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#### SPECIAL ON ROAD DIGGING

## City undergoes rigorous road digging

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Utility service providers are currently digging up around 42.1 kilometres road in the city simultaneously just before the rainy season, causing inconvenience to commuters.

A survey shows that more than a hundred roads in the city have been dug by the utility agencies under 41 development projects, also leading to traffic congestion.

The survey conducted by Unnayan Samannoy, a non-governmental organisation, in 26 wards of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) says most city dwellers have identified traffic jam and indiscriminate road digging as the main problems in the city.

Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is implementing nearly 80 percent of the schemes but in most cases it has failed to complete the work

For example, Wasa started digging a road in Kashaituli on April 20 and the work was supposed to complete by May 10. But only 15 percent work has been done so far. Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) is also digging roads for development work.

However, DCC and other utility service providers are blaming each other for the sufferings of the people due to road digging all the year round.

"The utility providers especially Wasa do not deposit security money on time that causes delay in road digging," Saifuddin Ahmed, DCC chief executive officer told Star City.

But Wasa officials said work is being delayed as the DCC has increased security deposit by 100



A Gendaria resident risks injury and damage to his motorbike as he crosses a large crater on a wooden plank. (R) A narrow main road in the same area has become off-limit to vehicles due to the digging.

percent against digging of any road for development work.

Wasa Managing Director ANH Akhter Hossain said Wasa has started digging city roads to improve the sewerage channel and water

'The issue of increased security money is yet to be resolved. But we could not wait as the rainy season nears," said the managing director.

The DCC CEO claimed that the corporation has increased the amount of security money to discourage utility agencies in road digging frequently.

DCC gave permission to the utility service providers for road digging in April, two months ahead of monsoon,

to avoid people's sufferings.

The works are scheduled to complete by May 31, but the present status of work indicates that there is no chance of the completion by that time. "These roads will be left with big ditches which will add sufferings to

the commuters," said a DCC official. "If we do not permit road digging, the utility services will be collapsed," the DCC CEO said when asked why they are giving permission to dig up roads simultaneously.

Furthermore, most of the roads are not repaired after the work is finished and the dug up roads remain in such a shabby condition for months. Wasa and Titas Gas dug up the road from Rampura to Kuril recently that has still been left without repairing.

"DUTP (Dhaka Urban Transport Project) developed the road six months ago, which has now become unusable," alleged a DCC official asking not to be named.

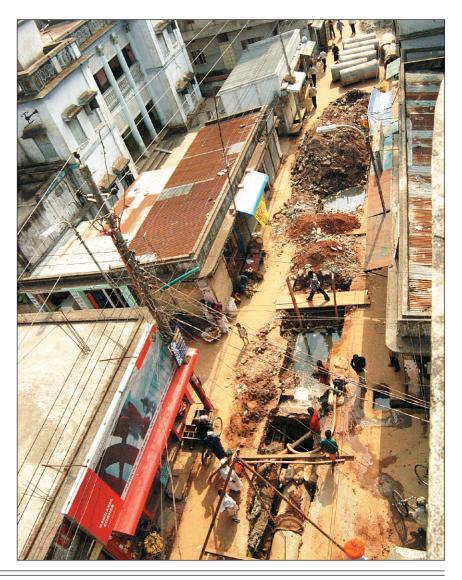
Titas gas was permitted to dig up the roads in Arambagh, RK Mission Road, Shapla Chattar, Malibagh, Kamalapur, Mughdapara, Fakirerpool and Madertek area. Titas was supposed to finish the works by May 5 but the works are yet to com-

DCC officials claimed that they could not give green signals to the utility agencies to start digging because of delayed approval from planning commission.

Sadeq Hossain Khoka, city mayor said: "All utility agencies receive funds from the planning commission at the eleventh hour and then they come to us for approval. It happens every year and this is the reason why the work is delayed.

"We are forced to approve plans just before the rainy reason, as utility service providers are compelled to complete their work before the end of the current fiscal year," he added.

He said DCC will hold a meeting to find a solution of the crisis today.



### Deadline to finish

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has asked

A letter signed by the chief engineer, DCC on April 30 asked the utility agencies to complete all road digging works by May

Most of the DCC officials replied in negative when asked if they expect all road digging works to be complete by that

Supply Company (Desco), Titas Gas, Public Works Department (PWD), Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), Dhaka Transport Coordi-

"Utility service providers keep on digging roads ahead of rainy season. So we reminded them to comply with the existing rules," said an official at the DCC

gency the authorities concerned can apply to DCC seeking permission to dig road during rainy season paying 50 percent compensation fee. DCC considers the application and permits road digging, if possible. The rate of compensation differs according to nature of roads.

The rules say any road digging work should be completed in 15 days. However, work on Dhaka Wasa's storm sewer

A zonal executive engineer of DCC said usually utility agencies except Wasa finish digging work in time. "Wasa fails to complete such tasks in time as they have to cut roads more extensively for their work," he said.

Managing Director of Wasa ANH Akhter Hossain said it is not possible to complete ongoing works by May 31. "How can we finish it by that time when we got the permission from DCC at the end of

DCC officials said road digging in rainy season also causes financial loss to DCC "They cut a certain part of road and pays compensation for that part only. But they do not pay for the part damaged by rain,"

# work

different utility service providers and other organisations to stop indiscriminate road digging ahead of the rainy season.

deadline. The letter was sent to different organisations including Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), Dhaka Electric

nation Board (DTCB) and Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DÚTP).

chief engineer's office. The Road Digging Rules that DCC adopted in October 2003 consulting with other organisations do not permit road digging from June to October.

