

Nepal

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pave the way for a government of national consensus.

The 11th-hour-deal was made possible after both the ruling coalition and the main opposition UCPN (Maoist) gave ground in hectic parleys. The Maoists had been demanding the prime minister's resignation before Friday's deadline as a precondition for extending the term of the Assembly. But Madhav Kumar and his allies had refused and insisted on firm commitments by the Maoists regarding key sticking points, such as power-sharing arrangements and the reintegration of former Maoist combatants into the army.

According to the agreement that was published in the Nepali media Saturday, the prime minister will step down once there is a consensus among the parties to "carry forward the pending issues related to taking the peace process to its logical end". Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, popularly known as "Prachanda" (The Terrible) told a press conference that the agreement on extension of the CA and formation of a national unity government was a victory for peace and the constitution.

The political scene in Nepal remains volatile, with the parties scheduled to hold a high-level meeting in the next two days to determine the next course of action in light of the agreement.

The Constituent Assembly's efforts to draw up a new constitution have been hampered by deep divisions among the leading political parties on whether to integrate former Maoist fighters into the national army, how to return the land seized during the Maoists' long guerrilla campaign and if a federalist system of state would be adopted.

Many Nepalese seemed disillusioned by the rocky transition from monarchy to democracy with demonstrations taking place outside the parliament as the clock ticked towards the deadline on Friday. "It was a day of reckoning," said Akhilesh Upadhyay, editor of the Kathmandu Post.

"The CA is easily the most representative body in the history of the country and a symbol of progressive Nepal. If it were to be dissolved, all kinds of disruptive forces would assert themselves in the political vacuum."

Reckless bus

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transport workers blocked the road with vehicles shortly after 11:00am.

They however withdrew the barricade at about 1:00pm after police confirmed them that there had been no abduction.

Moktar Hossain, president of an association of minibus owners in Narayanganj, said they offered Tk 10,000 in compensation but the garment workers demanded Tk 50,000.

When the demand was turned down, the garment workers went on the rampage, he added.

Bangladeshis

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to rejoice at Musa's feat.

The reception coincided with the International Everest Day, which celebrates the first human ascent of Everest. On this day in 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay conquered the highest peak on earth.

In his welcome note, Bangladesh Ambassador Nim Chandra Bhowmik congratulated Musa on behalf of the government.

He said the climber has shown people of Bangladesh are capable of taking on any challenge.

In his speech, Musa said, "Scaling Everest was my dream. Now that I've done it, I reckon things have totally changed for me. Maybe a different Bangladesh is waiting for me."

Bangladesh lawmakers Abdullah al Islam Jacob and Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shaon attended the programme.

They said the entire nation is eagerly waiting to receive Musa.

