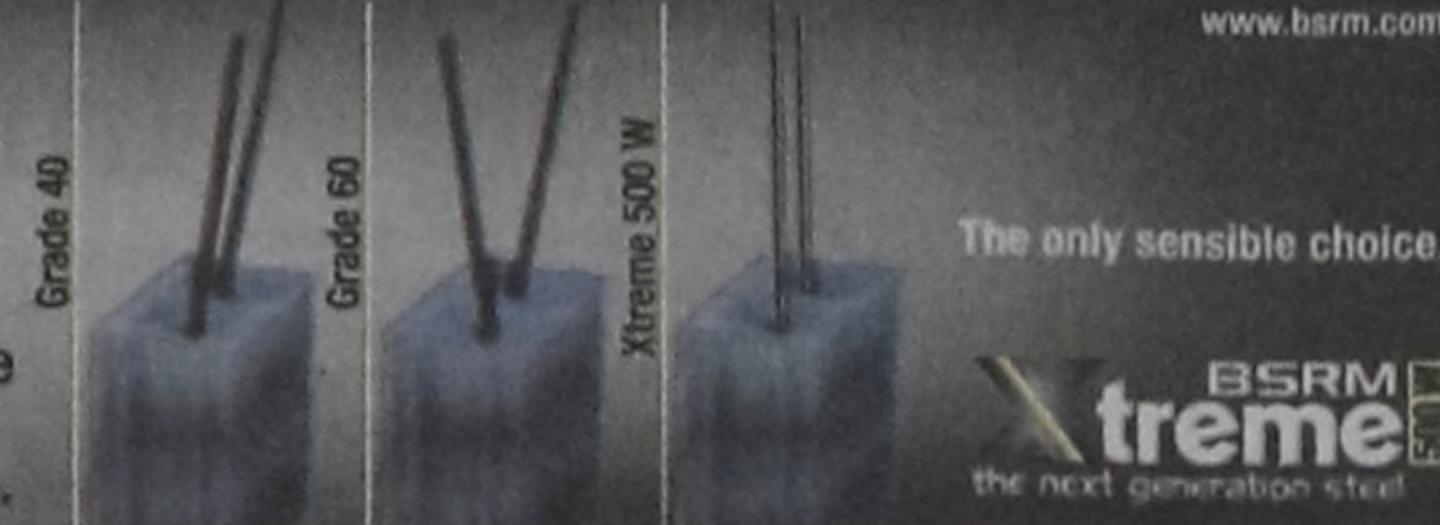


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BURIGANGA BRIDGE AT BASILA

Questions raised over narrow approach roads

MOSHED ALI KHAN

The Third Buriganga Bridge in Basila has been completed without ensuring proper approach roads on both sides of the bridge, which could render the bridge almost useless, said locals and sources in the Roads and Highways Department.

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development donated Tk 49 crore for construction of the Third Buriganga Bridge project at Basila. The idea was to connect vast areas of Keraniganj and connect the western part of the city with Savar Road in the north and Mawa Road in the south. The bridge is now awaiting inauguration.

On Mohammadpur end of the bridge, the approach road begins from the end of Satmasjid Road with a 20-foot-wide lane winding its way at Katahur. This narrow lane witnesses perennial traffic congestion at any time of the day even without the bridge functioning now. Locals

expressed their fear that with the inauguration of the bridge the area would become almost inaccessible.

On the other end of the bridge the road becomes a 10-foot-wide lane at Ghata Char winding its way through Atir Bazar and Keraniganj, virtually making it impossible for traffic movement. Moreover, the bridge at Atir Bazar over Atir Khal is so dilapidated that even small vehicles have to get on it with caution.

An engineer of the R&H department requesting anonymity said the Third Buriganga Bridge could never serve its purpose until these approach roads are widened.

"The vertical clearance of the bridge is already hampering navigation on the river. And now lack of connecting roads will simply make this bridge useless," said the engineer.

R&H official sources said on several occasions they had raised the matter in meetings with different departments of

the government.

"The R&H cannot build roads in the city unless it is directed to do so. So we provided the Dhaka City Corporation with proper maps and asked them to connect the approach road with Satmasjid Road in Mohammadpur. They (the DCC) were not interested," said another R&H engineer requesting anonymity.

An official of the DCC's engineering department said they could not take up the project of building the approach road as it required acquiring lands in Katahur, which belong to an influential quarter who are building a massive market-cum-residential bloc.

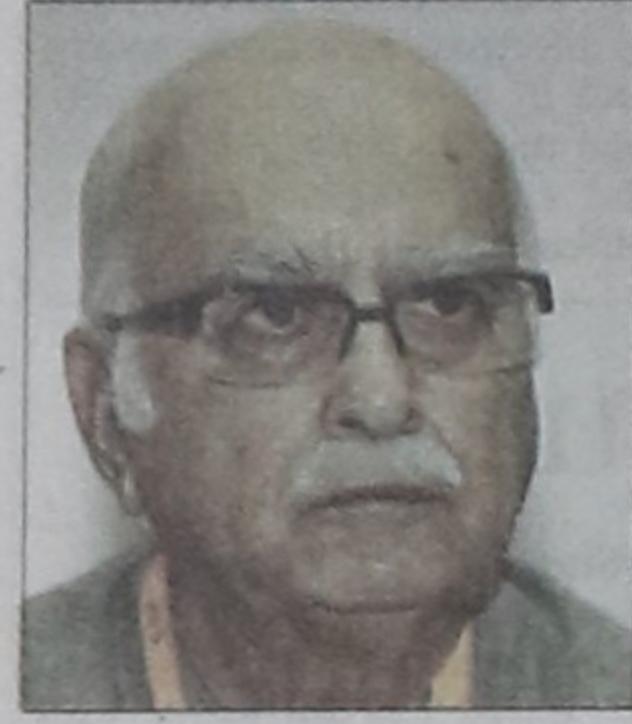
"We do not know how Rajuk approved such a project which lies on the very path of Satmasjid Road towards the bridge," he said.

