

Flyover design

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Company Ltd is chaired by Orion's owner M Obaidul Karim, who has been in hiding after being accused of embezzling Tk 596.44 crore from Oriental Bank.

The five-member experts team led by civil engineering department professor Dr Alamgir M Hoque was appointed by the DCC in February last year, eight months after Belhassa-Accom was awarded the contract.

The team submitted its report to the DCC on April 7.

The Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover is an 8km stretch of mainly elevated highway aimed at easing the heavily congested traffic in the capital. It is a BOOT (build-own-operate-and-transfer) scheme in which the constructor finances the building in return for the right to collect tolls for an agreed period. After that period the flyover will be handed over to the DCC.

"The concessionaire put options for setting up unnecessary ramps [slip roads] to the flyover as they will enable more vehicles to get onto it and as a result they will get more duty," Alamgir Hoque told The Daily Star.

"They gave importance to their commercial interest over public interest while preparing the layout and design of the flyover," he said.

"We have advised to make the roads under the flyover free from obstructions as much as possible. The concessionaire prepared a design shrinking these roads, forcing vehicles to use the flyover," Alamgir added.

The experts team said if the flyover is constructed under the present layout and design, it will create a lot of problems for the city dwellers.

"The layout and design was prepared without a proper feasibility study and in an isolated way," Alamgir said, adding, "The design lacks the kind of expertise needed for constructing such flyovers."

He rejected the Belhassa-Accom suggestions that the amendments to the design at "such a late date" will seriously affect the project's cost. "No physical progress has been made so far in the flyover," he said.

BUET EXPERTS' REPORT

The Buet experts' modified report suggested that five of the 13 ramps to the Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover should be omitted from the original design to reduce obstructions to traffic movement on the roads under the flyover.

The experts submitted their report following a decision taken at a meeting held at the Nagar Bhaban on March 12 involving the DCC, the experts and the project implementation company officials. At the meeting the Buet experts suggested bringing modification in the flyover's layout.

According to the conceptual recommendations, the five ramps are Ramp 9 and 11 (up and down ramps on New Dayaganj Road), Ramp 7 (up ramp in front of the Sayedabad bus terminal), Ramp 13 (down ramp from Chittagong-Narayanganj Road), and Ramp 5 (down ramp to the Sayedabad bus terminal).

The report also suggested that two new down ramps should be added—one near the Rajdhani Super Market and another at the Gulistan End.

According to the preliminary

design, the flyover will have four lanes, seven entrances and 13 ramps.

FLYOVERWORK MOVING SLOW

In the last 11 months, Belhassa-Accom has only put up fences of corrugated tin at three different sites of the project—one near the Janapath crossing on the Atish Dipankar Road, another on the Hatkhola Road opposite Rajdhani Super Market, and another in front of the Sayedabad inter-district bus terminal.

Prof Alamgir said no physical progress has been made so far, but DCC officials claimed that some piling work has been completed at two sites.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of the 8km flyover in June last year and the flyover is scheduled to complete within three years.

The concession period to recover the cost from tolls will span 24 years.

Belhassa-Accom has appointed two Chinese firms—China World-based Group Co and Chinese First Metallurgical Construction Co—for the construction work, said the DCC officials.

Ex-MP Faruk

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He is also an accused in an extortion case filed on April 6, 2007 and investigation into the case is going on.

Faruk was elected in 2001 general election from Noakhali-1 (Senbagh) constituency.

Overseas Hotel

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Singapore yet. Then we realised that Dolly Devi disappeared. Our then pastor of the church, Monoj Chism, who had good connection with Dolly, has also disappeared."

Bijoy said they have applied to various government departments but Dolly in association with her business partner Arif Hossain continued to threaten them.

When the present caretaker government came to power the cheated Garos made a complaint with the Ministry of Home Affairs that entrusted Sub-Inspector Jasimuddin of Gulshan Police Station to investigate the matter.

Bijoy said SI Jasimuddin, along with some of them, went to Arif's Survey 2000 office and Arif admitted to Dolly's fraud. He said he does not know Dolly's address but said she goes to office three-four days a week.

Bijoy alleged that Jerome Costa, who led the Garos about going to Singapore, now joined hands with Dolly and Monoj after getting a big amount from them.

Following the press conference, a group of journalists went to Nangrima Garo Christian Church at Kalachandpur. The present pastor of the church, Clement Sangma, and other Garos acknowledged the incident of cheating.