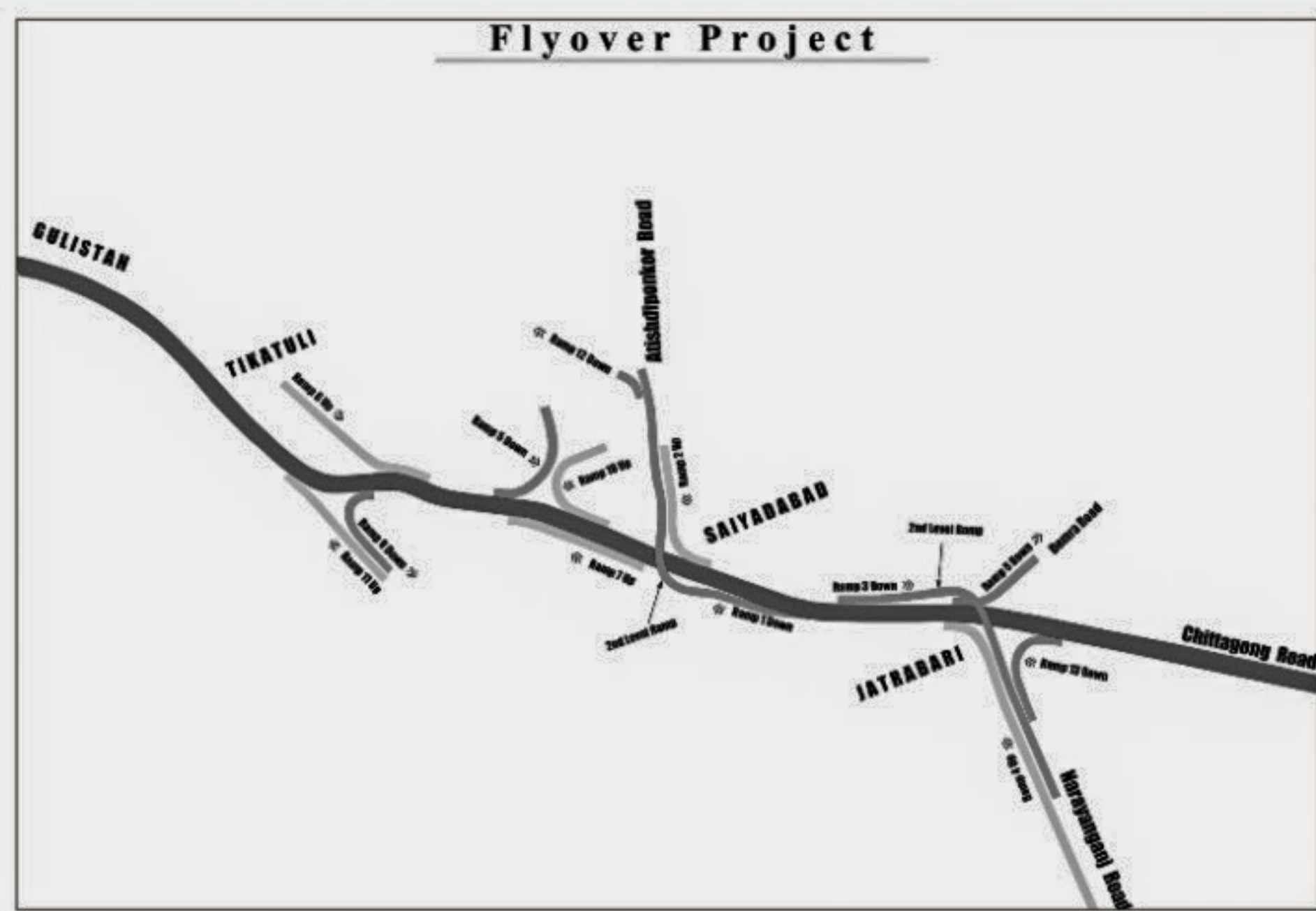
Anisul Haq, deputy editor of Bangla daily Prothom Alo and president of North Alpine Club, also spoke at the function.

Embassy officials and their families, tour organisers, Sherpas and two Australian mountaineers were present.

In a gesture of honour, the embassy officials gave Musa a Khada, traditional Nepalese scarf (turtorial).

Musa, a sub-editor at The Daily Star, left Kathmandu for Everest on April 12 and returned to plains after 45 days.

The programme, conducted by Nasrin Zahan Lipi, head of chancery of the embassy, was also attended by Kathmandu dignitaries and media personnel.



Jatrabari flyover

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The DCC is however oblivious to these problems. In fact, it is the corporation that gave the guarantee and also finalised the draft of the design.

The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was scheduled to open the flyover project on May 13, which was postponed by the DCC without assigning any specific reasons.

Experts say that the guarantee is very unusual and would block other desperately needed transport links.

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, a top transport expert, said, "Because of the guarantee clause, the flyover company can object to the construction of the expressway, Metro Rail and the rapid bus transit on the ground [that] these may impact his revenue generation."

Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "I don't think such a guarantee will hinder other transport projects in the corridor."

Belhasa Accom and Associates Ltd, an affiliated company of the Orion Group, owns most of the shares of the flyover.

Salman Obaidul Karim, Orion's managing director, said such guarantee clause is a usual worldwide practice.

He said the guarantee is all the more justified as the concessionaire company was deprived of duty-free facilities; exemption from advance income tax and value added tax, financial mortgage, any alternative concessions and assurance of guaranteed traffic flow.

