

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 Belhsa-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 a BOOT (build-own-operate-and-transfer) scheme in which the contractor 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 these 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 Belhsa-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.

BUT 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 Dayanganj 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

Workers to be sent

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Bangladeshi workers under a new Employment Permit System (EPS), Syed Fahim Munain, press secretary to the Chief Adviser (CA), told reporters at the Chief Adviser's Office after the weekly meeting of the advisers.

The EPS will replace the old Industrial Training System and would only involve government-to-government interaction, rather than the private employment agencies handling the workers' migration to South Korea.

Out of the 14 countries included in South Korea's EPS, Bangladesh has been put under Category C with three other countries. There is provision for recruiting 10,000 workers under this category. The three-year contract jobs would be in manufacturing, construction, service sector and agriculture, fisheries and livestock.

The state-run Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) will select both skilled and unskilled labour, who will have to undergo Korean-language training and take part in a Korean Language Proficiency Test, Fahim said.

The MoU will also include various protection measures for the workers, including a standardised expatriates pay-scale.

Some 12,000 Bangladeshi workers are currently working in South Korea.

Meanwhile, the government has tasked the ministries concerned to examine the details of the draft of a permanent Hajj policy, which will substitute the current system of annual hajj arrangements. With a view to improve Bangladeshi pilgrims' annual journey and stay in Mecca, the permanent policy would be designed in the light of the previous mistakes.

Peacekeeper in Darfur fatally shot

AP, Khartoum, Sudan

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

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.

Belhsa-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 Chisim, 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.

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.

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.

Govt in a fix

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no shortage of supply (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.

Besides, Deputy Director General of DGFI Brigadier General Golam Mohammad, Brigadier General M Ashab Uddin and Composite Brigade Commander Brigadier General AKM Muzahid Uddin have been adorned with the rank of major general, said an ISPR press release.

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 turnaround 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 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 outeranchorage.

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 Dhanmondi, 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.

Propponents 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.

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.

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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.

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 corrupted, 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.

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 party.

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

US troops raid Sadr

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launched in support of the ground hit cars lined up to purchase gas at a nearby petrol station, and 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.

Meanwhile, three US service members have been killed 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 killed by small arms fire during a battle in the Baghdad area, also on Friday, and in the western province of al-Anbar a marine died in a non-combat incident.

India toying

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overs. Vice