

## Anita Chowdhury laid to rest

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Pabna

Anita Chowdhury, wife of Square Group founder late Samson H Chowdhury, was laid to rest at ASTRAS firm house in Pabna yesterday.

Her body reached Pabna from Dhaka in the morning. Later, special prayers were held at the Baptist Church in Ataikula, after which the body was taken to ASTRAS firm house.

She was buried beside her husband Samson H Chowdhury with due religious honour. Her family members, relatives and well-wishers were present at the last rites.

Anita Chowdhury passed away at Square Hospital in the capital on November 13, at the age of 90.

Widely known as

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A school student carefully passes the uncovered manhole on the road in front of National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital in Agargaon. Many accidents involving open manholes have been reported in the area over the last month. This photo was taken recently by PRABIR DAS

## PRESIDENT'S FLIGHT Biman security head, 3 crew members denied clearance

RASHIDU HASAN

The head of security of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and three cabin crew members of the national flag carrier were not given clearance to operate the VVIP flight of President M Abdul Hamid on security grounds.

VVIP flight BG202 is scheduled to carry President M Abdul Hamid and members of his entourage from London to Dhaka tomorrow, sources in Biman said.

On November 13, Maj Taiz Ibne Anwar, deputy general manager of security at Biman Bangladesh Airlines and three Biman cabin crew members -- Sufia Akhter Shuphi (flight purser), Apon Kumar Singha Sinha (flight steward) and Mariyan Fatema Sheheli (flight stewardess) -- flew to London on aircraft BG 201 to operate the VVIP flight.

As the three did not get security clearance to operate the flight, Biman is now planning to engage them to operate a scheduled flight from Manchester to Dhaka, said a reliable source in Biman.

Asked about Maj Taiz and the three cabin crew members not getting security clearance to operate the VVIP flight, Biman Managing Director and CEO Zahid Hossain yesterday told The Daily Star, "As the matter is related to the intelligence agency and security issues of the VVIP flight, I do not want to comment on this."

This correspondent could not reach Maj Taiz and the three crew members over the phone despite repeated attempts.

President Hamid left Dhaka on October 29 on a 16-day visit to Germany and the UK for a medical check-up.

Earlier on September 5, a senior pilot and an operations officer of Biman were not given clearance to operate the VVIP flights of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her entourage members' Delhi visit.



A child turns his head while passing by an interesting toy van in Dhaka University area. With a wide range of curious toys, this vendor goes around the area to attract the little ones who accompany their parents or relatives during their recreational visit there. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## A man-made DANGER

### Lidless manholes putting commuters' lives at risk

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Salam Uddin was on his way to National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital (NIO&H) in the capital's Agargaon last week, with his six-year-old son who has vision problems.

However, the journey did not go as smoothly as expected. The child stepped into a 15-foot deep, lidless manhole, only covered by a bamboo fence. The incident injured his legs.

Instead of getting his eyes checked, he had to be rushed to a nearby private clinic to get his legs treated.

"I consider myself lucky as I was able to hold on to his hand tightly before he could fall deep into the manhole. I can't imagine what would have happened otherwise," said Salam, a resident of Mirpur 1.

"People with eye problems come to the hospital. How can it be considered safe to keep a lidless manhole on the road in front of it?" he asked.

This is far from an isolated case. On Sed Mahbub Morshed road, stretching from Shishu Mela foot overbridge to NIO&H, 19 out of 24 manholes are totally uncovered for over a month.

The remaining six are covered with bamboo fences and tree branches.

Things turn worse for the pedestrians at night as the road -- which now allows only one-way movement because of ongoing repair work of DNCC -- does not have enough street lights.

DNCC started its works on the road some around five months, and in the process, established new drainage there. But after authorities finished construction, the newly created manholes were left uncovered on one of the two lanes.

“A week ago, I rescued a four-year-old boy who fell into the manhole. Earlier, a woman was rescued by fire service officials. I've seen a total of five people fall into the manholes in the last month alone.”