Locals said with a truck stand in the vicinity and movement of heavy vehicles,

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The photo, taken from Bashbari of Mohammadpur, shows the narrow lane that leads to the Third Buriganga Bridge in Basila in Dhaka. As the road gets congested at any time of the day, with the inauguration of the bridge the area would become almost inaccessible.



Advani hands over BJP reins to Sushma

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

New Delhi

In a generational shift in top leadership of India's main opposition BJP, L K Advani yesterday stepped down as leader of the opposition, making way for much younger Sushma Swaraj, seven months after the party suffered debacle in parliamentary poll.

Eighty-two-year-old Advani named Swaraj, 57, to replace him as the head of BJP parliamentary party, BJP President Rajnath Singh told reporters here.

Swaraj is the first woman leader of the opposition in the Indian parliament and is seen as a moderate compared to the hardline Hindutva image of Advani.

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HC gets 15-20 new judges by Feb

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

After the appointment of new chief justice, the government is now going to appoint some 15 to 20 new judges to the High Court (HC) division of the Supreme Court.

On December 15 the government appointed Justice Md Tafazzul Islam as chief justice, for present Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin is going into retirement on December 22.

Sources said the new judges would be appointed in February next year as part of HC's plan to appoint a total of 50 judges to deal with a huge backlog of cases.

It will appoint two judges to the Appellate Division from the HC before appointing the new judges since two judges of the Appellate Division Justice Md Joyful Abedin and Justice Md Abdul Aziz will go into retirement on December 31.

The government is already working on the logistics involved with the appointments of new judges, sources said.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed a few days back told The Daily Star the government would appoint new judges to the Appellate Division and the High Court division of the Supreme Court very soon to reduce the number of pending cases and ensure fair justice.

The judges will be appointed after their office rooms are arranged and logistic supports ensured, he added.

Sources said about three lakh cases are now pending with the HC while about 5,000 cases with the Appellate Division. There are now 11 judges for the Appellate Division and 78 for the HC.

The present government reappointed 10 HC judges whose jobs were not confirmed during the rule of BNP-Jamaat government. They were

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CLIMATE TALKS
Danish Queen
praises role
of Hasina
UNB, Copenhagen

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday took her dinner with Queen Margrethe and Crown Princess of Denmark Mary Elizabeth at Royal Palace in Christiansborg.

On arrival at the palace, Hasina was warmly received by the Royal family.

The Danish royal family and other participants at the dinner highly praised Hasina's strong and clear voice in the international conferences on climate change.

The Bangladesh premier was also given special honour as she was a female head of government attending the Copenhagen summit.

Info Commission to get another temporary office
No permanent set-up expected in 3 years

M ABDUL KALAM AZAD

The office of the three-member Information Commission, which has been functioning from the National Institute of Mass Communications in a haphazard way for about three months, will be shifted to another temporary office by the end of this month.

This time the commission, formed more than five months ago to enforce the long-cherished Right to Information (RTI) Act, has got space in the Department of Archaeology building in Agargaon of the capital, and will function from there until construction of a full-fledged office of its own in the same area.

"We are moving to the Department of Archaeology building in Agargaon by the end of this year. We have got some 8,000 square feet of space there to set up our temporary office," Chief Information Commissioner M Azizur Rahman told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

He also said the commission has been provided with a bigha of land in Agargaon to construct a 10-storey building for setting up its permanent head office, but that will take about three years. "We have asked the government for 45 crore taka for the construction," he added. The construction work will start as soon as the fund is allocated. The commission will continue running its activities from the Department of Archaeology building until some of the floors of its own building are ready for use.

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Goods train link with Pakistan
Indian proposal awaits response from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan
OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal are yet to respond to India's proposal for a goods train corridor connecting Bangladesh with Pakistan through India and Nepal, Indian Minister of State for Railways E Ahmed said today.

He said in parliament that at a meeting of Saarc Inter-governmental Group on Transport held on July 24 this year, in Colombo, India had circulated a concept paper on running a demonstration container train from Bangladesh to Pakistan via Indian and Nepal.

The possible corridor for running the demonstration train mentioned in the paper was Chittagong Port/Dhaka-Katihar (India) - Birgunj (Nepal) - Lahore (Pakistan).

The meeting noted the

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Pak ministers face fallout from amnesty ruling

Court summons interior minister, foreign travel ban slapped on defence minister, 250 top officials

AFP, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday summoned the interior minister over corruption charges, as the government grappled with the fallout from a court ruling scrapping an amnesty for a raft of politicians.

The defence minister has already been barred from leaving the country, as the top anti-corruption body begins implementing a Supreme Court ruling banning a decree protecting politicians including

President Asif Ali Zardari.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has called for travel bans on more than 250 people since the Supreme Court Wednesday annulled a 2007 amnesty, sparking calls for Zardari to resign and rattling the US-backed government.

"The accountability court has summoned Rehman Malik... We have also reopened cases of 52 more people," said Salman Butt, deputy prosecutor general of the National Accountability Bureau in

Sindh province.

A court official in Sindh, who wished to remain anonymous, said that Malik would have to appear along with two other Zardari allies on January 8.

His lawyer, Khwaja Naveed, told reporters that Malik was on bail in one case -- dating back almost a decade -- at the time the amnesty was passed.

"Malik is ready to appear again if summoned by the accountability court,"

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