

‘Costlier than India-China because of soil conditions’  
Quader tells JS about road construction  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday told the parliament that construction cost of roads in Bangladesh is higher than that of India and China, due to difference in soil conditions.

He made the remark in reply to a supplementary question by BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana.

The reserved seat lawmaker said construction cost of roads in Bangladesh is much higher than that of India and China. Despite that, roads in Bangladesh are not durable, causing sufferings of people, she added, asking whether the concerned ministry was taking any measures in this regard.

In reply, Quader said, “You will have to

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‘DEFAMING BANGABANDHU’  
Arrest warrant against Tarique, two others  
OUR CORRESPONDENT, N’ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday issued arrest warrants against BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman and two other leaders in a defamation case filed for terming Ziaur Rahman “father of Bangladeshi Jatiyatbad”.

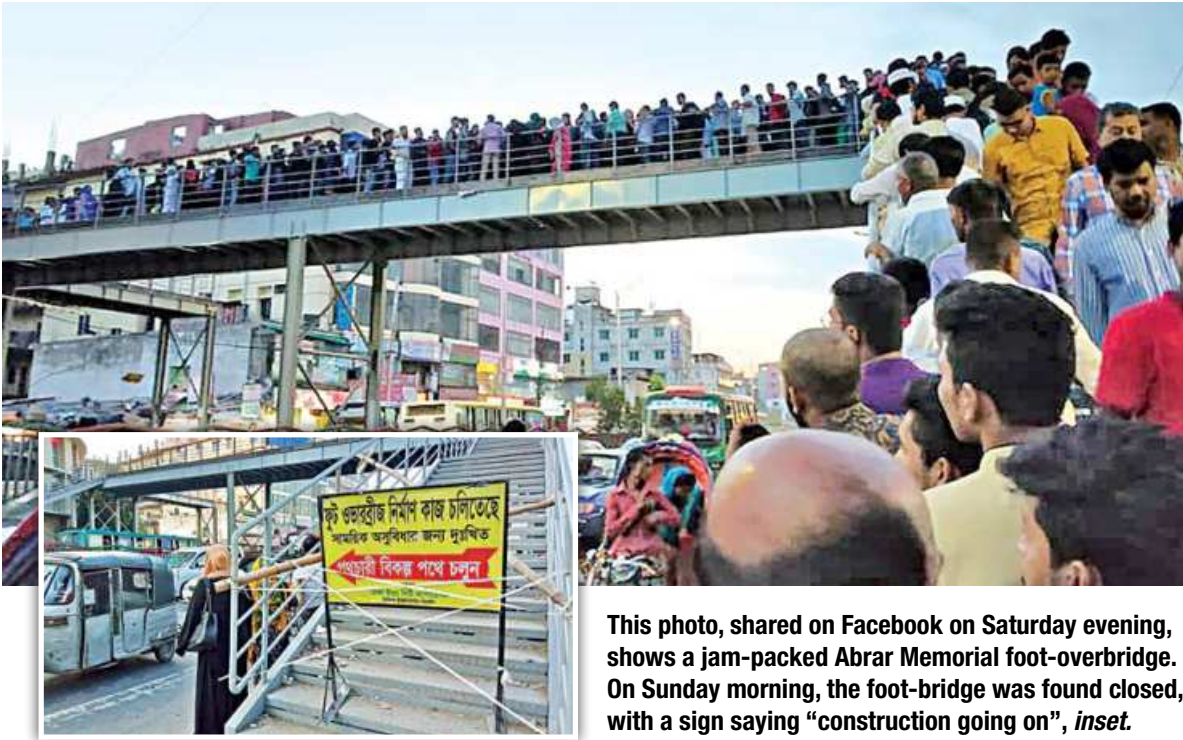
Senior Judicial Magistrate Milton Hossain of Narayanganj passed the order after Akram Hossain Badal, a member of central Awami League’s religious affairs sub-committee, filed the case on charges of seditious and defamatory comments.

The two other accused are: UK BNP unit’s President Shayesta Chowdhury Kuddus and its General Secretary Kayser M Ahmed.

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# Footbridge on Pragati Sarani closed days after opening

Overcrowding of pedestrians draws flak on social media; DNCC says it's still incomplete



This photo, shared on Facebook on Saturday evening, shows a jam-packed Abrar Memorial foot-overbridge. On Sunday morning, the foot-bridge was found closed, with a sign saying “construction going on”, inset.