During a visit to Arif's office, his employees first denied his presence at the office although he was later found there. Asked about his relationship with Dolly, he said she is his friend and he has no business relations with her.

Arif refused to talk to the media further.

Peacekeeper in Darfur fatally shot

AP, Khartoum, Sudan

A United Nations peacekeeper who was among a small group of reinforcements sent to Darfur was shot to death at his residence -- the world body's first casualty since its long-negotiated arrival in the troubled region, officials said yesterday.

Gunmen looted the home of the UN peacekeeper -- an Egyptian lieutenant colonel -- in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, and fatally shot him late Friday, the African Union and UN said.

"The senseless killing of an innocent man in the confines of his residence is beyond comprehension," said Hassan Gibril, the deputy head of the AU mission, at a memorial for Lt. Col. Ehab Nazir.

The gunmen who killed him were thought to be burglars, but an official close to the investigation said authorities would not exclude other motives. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

In Cairo, the foreign ministry deplored the Egyptian officer's death and condemned in a statement the "sinful aggression" in which Nazir became the "casualty of an attack by armed elements."

The AU has faced increased hostility from warring factions in Darfur, and has lost 19 of its own peacekeepers since it first deployed in June 2004.

"Not a month goes by without a new killing, it's very difficult," said Mezni.

The UN began deploying some 180 staff to Darfur in December to bolster the overwhelmed 7,000-strong AU mission.

This "light support package" is part of a broader agreement that should lead to 3,000 UN peacekeepers moving into Darfur in 2007, but the AU and UN both acknowledge that even the first batch of 180 reinforcements have not yet all arrived.

The Sudanese government of President Omar al-Bashir has rejected a UN resolution for some 22,000 U.N. peacekeepers to replace the AU in Darfur, where over 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million chased from their homes in four years of fighting.

Since then, the Sudanese government, the UN and the AU continue to negotiate a compromise for UN forces to help end Darfur's violence.

CA asks

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involvement with the club during his previous service life. Responding to some proposals regarding development of the club, the CA gave assurance of doing whatever is possible.

Cabinet Secretary and Chairman of the Officers' Club Ali Imam Majumdar and its General Secretary Shahjahan Majumdar, a former secretary, also spoke on the occasion.

Serving and former government officials, including secretaries, club members, and distinguished personalities, attended the dinner.

Govt in a fix

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no shortage of supply (of essentials), so the problems are somewhere else." He added that people need to be patient as it would take time for government policies to have impact on the market.

Pointing out the effects of rising international oil and commodity prices, Fahim said the government is going to encourage businessmen to open more letters of credit (LCs) and minimise role of local middlemen, and relax weight limits on goods-carrying transports.

Admitting that businessmen have been reluctant to open LCs since the start of the ongoing anti-corruption drive, Fahim said the government would take steps to increase business confidence to 'normalise' the situation.

Meanwhile, the government has recently withdrawn the weight-limit on trucks carrying food items while also allowing these trucks and vans to ply on rickshaw-free Dhaka streets between 11am and 4pm.

It also plans a two-month long Open Market System along with emergency purchase of six lakh tonnes of food items and sale of rice, lentils, soybean and onions through Trading Corporation Bangladesh (TCB).

Fahim also mentioned that Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has proposed to open four wholesale kitchen markets and will take special measures to keep prices of chickpeas, onions and edible oil at a 'tolerable level' during the fasting month of Ramadan.

The government would also consider importing these goods, if necessary. The last BNP-led coalition government had already proposed opening four wholesale kitchen markets in Dhaka's Lalbagh, Jatrabari, Aminbazar and Tejgaon areas in addition to the existing Karwan Bazar market.

Ctg port turns

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shippers have decided not to take any TCH. "We are expecting more miracles in the coming days," the business leader told The Daily Star.

The cost of handling general cargoes has also been slashed by at least 40 percent, he said.

Earlier, the business community had to incur a loss of at least \$286 million a year because of the port's inefficiency. Now that things have improved dramatically they won't have to bear the extra cost anymore, he observed.

"We are happy that the turn-around time has been reduced to less than four days from 11 days," said a leading feeder operator. Every ship had to count at least an additional \$10,000 for a day's delay as the daily operating cost is \$7,000-8,000 on average.