The company has been

allowed a lower toll rate and a shorter concession period (24 years) than it asked for, said Salman.

Jatrabari is a vital economic gateway to 32 eastern and southern districts. The 10km project is estimated to cost Tk 1,352 crore but officials say the final bill will grow by an unspecified amount because the design has been expanded.

Prof Reza is involved in planning the expressway, which will be designed to span from Narayanganj to Tongi. The Metro Rail is a subway planned from Uttara to Syedabad. The rapid bus routes are scheduled to run between Syedabad, Uttara and Mirpur. All of the projects, which will converge at Jatrabari, are being undertaken under the communications ministry.

Shamsul Hoque, a professor at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and a consultant on the relocation of utilities at the site, said, "The structure of the flyover will conflict with all these three projects as they are also at the same location."

The metro will run into the underground pillars of the flyover."

He said, "The expressway will face the flyover overhead. And there will be no space left for rapid bus route."

Changing the proposed projects to avoid the flyover would dramatically increase their costs, added Shamsul. "You can build deeper or higher, no problem. But you have to count much higher costs."

Shamsul and other experts also said plans to build seven

toll plazas at the end of the exit ramps on the existing surface roads will create severe traffic bottlenecks. The toll plazas should be moved up the flyover so vehicles on the surface roads could move without obstruction.

