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Western embankment in need of urgent repairs

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

From Babubazar to Gabtoli the 12 kilometre stretch of the western embankment is filled with cracks and holes and in need of immediate renovation. However, concerned officials say work might not

start until the monsoon is over. No repair work has been done on the embankment for the last three years which has made it a

risky structure. There are large holes in the dam, marks of the destruction caused by last year's flood.

Locals said hundreds of these cracks could have devastating effect on the dam with the rise in

water level of nearby rivers. "If the repair work is not done before the flood season, any part of the embankment might collapse and once that happens, controlling the gush of water would become impossible," said Khurshed Alam, a businessman

Officials said the process of getting funds from the Asian Development Bank for repairs is in progress but that might not be

used this season. "They will give us Tk 2.5 crore for repairing the dam. Even if we get the money tomorrow we cannot use it because it is too late to

start the work as the monsoon has arrived," said an official of the Water Development Board.

He however said they were aware of the problem and were prepared to handle any emergency situation with own funds.

The renovation project includes the area from Babubazar to Lalbagh Fort but the embankment's Gabtali portion needs urgent attention.

The road on the embankment from Babubazar to Gabtoli is full of potholes and heavy vehicles run on this road making it more vulnerable every day.

The 30km long embankment from Babubazar to Tongi Bridge was built in 1989 to protect the city from flood. A by-pass road was constructed on it in 1999 and that road is now in a damaged state due to lack of maintenance.

The road is very important for the city for its business connection with the northern part of the coun-

"Due to stagnant rainwater on this road, large craters have been created and that hampers goods carrying trucks and lorries from reaching the markets on time. Also, it is a great safety hazard for the vehicles." said Ramatullah a businessman at Babubazar rice wholesale market.



Installations of pipelines by land developers have made the western embankment vulnerable to road slides.

12x3

7x3

Desa set to become a limited company

Employees protest corporatisation fearing job cut

IMRUL HASAN

The government will turn Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) into Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC) to make it an effective, efficient and profitable organisation.

Sources said the company will be formed under a plan to corporatise the Desa which has been dogged by huge system loss, corruption, irregularities, administrative inefficiency and increasing debt over the years.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood announced earlier this month that the government has taken the final decision to corporatise Desa in accordance with the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) loan agreement.

"Desa's working environment will improve a lot once it is turned into a company. All will be benefited from the corporatisation," said the state minister about the government decision which is part of the ongoing reforms in the power

The government formed Desa in 1991 with the assistance from donors but the move failed to make it an effective and profitable organisation in the last 14 years.

However, most of the Desa officials and staff are against the corporatisation plan.

"If Desa is turned into a company, many officers and employees will lose job." said a high official in the administrative department of Desa.

"The power sector has been divided into parts repeatedly under the government's erroneous reform policy and following the donors' experimental prescriptions. But system loss and corruption are not decreasing," he added.

In protest against the government move, different groups of Desa employees have declared a non-cooperation programme and demanded cancellation of the decision.

"We are disappointed at the government decision. Why will we all suffer because of some employees' corruption?" said an employee of Desa who fears a massive job cut in the organisation after it is turned into a company.

Opposing the government plan on corporatisation, Mosharraf Hossain, chief of the collective bargaining agent (CBA) of Desa, said: "We are still in the dark about the process of forming the com-

He said Desa could be made a profitable body if the government involves the employees in the initiatives to improve Desa's condition.

The parliamentary standing committee on power ministry on July13 blamed the Desa for a Tk 2,000 crore deficit in its account. The committee members alleged that the huge amount of money was traceless due to corruption and irregularities.

The CBA and other employees' groups said they are not against reform but they want a guarantee from the government that no employee will lose his job in the process of corporatisation of

Desa Chairman Brig Gen AAMS Rab however claimed the system loss of Desa is decreasing. "We set a target for every three months to decrease the system loss. The present target is to bring it down to below 20 per-

Desa works as an autonomous body and its objectives are to improve service and distribution system and reduce system loss. It buys power from PDB at Tk 1.51 per unit and sells at Tk 2.40 per unit. Desa alone draws 55 percent of the total power generation.

According to the Desa officials, the demand for power in Dhaka City increases by around 10 percent a year but the supply is inad-

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