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## Work as public servants, not party activists

**CEC asks DCs, SPs; ruckus as questions raised over neutrality of dist officials**

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Amid allegations of bias, the Election Commission yesterday asked the deputy commissioners and superintendents of police to perform their election duties impartially.

It also directed them to make sure no one is harassed for their political orientation during the next Jatiya Sangsad polls.

At a meeting with the DCs and SPs at its office, the EC issued the directives regarding the upcoming zilla parishad polls, by elections to two parliamentary seats and the next general election.

The DCs discharge election duties as returning officers and the SPs, as the district chiefs of police, maintain poll-time law and order.

The administration and law enforcement officials urged the EC not to use Electronic Voting Machines in remote areas, officials who attended the meeting told The Daily Star.



These shops on the edge of the waterbody are illegal and an eyesore in the middle of the otherwise picturesque place in Jaflong, Sylhet. But the authorities don't seem to be much concerned. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO COURTESY: MUHIMEN RAHMAN

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

# ADB ready to give \$20b but has concerns

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAMIL MAHMUD

The Asian Development Bank is ready to give over \$20 billion to finance Bangladesh's road and railway projects but raised concerns over the timely implementation of schemes.

The Manila-based multilateral lender mentions the challenges facing implementation in a project portfolio review report submitted to the Bangladesh government last month.

The report does not mention over how long the money will be disbursed.

"Lack of comprehensive detailed design, including quality survey and investigation, contributes to significant scope changes, and time and cost overruns," it says.

In some transport sector projects, appointing a contractor took over 20 months after the bidding was approved, it says, adding that the main cause of the delay was poorly prepared bidding documents.

"Land acquisition and resettlement is one of the major reasons transport projects require time extensions," the report reads.

It is taking longer for development project proposal (DPP) preparation or revision, submission of the DPP to the line ministry and approval by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne), it says.

The ADB presented an

outline of projects in which it is likely to finance about \$4.16 billion in the next three years.

A decade ago, ADB's finance in the country's transport sector was \$741 million. In August this year, the lender's finance in the sector was almost \$3 billion, according to the report.

Referring to certain projects, the ADB says approval of revised DPP took over a year causing delays in project implementation.

The report cites a project titled "Transport Connectivity Improvement Preparatory Facility", for which the ADB approved a loan of \$42 million in February, 2020.

The loan agreement for the project was signed in June 2020 and the loan became effective in August that year. But no money has been spent from the fund yet. No consultants have been appointed to study the feasibility and finalise a detailed design of the project either.

A \$400 million fund for another project titled "Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment (trance I)", was approved by the ADB in September last year, but not a single penny has been utilised so far, the report says.

Project implementation also gets delayed over complications of land acquisition and compensation to the affected individuals, it says, adding that delays also take place in selecting and deploying resettlement NGOs or consultants for those who are evicted for the project.

Lack of understanding of FIDIC (International Federation of Consulting Engineers) contracts by the

- \$4.16 billion fund in next three years
- ADB financing in transport sector quadrupled in a decade
- Lack of comprehensive detailed design delays project completion
- Audit settlement takes long time

## LOAD-SHEDDING SITUATION

# Reality contradicts minister's claims

ZYMA ISLAM

Even though the countrywide power cuts are statistically more frequent at the moment compared to last month, State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid announced that load-shedding has decreased.

He said this while briefing journalists from his home on Friday.

"Load-shedding has decreased from before, but it is still approximately 700-800MW per day," he said.

Data on the daily load-shedding from Power Grid Company Ltd (PGCL) refute both claims.

On that day (October 7), the power outage was 964MW, or eight percent of the total demand, which is slightly more than the 932MW that the authorities had estimated.

A similar pattern can be seen for the entirety of October.

Discounting last Tuesday when a grid failure caused a blackout in half the country, load-shedding this week has been more than that in September.

On Thursday, it was nine percent of demand or 1,184MW. On that day, Dhaka suffered more outages among all divisions - 429MW.

The day before, the authorities estimated that approximately five percent of the demand would have to be shed. The actual outage was more than double that of that - 11 percent or 1,375MW.

According to the load-shedding schedule released by Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited for yesterday, most places in Dhaka and parts of the suburbs covered by the company would have experienced power cuts between three and five times in 24 hours.

**Discounting last Tuesday when a grid failure caused a blackout in half the country, load-shedding this week has been more than that in September.**

Narayanganj's Fatullah would have experienced the most outages; about eight times in those 24 hours.

Places in Azimpur, Dhanmondi, Demra, Khilgaon, Moghbazar among others would have experienced outages about five times.

Some of the load-shedding were scheduled after as late as 11:00pm.

In comparison, power cuts in September were less than what was experienced just this week.

Data shows that last month, there were as many as 19 days with almost no load-shedding at all.

On other days, the rate of shedding hovered between two and four percent of the estimated demand.

## Miladunnabi today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi is being observed today with religious fervour, marking the day of birth and passing away of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH).

On this day in 570, the 12th of Rabiul Awal of the Hijri calendar, Muhammad (PBUH) was born in Makkah with divine blessings and messages of peace for mankind. He also passed away on the same day.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have issued messages greeting the

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## HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star office will remain closed today on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. Stay tuned to our website for round the clock news coverage.

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## Blast damages key Crimea bridge

**'Truck bomb' causes partial collapse of Russia's sole land link with annexed Crimea**

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday said three people were killed in after a truck exploded on its bridge linking Crimea - a symbol of its annexation of the peninsula - without immediately blaming Ukraine.

On the same day, after Moscow suffered a series of setbacks on the battlefield that triggered unprecedented criticism of its army at home, Moscow appointed a new general to lead its Ukraine offensive.

The blast ripped through the 19-kilometre bridge more than seven months into Moscow's Ukraine offensive, although local authorities said it had reopened to motor traffic with vehicles subject to stringent screening. Rail traffic also resumed.

Dramatic social media footage showed the bridge on fire with parts plunging into the water.

Russian investigators said three people were killed and that two bodies - a man and a woman - were pulled out of the water after the bridge had partially collapsed.

They were likely to be passengers of a car that was driving near the exploded truck and their identities were being established, Moscow said.

It had also identified the owner of the truck as a resident of Russia's southern Krasnodar region, saying his place of residence was being searched.

Russia said the blast - which occurred just after 6:00am local time - set ablaze seven oil tankers transported by

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Black smoke billows from a fire on the Kerch bridge that links Crimea to Russia, after a truck exploded near Kerch, Crimea, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## US lays stress on need for fair polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman has reaffirmed the importance of promoting human rights and holding free, fair, and peaceful national election in Bangladesh due late next year.

She made the comment when State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam met her at the state department in Washington DC on Friday.

"The deputy secretary and State Minister Alam discussed the US-Bangladesh partnership, as our two countries commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations," US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement.

During the meeting, Shahriar urged the US government to withdraw the sanctions on Rab as soon as possible. The US

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