"Earlier, a ship could not have more than two trips on Chittagong-Singapore route a month, whereas now it can comfortably have more than three," he pointed out.

Therefore, the ship owners can carry containers at \$30-50 less charge per container than they did before.

As long as the feeder operators are concerned, the cargo fare has come down by 30-40 percent, said another operator. However, he thinks the main line operators (MLO) might try to add the terminal handling charge in the export-import documents.

According to sources, the off-docks are faced with acute congestion as the containers have been moved there to take pressure off the main jetty.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) thinks the congestion at the off-docks would also ease after installation of necessary handling equipment.

The CPA introduced the berth operating system instead of stevedoring agents on May 16. Initially,

12 operators have been given charge to handle cargoes at 13 general berths. Out of the berths, six have been earmarked for container cargoes while the rest are for general cargoes.

The berth operators have been selected from the existing stevedores. Fifteen stevedoring agents have been given the job of handling goods at different moorings and outer anchorage.

The authorities also fixed different rates for handling containers at the jetty by the berth operators, the source said.

None arrested

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following the incident with several patrol teams of police, Rab and Army still roaming around the place of the incident.

Almost every motorbike was checked in the city yesterday as incidents of mugging using motorbikes have become frequent.

About five places, known as gathering places of youths in Dhanmendi, wore a deserted look yesterday due to the security measures.

Meanwhile, police are looking for the young man seen on video footage of the bank. In the footage, the youth was seen moving suspiciously around Rusho while he was withdrawing the money.

AHM Arefin Alam Rusho, a BBA graduate from North South University and son of Lt Col AHM Shafikul Alam and Lt Col Ambory Begum, was shot dead by unidentified muggers in Dhanmendi on Thursday after he came out of Satmasjid branch of NCC bank after withdrawing Tk 4.45 lakh.

Muggers also took away the money.

Patients pay higher

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drug list is published and gazetted, the doctors would have the idea that these are the first line drugs. They would prescribe those

reducing the use of secondary drugs, which might hamper the business of the drug manufacturing companies.

Focusing on the need for an updated essential drug list the experts also said the foreign companies could not capture the market of those drugs included in essential drug list, as according to the TRIPS (trade related aspects of intellectual property rights) public health related drugs would be out of its jurisdiction that is going to be implemented by 2016.

Even the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been pressing different countries to prepare a list of essential drugs to protect public health through its guideline of around 350 essential drugs.

Talking to The Daily Star, Director of Drug Administration Habibur Rahman, however, said absence of an updated list of essential drugs does not cause any problem at all.

"A drug list comprising around 185 drugs was prepared to ensure availability and production of some essential drugs but it was not updated after 1988. But different companies are now producing drugs in the country and their

combined production has already ensured availability of the essential drugs," said Habibur.

Experts, on the other hand, said a list of essential drugs is supposed to be updated at least once in every two years as the status of different drugs change after more effective new drugs enter the market.

"The Drug Control Committee termed 117 drugs as commonly used essential drugs and controls the price of those drugs among 14,000 brand named drugs prevailing in the market," said Associate Professor of the Department of Pharmacology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"Although the Drug Administration took lots of money from the World Health Organisation to prepare a list of essential drugs, it did not work at all for preparing the list," said Prof Farook.

Brushing aside the allegation, the director of Drug Administration said steps have been taken to prepare an updated list of essential drugs according to the guideline of WHO last year and almost 250 drugs would be included in the list considering their usefulness, safety and efficacy.

"The list will be completed by the end of this year and 60 to 70 per cent of work have been completed already," he added.

Murder he wrote

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Belal turned out one of his friend hired Sarwar, who was recently released from jail in a snatching case, and planned the murder, police sources quoting Belal said.

Polly hailed from Fatullah in Narayanganj. She returned to Bangladesh on April 29 to register a piece of land in her name in Bashundhara housing project in Badda, for which she had been paying regular instalments.

In the morning of May 22 around 8:00am Polly left home to have a look at the piece of land at Bashundhara and get it registered. She went to Belal's office at Ramna Bhaban to take him with her.

In the office, Belal drugged Polly into slumber by serving sleeping-pill-mixed beverage. Sarwar then strangled Polly to death with her scarf between 12:30pm and 1:00pm, sources quoting Belal said.

