

Little to show for a costly project

Renovated footpath in Malibagh falling apart weeks after completion

|| MD FOISAL AHMED ||



DHAKA VIBE

Tiles of the footpath are coming off, while the sloping cement covering of the drain underneath it is also crumbling. The photos were taken last week.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A footpath renovated under the supervision of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), that brought months of suffering to locals, is falling apart within weeks of being completed.

According to DSCC Executive Engineer Khondoker Mahub Alam, the renovation and reconstruction work of a footpath and drains near Malibagh rail gate went on for about a year and cost around Tk 16 crore. The work was completed a few days ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

However, in less than a month, holes have emerged on the footpath, while newly-installed tiles are coming off, this correspondent found upon a recent visit.

Romjan, a staff at a local shop, said, "After a long time, they completed it on 26th of Ramadan, but within a week, big holes have formed by the

side of entire footpath." Tiles on footpath have also broken up in some places, he added.

Locals alleged that workers used only sand instead of cement, and that is why it has not sustained.

Contacted, DSCC engineer Mahub said, "We know that holes have formed and tiles are breaking up. We have already asked the construction company to repair those." Asked why it has not been fixed yet, he said workers were not available immediately after Eid, and assured it would be resolved. He also said the contractor's payment has not been cleared yet.

Mahub also refuted claims that proper materials were not used during construction. "It takes about seven days for the cement to set, but locals started using the footpath within hours, defying barriers; that has

caused the damage."

MONTHS OF SUFFERING DURING CONSTRUCTION
What makes the seemingly poor work of DSCC even more frustrating for locals is the problems they had to endure while the construction work was going on.

This correspondent has been following the condition of the road since early May. Residents of the area at the time had said the construction caused a range of problems.

Abdul Kader, a local, had said he was facing a water crisis, as drain-water was seeping into the supply water.

Sanwar Mia, a security guard of a building, told The Daily Star, "A number of tenants have left the flats due to water crisis and dust. Moreover, the construction workers kept their materials blocking our entrance."

A house owner had also said tenants were leaving the area, bothered by the situation.

Shopkeeper Shohag Hossain, meanwhile, had alleged that their sales were being affected to a great extent, as people were avoiding the side of the road. The excessive dust also forced them to sweep the shelves every few hours.

On May 20, DSCC engineer Mahub had said, "The project is almost complete and the rest will be done soon. I admit we are taking longer than usual, but work under the flyover is causing the hindrance."

He had also said he spoke to Dhaka Wasa personnel and the water issue was resolved.

However, masons working there had said at the time that it would take another 20 or more days to complete it, which eventually turned out to be the case.

Quader hints at cabinet expansion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday hinted that the cabinet may be expanded.

"I will talk to the prime minister regarding this after she returns from China. However, it [expansion] may not happen very soon," Quader said while replying to a query at a press conference in secretariat.

When a reporter asked about possible expansion of the cabinet, Quader first referred to it as "just speculation".

Later, he said some posts, including the women and children affairs ministry, in the cabinet are still vacant. "So, the issue of expansion, instead of reshuffle, is now in focus. There may be expansion," he added.

On May 19, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reallocated portfolios of five cabinet members as she curtailed powers of two ministers and increased that of two state ministers.

ALLOCATION NOT ENOUGH FOR DISTRICT ROADS
Quader said his ministry got Tk 37,827 crore budgetary allocation for this fiscal year, which is Tk 580 crore more than the previous fiscal.

The minister disclosed the information a day after Roads and Highways Department released a report which found 247km (24.34 percent) of its roads are in poor, bad or very bad condition.

Asked about it, Quader said, "These are district roads which have been getting inadequate allocation for many years."

However, the report shows 787.33km of national and 872.18km of regional highways are in poor, bad or very bad condition.

Quader said allocation for district roads has increased in last two years and will increase further in future. The minister said he will request the prime minister so that Planning Commission increases allocation in this sector.

