

MOGHBAZAR-MOUCHAK FLYOVER 450-metre stretch opens to traffic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A short stretch of the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover in the capital was opened to traffic yesterday, allowing vehicles to come down near the Sonargaon hotel from the Hatirjheel intersection by going over the Karwan Bazar level crossing.

Opening the 450-metre section of the 8.7-kilometre flyover, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain expressed the hope that it would help ease traffic congestion.

Expert critics, however, have always viewed that this portion would not bring any significant benefit due to various drawbacks -- one being that it touches down on the road before the Sonargaon hotel intersection and does

not go over the critical junction.

The project director earlier reasoned that the stretch would come into conflict with the proposed metro rail if it goes past the hotel intersection.

The section cost Tk 85 crore, coming into being through a structural change in the Tk 1,219 crore-project, which comprises 50 ramps and stands on 311 single column piers along the central line of existing roads.

The first part of the flyover was inaugurated late March last year by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

It is a two-kilometre four-lane carriageway stretching from the Satrasta intersection (Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Avenue) up to Shaheed Captain Mansur Ali Avenue (Moghbazar) near Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital.

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A handful of vehicles use the just-opened section of Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover that allows vehicles from Ramna area to get down near Sonargaon Hotel over the FDC Level Crossing. A large number of vehicles at the level crossing are seen waiting for a train to pass. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

11 members of Tabligh Jamaat doped, looted

8 of the victims foreigners

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Eleven members of Tabligh Jamaat, including eight foreigners, were doped in Brahmanbaria and were robbed of their belongings on Tuesday night.

The victims were admitted to Akhaura Upazila Health Complex yesterday morning.

The incident happened at Senarabadi Jame Mosque in Akhaura.

Of the victims, six are Indonesians, two Thai nationals and three Bangladeshis, according to locals and other members of Tabligh Jamaat.

Billal Hossain, a member of another Tabligh team there, said a man from Nagarkanda joined them a few days ago, introducing himself as Hasan.

On Tuesday night, Hasan gave them some juice and all the 11 fell sick after taking it, he said, citing the victims.

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Into quizzical hibernation

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However, the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 makes it mandatory for the local administration to take action to stop child marriage. The minimum age for marriage is 18 for girls and 21 for boys.

According to Section-4 of the act, upon receiving information that a child marriage is taking place, the UNO, women affairs officers, social welfare officers and education officers, among other officials in the upazila, have to act to stop the marriage.

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said enforcement of the section to prevent child marriage is an administrative function.

"Operating mobile courts is judicial function ... the sooner we realise that trial and punishment is the domain of the judiciary only, the faster we will develop as a nation."

Rights activist Sultana Kamal didn't subscribe to the reasons mentioned by administrative officials for not being

able to stop child marriages.

Any bonafide citizen is entitled to stop anything illegal happening, she said.

The deputy commissioners of both Dinajpur and Natore also cited the same grounds for not taking action to stop child marriages.

In a letter to the Cabinet Division, Natore DC Shahina Khatun said they heard about 12 incidents of child marriage, but they were unable to take action to stop those.

"It's not possible to stop child marriage without being able to run mobile courts."

She said the executive magistrates were not running mobile courts after the HC judgment.

Dinajpur DC Mir Khairul Alam said the local administration was facing problems in applying law in the absence of mobile courts. He communicated it to the Cabinet Division.

Talking to this newspaper, several

deputy commissioners have claimed that they now find it difficult to run the local administration, as executive magistrates without judicial powers are unable to try wrongdoers on the spot through mobile courts.

A week ago, the High Court declared illegal and unconstitutional the operation of mobile courts by executive magistrates, who had been exercising the judicial powers since 2007 even after the separation of the judiciary from the executive. Mobile courts can be run only by judicial magistrates, it said.

Some DCs have already written to the Cabinet Division, claiming that they have been facing difficulties in taking action against food adulteration, eve teasing, child marriage and some other wrongdoings after the HC verdict.

"Criminal activities have been on the rise in the district as the executive magistrates stopped holding trial of offenders on the spot after the court's [HC] verdict," said the Natore DC in a

letter to the Cabinet Division recently.

She said Natore UNOs informed her that it wouldn't be possible for them to maintain law and order and implement the government decisions in the prevailing situation.

In the letter, she also mentioned that incidence of child marriage rose in the district as the administration couldn't run mobile courts.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter sent to the Cabinet Division on May 13.

Contacted, Pabna DC Rekha Rani Balo said she informed the Cabinet Division about the difficulties the local administration was facing after the HC verdict.

Asked, Maksudur Rahman Patwary, additional secretary of the Cabinet Division, said field-level administrative officials informed them of their difficulties after the HC verdict.

"We have instructed the field-level administration to act in line with the

court verdict."

Maksudur said mobile courts run by executive magistrates had achieved a huge success since 2009. The courts disposed of more than eight lakh cases, and people immensely benefited from that.

Until the separation of the judiciary from the executive in November 2007, administrative officials used to exercise both judicial and executive powers. But they lost the judicial powers after the separation of the judiciary.

