

'Talk of safe exit at 72 unfortunate' Says adviser Fouzul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan yesterday said it would be "deeply unfortunate" if he now has to think of a "safe exit" at the age of 72.

"I have never taken any undue advantage of my position, nor have I used my post to help any relative or friend with a business or a job. With my limited ability, I have tried to fulfil my duty to the people," he wrote in a Facebook post yesterday.

"As a teacher, I also declined opportunities for permanent residency in the US and Singapore," he said.

His comments came days after NCP Convener Nahid Islam claimed that many advisers in the interim government have established ties with political parties and are now thinking about their "safe exits".

In his post titled "Adviser's daily note, driver without helmet and safe exit," Fouzul Kabir also described his trip to Brahmanbaria on Wednesday, where he was stuck for hours in a 15km tailback while visiting the Dhaka-Sylhet highway and eventually had to ride a motorcycle to move from there.

"I found that none of the motorcycle riders or passengers had helmets. After searching about 10 bikes, I managed to find only one helmet and wore it myself. After failing to find a helmet for the rider, I took the ride with advice from others," he wrote, adding that he later instructed the police and BRTA to take action against helmetless bikers.

4 more die of dengue, 781 get hospitalised

STAR REPORT

At least four dengue patients died while 781 others were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), three deaths were reported from areas under Dhaka South City Corporation and one from Dhaka North.

With the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths from dengue this year rose to 224 while total cases rose to 52,885.

Among the total cases, 50,209 dengue patients have been released so far after treatment. Currently, 2,452 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country, 1,625 of whom are from outside Dhaka.



People wade through knee-deep water in Botbunia of Khulna's Dacope upazila yesterday, as vast areas remain inundated following the collapse of an embankment on the Dhaki river. Inset, the breached section of the embankment near Harisabha Temple in Tiladanga union.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

DACOPE UPAZILA
40hrs on, no repair to breached Dhaki embankment

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

More than 40 hours after the collapse of an embankment on the Dhaki river in Khulna's Dacope upazila, authorities have yet to take any step for repairs, while water continues to inundate vast areas, submerging homes, croplands, and fish enclosures.

Locals have been working voluntarily round the clock to repair the breached section, but their efforts have so far failed.

The breach occurred on the night of October 7 near the Harisabha Temple in Tiladanga union. Since then, water from the river has flooded several villages including Botbunia, Nishankhali, Uttar Kaminibashia, and Arakhali.

Locals said the Water Development Board's embankment along the 31/1 polders was already in a fragile condition before the collapse.

"We repeatedly informed the authorities about the risk, but no effective measures were taken," said Jalal Uddin Gazi, chairman of Tiladanga Union Parishad.

According to residents, WDB had temporarily reinforced the embankment with geo-bags and soil last year, but it could not withstand the strong tidal surge this time. Around 50 metres of the embankment initially gave way, and the breach later widened to more than 200 metres.

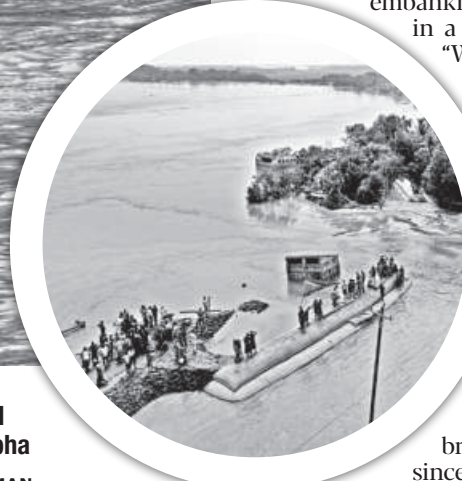
"We've been trying to close the breach with bamboo, sandbags, and mud since October 8 morning, but the strong current keeps sweeping everything away," said Sanjay Sardar, a member of Tiladanga Union Parishad.

Over 3,000 bighas of Aman paddy fields have already been submerged, and if the water cannot be stopped soon, the crop damage will be irreversible, he added.

"Around 302 hectares of Aman fields have been inundated so far. The crops have not reached the flowering stage yet and are still standing. If the water can be controlled within a day or two, major damage might be avoided," said Md Nazrul Islam, district agricultural officer in Khulna.