Two held with AK-22 rifle, ammo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has detained two persons with an AK-22 rifle and ammunitions from Sayedabad.

The detainees are Kamal Hosen, 35, and Saidul Islam Majumder, 30, from Shuvopur of Cumilla.

A team of Arms Enforcement Team of Special Action Group detained the duo in a drive near Wonderland Park in Sayedabad around 7:40pm on Sunday. Some 30 bullets were also seized from them.

CTTC Additional Deputy Commissioner Jahangir Alam, who led the drive, said the rifle was sold to one Hasib at Tk 6.5 lakh.

Hasib, who fled arrest, is a Jamaat activist and accused in at least 10 criminal cases, said the ADC.

He also said the arrested duo purchased the rifle from two Jamaat activists in Chattogram, and efforts are on to arrest others involved with the syndicate.

Finding quality teachers is a challenge: Prof Serajul

DU's 98th founding anniversary celebrated

DU CORRESPONDENT

It is now a big challenge to find quality teachers in Bangladesh, Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said yesterday.

He said meritorious students have to be brought into the teaching profession.

The eminent thinker said this while presenting a keynote speech at a discussion titled, "Quality education, hindrance

and success", organised marking Dhaka University's 98th founding anniversary.

"A good teacher should not only be wise, they have to be truly interested in the job. Teachers' allowances should be increased to ensure meritorious students choose the profession and concentrate on teaching in classrooms instead of coaching centres," he said.

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DU VC Md Akhtaruzzaman and Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury enjoy a musical performance marking the university's 98th founding anniversary.

PHOTO: STAR

Prayers for Faraaz

Family and well-wishers recall his heroic sacrifice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prayers and milad mahfil for Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain, who was brutally killed along with 19 other hostages in a militant attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka on July 1, 2016, were held yesterday after Asr prayers to seek salvation of the departed soul.

Family members, relatives, friends and well-wishers were present at the programme held at the residence of Latifur Rahman, maternal grandfather of Faraaz and chairman of Transcom Group. Narinda Pir Shah, Syed Muradullah Ahmed administered the prayers attended by eminent citizens and officials of Transcom Group.

Muradullah Ahmed said Faraaz sacrificed his life for his friends and such sacrifice entitles him to a martyr's honour.

Faraaz was the son of Simeen Hossain and Muhammad Waqer Bin Hossain. During the siege at the upscale Gulshan eatery, the terrorists particularly targeted foreigners. The gunmen were asking who could recite verses from the holy Quran and who could not.

Faraaz, a student of economics at Emory University in Atlanta, USA, recited from the holy Quran, and was given the chance to walk out. But he chose to stay with his friends -- Abinta Kabir, a

Bangladesh-born US citizen and fellow student at Emory University, and Tarishi Jain, an Indian student at the University of California, Berkeley -- with whom he had gone to the cafe on that fateful night.

Faraaz was buried at Banani Graveyard on July 4.

Zaraif Hossain, brother of Faraaz, said, "Faraaz is being remembered in and outside the country. We are proud of the honour with which people are recalling him."

Meanwhile, prayers for Faraaz were also held at different places across the country yesterday.

In Brahmanbaria, a milad mahfil was held at Brahmanbaria branch office of Transcom Distribution Company Limited (TDCL) in Ghatutura area of Sadar upazila after Asr prayers.

A milad mahfil was held at Transcom Distribution Company Limited's Faridpur branch as well.

In Chandpur, milad mahfils were held at Transcom Distribution Company Limited office on Mission Road of Natun Bazar and W Rahman Jute Mill Mosque in Puran Bazar.

Besides, milad and doa mahfils were held at Rajshahi, Bogura, Feni, Patuakhali and Cox's Bazar.



Zaraif Ayaaz Hossain, elder brother of Faraaz, speaks at the programme. PHOTO: STAR

LDP leader gets bail

Arrested with bullets earlier in the day

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Within hours of his arrest with seven rounds of bullets at the Dhaka airport, Redwan Ahmed, secretary general of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was granted bail after he was produced before a Dhaka court yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Dhiman Chandra Mondol passed the order after airport police produced him before it showing him arrested under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

In the forwarding report, police said that Redwan was arrested after he entered the airport with bullets without permission and he should be confined in jail until the investigation is completed.