Irked by the separation of the judiciary from the executive in November 2007, administrative officials staged a showdown in the capital and demanded their judicial powers remain untouched. They forced the then caretaker government to give some judicial powers to them.

The then president promulgated an ordinance empowering executive magistrates to run mobile courts to maintain law and order. They were

allowed only to fine individuals for an offence.

Assuming office in early January 2009, the Awami League-led government offered more powers to administrative officers. It empowered executive magistrates to sentence offenders to up to two years' imprisonment in addition to their earlier powers to impose fines.

In response to three writ petitions, the HC on May 11 declared unconstitutional the running of mobile courts by executive magistrates.

On Sunday, the government filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

SC Chamber Judge Justice Hasan Foez Siddique stayed the HC verdict till today. He sent the petition to the full bench which is expected to hold hearing on it today.

[Our correspondents from Natore, Dinajpur, Pabna and Narayanganj contributed to this report]

A man one couldn't help loving

FROM PAGE 1

start The Daily Star with a promise of independent journalism. I knew of his personal interest in the affairs of the newly launched paper as Ali Bhai would frequently refer to him in his conversations with me.

His natural affinity to democracy and liberalism made him an instinctive adherent of the free media. He truly believed diversity of views is a fundamental source of social capital and the surest guarantor against authoritarianism. He had learnt from this vast experience of other countries that however well intentioned a government was, it could never be the repository of all knowledge and hence it had to listen carefully to the voices of the people, especially the critical ones, for only those who spoke fearlessly spoke with utmost sincerity.

It was his core belief that governments, even those sincerely devoted to the welfare of the people, were never harmed by criticisms, however harsh. When many in a society spoke out loudly-- environment permitting-- the few with vested "agenda" were forced to step back.

Faruk Bhai knew from experience that developing countries repeatedly erred on the side of authoritarianism sometimes from a genuine impatience with democracy-- as everything took more time when either consensus or large scale support were needed to be built--but more often because they found public support too hard to garner or retain as they surrendered to vested interest or developed their own.

But he believed, as all of us freedom fighters did, that Bangladesh need not go the way of authoritarianism. He was

greatly pained when it did.

When the chance to rebuild democracy came, after the fall of Gen. Ershad, he energized himself and joined all those who were working to make it a reality. At one stage he joined the Awami League in an advisory capacity as he, being a wholehearted believer in the spirit and values of our Liberation War, held the view that the party of Bangabandhu, now led by his daughter, would be his means to contributing to strengthening democracy in Bangladesh. Finding his efforts stymied, he became inactive, and later withdrawn.

His irreplaceable desire to serve the nation prompted him to join Brac as an advisor after his retirement, in which capacity he contributed wholeheartedly to the worldwide success of this unique and worthy institution that has made Bangladesh a household

name in the global struggle to eradicate poverty.

To me, he was a model of a modern Bengali, highly proud of his cultural identity and yet open to the world to eagerly learn everything that would make our culture, our people and our country better. He was a very refined person as evidenced by his love for literature, music, and painting from both home and abroad.

He was truly a global citizen in his love for food, a gastronomie. He would travel the world to dine at the best restaurants. He was the only person I heard saying that he was going to Paris, of course to visit the museums, but also to dine in those exquisite places that only Paris had.

He was a sincere friend of The Daily Star. His love affair with this paper started of course with his friend, SM Ali, but continued over the years not

only because of what we tried to do but more importantly because of what we tried to stand for. His worldwide experience taught him the values of free media and as such, he stood for its success in the country that he loved so much.

There were countless moments of advice and encouragement that I had the honour to receive from him. He felt personally proud when we succeeded and deeply pained when we failed. He was a tremendous source of courage and consolation during my most challenging days in leading this newspaper for which I will forever remain indebted to him.

With him we lose a man of knowledge, culture, sophistication, courtesy, dedication and warmth. He loved life and in turn life--in the form of all the people who came into his contact--loved him.

BNP worried

FROM PAGE 16

The BNP's Vision 2030 is a forerunner to its electoral manifesto for the next national election due in early 2019.

Despite several attempts, the BNP failed to form all the district committees, said party insiders.

In April this year, the party assigned 51 central leaders to tour its organisational districts and complete the task by May 7. The deadline was extended to May 15, but the party could not finish the job.

On May 2, the meeting of BNP Chittagong north district unit at its Chittagong office was foiled and the following day, similar programme of Chittagong south district unit met the same fate due to infightings. Some 15 people were injured in a clash between two groups of BNP men in Chittagong's Patiya.

On Monday night, Khaleda held a two-and-a-half-hour long meeting with the Chittagong BNP leaders to resolve the intra-party conflict.

A senior leader present in the meeting told The Daily Star that Khaleda vented her anger about the incidents and said that committees of the two units of the port city would be announced from the centre.

In a press release yesterday, the BNP expelled two leaders of the units for violating party discipline and another was warned.

On May 14, a meeting of Dhaka district unit was suspended as its leaders were locked into a clash in presence of central BNP leaders over something party's senior leader Amanullah Aman said in his speech.

Khaleda later called Aman and other leaders of the unit and asked them to solve the problem.

Besides, there was violence during the meetings of BNP in Joypurhat, Jhenidah, Barisal and Rajshahi.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, Mohammad Shahjahan, vice-chairman of the BNP, said in most of the places, the meetings ended peacefully. In some districts, clashes happened and it was normal for a large political party like the BNP.

"It is a political culture in Bangladesh that leaders want to demonstrate their popularity before the central leaders, and this sometimes creates problems. There is a competition among leaders. So, this might happen. We are trying to get out of this situation, and it will take some time," he said.

He also said but the party was monitoring all those incidents and taking prompt action. Party chief Khaleda had already talked to the leaders of Chittagong city and Dhaka district units.

"If it is found that an individual creates a chaotic situation, action will be taken against them," he added.

He was a successful civil servant, an outstanding secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a colourful High Commissioner in India, and a great organiser of Saarc foreign ministers' conference in its early days.

FINANCE MINISTER
AMA MUHITH

Choudhury was an excellent writer and speaker apart from an efficient diplomat and good human being. ... With his departure, the country has lost an efficient diplomat and this loss is not repairable.

COMMERCE MINISTER
TOFAIL AHMED

Faruk Choudhury was such a man who used to think about the country even at this age. Though he was quite senior to us, he was like a friend. Whenever we talked, he talked like a friend. ... We have lost a good friend both politically and personally.

CULTURAL MINISTER
ASADUZZAMAN NOOR

For me, it's a personal loss which I may not ever fully overcome. Ambassador Faruk A Choudhury was a diplomat of a different breed: sharp, always on top of the issues and never at a loss of wit and humour.

FORMER FOREIGN SECRETARY
HEMAYETUDDIN

Choudhury was an outstanding leader in diplomacy of the country. He was a wonderful human being and a down to earth person. ... He played a very crucial role in Bangladesh's foreign ministry and was involved with many crucial issues.

FORMER AMBASSADOR M
HUMAYUN KABIR

Faruk Ahmed Choudhury passes away

FROM PAGE 1

Born in 1934, he entered the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1956 and later went on to hold various positions in the Pakistan Foreign Office and Missions abroad, including in Italy, China, the Netherlands and Algeria.

The diplomat, who had a very rewarding life in his 36-year career, was in charge of Pakistan Foreign Office in Dhaka during the 1971 Liberation War and worked as one of the policymakers in diplomatic arena in support of Bangladesh's independence.

He went to New Delhi to receive the father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after he was freed from Pakistan jail.

He accompanied Bangabandhu in the aircraft from New Delhi to Dhaka on January 10, 1972. He was a close associate and a trusted diplomat of Bangabandhu and travelled to many countries with him.

"He was a successful civil servant, an outstanding secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a colorful high

commissioner in India, and a great organiser of Saarc foreign ministers' conference in its early days. There are so many things to remember about Faruk but the unforgettable thing is his loud laughter," said Finance Minister AMA Muhith in a statement.

After liberation, Faruk was appointed the first Chief of Protocol of Bangladesh in 1972.

He served as deputy high commissioner of Bangladesh in London from 1972-76. During this period, he was involved with the final phase of the negotiations leading to Bangladesh's entry to the Commonwealth.

From 1976-78, he was ambassador to the UAE and Bahrain and from 1978-82 to the EEC and Benelux countries.

After returning home, he became the chief coordinator of the 13th OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Dhaka in 1983 when he served as additional foreign secretary for a year.

He became foreign secretary in 1984, serving for two years. He then

served as Bangladesh high commissioner to India from 1986-92. After retirement in 1992, he came out with another revelation of his genius as an outstanding columnist and writer. He associated himself with social work and authored a number of books. He also served Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), one of the largest NGOs of the world, in different capacities.

He became a member of the Awami League Advisory Council (Foreign Affairs) in 2002 and was the contact person of foreign diplomats. He played an important role for the Awami League's foreign affairs during the BNP-Jamaat's 2001-06 government tenure.

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said Faruk played a very crucial role in re-structuring the foreign ministry. "With his departure, the country has lost an efficient diplomat and this loss is not repairable."

Cultural Minister Asaduzzaman Noor said Faruk was concerned about the rise of radicalism and often

inquired about what was going on. "We had many things to learn from him. We have lost a good friend, both politically and personally."

Ex-foreign secretary Hemayetuddin said his passing left a vacuum that would be felt by the nation for all time.

"The nation owes him a debt of honour for the selfless services he has rendered from the very early days of our emergence as a sovereign and independent country and for setting up the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of our great country," he said.

Faruk was the eldest among four brothers and two sisters. One of his brothers, ex-secretary Enam Ahmed Choudhury, is an adviser to BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

Another brother, former career diplomat Iftekhar Ahmed Choudhury, served as the Foreign Affairs Adviser to the military-backed caretaker government of 2007-08. His other brother was former ambassador Masum Ahmed Choudhury, who died in 2012.

Among his sisters, Nasim Hai is the