According to the rules, in case of emer-

line is allowed to complete by 30 days.

explained one of them.

April," he said



The Wasa has dug almost half of the busy Central Road. As a result, traffic jam is common in the area

### A resident's plight

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Bazlur Rahman woke to the clatter made by spades against concrete, by courtesy of the house. As usual, he was in a hurry to reach office with an important meeting scheduled. Rahman also had to drop his six-year-old son at school on

Just when they were ready to leave the house after a hastily gulped down breakfast, they found out to their horror that the chauffeur had not arrived. The two were on the verge of losing patience with Rahman lost for ideas on how to sneak son Akash in past the school gate which must have closed by then, driver Obaidul appeared

already 20 minutes late. In the face of furious queries,

the driver mumbled that he could not reach in time as the road leading to the house at Central Road had been dug by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA).

Rahman could see the tailend of a long line of cars and rickshaws mostly carrying

school and college going chil-The road that was originally 30 to 35

feet wide had shrunk to half due to the trenches dug by Wasa. Moreover, huge cement pipes have been kept on the road, further constraining space

They rushed down to the garage and then were stunned when the guard at the gate boldly announced that it would be impossible to take the car

dren just outside his gate. They were crossing the area at snails

The road that was originally 30 to 35 feet wide had shrunk to

out of the apartment's parking Wasa. Moreover, huge cement pipes have been kept on the road, further constraining "We are building storm sew-

ers here," replied a labourer when Rahman asked what was going on. Already late for his meeting Rahman decided to cross the dug-up portion on foot in the hope of getting on any passing public transport. But taking Akash along would be risky as the craters were deep. So there would be no school for Akash that day and he was sent

Rahman remained busy at work throughout the day but was frequently pestered by phone calls from home. "The carpenter has brought the dining table we ordered on a rickshaw van. But he can not cross the road now. What

half due to the trenches dug by should I do?" his wife asked. A grumbling Rahman suggested that the carpenter take back the table and return in a week's

> After a tough day at office, Rahman was returning home in the afternoon with the experience of the morning nearly forgotten. But just as he approached Central Road, he saw a similar traffic jam. As he wondered why on earth so many people were stuck there as it was not the rush hours, he got his answer from a visibly disgusted elderly lady sitting in

a rickshaw. "There are at least 50 doctors' chambers and three hospitals in the area. Doctors usually see the patients in the evening and that is why there is no respite for people here," she

### One Stop Cell coordination attempts fail?

SULTANA RAHMAN

The One stop cell a segment of Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC), formed with the aim of coordinating road digging has allegedly failed in its attempts as service providers do not follow guide lines outlined for the

purpose. The cell set up about two years back is often blamed for haphazard road digging across the city.

The DCC initiated road digging in parts to avoid inconvenience to commuters, but unplanned digging of 2,289 kilometres of roads has taken a different turn and commuters face acute problems because of

The cell authorities blamed the city's utility service providers like Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA), Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), Titas Gas, Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) for the mess caused by

haphazard road digging. "The situation has improved presently compared to the earlier days where road digging continued over the years. But the aim of establishing the one stop cell is not fulfilled vet as utility service agencies do not follow the guidelines during road digging," commented a senior official of the DCC.

"Roads have to be dug in phases to avoid people's inconvenience but utility service providers apparently dig the entire length of a road at a time," said the official. WASA has dug about half of a kilometer of road stretching from Notrédame College to Fakirapool, violating the guide-

"Road digging is a never-ending problem in the city. We can only minimise the people's inconvenience because unplanned road digging, but can not stop it. Utility agencies need to dig the roads to up-keep their services," said Saifuddin Ahmed, DCC's chief executive officer and head of One Stop Cell.

Titas Gas dug Khilgaon-Bashabo road in April and the work was completed over a week ago, but the debris and rubble still lies on the road. As per the guidelines, the agency is expected to remove all obstacles on the road within a day of completion the work

On completion of the work, the utility service agencies are expected to fill in the dug-up portion of road with sand, instead of mud, and cover the area with bricks making it fit for vehicular movement. The agencies are also expected to present to the cell plans made to remove debris, earth,

rubble and rehabilitation before the commencement of the digging pro-

"No materials like pipes, iron rods can be transported to the site unless the digging is completed and the debris is taken away," said an official of the cell seeking anonymity.

The Mayor supervises the coordination activities of the cell while DCC's chief executive officer and head of the cell issues permits to dig the main thoroughfares. Agencies have to deposit fees for digging and in addition an equal sum as security deposits with the city corporation for each segment of work. Guidelines state that if agencies fail to complete the work within the stipulated time they will have to forfeit the security deposits placed for that particular

According to a consensus with the service providers, it was included in the guidelines that all road digging should be completed in 15 days, while only WASA will have 21 days to lay sewers and water lines.

"But utility agencies never complete their work within in time," alleged Saifuddin Ahmed.

The guidelines also stated that a road dug by a service provider once would not be approved for digging

within the next two years, but permission will be granted repair or mainte-

lines stretch across the road. It is

reinstalled on one side of the road, to avoid digging up the centre of the Presently, the underground utility roads for repairs or installations, to permit smooth flow of traffic

"We need full cooperation from proposed that these lines should be the utility agencies to implement the guidelines," Saifuddin Ahmed



Photos: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN