

The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



"Some industrialists, under the shelter of a section of ruling party men, are involved in river encroachment..."
 NOTED COLUMNIST SYED ABUL MAKSUD, AT A HUMAN CHAIN PROGRAMME (Page 3)

"Whitepaper would be published on how much wealth they accumulated when they were in power."
 AL GENERAL SECRETARY OBAIDUL QUADER IN RESPONSE TO BNP'S DEMAND OF MAKING AL LEADERS' WEALTH PUBLIC (Page 3)

"They're trying to stop me because I'm fighting for you -- and I'll never let that happen."
 US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP LASHES OUT AT IMPEACHMENT PROBE DURING A US RALLY (Page 8)

DHAKA-CTG HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Example of wasting public money

THE PROBLEMS	No feasibility study done before undertaking project	Faulty forecast of number of road users	Overloading of lorries 'legitimised'	Improper category of bitumen used	No separate lane for slow-moving vehicles	Absence of underpass or footbridge at key places
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TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Dhaka-Chattogram highway expansion project is a classic case of how poor planning and bad decisions can cause a huge waste of public money.

The project covering 192km stretch took Tk 3,439 crore to turn a two-lane highway into a four-lane one.

But within just two years of its formal opening in 2017, the highway suffered substantial damages, forcing the government to sanction another Tk 793 crore for repair and maintenance.

The highway, considered the lifeline of the country's trade and commerce, was supposed to last for ten years without any major damage, according to the initial design of the project taken up in 2006.

But it started falling apart six months into its inauguration, thanks to the absence of a feasibility study and proper traffic forecast.

Besides, a government decision to increase maximum weight limit of goods-

laden vehicles further aggravated the situation, causing destruction of a large segment of the country's busiest route.

The project overran by six years as there was weakness in the development project proforma (DPP), which compelled the Roads and Highways Department to amend it several times, eventually resulting in cost escalation and long delays.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) on September 3 passed a Tk 793-crore project for the maintenance. Moreover, the RHD has already spent Tk 32.25 crore in the last two fiscal years to repair ruts.

But an eminent transport expert expressed doubt whether all this will be able to keep the highway in good health. He pointed to substandard work on some parts of the highway and continuous overloading.

"The highway has gone through regular maintenance after its formal opening. Now it would go for rehabilitation. This is

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A waterlogged street in the capital's Paschim Rajabazar area yesterday. Inset, a wheelchair user protects himself from the downpour, while negotiating a stretch of flooded road. Yesterday's rain, which lasted for a few hours, inundated large parts of the capital plagued by a poor drainage system.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, ANISUR RAHMAN

Heartburn drug taken off shelves

Govt follows Canada, France following carcinogen in Ranitidine scare

STAR REPORT

The Directorate General of Drug Administration has imposed a temporary ban on the import, production and sale of heartburn drug ranitidine amid a global concern over the presence of a probable carcinogen in the products.

Canada and France have already announced recalls of ranitidine products while the US and the European Union are investigating, reports BBC.

The drug administration in Dhaka announced this after a meeting with representatives of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries at its office yesterday.

Ranitidine, produced by almost every pharmaceutical company in the country, has annual sales of Tk 250 crore, officials said.

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Drive against the corrupt to go on: PM

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said that action against people involved in irregularities will continue irrespective of their political affiliations.

"Let me tell you one thing very clearly, if anyone makes money through dishonest means, if that person's dishonesty, indiscipline and irregularities get caught, then whoever that person is, even if that person belongs to my party, our action will continue against them," she said at a civic reception accorded to her at Hotel Marriot Marquis on Saturday.

The US chapter of the Awami League organised the programme.

Hasina, also the AL president, said her government has taken measures against militancy, terrorism, drugs and corruption.

"[For] those who want to lead their lives in an honest way and for their children, it becomes hard ... Honest persons have to face difficulties in leading their lives," she said.

The PM said those who make money through dishonest means could splurge on expensive brands and lead a lavish life.

"The result of this is it makes the life of an honest person difficult," she said.

