

## Dhaka Bypass to end by June

RAFIQ HASAN

The government has decided to complete the 61-kilometre Dhaka Bypass from Joydevpur to Madanpur on Dhaka-Chittagong highway within next six months on priority basis to ease the traffic congestion in the capital.

Once the bypass is open to traffic, the vehicles coming from 16 northern districts and greater Mymensingh will be able to go to Chittagong, Sylhet and other eastern and south-eastern districts without entering Dhaka.

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sources said.

The construction of the road started in November 2001. Initially, the government had approved Tk 192.46 crore for the project but later the cost of the project was revised and estimated at Tk 317.15 crore.

Sources however said the project cost may go up to Tk 350 crore as the road is going to

be of four lanes instead of two lanes planned earlier.

Besides, some other components like small bridges, culverts and toll plazas were also included in the project that raised the cost.

The government has meanwhile decided to expedite the construction of Kanchan Bridge over the river

Shitalakhya on the bypass. Officials concerned said around 85 percent work on the bridge has already been completed.

The 415-metre long bridge is being constructed at a cost of Tk 77 crore.

A meeting at the communications ministry last week discussed the overall progress of the project and felt that the bypass should be completed as soon as possible for a permanent solution to the traffic congestion in the city.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda chaired the meeting attended by the secretary and other high officials of the ministry and the Roads and Highways department and representatives from Planning Commission.

"We are confident that the project would be completed by June 2005, if everything goes smoothly," Nazmul Huda told journalists after the meeting.

Asked why the project was delayed, the minister admitted that there were some misunderstandings about the escalation of the project cost.

Meeting sources said the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) had raised various questions about the cost of the project. The Ecne had also asked the Planning Commission to examine the reason for the cost escalation and the commission formed a committee to re-examine the matter.

The planning commission has however accepted the

reasons for the cost increase and agreed to recommend for the revised amount.

"The reason for the cost escalation is justified because the road is being built with four lanes instead of two lanes," a meeting source quoted the planning commission representative as saying at the meeting.

The commission will submit its report in a week and the ministry will place the revised project before the Ecne for final approval, the source added.

Officials said Tk 206 crore was spent for the project by June 2004. The government has allocated another Tk 35 crore in the current fiscal year.

### 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 future of Bangladesh is very good. Considering social advancement the country has done better than India"*

-- Professor Amartya Sen

Nobel Laureate Economist  
Told Prothom Alo in an interview on December 30 on a visit to Dhaka to attend the certificate award ceremony of a training programme for women journalists from rural areas.  
Source: Prothom Alo

*"If Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has enough confidence then she should arrange a fresh poll immediately and take the people's mandate once again"*

-- Abdul Jalil

General Secretary, Awami League  
Told newsmen at the National Memorial in Savar on December 30 when he joined the second cross-country 'no-confidence human wall' from Sunamganj to the Sundarbans.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"Small factories would be most vulnerable in the quota-free regime if they are stuck with stocklots"*

-- Annisul Huq

President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)  
Told a press conference on December 28, three days before the country entered into the quota-free world market.  
Source: The Daily Star

*"I may be the spouse of a minister but I have not sold my conscience"*

-- Sigma Huda

Eminent lawyer and human rights activist  
Told a seminar titled 'Protection of women and children: Child Marriage and Domestic Violence' organised by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association in the city on December 30.  
Source: Bhorer Kagoj

*"Not only in our country, even the English do not celebrate the 31st night so colourfully"*

A Norwegian tourist

Told journalists on January 1 commenting on the New Year celebrations in Cox's Bazar sea beach.  
Source: Prothom Alo

*"Deshnetri (leader of the country) Khaleda Zia will definitely get a Nobel Prize"*

-- Golam Hossain

Former General Secretary of JCD, student wing of ruling BNP  
Told a large gathering of students on January 1 marking the 26th anniversary of the student front. Source: Bhorer Kagoj



Orchids, cacti along with varieties of daisies, roses and others attracted many flower-lovers to the show.



## Flower-power draws many

Participants seek govt assistance to promote flower export

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Flower exporters participating in the 10<sup>th</sup> National Flower Show 2005 seek government assistance in promoting flower exports from Bangladesh.