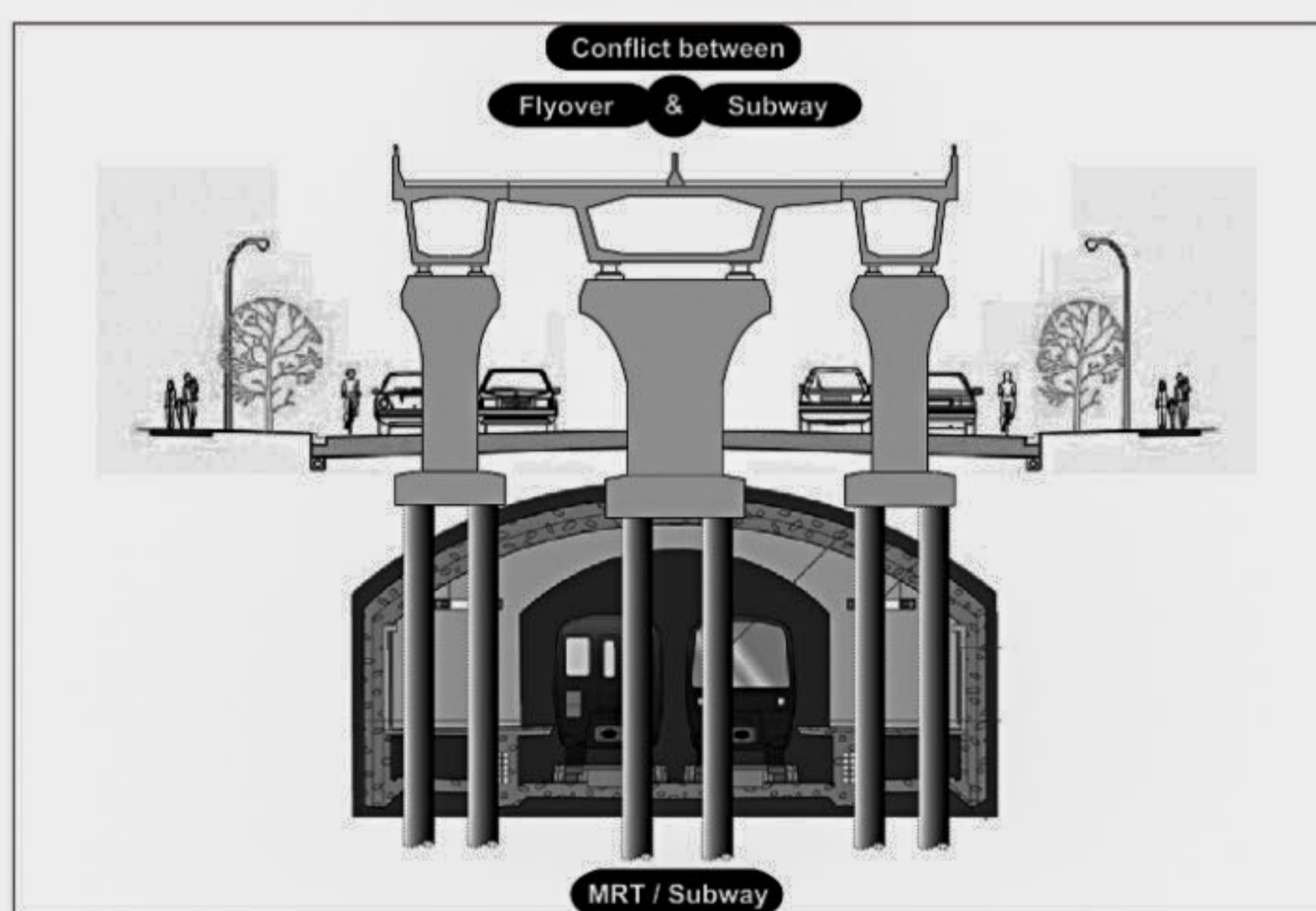
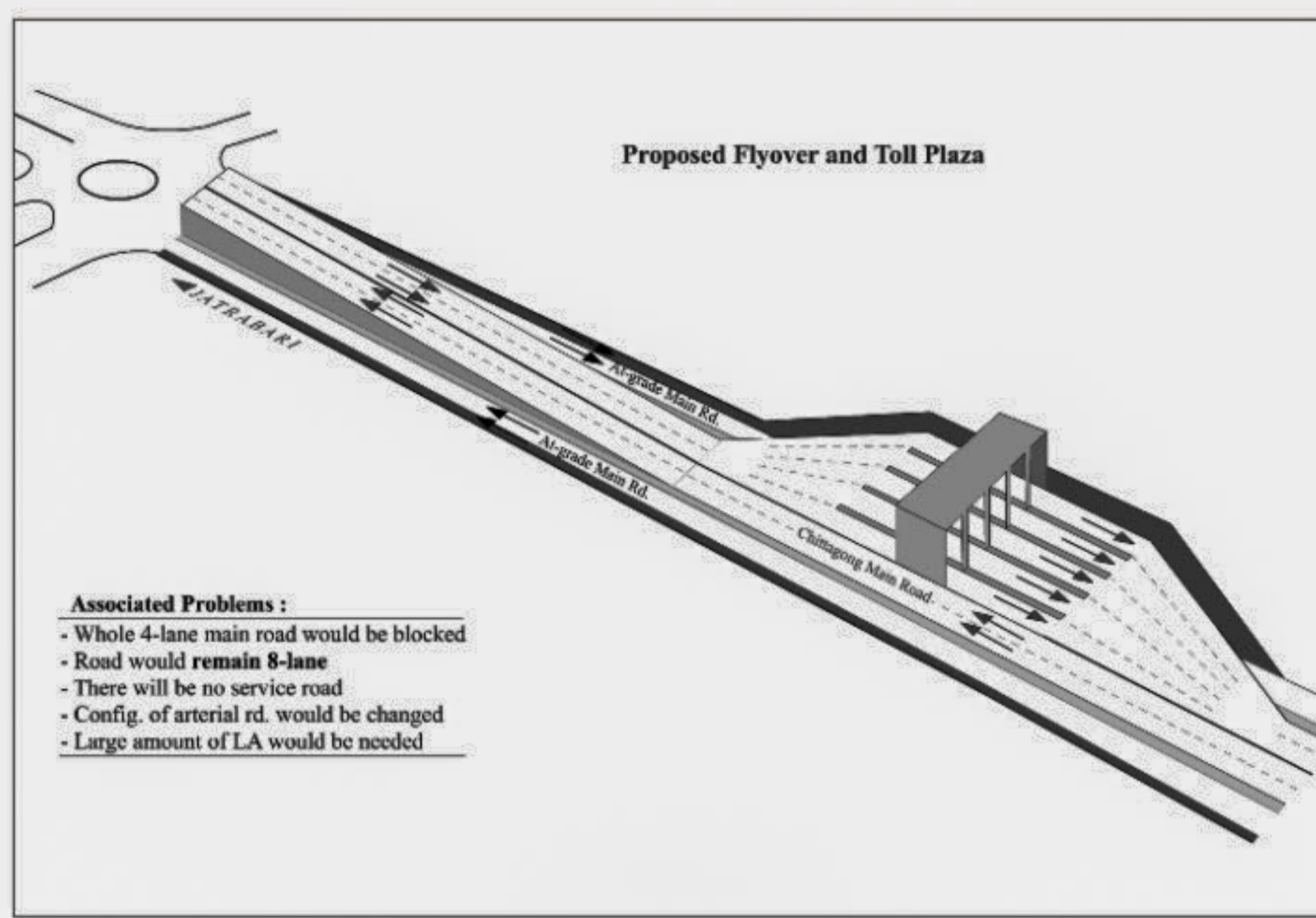
Belhasa Accom company officials say it is up to the communications ministry to find a way to integrate other projects with the flyover design because it was approved first. They said they would also consider moving one of the seven toll plazas up to the top of a ramp.