Soon after the murder, they placed the body inside a barrel and handed it over to a rickshaw-van puller to have the barrel disposed of somewhere, sources mentioning Belal's confessional statement said. Sarwar was fully paid after the killing.

The rickshaw-van puller, however, left the barrel on the road at Purbha Dhulairpur in Jatrabari. Locals found the body the same night and informed police. Police sent the body to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy where family members of Polly identified the body on Wednesday.

Police arrested Belal when he went to the hospital morgue to see the body. Earlier, Tuhin, a cousin of

White House considers 50pc troop reduction in Iraq

AFP, Washington

The White House is reportedly working on what officials describe as several "concepts" for reducing the number of US combat troops in Iraq by as much as 50 percent next year.

Citing unnamed senior administration officials, The New York Times said the concepts could lower US troop levels in Iraq to roughly 100,000 by the time the 2008 US presidential election moves into high gear.

They would also greatly scale back the mission that President George W. Bush set for the US military when he ordered it in January to win back control of Baghdad and Anbar Province, the report said.

The mission would instead focus on the training of Iraqi troops and fighting Al-Qaeda while removing Americans from many of the counter-insurgency efforts inside Baghdad.

But there is no indication that Bush is preparing to call an early end to the current troop increase, The Times said.

And one reason officials are talking about their long-range strategy may be to blunt pressure from members of Congress, including some Republicans, who are pushing for a more rapid troop reduction, according to the report.

Proponents of reducing the troops and scaling back their mission next year appear to include Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, it said.

They have been joined by generals at the Pentagon and elsewhere who have long been skeptical that the Iraqi government would use the opportunity created by the troop increase to reach genuine political accommodations.

The concepts have been developed without the involvement of the top commanders in Iraq, General David Petraeus and Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, both of whom have been enthusiastic supporters of the troop increase, the paper said.

In an interview in Baghdad on Thursday, General Odierno said any withdrawal of American troops was not advisable until December, "at a minimum," The Times said.

Blast kills

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three-wheeled auto-rickshaw, said SN Singh, police chief of Guwahati, the capital of the state of Assam.

Separately, officials defused a 22-pound bomb inside an unclaimed steel box that was found on a train during a routine check at a station stop 125 miles outside of Guwahati, said railway official T Rabha.

The state government's one-year anniversary of holding power was to be marked Sunday with public events. A state minister, Himanta Biswa Sharma, said the festivities would go on as planned.

"We are not going to be cowed down by today's explosion," said Sharma.

Federal authorities have sent extra troops to the region.

Peace talks between the Ulfa and the Indian government broke down in September last year after a six-week truce. Ulfa responded with violence, killing more than 70 Hindi-speaking migrant workers across Assam.

The rebels say Assam's indigenous people, most of whom are ethnically closer to Myanmar and China than to the rest of India, are ignored by the federal government in New Delhi, some 1,000 miles to the west. They also accused the government of exploiting the north-east's rich natural resources.

DCC starts

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Construction be blacklisted and payments of all bills of the firm withheld.

A five-member probe body headed by a professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) was formed to investigate the matter and it was also asked to submit a probe report within a week, the DCC press release said.

Families evacuated from the tin-roofed Dayaganj Sweepers' Colony, after the building subsidised, returned to their homes yesterday morning. They returned ignoring law enforcers' caution that the building was leaning precariously.

"We stayed on the street last night. We have children and we do not have other places to go to, we have to stay at our home," said Lakshmi Rani, a sweeper of Dayaganj Sweepers' Colony, yesterday.

Meanwhile, the DCC sweepers in Dayaganj yesterday demanded examining the structural integrity of the southern part of the building before they move in. They also said they would not take their allotments if that part was not examined properly.

The two-part building was designed for 60 families. The northern part of the building was meant for 30 families. The construction work of the building was completed recently and was supposed to have the first families move in on June 3.

Sycophancy destroyed

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appointment of an ombudsman or a watchdog body for putting checks and balances on use of power, and establishing accountability within his party. The AL leader also emphasised on taking collective decisions in the party.

Former adviser to a caretaker government Sultana Kamal, and Editor of the New Age Nurul Kabir also participated in the Sanglap.

BBC Bengali Service in conjunction with BBC World Service Trust organised the event. BBC's Waliur Rahman Miraj and Masud Hasan Khan produced and moderated the event respectively.