On the other hand, defence lawyer submitted a petition seeking bail in the case, saying his client was wrongfully charged.

Airport police arrested Redwan Ahmed with seven rounds of bullets in his luggage which he was carrying without the airport authority's permission, Noor-e-Alam Siddiqi, director of Aviation Security (AVSEC) at the Dhaka airport, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The bullets were detected while Redwan Ahmed was going through security screening for boarding his flight from Dhaka to Chattogram at 7:30am yesterday, the security official added.

Redwan told the airport authority he was not aware that the bullets were in his bag.

DEATH IN MEDITERRANEAN

HC asks govt to submit report on traffickers in 60 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to submit within 60 days its committee's report on travel agencies and human traffickers responsible for the death of 37 Bangladeshis in the Mediterranean Sea in May.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader passed the order following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Advocate Emdadul Haque.

The Bangladeshi nationals, most of whom were from Sylhet and Noakhali, reportedly died after their boat capsized in the sea -- on the way to Italy from Libya --

on May 9.

During hearing on the petition, Deputy Attorney General ABM Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar informed the court that the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry has formed a high powered inter-ministerial committee, led by an additional secretary, to probe into the tragic incident.

The ministry has also sent a letter to the home ministry for identifying and taking drastic actions against the travel agencies and human traffickers responsible for sending Bangladeshis abroad illegally and for the death of 37 individuals, he said.

DAG Bashar also placed a report from SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

RAMPAL POWER PLANT

Govt lobbying all over the world, says Anu Muhammad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted economist Prof Anu Muhammad yesterday said the government has been "lobbying" all over the world, spending people's money, so that it can implement "Sundarbans-destroying projects without protest and with international consent".

"They sought legitimacy through international lobbying for destroying the Sundarbans. What could be more shameful than this?" he said at a protest rally.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports arranged the rally in front of the Jatia Press Club in the capital, demanding immediate stop to Rampal Power Plant and other similar projects to save the Sundarbans, Bangladesh's only Unesco-recognised world heritage site.

In 2017, a government delegation -- after meeting with Unesco -- had said in a press conference that Unesco has withdrawn all of its reservations against the Rampal project, said Prof Muhammad, also member

secretary of the national committee.

"However, that was a blatant lie. Unesco did not withdraw its reservations," he added.

The government did not stop there, but recently approved new projects for an oil-based power plant within 4 kilometers and a cement factory within 6 kilometers periphery of the Sundarbans, he said.

The projects have been awarded to those companies that are loan defaulters -- known for destroying the country's assets and siphoning people's money abroad, he further said.

So, Unesco's decision to put the Sundarbans on the list of "world heritage in danger" has come against that backdrop, he said, adding this is going to be a great shame for Bangladesh.

Furthermore, a 10-member delegation is now in Azerbaijan to "lobby" for Rampal project, he said, referring to the state participation at the ongoing 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee in Baku.

DHAKA TODAY

ART EXHIBITION

Implicit by Joya Shahrin Huq
Venue: Kala Kendra, Mohammadpur
Time: 4:30pm

FAIR

Charu o Karushilpo Mela
Organiser: Deshong
Venue: Drik Gallery
Time: 10am-8pm

THEATRE

A Woman Alone
Venue: Experimental Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 7pm

FAIR

Brikkho Mela-2019
Venue: National Parade Ground
Time: 10am-8pm

implicit
Drawing, Object, Installation

Joya Shahrin Huq

Exhibition Opening: Saturday, 22 June 2019, 7:00pm
Speaker: Professor Lala Rukh Seilm
On view: 22 June - 09 July 2019, 4:30 - 8 pm

Kalakendra, 1/11 Iqbal Road (3rd floor) Mohammadpur