The government always promises help to promote flower export, but we never get such assistance, said Sushmita Uddin, managing director of

Micro Orchids and Plants.

Most participants believe that technical assistance and proper training for flower cultivators are essential for commercial production of flowers.

The government should invite foreign buyers and introduce them with local exporters if it really wants to promote flower export, a participant said.

participant said.

Mahmud, farm in-charge of Dipta Orchids Limited, said the exporters are facing problems due to costly fertilisers and insecticides required for flower production.

The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) has organised the weeklong flower show at the T&T Ground in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area.

As many as 47 flower exporters and entrepreneurs are taking part in the exhibition.

Inaugurating the show, Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury said exports of agro-based items including fresh flowers should be promoted to boost the country's economy.

"Now agro-based exportable products enjoy 30 percent cash incentive, which also helps increase the export of flowers," the minister said.

He said in the age of globalization there is no alternative to raise standard and quality of products to survive in the international market with a stiff competition.

Bangladesh earned Tk 4.51

crore in 2003-2004 through export of flower while the export earning during the first quarter of 2004-05 fiscal year was Tk 4.09 crore.

The major export destinations of Bangladeshi flower are India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, USA, UK, France, Italy and Portugal, the exporters said.

## Gaming, a growing craze

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

The new gaming venues of the city are organising frequent competitions to attract more visitors and also to promote gaming.

Creativity and good maintenance have already ensured a steady flow of customers to these computer-based entertainment centres.

"The sheer thrill of playing something new draws us to gaming," said Barish Khandaker, one of the winners of this year's Bass Bi-Annual Gaming Tournament.

Bass Gaming Zone, the organisers of the tournament use the concept of multi-player gaming by connecting 18 or more personal computers through local area network (LAN). Bass was launched in 2002 and quickly gained popularity for being the only facility of its kind at that

time. It organised the first gaming tournament in the following year.

"We did not receive an enthusiastic response from the city's gamers at the beginning," said Mainul Ahmed, vice-president of Bass Gaming Zone. When the second gaming tournament was held, number of participants was still not encouraging.

But this year the third tournament saw a huge number of gamers from different corners of the city willing to compete.

"Over 45 gamers were playing in different categories of the tournament," informed Khandaker.

Bass gave away over Taka 25,000 in prize money to the champions, runner-ups and other award winners and also distributed various gifts.

Two other gaming facilities have started their venture in the

city this year and are also using the multi-player concept. However the two -- Blizzard Gaming Zone in Dhanmondi and Games.net in Uttara, were yet to launch any official tournaments.

"If we can establish a working relationship with the two other gaming zones, we might organise a bigger and better multi-player tournament in the future," said Mainul Ahmed.

The only other popular gaming joint is Games World with its state-of-the-art facilities.

It started in a humble way in Kalabagan during 2001 but has an ever-increasing membership list. It has opened a new branch in Bashundhara City recently.

Games World is affiliated with Games Center of the UK and follows tournament rules and procedures of their UK counterparts. Tournaments are held regularly on weekly, monthly, and annual basis at its two

branches in Dhaka.

"With over 1600 members, we have to organise many tournaments in order to keep our members satisfied and motivated," said an employee of Games World. The store gives away gaming consoles, popular brand game in prizes.

From this year, Games World plan to initiate multi-player system in gaming consoles through cables.

Gamers of the city are now demanding online tournaments but owners of the gaming centres cited inefficient internet infrastructure as a major obstacle.

"We are still awaiting the arrival of optic fiber after which we can start organising such tournaments," said another employee of Games World.

These games are much developed versions of the video game arcades, which popped up in

street corners and localities in the late 80's and early 90's and were flocked by school children and teenagers. Parents had a guarded opinion about these arcades because of their addictive nature.

Even though it has now become a healthy form of entertainment thanks to the quality of the gaming facilities, the addictive aspect remains.

"Games are based on theories of movement on the screen which excites the mind," said Professor A. H. Mohammad Feroz, a psychiatrist. "Movements of such type will affect the mind and will possibly make the player hostile," he cautioned.

"There will be side-effects to everything but at least we are getting some indoor entertainment in a city where it is rare to even find an open field to play cricket or football nowadays," reasoned Barish Khandaker.



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