On the guarantees, Salman Karim of Orion also said the concessions granted for Belhasa Accom were common for such transportation projects. As evidence, he cited a similar promise given on a large road project in India.

But the contract referred to by Salman is different from the blanket guarantee for this project. Indian officials pledged not to construct any competing road only for 10 years, and kept provisions for further transport developments in the area once the first roadway exceeded 90 percent of the designed capacity.

Asked about the logic of having so many ramps, 13 all together, which a Buet report said would choke traffic, Salman said these were planned to meet local needs. He claimed two ramps have been excluded from the design.

He said it does not make business sense for the company to force traffic on the flyover, as that would create congestion on the flyover.



CLOCKWISE: The ramps of the flyover. Setting up toll plazas on the existing surface roads would disrupt entire four lanes of traffic on Chittagong Road and acquisition of large amount of land will be required. The drawing by Prof Shamsul Hoque of Buet shows how the underground pillars of the flyover will conflict with the subway. The metro tunnels will have to be deeper to avoid the pillars.

facebook blocked

FROM PAGE 1
Many Facebookers called The Daily Star yesterday, enquiring about why they could not log on to the site. They dubbed the move radical and said the government should have blocked individual profiles rather than the entire site.

Earlier, the BTRC had directed internet data service handlers Mango Telecom and Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd to find a way to block antisocial contents posted by Facebookers.

But the two companies failed to fix the problem, which prompted the government to block the entire platform, said the official, asking not to be named.

The BTRC official said some users had posted anti-Islamic content about Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM), which the government took seriously. Some users have posted sub-links to pornographic materials, which are not "tolerable", the official said.

"The access to Facebook will resume when the operators find a way to block such anti-social contents," said the official.

Three Islamic political parties -- Islami Oikya Jote, Islami Andolan and Khelafat Andolan -- on Friday demanded an immediate ban on Facebook for a recent campaign by some users inviting people to draw images of the prophet.

In March last year, the government blocked the video sharing website YouTube for hosting a recorded conversation between the prime minister and army officers after the BDR carnage.

More than 10 lakh people use the internet in Bangladesh. Facebook is the most popular social network, especially among the youth.

Pakistan has recently banned Facebook for hosting blasphemous contents. A contest organised by a Facebook user calling on people to draw the prophet raised protests in Pakistan.

RABARRESTSYOUTH Rab yesterday arrested Mahub Alam Rodin, 30, a resident of Wari in the capital on charges of uploading satiric images of some political leaders on Facebook.

Commander Mohammad Sohail, director of Rab's legal and media wing, said Rodin's Facebook activity over the last one year was offensive.

Rab quoted Rodin as saying

he uploaded obscene images and did this as his pastime.

