

Eastern bypass project returns to limelight

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Floodwaters deluged the eastern fringe of Dhaka, as no flood control dam was built on the eastern side, experts said.

The water resources ministry took up a project known as the "eastern bypass project" in 1998 to protect the eastern side of the capital from flooding, but it stalled because of fund shortage.

"The project grabbed the lime-light again, as the eastern part is reeling under water. But Mirpur and other areas are dry thanks to a dam on the western side," said Project Officer Shahidul Islam of the Water Development Board (WDB).

The floods affected about five million people in the city of about 13 million. The areas such as Sayedabad, Motijheel, Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Paltan, Gopibagh, Madarek, Mugda, Goran, Rampura, Malibagh and Badda could have been saved from the floods if the eastern dam had been built.

This year, the sewerage system was overwhelmed and the capital was swamped by stagnated sewage that could have been pumped out if there had been a dam on the eastern side, the experts said.

On the other hand, the western part remained dry as WDB workers pumped out water into the Buriganga and Turag rivers thanks to the flood control embankment there.

The eastern bypass project was included in the Annual Development Programme with 2004 as the deadline for implementation.

"The World Bank (WB) imposed a condition that the project should envisage how the government will profit from the bypass and stopped funding the project," said Habibullah Mojumdar, joint secretary (development) of the water resources ministry.

A meeting on July 18 at the Prime Minister's Office, chaired by Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, decided that Dhaka Urban Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) would coordinate the project.

"Although the project was under the water resources ministry, the DTCB will now coordinate it. Wasa, Roads and Highways, Dhaka City Corporation and LGRD and land ministries are also involved in the project," Habibullah said.

The Water Development Board will be responsible for dam construction and roadwork and other organisations will build railways.

The DTCB is working on the project concept paper submitted by the water resources ministry and will have a presentation on how the government will profit from the project that will cost Tk 2,476 crore.

The project will protect the city from floodwaters of the Balu river that runs from Tongi Bridge to Demra Road and cut traffic jam. The total area of the project is 124 square kilometres.

The vehicles from northern and southern regions will use the bypass through Tongi-Joydevpur and Demra.

A road has already been constructed from Joydevpur to Chittagong Road as part of the project. Project officials said four pump houses to pump out stagnant water, a sluice gate, a drainage and an embankment are likely to be complete at a cost of Tk 1,500 crore.

"Constructing a dam is more important and other work could be done in phases," a project official said.

A visiting team of the Asian Development Bank's board of directors at a meeting with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda on July 29 expressed interest in constructing the bypass for protection of Dhaka city from flooding in future. The minister called for unconditional help.



Badda-Satarkul point of the proposed eastern bypass project.



A stretch of road from Science Laboratory to Azimpur yesterday.

Dilemma delays plan for fresh ban on rickshaws

SULTANA RAHMAN

The Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) is in a dilemma over its decision to free rickshaws from two major city roads due to diametrical pressure from the government and the World Bank (WB).

The latest deadline to ban rickshaws from the roads in question is August 15, which has been fixed over an Agreed Aid Memoir with the WB. But it has been extended by two days to August 17 due to the current floods. This happens to be the fifth time that the deadline had to be shifted. The fresh deadline has been sent to the mayor for approval.

The stretches of roads to become off-limits to rickshaws were Kalabagan crossing to Azimpur via Newmarket and Science Laboratory to College Road (next to Bangabazar) via Shahbagh and National Press Club. Originally, the roads were supposed to become rickshaw-free in December 2003.

Senior officials in the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) DTCB's implementing agency said that the plan has become a political issue which has thrown it into uncertainty. Both the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the communication ministry have objected to implementation of the rickshaw-ban as the government fears the step could make it unpopular and create a negative impact in the national elections scheduled for 2006.

In the wake of situation, the communications minister at a meeting on July 29 called for cabinet approval to enforce the ban, sources said.

DTCB's executive director Quamrul Islam Siddique however, become unemployed, which will be inhuman under the present circumstances.

The DTCB has plans to make three more major thoroughfares rickshaw-free next year. These are Progati Sarani to Mouchak, Bangla Motor to Mouchak and Rokeya Sarani to Farmgate. Earlier, the stretch of Mirpur Road connecting Gabtali to Russel make the roads earmarked for the ban free of rickshaws on time.

Sources said that following the WB's observation, the chief executive officer of DCC on July 26, sent a letter to the DTCB asking it to take initial preparations including arrangement of sufficient public transports, awareness campaign etc.

"This is just an eyewash from ever, it is alleged that the plan had to be set back following instructions from a top government office Officials fear that this time too it will be a case of fund misuse.

Rickshaws have become a major headache for city planners. The Dhaka Integrated Transport Study (DITS), a government survey funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), found that rickshaw fare is almost double in comparison to bus fare for the same distance. But some 19.2 percent passengers use rickshaws as their favourite mode of transportation while only 9.5 percent travel by buses.

According to the records of the Wheel tax Department of DCC, there are nearly 89,000 licensed rickshaws and vans plying in Dhaka. But the Mayor has admitted that unofficial numbers are nearly four lakhs. The illegal rickshaws are believed to be the prime cause for constant traffic jams and violation of traffic rules.