Replying to a query, Saber said reform has been a continuous process within AL since its formation. Saying that the military backed caretaker government has been pressuring political parties for bringing reforms to the organisations, the AL leader claimed that feeling the necessity for political reforms they already placed some proposals to the immediate past parliament.

"What reforms we should bring to the parties have not been finalised yet. The necessity for reforms might come to the fore in the future also in changing contexts," Saber added.

Hafiz said as the council of BNP has not been held for long, discussions on reforms did not come up in BNP. "But our party chairperson said a couple of days ago that reforms will be brought to BNP immediately after the ban on indoor politics is lifted," he said.

Sultana Kamal said, "If we can compel political parties to establish accountability, then there might be a hope that they will bring meaningful reforms."

Saying that no political party in the country seems to be democratic, Nurul Kabir emphasised on decentralisation of power among the top leaders and on bringing transparency in the accounts of the parties.

Regarding the much talked about possibility of a new political party, the BNP leader observed that

due to confrontational politics of AL and BNP, the people want to get rid of such politics, making real the necessity for forming new political parties.

He also blamed AL and BNP for the 'current crisis' of the country and said both parties have failed to meet the aspirations of the people.

He however said there are more political parties in Bangladesh than necessary. "We will welcome the Election Commission if it takes initiatives to scale down the number," said Hafiz.

Saber said new political parties are launched when existing political parties fail to fulfil the ambitions of the people, adding that a new political party should be an outcome of an organic demand of the time and should be formed accordingly. But if it is formed artificially, then it will run the risk of being rejected by the people.

Nurul Kabir said there are three kinds of people who are wanting to form new political parties those who could have been accused of corruption, those who are currently deprived in existing political parties, and those who are looking for a short cut to power.

About human rights violations under the current caretaker government, he said the current interim government came to power suspending all kinds of human rights, which he said is unjust. Kabir's comment prompted echoes from the other speakers who said human rights are being violated every day in the country.

About the recent promotions of the top brass of the armed forces, the speakers said it would have been better if the promotions were given during the rule of a democratic government. But they said there was a necessity for a four-star general to adjust the armed forces to its international duties.

They also recommended that the caretaker government arranges subsidies for curbing the prices of essentials and reduces tariffs on essential imports.

US troops raid Sadr

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launched in support of the ground raid hit cars lined up to purchase gas at a nearby petrol station, and that those killed were innocent civilians.

The US military statement said the man detained in the raid had been "acting as a proxy for an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps officer," and smuggling explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) to local militias.

Two separate mortar attacks, one allied with a car bomb, killed eight people in a disputed Baghdad neighbourhood on Saturday, security and hospital sources said.

In the first attack, a barrage of mortar rounds and an exploding car bomb struck a market in the Bayaa area in the southwestern corner of the capital, killing at least six people.

"We received six bodies and 34 wounded, including three women, from the incident in Bayaa," said an official at the Yarmuk hospital.

It added that five people were killed when troops called in an air strike after nine vehicles moved into the area following the arrest in an apparent attempt to resist the operation.

The Iraqi official disputed this version and said the cars hit in the air strike had been waiting to fill up with gas, a common pre-dawn scene in a city where shortages are common and lines often stretch for several blocks.

The military official added that several houses were destroyed and six vehicles incinerated, in the raid.

A local hospital official reported receiving three bodies and eight wounded people following the battle.

The United States has long accused Iran of supplying EFPs, sophisticated explosive devices that discharge a ball of molten metal capable of tearing through an armoured vehicle, to Shia militias.

The United States and Iran frequently accuse each other of fomenting violence in Iraq, but on Monday their respective ambassadors will hold landmark meetings in Baghdad aimed at slowing Iraq's spiralling mayhem.

Saturday's raids came one day after radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr reappeared from a four-month absence to deliver a Friday sermon calling for national reconciliation and the departure of US and British forces.

Sadr called on his forces to refrain from fighting the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police, but a few hours later Iraqi special forces with British support killed one of his senior commanders while trying to detain him at Basra checkpoint.

Sadr's well-armed but increasingly fractured Mahdi Army militia has largely cooperated with a three-month-old US-led security crackdown in the capital, but rogue elements continue to battle coalition and Iraqi forces.

Meanwhile, three US servicemen have died in a series of incidents across Iraq, the US military reported Saturday.

On Friday evening a roadside bomb killed a soldier northeast of the capital in Diyala province.

Another soldier was