



In Memory of Prof. Yozo Fujino

Building Bridges Beyond Structures

A. F. M. Saiful Amin

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In Memory of Prof. Yozo Fujino

Building Bridges Beyond Structures

A. F. M. Saiful Amin , Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, BUET Chair, Bangladesh Group of IABSE.

Professor Yozo Fujino did not merely study and advise on bridges. Through scientific generosity, professional trust and personal warmth, he built a bridge between the engineering communities of Japan and Bangladesh—one relationship at a time.

My first scientific proximity to Professor Fujino came at the Wind Engineering Laboratory of the University of Tokyo on 18 June 2000, during the US–Japan Young Researchers’ Seminar. It was an encounter to feel simulated wind in a wind tunnel that also housed a scale model of the mammoth Akashi Kaikyo Bridge—and that same month, as the world would soon learn, the Millennium Bridge in London was closed due to pedestrian-induced lateral vibrations, a phenomenon his research had long anticipated.

Professor Fujino arrived in Dhaka two years later, in 2002–2003, in connection with the pre-feasibility studies of the Padma Bridge—at that time still a national aspiration, a bold idea intended to unite the two sides of a great river and, in time, to transform the connectivity of Bangladesh. Yet, amid discussions related to such a nationally important project, he gave patient and empathetic attention to a young engineer’s question about a much smaller bridge.

I was then involved in the design of a pedestrian bridge over the Crescent Lake within the National Parliament Building complex in Dhaka. It was my first bridge project. The architectural setting was exceptionally sensitive, and the bridge was intended to offer both a graceful public connection and a structure worthy of its surroundings. However, the challenge before us was not confined to strength, stability or appearance. We had to consider how the bridge would behave when pedestrians began to use it.

Professor Fujino helped me understand that a pedestrian is not simply a load placed upon a bridge. The pedestrian and the bridge can form one dynamic system. His pioneering work on pedestrian synchronisation and lateral vibration—most notably at the Toda Park Bridge in Japan and later in connection with the Millennium Bridge in London—had already shown how ordinary human walking could create unexpected bridge motion when structural frequencies and human movement became coupled.

That insight guided our critical design thinking for the Crescent Lake Bridge. We studied its lateral and vertical vibration modes, investigated alternative forms of bracing, hanger arrangement and tie systems, and used finite-element analysis to examine how stiffness could be enhanced without compromising the architectural character of the bridge. The completed bridge was also subjected to field testing before it was opened to the public.

The Crescent Lake Bridge became, to my knowledge, one of the first bridge projects in which the dynamic behaviour associated with pedestrian movement was explicitly considered in the design process. It was a modest bridge in scale, but for me it was a formative professional experience. Its importance lay not only in the design itself, but in the lesson behind it: engineering judgement must connect theory, analysis, architectural sensitivity, observation and public confidence.

That lesson remained with me throughout my career.

My encounters with Professor Fujino over the following years reflected the same combination of scientific distinction and human openness. At the IABSE–JSCE Joint Conference on

Advances in Bridge Engineering in Dhaka in 2010, he returned to Bangladesh as a distinguished presence among bridge engineers from across the world. At the JSCE International Outstanding Collaboration Award Ceremony in Tokyo in 2017, we stood together as the formal recognition of a Japan–Bangladesh partnership was extended to me. At the celebration of the 90th Anniversary of IABSE in New York in 2019, we met again on the global stage that he had helped shape over decades. In every setting, he always remained approachable, attentive and deeply committed to the international community of bridge engineers.

My own journey later led me to serve as Team Leader of the Design Review Team for the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project—a 162.5 km railway corridor that crosses the soft Ganges delta and passes over the mighty Padma River through the Padma Bridge itself, the longest river bridge in Bangladesh, with which Professor Fujino had been associated from its earliest conceptual stages. Bangladesh’s most significant railway, directly connecting Dhaka to the south-west across major river crossings and over the Padma through the bridge’s lower deck, was inaugurated in December 2024—just months after Professor Fujino had marked its near-completion with characteristic warmth in Tokyo.

For me, this was a deeply meaningful continuity. I first encountered Professor Fujino when the Padma Bridge was still being studied. During his visit to Dhaka, he helped me address the vibration-serviceability challenge of my first bridge project, a pedestrian bridge. Many years later, I found myself contributing to the rail link that would cross the Padma over that very bridge.

Our responsibilities were different, and our bridges belonged to different engineering contexts. But the connection was real. The scholar associated with Japan's great long-span bridges—and with the early thinking around the Padma Bridge—had also shaped my understanding of how a small bridge should respond to the movement of people.

In September 2024, in Tokyo, Professor Fujino marked the completion of the Padma Bridge and near-completion of the Rail Link with a warmth that I shall never forget. He came to me holding the national flag of Bangladesh—a gesture that spoke more eloquently than any formal tribute. In that moment, the bridge was not only a structure across a great river. It was the visible result of a partnership between nations, institutions and generations of engineers.