PHOTO COURTESY: TRAFFIC ALERT/FACEBOOK

MATHEWS CHIRAN

A long-awaited footbridge -- promised by Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Atiqul Islam himself following the tragic death of a youth under a bus on the road -- has been abruptly closed down within a week of opening it to public.

Photos and videos of the jam-packed overbridge on Pragati Sarani near Jamuna Future Park caused a stir on Dhaka-based Facebook group Traffic Alert (facebook.com/groups/trafficalert.bd) earlier this week, where pedestrians said they needed 10-15 minutes to cross the 95-foot long bridge due to excessive load of commuters.

The situation was created as traffic police closed the zebra crossing on the road after the footbridge was opened.

“It took me 15 minutes to cross the bridge, as the entire overpass from one end to another was crammed with people. Although it is a commendable step from DNCC, if it becomes difficult to cross the bridge then it doesn’t serve the purpose at all,” said Reyquel Sangma, a resident of the area.

However, on Sunday, this correspondent found the bridge’s

entrances blocked, with a sign that said construction work was still going on.

On March 19, following students’ agitation surrounding the death of private university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury in a road accident on the spot, Mayor Atiqul promised to construct a footbridge there. The foundation stone of the footbridge -- named after Abrar -- was laid the very next day.

It was completed in August and opened in the first week of September, said DNCC Superintendent Engineer Arifur Rahman, unable to specify the date.

He said the bridge was opened due to pressure of pedestrians. “The main structure of the bridge has already been completed. The paint work is still under process. Therefore, we closed the bridge temporarily. However, we will open up the bridge within two days for public,” he told this correspondent yesterday, claiming that it is one of the widest footbridges in the city.

The footbridge was built by PEB Steel Alliance Ltd as part of its corporate social responsibility, he added.

Contacted yesterday, Efat Jahan, PEB’s assistant manager, said the work of the footbridge was not

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PROJECTS Failed to meet expectations as locals not consulted: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several climate change adaptation projects, such as construction of embankments, did not generate expected outcome as those initiatives were taken without consulting locals and public representatives in the country’s coastal areas, speakers alleged yesterday.

Long delay in maintenance of those infrastructures, lack of accountability among the relevant government bodies, and absence of good governance are the other reasons which hinder effectiveness of the projects, they added.

The allegations were placed at a consultation meeting -- attended by public representatives, policymakers and experts -- on embankment management at CIRDAP auditorium in the capital.

Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL), an alliance of non-government organisations, arranged the event, where several Union Parishad chairmen and members from Khulna,

Satkhira and Gaibandha took part.

Replying to the issues, lawmakers and climate experts urged the concerned authorities of the government to prepare the adaptation plans through consultation with locals and public representatives.

They also stressed on the need for proper implementation of the plans and curbing corruption in climate projects.

“My home is in a coastal area. I know what actually happens there. I also know how the climate projects are implemented,” said Habibun Nahar, member of the parliament from Bagerhat-3 constituency [Mongla and Rampal].

Not only the government officials, some locals and political leaders are also responsible for causing damage to the embankments and forest resources, she said.

“...I alone cannot ensure proper implementation of the projects. I need support from people and all stages of the government,” said Habibun, also deputy

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## Medical students take to the streets Demand cancellation of proposal to extend internship

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical college students demonstrated in the capital yesterday, demanding cancellation of a proposal to extend their internship duration to two years from one year.

Around 12pm, about 5,000 students brought out a procession from Central Shaheed Minar which ended in front of Jatiya Press Club.

On August 7, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare published a draft policy proposing a two-year internship for medical students.

As per the policy, the students will have to complete an additional year of internship at the upazila health complexes to obtain their MBBS degrees.

However, medical students had termed the move “a breach” of their academic contract. They also said the plan will prolong their academic life.

Against this backdrop, the ministry “temporarily withdrew” the policy saying that it will remain suspended “for the time being” and a final decision will be put forward after discussion with all parties.

After the procession, the students also held a press conference at the press club, threatening to go for indefinite class boycott across the country from September 18.

Abrar Hasan, a fifth year student of Dhaka Medical College, said, “In India, a student need around eight and half years to complete MBBS with post-graduation while we need more than 12 years. In this context, the decision is totally absurd.”

The demonstrators also claimed that there is lack of

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## Rajhangsha arriving on Sep 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will get its forth factory-fresh Boeing 787-8 on September 12.

With the latest brand new Dreamliner, the total number of aircrafts in Biman’s fleet will rise to 16.

“The new aircraft named ‘Rajhangsha’ will land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 3:45pm on September 12 from the Boeing factory in Seattle, USA,” Biman’s Deputy General Manager (public relations) Tahera Khondokar said yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the aircraft on September 14, said Tahera.