Rab has so far blocked seven Facebook accounts of Rodin, which he opened with email addresses and fake particulars, the Rab official said.

Rodin also used several pseudonyms: Brigadier Mahadi, Sepahi Mahadi, Imam Hossain, Rodin Al, Mohammad Al Mahadi and Junaida Khandaker Zihan, according to the official.

Sohail said Rodin, jobless, did not continue studies after college. According to the official, during interrogation, Rodin said he possesses two passports.

REACTION Educationist Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said the blocking of Facebook is by no means beneficial. "Information should be free flowing. When that is hampered, people would only find more interest in finding ways to bypass it."

Talking about the offensive contents on Facebook, he said, "These [activities] cannot be stopped by blocking Facebook. Many more websites need to be banned as well."

IT expert Mustafa Jabbar said the internet has become an uncontrollable medium but blocking the entire site is no solution to the problem.

"I don't support it. Restricting us from being in touch with the world is like making us live like ostriches with their heads buried in the sand," he said.

"It is not a good move. A better step would be to take legal action against individual offenders."

Jabbar said the government did it because someone posted cartoons of the VIPs. "But many people including girls are being abused in Facebook every day. Would they have done the same for them or me? You cannot block an entire population for some wrongs done by one or two individuals."

He stressed stronger and all-inclusive cyber-crime laws so that people can go to law enforcers when they are being harassed on the internet, not just on Facebook.

Monjur Morshed Khan, a university student and Facebook user, said "Blocking the entire site is too much."

Nazibuddin Ahmed, a father of three from Malibagh Chowdhurypara, said: "I'm not a fan of social networking sites, but I think this is a very stupid decision following demands from Islamic parties."

Death

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officer of the Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, Dr Rokon, pulled out her tooth, the condition of the lady deteriorated.

Doctors sent the lady to the emergency section of the Cardiology department, where on-duty doctors said she was brought dead.

Relatives of Halima Khatun blame doctors' negligence for the death. They alleged the doctors did not take any precaution, though she was a patient of diabetes and had hypertension.

The doctors even left the hospital locking the gate of the department around 1:45pm, said Farook Ahmed, brother-in-law of Halima Khatun. The body was taken home from the hospital around 6:15pm.

Halima Khatun's husband Afzal Hossain is the Senior Vice President of Louhajang upazila Awami League.

Referring anonymity, a group of doctors of the Dentistry department said if they had acute emergency management service in the department, the situation could be averted.

Contacted, the director of the hospital, Brig Gen Mohammad Abdul Majid Bhuiya said her blood pressure was quite normal and so the doctors pulled out her tooth. Perhaps she then suffered a cardiac arrest, which is very rare.

"But without an autopsy the reason behind her death cannot be affirmed," he said.

He added, the patient's relatives expressed unwillingness in autopsy and gave him a written statement in this regard. So it is still unknown what caused the death.

The director also said a four-member committee has already been formed to investigate the death with Prof Abu Shafi Ahmed Amin, chairman of the department of ENT, as its head.

The other members are Prof Mohammad Shamsul Alam, chairman, department of dentistry and Dr AKM Salek, associate professor of Physical Medicine. And the member secretary of the probe body is Dr Mohammad Nazmul Karim, deputy director of the hospital.

The director however said immediate resuscitation was given to the lady and at every department there is emergency management system.

The officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, Rezaul Karim said that no case was filed in this regard. But they were informed and went to the spot.

Law minister

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meeting of the parliamentary body, he yesterday gave the excuse of not receiving the meeting resolution for not consulting Zillur Rahman.

He said he would decide on meeting the president after receiving the meeting resolution on returning home from Kampala.

The law minister is expected to return on June 6.

Shafique Ahmed said the government has no plan to cancel the judges' appointments. The tangle will be over only if the chief justice administers them the oath, he added.

Earlier on May 6, Attorney General Mahbub Alam told The Daily Star that if the judges are not sworn-in for their offices it would set a bad example.

He said refraining from complying with the president's order is unconstitutional.

"There is no specific timeframe for the chief justice to administer oath to any judges appointed by the president," he added.