The police began a drive to seize unlicensed rickshaws from the capital last year. Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)'s estimates show that around 10,000 rickshaws were taken in from September 2003 to June this year.

The latest deadline to ban rickshaws from two major city roads has been extended again. But DUTP officials believe the plan has become a political issue, for which the project now faces uncertainty

told the Star City that the plan to ban rickshaws has become stalled because of the flood.

"If we try to implement the plan now, it will bring inconvenience for the people," said Siddique.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka recently told reporters that the plan would be delayed as many poor rickshaw-pullers will Square had been made off-limits to rickshaws on December 20 last year.

A World Bank team reviewed the DUTP project in July and expressed dissatisfaction at the limited progress of the rickshaw-ban programme along with other plans. The team reportedly put pressure on the authorities to the government side and a bid to avoid their liabilities. Ultimately the World Bank will blame the DTCB as the plan will not be implemented on time," a senior official of the DTCB said.

The DTCB had spent around seven lakh Taka on the rickshaw-ban campaign to meet an earlier deadline on February 26. How-

useful

telephone

numbers

COURIER SERVICES

International
Air Borne Express- 9561371, 9561372, 9550724
Air Couriers Int'l (BD) Ltd.- 8815970
Aramex International Courier- 9558003, 9559582, 9565075
Airspeed Express- 9563494
Asian Courier Services Ltd.- 8313543
Baishakhi Courier Service- 9558606
Banmgladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Bangladesh Courier Service- 9563989
Bengal Express- 9560642, 9552666
Bangladesh Int'l Courier- 953636
Continental Service Ltd.- 9552948, 9558425
DHL Worldwide Express- 9881703-7, 9886305-9, 9882057
Enem Express- 9330699
Fedex Bangladesh Express Co. Ltd.- 9565114
Modhuban Courier Service-

9550884
Overseas Courier Service- 9352431, 8321169
Pacific Courier- 9568446
Reliance Express Service- 9558515, 7110249
Sky International service- 9660442
Skynet world Wide Express- 9558062, 9560258, 7114787, 7113184
TNT Express- 9566662, 9558239, 8618155
Union Courier Service- 9341722
United Parcel Service Air alliance Ltd- 8826429, 8810223

National
Asian courier Service Ltd.- 8313543
BAE- 9884851
Central Courier Service- 9881118
Confidence Courier Service Ltd. 9567036
Chisty Courier- 7110177-9,
Cosmopol Services- 9552793, 9557975
Dhaka Courier Services- 7236222

LIBRARY & INFO-

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4,
Shishu Academy- 9564128
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673
Bangla Academy- 8619550
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407
Nazrul Institute- 9114602
Ford Foundation- 8116133
Alliance Francaise- 8611557
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412

OUTING

Museum and Zoo

National Museum- 8619396-9
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday 3 pm- 8 pm, Thursday closed
Muktijuddha Jadughar- 9559091
Open: 10:30 am 6:30 pm, Sunday Closed
Bangabandhu Smiti Jadughar- 8110046
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Wednesday closed
Ahsan Manzil
Open: 10 am 5 pm, Friday: 3 pm - 7 pm, Thursday Closed
Shishu Jadughar- 9666466
Open: 10 am- 6 pm, Sunday Closed

CITY BUS ROUTE

Bus No.	Route	Starts from
1	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 10, 11, 12	Golap Shah Mazar
2	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Banglamotor-Farmgate-Mirpur 1, 2	Phoolbaria bus station
3	Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mahakhali-Airport-Azampur	Phoolbaria bus station
4	Shyampur-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Airport-Tongi	Shyampur
5	Sayedabad-Kamalapur-Motijheel-Airport-Joydebpur-Gazipur	Sayedabad
6 A	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 B	Kamalapur-Motijheel-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 1, 2	Kamalapur
6 C	Motijheel Shapla chattr- Malibagh- Farmgate- Gulshan 2	Motijheel Shaplachattr
7	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Maghbazar-Nabisco-Gulshan 2	Sadarghat
8	Chittagong-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asad Gate-Kalyanpur-Gabtoli	Chittagong Road
9	Demra Rani mahal-Motijheel-Kalbagan-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 10, 11, 12	Demra Ranimahall
10	Sadarghat-Gulistan-Kakrail-Malibagh-Rampura-Biswa Road-Tongi Bridge	Sadarghat
11	Sayedabad-Motijheel-Fakirapool-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Tongi Bridge	Sayedabad
11/A	Sayedabad-Khilgoan-Malibagh-Rampura-Airport-Tongi Bridge	Syedabad
12	Shanir Akhra-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Asadgate-Mohammadpur	Shanir Akhra
13	Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Jhigatola-Shangkar-Mohammedpur	Motijheel
14	Signboard - Motijheel-Shahbagh-New Market-Shyamoli-Mirpur 1, 12	Signboard (Chittagong Road)
15	Chittagong Road-Motijheel-Shahbagh-Farmgate-Mirpur 12	Chittagong Road
24	Gulistan-Maghbazar-Mohakhali-Airport-Uttara-Bipile	Gulistan

TIPS

Do you know according to Dhaka City Corporation, you must deposit your waste at the collection site between 4pm and 10pm