

বিশ্ব বলেছিলো- পদ্মা সেতু 'সম্ভব না' একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আর ১৬ কোটি বাঙালি বলেছিলো- 'কেন না!'

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# VIP LANE? What about people's?

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

Dhaka's road traffic earned a horrendous feat quite a long ago. Be it day or night, the roads remain clogged with thousands of vehicles for hours, taking a toll on commuters and costing the country billions of dollars and thousands of work hours.

When the frustrated city dwellers are eagerly waiting for a solution to the perennial traffic congestion, the government high-ups have come up with a bizarre idea of a separate lane for the VIPs.

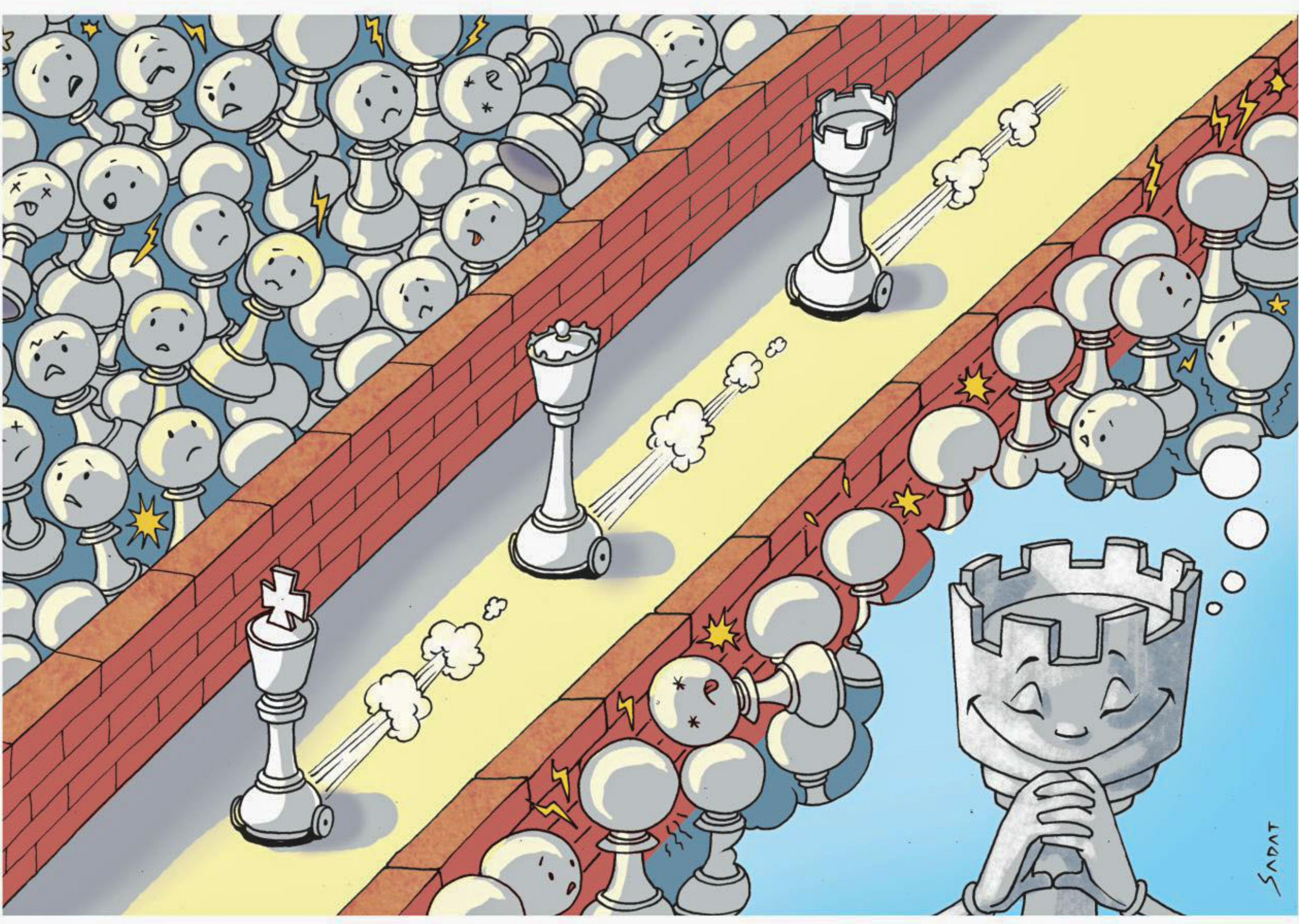
That is what the Cabinet Division has proposed to the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges. According to a proposal, emergency services like ambulance, fire service and police can also use the dedicated lane.

Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shaful Alam said, "A normal request was sent from the Cabinet Division for vetting."

Some countries have such lanes and the proposal was sent to examine if the same could be introduced in Bangladesh, he added.

Explaining the rationale for the move while replying to a query, Shaful Alam after a cabinet meeting yesterday said the

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## Rupa rape, murder case verdict Feb 12

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court yesterday set February 12 for delivering the verdict in the case filed for rape and murder of law student Rupa Khatun in a moving bus.

After closing arguments of both sides, the court of Abul Mansur Miah, acting judge of Tangail Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, came up with the decision.

All the five accused in the case are now in jail.

On Sunday, the court set yesterday for hearing arguments from both sides on legal points after the defence concluded their arguments on the day, seeking acquittal

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## BRIBERY CONVICTIONS S Korea appeals court frees Samsung heir

AFP, Seoul

A South Korean appeals court yesterday dismissed most of Samsung heir Lee Jae-Yong's bribery convictions and cut his prison sentence to a suspended term, ordering his immediate release.

Judges said Lee, vice chairman of the world's biggest smartphone and memory chip maker Samsung Electronics, had been forced to offer bribes to then-president Park Geun-Hye and her close confidante.

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## PADMA BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION Piling problems delaying work

Piling could not be done in 14 piers; bridge may not be complete before June next year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Design-related problems in 14 piers of the Padma Bridge would cause at least a six-month delay in its construction.

Construction of the 6.15km bridge connecting the capital with the southwestern region would not be completed by the government's set December deadline.

Of the 40 piers, piling for the 14 could not be done due to the nature of the riverbed. The authorities were trying to redesign the piers, said sources in the Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA).

Time and again Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader had said the bridge would be done within the deadline, which now seems very unlikely.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said construction of the bridge might not be finished before June 2019.

Speaking at a prize-giving ceremony at the NBR, he said, "Our Mr Obaidul Quader wanted to complete the bridge by December this year. But this will not be possible as all spans have not yet been laid."

He claimed that Quader was of the opinion that the bridge would be at least done by March 2019 but Muhith termed it over-optimistic.

The construction work of the country's largest bridge was going on in full swing before the BBA, the implementing agency of the project, last year discovered problems in the design of some piers.

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## Muhith pledges steps on loan anomalies at Janata Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said necessary steps will be taken regarding the alleged loan irregularities at state-owned Janata Bank.

Muhith said this while speaking at a prize-giving ceremony organised by the National Board of Revenue.

Asked about a news report on the bank in the Prothom Alo, the minister said he had no knowledge that huge amounts of loans were disbursed when Abul Barkat, professor of economics at Dhaka University, was the bank's chairman.

Muhith, however, said he was aware that loans ranging from Tk 300 crore to 400 crore were given against fictitious names. "A bad precedent was set."

Janata was a good bank but it was ruined during Barkat's tenure, he added.

The bank disbursed more than Tk 5,504 crore to a little-known group, AnonTex, between 2010 and 2015. A Dhaka-based businessman named Md Younus Badal is managing director of the group.

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## Microplastics threat to ocean giants



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Even the largest marine creatures are vulnerable to tiny fragments of plastic littering the world's oceans.

A new study has found whales and whale sharks - the largest fish in the world - are ingesting microplastics in alarming quantities.

These creatures are filter feeders, meaning they consume large quantities of small prey by straining them out of the ocean water.

In the process, they swallow hundreds to thousands of cubic meters of water daily, meaning there is the potential for them to take in substantial amounts of microplastic floating in the water.

"Our studies on whale sharks in the Sea of Cortez and on fin whales in the Mediterranean Sea confirmed exposure to toxic chemicals, indicating

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## 15-day state of emergency declared in Maldives

AFP, Malé

Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen yesterday declared a 15-day state of emergency, his aide Azima Shukoor announced, deepening the political crisis in the Indian Ocean nation.

The move gives sweeping powers to security forces to arrest and detain suspects, and comes amid a tense standoff between the Supreme Court and the government.

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**SIBL Foundation Hospital & Diagnostic Center**

PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 6

Fazl Zohr Asst Maghribi Sha

AZAN 5-30 2-45-15 5-52 7-15

JAMAAH-051-154-30 5-56 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Every winter, the bank of the Karnaphuli becomes more vibrant as this is the season for making fishing trawlers. It takes nearly three months and costs around Tk 1 crore to build one of these boats. The photos were taken at Fisheryghat in Chittagong on Saturday.

PHOTO: MD RAJIB RAIHAN



## PAK SHELLING Four Indian soldiers killed in Kashmir

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Four Indian soldiers, including an officer, have been killed in the latest cross-border clashes in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, deputy commissioner of Rajouri sector, told Al Jazeera the four troops were killed and one wounded after the Pakistani army opened fire on Indian posts in the Jammu region on Sunday evening.

"The situation is tense currently on the border," Choudhary said. "The latest shelling was ongoing until late on Sunday," he added.

"Most of the areas near the border have been affected due to the ceasefire violation. Though it is difficult to evacuate the civilians at night, we are continuously monitoring the situation," said Choudhary.

Officials ordered the closure of schools near the border for the next three days. There was no immediate response from Pakistan.

Hostilities between India and Pakistan have increased on the de facto border since last month.

More than a dozen people, including six civilians, were killed in January with deadly clashes between the two countries continuing for three days.

Despite a 2003 ceasefire, India and Pakistan regularly trade fire across the so-called Line of Control (LoC), the military demarcation between the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of Kashmir.

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