Meanwhile, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Khandaker Mahub Hossain has recently said that lawyers of the country would not accept it if the chief justice administer oath to these two controversial persons.

He urged the government to cancel the two judges' appointment for the sake of the judiciary.

Another held

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Khokon assaulted Aleya on Wednesday night and set fire to the teenage girl, because she had refused to marry him.

OC Iqbal Hossain of Pallabi Police Station said Billal confessed to his involvement in the attack.

Billal told police that Khokon requested him to make the attack to take revenge on Aleya for her refusal to marry Khokon.

On Tuesday, the day before the beastly incident, Khokon plotted the attack and gave him Tk 100 for buying petrol, said Billal.

Billal was produced before a Dhaka court with a prayer of seven days' remand while Khokon whose interrogation ended yesterday will be produced before the court today seeking further remand.

Billal collected the petrol from a motorbike in the area and took the petrol in a jug to the spot and poured it on Aleya, the OC said quoting Billal adding that then Khokon lit a match stick and threw it on Aleya.

Billal fled the scene when she caught fire within seconds.

Meanwhile, Aleya's aunt Razia said the condition of Aleya is deteriorating and now she was unable to speak.

Doctor Samanta Lal Sen, project director of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of DMCH, said Aleya has been in the ICU and her condition is critical.

Climate fund

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The state minister said so far the UK has committed 60 million pound sterling, the European Union 8.5 million euro, Denmark 10 million Danish kroner to the fund. In total, it's around Tk 1200 crore, he noted.

A UK newspaper recently ran a report saying Bangladesh had refused the fund opposing the WB's control over the money.

Civil society organisations in Bangladesh too were against WB's authority. They said it would cost a good percentage of the fund if managed by the WB.

Hasan Mahmud said a committee comprised of the ministers for environment, finance, agriculture and disaster management will handle the BCCRE.

On the Asia conference, he said, "The objective of the conference is to enhance understanding among the least developed countries (LDC) and small island developing states (SIDS) on climate change risks."

Ahead of the climate change conference in Mexico late this year, the Asia Conference is

significant, he said, adding through better understanding, it will be easier for the LDC and SIDS to take joint stance during the climate negotiations.

Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Maldives would sign joint declarations with European Union during this conference. However, he did not go into details of the declarations.

Bangladesh and EU are organising today's conference, which will be inaugurated by the prime minister at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Ministers and high officials of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Republic of Yemen will attend it.

Connie Hedegaard, EU commissioner of Climate Action, will address the conference as the guest of honour.

Bangladesh led the LDCs in Copenhagen and wants to hold the same position in Mexico climate conference, Hasan Mahmud said, adding, "We want to make our concerted voice louder there."

Buet in mourning

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demanded arrest and exemplary punishment of the driver and other staffs of the bus, and proper compensation by the bus company to the family of Khandaker Khanjahan Samrat, a fresher of mechanical engineering department, who lost his life only five days after joining his academic session.

Classes were suspended at the institution yesterday.

Around one thousand students, teachers and staffs wearing black ribbons formed human chains at around 1:00pm on three roads through the campus as part of the day's programmes.

"We do not want such loss anymore," said Buet Vice-Chancellor Prof AMM Shafiqullah while participating in the human-chain programme.

He also said the university authorities will come to a firm decision to avoid repetition of such tragic incidents.

Earlier at midday, students brought out a procession with placards and marched on campus streets.

They announced that they will wear black ribbons for the next six days in memory of their fellow.

Agitating students submitted a memorandum with a nine-point demand around 12:30pm to the VC.

The demands include exemplary punishment of the staffs of the bus and appropriate compensation to the victim's family.

The VC at the human-chain programme said he would be doing everything to fulfil the demands.

Vehicular movements on the main road of the campus and three other roads connecting the Palashi intersection remained

suspended since the bus crash on Thursday.

The other demands placed by the students were imposing a ban on the movement of heavy vehicles on the campus roads, building an entrance gate-cum-vehicle barrier and naming it after Samrat, setting up a permanent traffic police booth at Palashi intersection, observing a seven-day mourning programme and purchasing a well-equipped ambulance for the university.