SADEK HOSSAIN  
Security guard of TB hospital

During several visits to the area last week, this correspondent found at least 80 such manholes on the one-kilometre road from Shishu Mela to the Archives and Library Department building.

Locals alleged that the manholes have remained uncovered for around a month. Around three to four incidents of pedestrians falling into them are witnessed every week.

However, Dhaka North City Corporations (DNCC) authorities are yet to take any steps in this regard.

Sadek Hossain, a security guard of the 250-bed TB hospital, said more than 1,000 patients come to the hospital every day.

"A week ago, I rescued a four-year-old boy who fell into the manhole. Earlier, a woman was rescued by fire service and civil defence officials," he said.

"I have seen a total of five people fall into the manholes in the last month alone," he added.

Jalal Uddin, an eye patient at NIO&H,

told this correspondent that after getting down from the bus in front of Shishu Mela, he had to walk very carefully to get to the eye hospital.

"I have problems seeing with both my eyes. So I had to walk very slowly to reach the hospital. It took around 10 minutes to move through a two-minute walkway," he said.

Sohel Hossain, a roadside shopkeeper, said as there are two hospitals, hundreds of patients go there from from all over the region.

"Manholes covered with bamboo fences are even more dangerous than lidless ones," he added.

Ashirul Islam, a security guard at NIO&H, said over 2,500 eye patients

On Syed Mahbub Morshed road, the stretch from Shishu Mela footbridge to NIO&H, 19 out of 24 manholes have remained totally uncovered for over a month. The remaining six are covered with bamboo fences and tree branches.

from all around the country come to the hospital for treatment.

"Most people coming here have vision problems. They are always concerned about being the next victims of accidents caused by these manholes," he said.

It was known that Jony Enterprise, a private contractor, has been given the work of covering the manholes. Despite two visits to the site office on the road last week, this correspondent did not

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## Bike ban on highway, action plan on agenda

### Meeting of National Road Safety Council today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Road Safety Council (NRSC), the apex government body that deals with road safety issues, is going to hold its meeting today, after a hiatus of 21 months.

The meeting will focus on three main agendas: National Road Safety Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024, banning of motorcycles on highways, and registration issues of vehicles that have been auctioned.

The last NRSC meeting was held in February last year.

The long delay in holding the meeting has not only affected decision-making on important policies but also halted the approval process of the strategic action plan.

Amid a sharp rise in both road crashes and deaths, the country does not have any action plan for road safety at the moment, as the previous one expired in 2020.

The NRSC meeting is supposed to be held every six months or at the "will" of the council's chief. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader is the ex-officio chief of the body.

### SPIKE IN ROAD CRASHES, DEATHS

A total of 5,088 people were killed in 5,472 road crashes in 2021, 30 percent higher than the previous year's death toll, according to a police report.

Meanwhile, according to another police report, in

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## Canadian envoy meets Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Lilly Nicholls yesterday held a closed-door meeting with BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and discussed various issues relating to Bangladesh's upcoming national election and human rights situation.

The meeting went on for around one and a half hours at the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

After the meeting, BNP's standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told journalists that the two had a fruitful discussion where they talked about all issues relating to Bangladesh's current situation, especially in terms of human rights, elections, law and security.

He said Canada on multiple occasions has told the Bangladesh government that human rights are being violated in Bangladesh.

Asked what the Canadian envoy said about the upcoming national election, Khosru said he

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## 'Let's see who's popular in polls' Says Quader in reply to BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In response to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's remark that Awami League is jealous of BNP's popularity, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said, "Let's take part in the elections and see who is more popular."

Quader made the remark at a party meeting held at the AL chief's political office in Dhanmondi.

The meeting was of AL's publicity and publication sub-committee, formed to organise the party's 22nd National Conference,

"Awami League has no greed for power; it will remain in power if the people want it, otherwise it won't," said Quader.

At the meeting, Quader directed leaders of the sub-committee to increase publicity on Facebook and deal with the misinformation BNP is spreading

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