

ALERT!

Persistent financial mismanagement in the government remains largely understated, though it takes a heavy toll on the economy. The Special and Annual Audit Report released recently says corruption and mismanagement in the Ministry of Communications, a case in point, has drained more than Tk 12,600 crore in the last seven years.

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As Morshed Khan sees Hasina

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday castigated Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina and dubbed her as a "one-man demolition squad" working against the country's image and interests.

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The slackening grip

Slow-go in streamlining city traffic fearing agitation by transport men?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Traffic Department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has 'temporarily backed off' from implementing some vital schemes to ease congestion and contain pollution in the city, fearing backlash by transport workers.

Sources in the department said top government officials, including some 'ministers' 'ordered' the city's Traffic Department to adopt a 'slow-go' policy. The government officials apprehended that transport workers might 'paralyse' the city by staging violent street demonstrations if those schemes were implemented.

The sources added that the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) was not co-operating with the department in its drive to streamline city traffic. One source said despite repeated requests the DCC has failed to repair the Syedabad Bus Terminal, required for relocation of illegal bus terminals on the TCB Road and at Fulbaria. Traffic Engineering Department of the DCC was asked almost a month ago to install some street signs prohibiting use of hydraulic horns at four different entry points of the city but nothing has been done so far.

Having identified illegal and unplanned bus stoppages and sheds, a committee recently submitted a report to the DCC's Engineering Department. But the DCC has taken no step whatsoever to demolish those structures.

"We are going slow for the sake of law and order but we are not able to implement our basic plans due to non-cooperation by the DCC," said a Traffic Department official, on condition that he not be named.

The department's next major step to make the entire stretch of Mirpur Road off-limits to rickshaws has been shelved firstly because there are not enough buses on the route. A senior official said there are 165 buses now plying the same route, but 120 more buses are needed to replace rickshaws. He said the new buses are already on their way, but it would take some time to replace rickshaws.

"We already have 14 new air-conditioned buses operation between Gabtali and Gullistan via Panthapath," said the official.

Senior officials are now having frequent meetings with leaders of the transport owners and workers. Deputy Commissioner, Traffic, of the DMP Abu Musa Mohammad Fakhru Islam told The Daily Star that arrangement was now being made with the leaders to deploy 'the association's own men with sticks in hand' to prevent buses from making random stoppages on busy roads and intersections.

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PHOTO: STAR
Dust blown by passing vehicles at unpaved segments of the Tongi Diversion Road obscures vision, making a mockery of the government's clean city programme.

'Tigers willing to give up homeland demand'

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels "appeared to be willing" to give up their long-standing demand for a separate homeland following approaches from peace-broker Norway, the Norwegian Prime Minister said in an interview broadcast yesterday.

Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik told the BBC he was optimistic of bringing the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

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PM urges VCs Restore congenial atmosphere on campuses

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has called upon the vice-chancellors of different universities to restore congenial academic atmosphere on the campuses.

She lamented that the educational institutions and the country's image suffered badly for various irregularities and mismanagement.

She expressed the views when a delegation of the Association of Universities of Bangladesh called on her at her office yesterday afternoon.

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Bumpy rides in choking dust

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city commuters take bumpy rides on mutilated roads, inhaling dusts and negotiating traffic jams as their perennial fate.

But hopefully their misery may end in next two months when Dhaka WASA completes installation of pipelines for the Syedabad Water Treatment Plant, the largest ever water supply scheme taken up by the authorities.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources said it would take some more time for the dug-up roads to get properly compact before they could be carpeted again.

Meantime, the delay is causing massive dust pollution, frequent accidents and untold sufferings to commuters on roads like the Tongi Diversion Road, Sonargaon, DMCH, University, Kataban, New Market, Science Laboratory, Green Road, Mouchak, Syedabad, Jatrabari, Sadarghat, English Road, Victoria Park and Malibagh road.

However, there was some sort of respite for commuters on Tongi Diversion Road as the city authorities started spraying water from a mobile water container at 4:00pm yesterday.

In most cases, having laid the pipelines to a depth of up to 12 feet through the middle of these major thoroughfares, the authorities have left the stretches filled with sand and brick chips. But these filled-up patches are yet to be compacted. And without proper compaction, it would be a waste of money to carpet the roads, DCC sources said. WASA has already made a part-payment of Tk 4 crore to the DCC for the road repairing works.

"Such an extensive road digging is a unique experience for us," said Engineer Abdur Razzak of DCC's planning and design cell. Razzak explained that the pipelines had to be installed through the middle of the major roads and the traffic department did not allow anyone to work during daytime.

"The installation work was allowed only between midnight and 5:00am. Within this short time only a

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