Ashrafal Alam, executive engineer of WDB-2, said, "We are providing materials like sandbags and bamboo, and locals are working voluntarily, but repairing the breach is challenging as the geo bags placed earlier have been washed away."

"A 500-metre permanent embankment is under construction with JICA funding, and a Tk 2,200-crore project proposal for long-term riverbank protection in the area has been sent to the Planning Commission for approval," he added.



Emergency care eludes mental health patients

Pabna hospital struggles amid staff, medicine shortages

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Mental health in Bangladesh remains a topic many find difficult to discuss even in 2025, entangled in social stigma and widespread misconceptions.

Issues related to mental health are often viewed through the lens of superstition, leaving patients vulnerable and struggling in silence.

On top of all that, systemic gaps and a lack of proper healthcare support — particularly emergency services — also persist, meaning even those who seek help often struggle to receive timely and adequate treatment.

Take the case of Khadiza Begum, 35, from Pabna's Bhangura upazila. After her divorce, she suffered from mental illness for four years without any medical attention.

Believing she was a victim of "black magic", her family took her to local quacks, which worsened her condition.

She was only recently brought to Pabna Mental Hospital.

"She wasn't treated early because there is no emergency mental healthcare in her area, which led her to become violent," said Dr Masud Rana, a senior psychiatrist at the hospital. "If she doesn't improve, we'll have to admit her."

Doctors, social workers, and patients' relatives say the absence of an emergency response system continues to cripple mental healthcare across the country.

"A vast number of patients cannot get minimum treatment early on. Consequently, their conditions often fail to improve properly," Dr Rana added.

"The government plans to upgrade the hospital to 1,000 beds under a proposed project with a research centre and international-standard treatment facilities, which could improve services," Dr Kamal said.

The hospital is also facing an acute shortage of medicines. Only six types of anti-psychotic drugs and one mood stabiliser are currently available, far short of the minimum requirement.

"I brought a patient from Bogura, but we couldn't get the prescribed medicines for free," said Md Hasan, a patient's relative.

Officials report that only six types of anti-psychotic medicines are available for indoor patients — short of the minimum required 10 — and only one mood stabiliser is in stock.

"There has been no supply for the last few months, so we are treating admitted patients with the existing stock," said a hospital official, wishing anonymity.

Hospital Superintendent Dr Ahia Kamal said hospital rules require a

BNP leader, 6 policemen hurt in clash over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least eight people, including six policemen, were injured during a clash between two groups at Palpara Bazar in Patuakhali Sadar upazila on Wednesday night.

Among the injured are one sub-inspector, two assistant sub-inspectors, and three constables of Sadar Police Station.

Officer-in-Charge Intiaz Ahmed said land dispute led to the clash.

"When we tried to bring the situation under control, some people attacked us. We are investigating the incident..." he added.

Locals said the clash ensued when a group led by Sohail Majhi attacked BNP leader Mofizul with sharp weapons.

On information, police rushed to the spot. However, sensing their presence, the group attacked them with sharp weapons.

Joint forces later conducted an operation, firing blank shots to disperse the attackers and restore order. The injured were taken to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital.

Later, Mofizul was referred to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal, while four injured policemen were admitted to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital, police said.



Raise immunisation coverage

FROM PAGE 3

"There are some challenges for which immunisation coverage has been hovering between 80 and 84 percent over the past 12 years," he said.

He noted that nearly 40 percent of posts in the immunisation programme are vacant, including 43 percent at the EPI headquarters. Delays in approving health programmes have also disrupted vaccine supply, he added.

Riad Mahmud, health manager (immunisation) at Unicef Bangladesh, said a new strategy is needed to address low-coverage areas.

While rural immunisation coverage

stands at 85 percent, it is below 80 percent in urban areas, he said.

The government's own workforce is engaged in rural vaccination, whereas coverage in urban areas mainly depends on NGOs and private hospitals.

He suggested that the government deploy its own manpower in urban areas as well.

EPI Deputy Director Mohammad Shahariar Sajjad said funds have already been allocated for vaccines and the supply is expected within this month, which will help resolve some issues.

Meanwhile, at a separate press conference at the health ministry, Prof

Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said the WHO-prequalified typhoid vaccine has been used safely in countries like Nepal and Pakistan.

"The vaccine is completely free, and no one is allowed to charge money. Action will be taken against any violation," he said.

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Md. Kamruzzaman
General Manager & Division Head

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