The first and second Boeing 787-8, named “Akash Beena” and “H a n g s a b a l a k a” respectively, arrived in Bangladesh in August and December last year, while the third named “Gaangchil” arrived in July last.

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Pankaj Bhattacharya was presented with a portrait at the felicitation. PHOTO: STAR

## Will continue fight against discrimination Pankaj Bhattacharya says on 80th birthday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Throughout his life Pankaj Bhattacharya, Oikya Nap President, has been striving to fulfill his mission to protect democracy and eradicate communalism from society, said National Professor Dr Anisuzzaman yesterday.

“He [Pankaj] has never derailed from his mission and upheld his principles,” said Prof Anisuzzaman at a civic reception organised to celebrate Bhattacharya’s 80th birthday.

Pankaj Bhattacharya 80th Birth Anniversary Celebration Nagorik Committee arranged the programme at the Central Library in Shahbagh.

Prof Anisuzzaman said, “His willingness to make sacrifices for the country has made him unique. I hope he will get more time to serve people of the country.”

Born on August 6 in 1939 at Noyapara

village under Raozan upazila of Chittagong, Bhattacharya took part in student movement against the autocratic government of East Pakistan in the ‘60s. He was one of the organisers of the guerrilla force that fought for independence in 1971.

In his speech, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said, “The principle he [Pankaj Bhattacharya] nurtured throughout his life will be exemplary for the youths.”

In his reaction, Pankaj said, “I’m overwhelmed. I thank you all. I’ll keep up my fight against all sorts of discrimination,” he said.

Ayesha Khanam, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad; Mujahidul Islam Selim, president of Communist Party of Bangladesh; Ramendu Majumdar, cultural personality and Dr Sarwar Ali, trustee, Liberation War Museum, also spoke.

## Swiss delegation arriving to discuss migration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Swiss delegation is arriving in Dhaka today for a three-day visit to hold a bilateral talk on migration, the first of its kind between the two countries.

The Swiss delegation will be led by Ambassador Vincenzo Mascioli, director of International Cooperation, State Secretariat for Migration, Federal Department of Justice, and Police of Switzerland.

“The objective of this meeting is to discuss bilateral cooperation in the area of migration as well as to exchange views on the regional and multilateral processes related to labour migration,” says a statement issued by the Swiss embassy in Dhaka.

Labour migration is an important instrument for Bangladesh to address the growing needs for employment and job creation. Nevertheless, the migrant workers are often faced with complex challenges both at home and the country they work in.

Switzerland is working with Bangladesh at local, national, and global levels to facilitate a safer migration experience.

The Swiss delegation will travel to

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## BNP hits back at PM for comment on Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Taking a swipe at the Prime Minister for accusing Khaleda Zia of creating the scope for HM Ershad to grab power in 1982, BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Monday said it is the Awami League-led government that has destroyed democracy together with Jatiya Party.

Fakhrul also accused the Prime Minister of creating a ‘domestic opposition’ in parliament.

“She (PM Sheikh Hasina) often makes baseless statements in parliament. The fact is that when Ershad usurped power by ousting an elected president, she (Hasina) said she was not unhappy,” he said.

Talking to reporters after placing wreaths at the grave of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman along with leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dol marking its 41st founding anniversary, he said, “She (Hasina) destroyed democracy and snatched people’s rights along with Ershad by making alliance with his party. Ershad was the ‘domestic opposition leader’ of Awami League.”

Speaking about the condolence motion on late opposition leader HM Ershad and others at Jatiya Sangsad, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday alleged that Khaleda Zia paved the way for HM Ershad to take over power in 1982 and enjoyed various facilities from the former military ruler.

“Sattar (Justice Abdus Sattar) was the acting chairman of BNP. Though Begum Khaleda Zia didn’t join politics at that time, she suddenly made a statement to oust Sattar from the post of chairman. I would like to say Khaleda Zia had created the scope for Ershad to grab power in 1982,” she said.

Fakhrul alleged that the current government has kept their chairperson Khaleda Zia in jail out of its political vengeance.

He claimed that Khaleda is very unwell but she is not receiving proper treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. “We hope we’ll free her from jail through a united movement and restore democracy.”

## PHOTO OF THE DAY

RASHED SHUMON



Yesterday’s heavy downpour brought back familiar monsoon scenes of Dhaka. This plastic sheet barely covers three people on a rickshaw in Shahbagh, as city-dwellers were hardly prepared for the sudden autumn rain.