

# It's December now for Khilgaon flyov

## PM's displeasure hastens work

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is anxious to complete the construction of the Khilgaon flyover by December following Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's reported dissatisfaction about the delay in the project.

Work on the flyover began in September 2001 under a Tk 74 crore budget. It was scheduled to be finished by February 2003. But it missed the deadline apparently due to delayed fund allocation from the government and a slow land acquisition process.

LGED officials had told The Daily Star in November last year that the flyover's work would be completed by June 30, 2004 but it missed the second deadline also.

"The Prime Minister asked us to finish the construction by December 16 and we are trying hard to meet that deadline," said a senior official of LGED adding that almost 82 per cent work of the 2,505-meter long flyover was done and around 41.36 crore taka was already spent.

The flyover has been designed with three wings connecting Khilgaon, Rajarbagh and Syedabad.

"At least 21 out of the 36 loops of the girder and 16 loops of deck slab along with three ramps are yet to be constructed," said the official.

He dismissed suggestions that the construction could be delayed again due to the installation of a Shock Transmission Unit (STU) to prevent earthquake damage.

"The Khilgaon flyover has been made earthquake proof

with an in-built design using rubber pads," he said.

LGED insiders said that construction was hampered in the past because of slow disbursement of funds but at present they were getting the money smoothly. Sources said already Tk 44.69 crore out of the estimated budget of 74 crore had been received.

However, land acquisition at Sayedabad has stalled the construction work. Officials said that 0.44 acres of land belonging to the Public Works Department (PWD) waits to be transferred to the LGED.

"There is a six-storied building on the land owned by PWD and we are unable to construct the surface road and footpath unless we demolish that establishment," said a high-ranking official of LGED.

Lack of security is also a

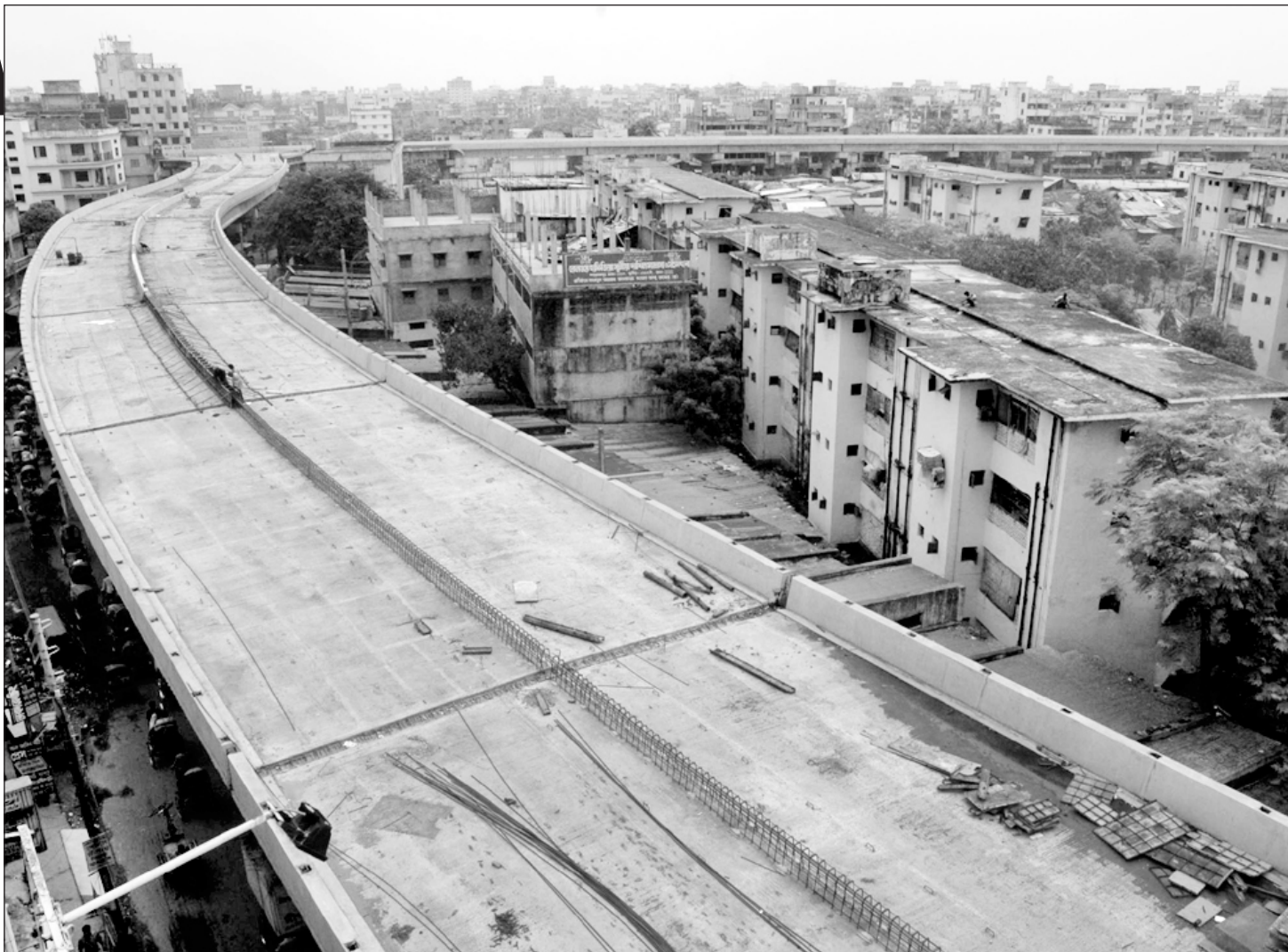
constant problem for the people working on the site.

An armed gang of around 25 hoodlums allegedly took away 10 meters of telephone cables from the 11-meter deep ditch near Sayedabad rail station that had been dug up to construct a 130-meter long ramp of the flyover.

"We can not keep it covered as compaction work is going on there," said an official.

"The miscreants peel off the rubber cover and melt the copper cable inside before selling it," said another official of LGED.

LGED sources said that around 50 people employed by the contractor armed only with sticks patrol the construction site which can hardly be called adequate security.



Work on the Khilgaon flyover will hasten to win over the prime minister's dissatisfaction at the present slow pace of progress.

# High-rises living on the edge

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Many high-rise buildings in the city have no emergency escape routes or fire fighting devices, making them vulnerable in emergency situations.

The Eastern Tower, an 18-storied apartment block in New Eskaton where 180 families reside in three buildings,

has been constructed without any emergency escape door. The fire fighting tools that had been there when the apartment was opened have not been replaced or upgraded even after 13 years.

"We have only one staircase and two elevators in each building. In the event of an emergency all the people will try to exit the building at the same time. It will be total chaos and I fear very few will be

able to get out safely," said a resident of Eastern Tower.

Eastern Housing Ltd. Officials claimed that when they built the tower, there was no rule for adding emergency escapes and did not want to take responsibility of the problems faced by residents.

"The association of the flat owners maintain and look after the apartments

after we hand over the flats," said an official of Eastern Housing Ltd.

A good number of 15-20-storied buildings are ill equipped to tackle fires and more alarmingly, the fire-fighting devices available have crossed their expiry dates. Besides, very few of the residents know how to use them.

"It is our own fault that we do not

know how to use the fire-extinguisher or the water-hose.

"We never even think about an accident and that is why we are totally unprepared to face a crisis," said a resident of Twin Tower Concord at Shantinagar.

According to Rajuk's Building Construction Rules 1996, there should be adequate emergency exit options in every high-rise and they must be kept separate from the staircase lobby and the elevators. Dhaka's developers hardly follow that rule.

"The developers are violating the rules. The designs they send us for approval show emergency exits but they are not there in the constructed building," said Jamal Akter Bhuiyan, authorised officer-4 of Rajuk.

Rajuk's rules suggest that the emergency exit must be at least 25 metres apart from the nearest gateway on a floor. But buildings that have emergency escapes in most cases have constructed the main stairway and emergency stairs within a few feet of each other. If the lobby is on fire, both the staircases stand to become inoperative.

After repeated fire-related accidents and deaths in garment factories, the residents of the high-rises are also concerned that similar disasters could strike them anytime.

