberation War or the Father of the Nation, using digital devices, will risk being sentenced to life in prison. The draft also stipulates two-year imprisonment for "deliberately" defaming someone or hurting anyone's religious sentiment by publishing or broadcasting something through digital devices.

The director general of the Digital Security Agency, through a gazette notification, will declare some specific computer systems, networks and information infrastructures, which are related to national security and

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Hajj, umrah to get costlier

Saudi Arabia decides to hike fees

AGENCIES

Saudi Arabia will increase charges for visas for people to visit the country for performing hajj.

The ruling Council of Ministers, chaired by Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Naif, announced that anyone applying for a visit to complete the hajj for a second time will be charged SR2,000 for each visit.

The same fee will apply for people wishing to complete the umrah, a similar pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah but one that can be completed at any point in the year, for a second time.

The first entry for hajj and umrah will be free.

Foreigners visiting the Kingdom will be charged SR3,000 for a six-month multiple entry visa, SR5,000 for one-year multiple entry visa, and SR8,000 for two-year multiple entry visa.

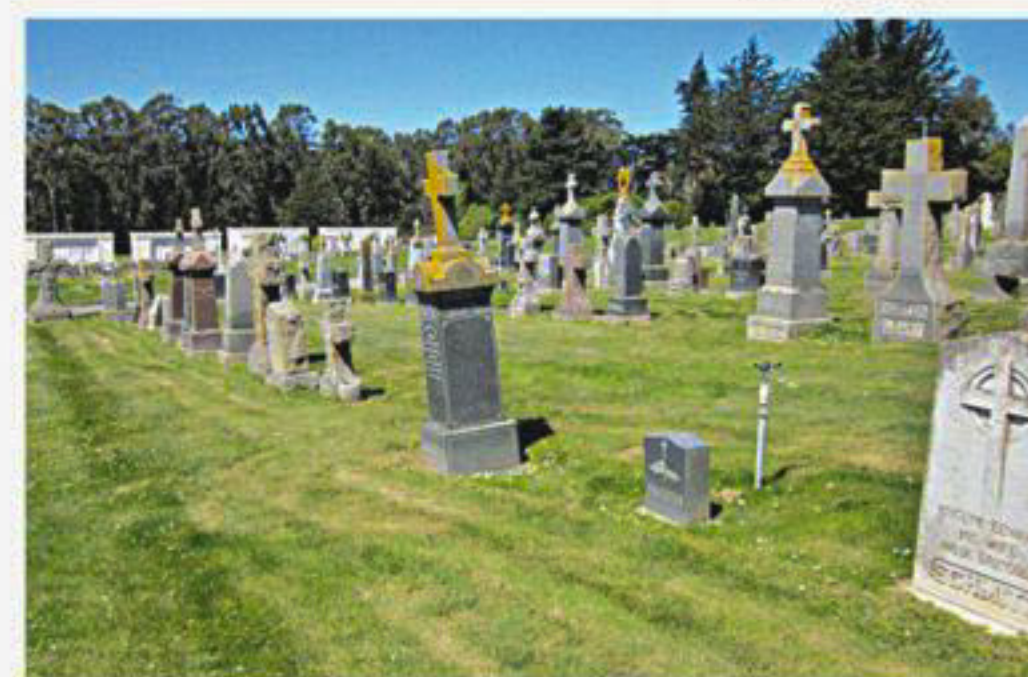
The revised fees will come into force from today.

The new fees come as Saudi Arabia struggles to fill the holes in its balance sheet as its oil revenue continues to decline.

During a meeting of Opec nations in

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Where the dead outnumber the living



ODDITYCENTRAL.COM

Colma, a quiet Californian town of roughly two square miles is home to 1,700 living residents and over 1.5 million dead ones. Most of the town's forever-silent population are people who lived and died in San Francisco, but, just like most of today's living residents, couldn't afford to spend their afterlives in the expensive metropolis.

In the year 1900, San Francisco was a city crowded by the dead. During the gold rush, gold miners, merchants and immigrants from all around the world flocked here in search of a better life, bringing with them disease, and as the death toll rose, the 27 cemeteries filled to the brink of overflowing. They were considered a health hazard.

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Criminals stab woman dead, injure another

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals stabbed a woman dead and critically injured another at a flat in Rasulpur area of Jatrabari late last night.

The deceased was identified as Shilpi. She had several stab marks in her throat.

Her sister-in-law Parul was found in a critical condition with multiple stab injuries in her throat and other parts of her body.

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PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 2

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-15 5-53 7-30
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 4-30 5-56 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Man sent to jail over torturing 7-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A man was sent to jail on Friday after he tortured a 7-year-old boy for alleged theft at Mongla in the district.

Mongla police, following a tip off, rescued the boy named Shakil from a scrap store where he was found tied to scrap metal under the scorching midday sun, with several heavy iron rods placed on his lap, said Uttam Chatterjee, town sub-inspector (TSI) at Mongla Police Station.

Police arrested Shukkur, 48, an employee of the store, for child endangerment. A Mongla court later sent Shukkur to jail after police produced him before it.

Shakil's day labourer father, Shamim, filed a case with Mongla police in the evening the same day under Children Repression Prevention Act against

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Two men busy making dhak (big drums) and dhol (drums) inside a shop in Chittagong city's Pathorghata area as Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindus, is just a few days away. The demand for such instruments, an integral part of the festival, picks up ahead of the puja every year. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Tanners delaying relocation on lame excuse

Says project official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tannery owners have been holding up the relocation of their factories from Hazaribagh to Savar on the pretext of financial crisis although the tannery industrial estate is ready for operation, said the consultant of the estate's Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP).

"Two modules of the CETP are ready for operation. Sometimes we run the plant with air blow for not having adequate effluents from tanneries to make sure that the machine is not damaged," consultant Delwar Hossain told a discussion in the city's Brac Centre Inn yesterday.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) and some NGOs jointly organised the programme to discuss the issue of the relocation.

Delwar said the delay was putting the environment in Hazaribagh and the health of the Buriganga in danger.

"The relocation should be completed as soon as possible not only to save the environment, but also to keep the CETP operating as we need adequate effluent now," the expert said in his keynote speech.

The relocation project was taken up in 1991, but it was postponed until 2003 due to a court order.

The government estimated the total cost of relocation at Tk 1078.71 crore, of which Tk 250 crore would be for incentive to tannery owners and Tk 638.79 crore for the CETP, dumping yards, sewage treatment plant and sludge power generation system, said Delwar, also a teacher of

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