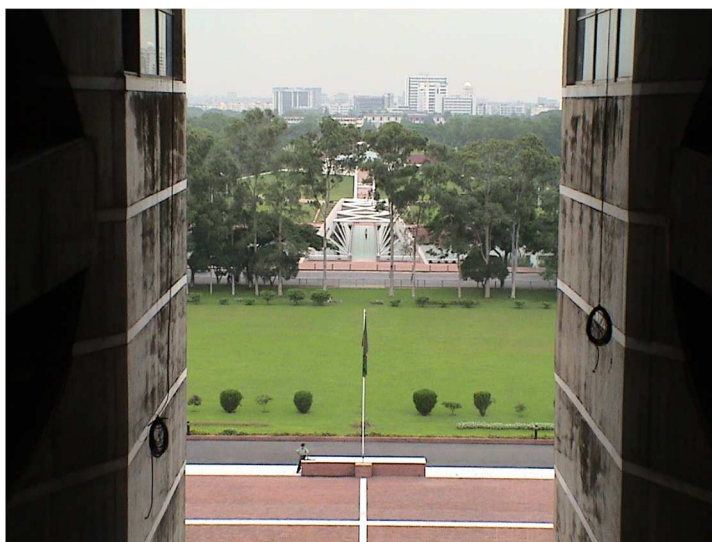
Professor Fujino's legacy will endure not only in his research but also in his warmth and empathy, in his landmark professional contributions and in his distinguished service to IABSE—as Vice President from 2005 to 2013, as Honorary Member from 2016, and as a tireless leader of the Japanese National Group. For those of us who knew him personally, it will also endure in the quieter moments: a shared seminar room followed by the mammoth wind tunnel visit in Tokyo in June 2000, a conversation in a Dhaka office in 2002, a question answered with care, encouragement given without hesitation, and the feeling that a great engineer had made time for someone at the beginning of a journey.

He showed us that bridges are not only structures across water, valleys or roads. They are also links between disciplines, countries, institutions and generations. IABSE was the international platform through which he exercised that vision most fully—and through which the bond between the engineering communities of Japan and Bangladesh was built, sustained and celebrated.

Professor Yozo Fujino built many such bridges. Between Japan and Bangladesh, he built them one relationship at a time.



At the Wind Tunnel of the Wind Engineering Laboratory of the University of Tokyo, Japan in connection with the US-Japan Young Researchers' Seminar on 18th June 2000. A F M Saiful Amin is fourth standing from the left, Yozo Fujino in first sitting from the right.



Pedestrian Bridge constructed in 2004 over the Crescent Lake of the National Parliament Building of Bangladesh.



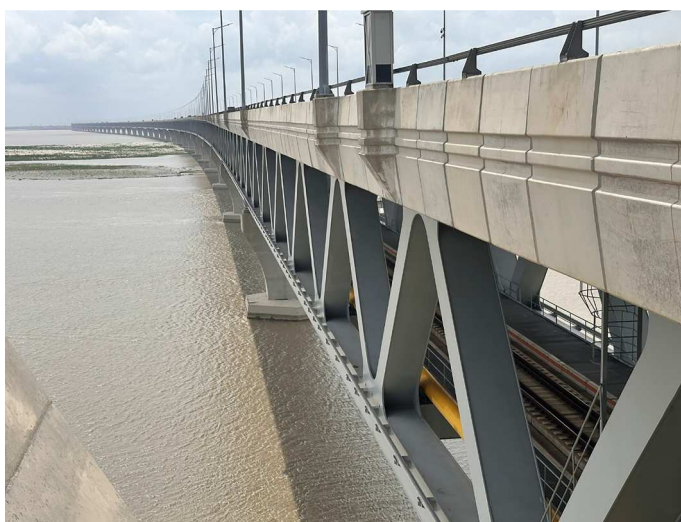
At the IABSE-JSCE Joint Conference on Advances in Bridge Engineering-II, Dhaka 2010 on 9th August 2010. From left to right: Md Abdus Sobhan, A F M Saiful Amin, Yozo Fujino, Klaus H. Ostenfeld, Imam Hossain, A M M Safiullah, M Nagai, H Mutsuyoshi.



At the FY2016 JSCE International Outstanding Collaboration Award Ceremony, Tokyo, Japan on 9th June 2017. Left to right: A F M Saiful Amin, Yozo Fujino.



At the US Group Reception on the 90-years of Celebration of IABSE at the Press Lounge, 16th Floor of Ink48 Hotel, New York on 4th September 2019. Left to right: A F M Saiful Amin and Yozo Fujino.



The 6.15 km long Padma Bridge over the Padma River, Bangladesh- top deck for roadway and the lower deck for heavy rail.



Celebrating the Padma Bridge and the Rail Link near-completion, Toritsu Daigaku station, Tokyo, 6 September 2024.

ORCID

A. F. M. Saiful Amin  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2431-4824>