

Khilgaon flyover may fall behind target

"Fund crisis slows the progress in the flyover work as we received only Tk 22 crore from the government," said a senior official

SOHEL ISLAM

Fund crisis and red tape have delayed the completion of the Khilgaon flyover, pushing the deadline further to June 30 next year.

Earlier, the authorities said the construction of the flyover that started in September 2001 was scheduled to be complete by February this year.

The Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) is supervising the Tk 74 crore flyover work, financed by the government.

"Fund crisis slows the progress in the flyover work as we received only Tk 22 crore from the government," said a senior official working on the project.

"We have completed 60 percent of the construction. Although the Prime Minister's Office last August directed the

planning ministry to provide the remaining fund for speedy construction, the fund has not yet been channelled," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The contractor of the flyover may not continue his work, since the authorities owe at least Tk 3.5 crore to him. "Last fiscal year, the government released only Tk 7.89 crore and it was difficult to pay the contractor. If this happens again, it will make uncertain the completion of the flyover by the new deadline," the official said.

"The Prime Minister's Office also requested different ministries to resolve the dispute over land acquisition and demolition of illegal structures around the flyover, but some ministries did not pay attention," the official added.

"We have requested the land ministry about a year ago to settle the land acquisition problem, but it took the initiative only

last October," the official said.

The illegal occupation of lands of Bangladesh Railway (BR), the Ministry of Public Works and Housing and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is the major roadblock to implementation of the plan.

"The BR and DCC have progressed in their work, but the ministry did not take initiatives yet. If the furniture shops on the ministry's land at Rajarbagh are not removed, it will be difficult to meet the June 30, 2004 deadline," the official added.

Public Works and Housing Minister Mirza Abbas could not be reached for comments despite repeated requests.

The construction of the flyover with three wings connecting Khilgaon, Razarbagh and Syedabad halts traffic flow, building rush-hour jam on thoroughfares, especially Atish Dipankar Road.



Although part of the under-construction Khilgaon flyover looks almost complete, it may miss the deadline.

HOME, SWEET HOME...



Eid is almost knocking at the door. Bearing bags and suitcases filled with gifts for their dear ones, Dhaka residents stream onto the platforms at launch terminals, train and bus stations in eager anticipation of the ride home for Eid celebrations.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN



Live or die, you have to bribe

MONJUR MAHMUD

Certification of birth or death is not possible without bribes. You will have to pay Tk 800 in bribes to the officials of the birth and death registration section of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) if you want to get a certificate hassle-free.

The official fee for a death or birth certificate issued by the DCC is only Tk 40.

According to DCC officials, the cumbersome procedure in obtaining the certificates is encouraging corruption in the corporation. An application for a birth certificate passes through at least 12 points for signatures and checks.

"As an application lands on so many desks on different floors of the DCC, it takes an applicant an indefinite time to get the job done. To avoid hassles, people prefer to give money to the officials or brokers for certificates," said Alauddin Mridha, who went to the DCC for a birth certificate for his daughter, as she needs it for admission to a university abroad.

An application will get an entry number from the birth and death department (BDD) after the chief health officer (CHO) initials it and refers it to the food and sanitary officer. After the food and sanitary officer makes a note on the applica-

tion that the case is genuine, it will reach the table of the health officer for his signature.

With all signatures, the application will again go to the CHO for his approval and sent back to the BDD section where a card will be issued in favour of the applicant.

The applicant will have to fill in another form and a DCC official will have to sign it.

The issued card will have to follow the route through five places for signatures as the application did.

Contacted, a top DCC official said zonal offices have been given authority to issue birth or death certificates for their areas to cut down the rush. "And the number of applications at the DCC came down," he added.

The zonal offices are blamed for taking bribes from applicants for birth or death certificates.

A social welfare official working at the birth and death registration section at DCC Mirpur Zonal Office says if a person gives him Tk 800 a certificate, he will do the work for him.

"Also, an applicant should take the help of brokers or go through a complicated procedure for doing the job including an investigation by a DCC food and sanitary officer," Hossain said.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"The country is now at a cross-roads."

-- Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury
Former president
Speaking to members of the civil society, editors, diplomats and others at the much-talked-about Itar party at the Hotel Sheraton on November 22. Source: Janakantha

"Sheikh Hasina went to the northern region to look for Basanti instead of attending parliament."

-- Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan
Minister for Local Government and Rural Government
Speaking at the Parliament before the recently concluded session on November 19. Source: Prothom Alo

"The lives and property of people are not safe at the hands of police officers who cannot even save the lives of their colleagues using firearms."

-- Hussain Shaheed Ahmed
Dhaka Metropolitan Session Judge
Pointing at the incompetent police officers while delivering judgement of Sergeant Ahad murder case on November 20. Source: Prothom Alo

"Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan is making a mockery of the distressed of the northern region who are facing severe hunger and starvation."

-- Abdul Jalil
Secretary, Bangladesh Awami League
Commented in a press release on the remarks of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan on Hasina's North Bengal tour on November 21. Source: Banglabazar Patrika

"The government selects even half-literate persons as presidents of college committees without taking the opposition lawmakers into account."

-- G M Kader
Jatiya Party (Ershad), MP
Speaking to journalists on the return of the Jatiya Party to parliament on November 18. Source: Bhorer Kagoj

"Taslima did the appropriate thing."

-- Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini
Chief of IOJ faction
Thanking Taslima Nasrin for speaking out against a section of intellectuals at an Itar party on November 23. Source: Ittefaq

Bypass railway bypassing plan

Donors may not provide funds because of a deviation in the original plan of the proposed bypass rail link

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The proposed bypass rail link between Tongi and Kamalapur Railway Station may lose donor funds, as a deviation surfaced in the original plan, which experts say will reduce benefit from the project.

The government made a proposal to the World Bank (WB) for funding an embankment along the Balu River to protect the eastern side of the city from floods. The bypass railway was planned to run through the embankment along with a bypass road.

But the government later altered its plan up to Tk 120 crore and decided to run the rail link through an area close to Basundhara in Rampura.

"The project proposal has been

submitted to the Planning Commission for feasibility study and we will decide on which proposal will be implemented and funds after approval," said Rezaul Karim, Bangladesh Railway director general.

"If we don't get any donor to help the project, we will use state funds," the DG added.

The project was billed as one of the high-priority projects by a high-level meeting last month with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair. The meeting was convened to identify high-priority projects as suggested by the WB.

The WB in September assured the government of doubling its lending provided Bangladesh identified its high-priority projects in rail, road,

energy and agriculture.

It was also decided at the meeting that the top-priority project should be implemented this fiscal year.

The meeting identified the rail link running through the city as largely responsible for traffic jams and tagged the project as crucial to reducing traffic snarls the capital faces every day.

Commuters cross 27 level crossings from airport to Kamalapur, which cost lots of man-hour.

Although the local passenger and cargo trains will use the old rail line, high-speed inter-district passenger and cargo trains will go through the bypass railway, which the authorities think will reduce traffic jam remarkably.

The bypass railway has been planned also to deliver containers at

Tongi Inland Container Depot (ICD). Currently, the railway handles over 70,000 containers on the route a year, up from about 7,000 a few years ago.

The proposal includes surface-elevated rail lines from Tongi to Kamalapur. The roads could pass through under the elevated rail tracks for future development of the eastern part of the city.

"The embankment on Balu river may serve the purpose of the circular railway around the city but elevated tracks at Rampura would be used as the bypass rail line," said the DG.

Experts think that the bypass rail line at Rampura would actually bisect the city which is developing towards the east of Dhaka.



The proposed railway bypass will rid the city of this type of long waits at inner-city train crossings.