On June 3, teachers, students and others will join another human-chain programme in front of the National Press Club in the capital at 3:00pm to press home their demand of ensuring road safety. An association formed by the people who lost their loved ones in road accidents will organise the programme.

Police are yet to arrest the driver of the bus.

The driver and other staffs of the bus went into hiding soon after the accident, and the police are seeking them out, said Basir Ahmed, the investigation officer of the case filed with Lalbagh Police Station.

The matter of realising compensation from the bus company would be fixed after the arrest of the accused, he added.

No report

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found among the victims". Chowdhury's comments came as emergency teams were still trying to cut their way into sections of the mangled wreckage more than 30 hours after a Mumbai-bound high-speed passenger train from Kolkata careened off the tracks in a remote part of West Bengal.

Aila

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serious hardship. Of them, around one lakh people live on the embankments.

An assessment by South Asian Association for Poverty Eradication in October last year found the Aila-affected people in those areas face 44 percent drop in income.

Around 60 percent of the people there are engaged in fishing, while others depend on agriculture, livestock, and collection of crabs, wood, honey from the Sundarbans and small trades.

The storm damaged crop on 77,000 acres of land fully and on 246,000 acres partially according to the Disaster Management Bureau. About 52,961 acres of shrimp enclosures and 1,074 acres of sweet fishponds were damaged by Aila.

Prior to Aila, people used to rear livestock at household level, but they lost 80 percent their animals. Any livestock or poultry that survived the catastrophe was sold after Aila at reduced prices due to lack of fodder and limited space to live, says a survey conducted by an alliance of NGOs working in southwest coast.

As saline water remain stagnated on vast land, it is not possible for the farmers to grow Aman rice this season too, said advocate Firoz Ahmed, chairman of Aila-hit Solidarity Platform.

"The localities in the southwest could disappear if the government fails to build strong embankments or maintain natural river flows," Firoz Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Secretary for Disaster Management Division Mukhlesur Rahman said the government is providing food aid to 48,000 families in the cyclone-affected region.

"The government will respond to any emergency situation, if arisen," Rahman noted.

Extortionists

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into the construction site of Sun City Developers Ltd around 7:30am.

The gang shot Ujjal in the right leg, stabbed Anju indiscriminately and left the scene leaving them seriously injured. Before leaving they threatened Ujjal to ask his employers to contact them sharp, he added.

Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station, said they have reinforced security around the site since the company filed an extortion case a week earlier.

According to the case statement the extortionists had swooped on the hapless workers at the site injuring three and demanded Tk 5 lakh as toll. They even left their contact number with the workers.

Delwar said they have identified the criminals and will arrest them soon.

On the same day at 7:00am, a gang of around five criminals entered a construction site of another real estate developer in that area and attacked the construction workers and shot Abdul Wahab in the leg.

Wahab said the gang ordered the workers to stop working and shot in his left leg creating panic. The attackers had neither demanded any extortion money from the developers earlier nor did they mention the reason for their anger.

Delwar said the same gang may be responsible for the two incidents as the victims of both the cases gave similar descriptions of the assailants.

The criminals may be adopting the strategy of creating panic first and asking for money later, he said.

Zia's death

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in 1981 by a group of disgruntled army officers at Chittagong Circuit House.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday in a statement asked all of its unit committees of the country to observe the day with due respect and solemnity.

The party flag will be hoisted at half-mast at the central party office at Naya Paltan and all party offices across the country.

Leaders and activists of BNP will place wreaths at Zia's grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital early in the morning and offer Fataha.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will distribute food among the destitute, after placing a wreath at Zia's grave at 10:00am.

Khaleda will distribute food among the destitute for three consecutive days from today, said a party press release.

She will also inaugurate a 3-day photo exhibition on Zia's life and works at the Jatiya Press Club later in the day.

Meanwhile, BNP held a discussion on Zia's life and works at the Institute of Engineers' auditorium yesterday.