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RHD BRIDGES, ROADS Govt officials exploit 172yr-old law, avoid tolls

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Taking the benefit of a 172 year- old law, thousands of vehicles carrying government officials are not paying tolls on roads and bridges under the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), costing the state a huge amount of revenue.

The government lost revenue of about Tk 27.37 lakh last month as more than 24,000 vehicles carrying government officials did not pay tolls for the Dhaka-Bhanga Expressway and the Meghna and Ghumti bridges on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, a document shows.

However, all but the president pay tolls for using Padma, Bangabandhu and Mukterpur bridges under the Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA), an agency under the road transport and bridges ministry.

Even the Toll Policy-2014 of the Road Transport and Highways Division does not allow toll-free movement of all government officials.

Against this backdrop, the Road Transport and Highways Division has decided to write to the Cabinet Division and the Prime Minister's Office seeking directives for all government offices and agencies so that vehicles carrying government officials pay tolls, sources said.

The decision was made after the issue of non-payment of tolls was raised at the monthly coordination meeting of the Road Transport and Highways Division on June 12.

An official told the meeting that 12,866 vehicles carrying government officials took toll-free facility at Jatir Pita Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Highway (Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway) last month while 11,309 used the benefit on Meghna and Ghumti bridges.

The authorities lost revenue of Tk 27.37 lakh, reads the meeting minutes.

The RHD collects tolls on four roads and more than 50 bridges across the country.

An RHD official said the Tolls Act-1851 exempted "public servants travelling on duty" from paying tolls.

Exploiting the law, vehicles carrying government officials refuse to pay tolls, be they on duty or not, the official said wishing anonymity.

However, the Toll Policy-2014 stipulates that on-duty government officials will be exempted from paying tolls inside the area under their jurisdiction and their vehicles have to have government stickers.

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A blue-tailed bee-eater, locally known as Shuichora, stretches its wings on a branch at Arakul in Dhaka's Keraniganj. This species, like other bee-eaters, is a richly coloured slender bird. It is predominantly green. Its face has a narrow blue patch and a black eye stripe. The bird is seen mostly in open habitats close to water.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

CAPACITY PAYMENT It's eating up maximum power subsidy: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As much as one-fourth of the subsidy allocations go to the power sector, which, in turn, channels the maximum portion to capacity payments for the power plants, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"The burden for such payments is skyrocketing, which is difficult to accommodate even with subsidies," it said, adding that the financial condition of Bangladesh Power Development

Board (PDB) is deteriorating over the years as a result of the rising generation capacity.

Capacity payments are supposed to be paid by the government to the private-owned power plants based on the plant's capacity and establishment costs. It impacts the per unit price of electricity as the power plants get the minimum payment even if the plants do not produce electricity.

In fiscal 2021-22, PDB's operating

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

4,000-yr-old sanctuary found in the Netherlands

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Archaeologists have discovered a 4,000-year-old sanctuary made up of ditches and burial mounds in the central Netherlands that they believe may have served a similar purpose to Stonehenge.

Like the famous stone circle in southern England, the sanctuary - which was as big as at least three soccer fields and built with soil and wood - was built to align with the sun on the solstices.

The archaeologists also discovered offerings,

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Congestion at Jatrabari intersection under the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover around noon yesterday. Slow repair work on the road has made things worse.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

All five in Titan sub die Wreckage of the vessel found

REUTERS

The five people aboard a missing submersible died in a "catastrophic" event, a Coast Guard official said yesterday, bringing a grim end to the massive search for the vessel that was lost during a voyage to the Titanic.

"These men were true explorers who shared a distinct spirit of adventure, and a deep passion for exploring and protecting the world's oceans," OceanGate Expeditions said in a statement. "Our hearts are with these five souls and every member of their families during this tragic time." An unmanned deep-sea robot deployed from a Canadian ship discovered the wreckage of the submersible yesterday morning about 1,600 feet (488 meters) from the bow of the century-old wreck, 2-1/2 miles (4 km) below the surface, US Coast Guard Rear Admiral John Mauger said at a press conference.

"The debris is consistent with a catastrophic loss of the pressure



chamber," Mauger said.

Rescue teams from several countries have spent days searching thousands of square miles of open seas with planes and ships for any sign of the 22-foot (6.7-meter) Titan, operated by US-based OceanGate Expeditions.

The submersible lost contact on Sunday morning with its support ship about an hour and 45 minutes into what should have been a two-hour descent.

The five people aboard included the British billionaire and explorer Hamish Harding, 58; Pakistani-born business magnate Shahzada Dawood, 48, and his 19-year-old son, Suleman, both British citizens; French oceanographer and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet, 77, who had visited the wreck dozens of times; and Stockton Rush, the American founder and chief executive of OceanGate, who was piloting the submersible.

The detection of undersea noises on

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Bangladesh go down fighting

ANISUR RAHMAN from Bengalturu

It was another heartbreak for Bangladesh as they conceded two late goals and began their SAFF Championship campaign with a 2-0 loss to Lebanon in the Group B opener at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium yesterday.


Lebanon, the top-ranked team in the tournament, were clear favourites but Javier Cabrera's charges came close to repeating their heroics in 2011, when they defeated Lebanon 2-0 in the 2014 World Cup pre-qualifiers in Dhaka.

Young winger Faisal Ahmed Fahim squandered a one-on-one with the goalkeeper on the hour-mark before defenders



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IN LOVING MEMORY
KAISER ZAMAN
1944 - 2023



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Kaiser Zaman, lovingly known to his nearest and dearest as Kochi, a truly remarkable man whose impact was felt by millions across the world.

A founding partner of BRAC, and Representative of the UNHCR as head of multiple global humanitarian missions, his life and work took him to every corner of the world from Mogadishu to São Paulo, Baku to Kabul. He lived his years helping those most in need, his selflessness inspiring everyone he met. A man of infinite wisdom, kindness and integrity, sparkling wit and a great sense of adventure, he was an adored brother, uncle, son, cousin and friend, and a treasured role model.

As he joins his beloved wife Wendy in heaven, he leaves behind three devoted sisters, two older brothers and dozens of nieces, nephews, cousins and lifelong friends the world over.
May Allah (SWT) grant him Jannatul Firdaus.

His Qulkaani will be held today Friday 23 June at 5pm (Baad Asr) at Gulshan Jame Masjid.
We welcome your presence and your prayers.