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BSMRSTU, GOPALGANJ

Withdraw the VC for links to graft

Recommends UGC probe committee; VC leaves campus with police escort

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A UGC probe committee has found evidence of irregularities and corruption against the vice chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University in Gopalganj and has recommended his withdrawal.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) formed the committee on September 23 at the behest of the education ministry amid student protests for removal of VC Khondoker Md Nasiruddin for his alleged involvement in graft and irregularities.

"We have recommended taking legal action against Khondoker Nasiruddin for his involvement in irregularities and corruption in student admission, appointment of teachers and procurement," a member of the probe committee told The Daily Star yesterday.

"In our probe, we found that the VC was running the university at will," said the probe committee member seeking anonymity.

Meanwhile, the VC left his residence on the university campus under police protection around 9:00pm.

He was heading for the capital, Saidur Rahman Khan, superintendent of police in Gopalganj, told The Daily Star last night.

Despite repeated attempts, this newspaper could not reach VC

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Md Nasiruddin

Man was abroad, yet accused of sabotage

RAFIUL ISLAM

His passport records say he went to India on July 3 last year through the Benapole Land Port and flew back home on July 19.

But interestingly, Sadaqat Khan Fakku, a leader of the Urdu-speaking community in Bangladesh, was charged along with 40 others in two cases filed over gathering in front of the Adhunik Hospital in the capital's Pallabi area on July 7 that year to carry out sabotage and subversion.

However, nothing outward happened that day as the members of the group dispersed following a police chase, according to the charge sheet.

Police arrested one Jahurul Islam Sohel from the spot and recovered 23 cocktails from his possession, the charge sheet read, adding that the others, including Fakku, ran away.

The cases were filed a day later on July 8.

Police said Fakku and others gathered there to carry out sabotage as part of their anti-government movement to free BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

On December 31, after more than five months of investigation, Sub-Inspector Arif Hossain of Pallabi Police Station pressed charges against 41 people in the two cases.

"I was receiving

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Corruption marred flood relief delivery

Says TIB survey; political influence, nepotism tainted govt list of victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Transparency International Bangladesh survey yesterday said the government's flood relief distribution activities this year were marred by various irregularities, including using the relief fund to pay for a minister's visit to flood-affected areas.

The irregularities and corruption also include making political considerations when preparing lists of flood victims and distributing relief items, distributing less relief than the stipulated amount and depriving those who raised their voice against the dishonesty.

TIB, the Bangladesh chapter of the Germany-based global anti-graft watchdog body, revealed its findings while unveiling a report titled "Integrity observation in preparation to face flood and relief activities in 2019" at a press conference organised in the watchdog's headquarter in the city.

According to TIB, around four million people in 28 districts were affected during 10 to 15 days of flooding, which left 108 people dead this year.

The survey was conducted in 683 thanas in 20 unions of 10 upazilas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Bogura and Sylhet from Jul 31 to Aug 7.

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Indian ban on onion exports sends prices skyrocketing

STAR REPORT

India yesterday imposed a ban on export of onions, and the wholesale markets across Bangladesh witnessed an overall hike of Tk 20 per kg within hours.

Talking to wholesalers in Dhaka and Chattogram yesterday evening, The Daily Star found that asking price for Indian onions was Tk 82 per kg while the price for locally grown ones was Tk 87 per kg.

The ingredient was trading between Tk 62 and Tk 71 a kg yesterday morning, but it swiftly went up right after India imposed the ban, said traders and importers.

At Khatunganj wholesale market in Chattogram, the price went up to Tk 100 per kg and traders there stopped selling the bulb in the evening.

Sobuj Mia, a wholesaler

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with António Guterres, the secretary-general of the United Nations, during a bilateral meeting at the UN Headquarters in New York.

PHOTO: PID

Look out for The Daily Star initiative

Homeowner at a young age

October 6: Special issue that includes reports on the changing concept of home in Bangladesh, how to plan for a home and home financing at an early age, home financing market in Bangladesh and innovative solutions to urban housing challenges.

October 13: Roundtable publication on 'Affordable housing and the role of stakeholders'.

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