"I just can't imagine what will happen if there is a fire in our building," said Lutfuluzzaman Khan of Mona Tower in Eskaton where about 60 families live without an emergency exit or fire fighting tools.

The Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) informed that it has a monitoring team to watch over the matter.

"We always encourage adequate fire fighting devices and required numbers of emergency exits in high-rises. If any REHAB member violates the rules, we take action against the company," claimed a REHAB official.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi applicants for Diversity Visa (DV) 2005 lottery have started receiving their initial letters.

According to sources, there was an estimated 1.3 million DV 2005 entries from Bangladesh last year but a large number of those applicants are set to pay the price for faulty online applications.

For the first time, the DV authorities introduced application via the internet for 2005. Prospective candidates were selected randomly from applications submitted between November 1 to December 30, 2003. Bangladeshis topped the success ratio in the lottery by receiving 7,404 visas, with Nigeria (6,725), Poland (6,211) and Ethiopia (6,060) following.

But letter recipients said that mistakes made while typing names, date of birth, spouse's name and other mandatory information mean that many of them cannot proceed to the next phase.

"I have only recently learnt that after the application has been received, a letter of confirmation is sent to the applicant's e-mail address and a print of it should be

kept for future reference. As I was not aware of that advice, I did not keep record of received e-mails. Now that can really spell trouble for me," said Mansur Ahmed who applied from a cyber café in Gulshan.

The online system also made computer operators of cyber cafés and other outlets with e-mailing facilities prone to mistakes. Although DV 2005 applications became a lucrative business venture for many opportunistic individuals and firms who promised applicants of assisting them in filling up the form properly, due to work load and lack of knowledge in certain cases, they made spelling mistakes, misprinted addresses or made errors while attaching photos.

There is a specific format for the DV photo and those that do not conform to it will not be accepted.

"Everything worked out fine for me as I had approached a visa counselor of the US embassy before applying. Since everyone does not have that privilege, some kind of public demonstration of the entire process should be available for applicants," said Suman Kumar Roy, a successful applicant.



PHOTO STAR

healthouting,taxicab&train

HEALTH

Hospitals

Heart

Burn

Cancer

Diabetes

Mother & Child Care

Eye

Dental

Orthopaedics

General

Salimullah Medical Collage

Blood Bank

Eye Bank

Ambulances For

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday

Bishal Center-Friday

Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday

Polwell Market-Friday

BCS Computer City-Friday

Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.

Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday

Stadium Market-Friday

Bangabazar Market-Friday

National Museum-Thurseday

Ahsan Manzil--Thurseday.

New Market-Tuesday

Gausia Market-Tuesday

Mouchak Market-Sunday

Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday

Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday

Eastern Plaza-Sunday

Farmview Super Market-Sunday

Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday

Dhaka Zoo-Sunday

Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab

Salida

Cosmo

Cab One

Nihon

Orion

Anudip

Capital

Union

Kool

Black Cab

Cab Ex

Cabline

JBS Cab

Sajan

Anudip

Cab One

Palki

Cab I

Jatri

Nipun

R-Cab

Star Cab

Shihab

KGN

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Subarna Express

Mahanagar Prabhati

Mahanagar Godhuli

Parabat Express

Joyantika Express

Upaban Express

Tista Express

Ekata Express

Upakul Express

Agni Beena Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am

Leaves Dhaka at 3:15 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 11:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 6:40 am

Leaves Dhaka at 12:45 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9:45 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 7:00 am

Leaves Dhaka at 5:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 8:00 pm

Leaves Dhaka at 9:20 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 1:55 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 10:55 pm

Reaches Chittagong at 6:40 am

Reaches Sylhet at 2:30 pm

Reaches Sylhet at 9:20 pm

Reaches Sylhet at 6:40 am

Reaches Bahadurabad at 1:05 pm

Reaches Bahadurabad at 11:15

Reaches Noakhali at 5:00 am

Reaches Jagannath at 2:30 pm

TRAIN TIMING

British Council

Community Development Library

Goehte Institute Int'l

Indian Information Centre

The Russian Cultural Centre

Drik Photo Gallery

Press Institute of Bangladesh