

MAHAKHALI FLYOVER

A classic case of mismanagement

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Lack of maintenance of Mohakhali flyover is a classic example of mismanagement and coordination gap among the government departments.

Streetlights on the flyover remained switched off for the last 12 days, but none of the departments concerned could say why it happened.

The officials of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and Roads and Highways Department (RHD) point finger to each other on the responsibility of the flyover.

Dozens of lights on the flyover were on for consecutive 61 days before some 'ghostly' hands switched them off in the last week of December 2006. These lights still remain off leaving the flyover in dark in the foggy winter nights. For the last 11 days this correspondent tried to find out who has switched off the lights and who will switch these on. More than 20 officials of DCC and RHD were contacted but none of them could say anything specific.

Electrical engineers from DCC and RHD say the high performance lights were installed on the flyover so that the vehicles do not miss the direction in the night.

Lack of lights on the flyover might lead to severe accidents anytime. Moreover, the drivers get very short view in foggy

nights where the high performance lights would help them. Keeping the flyover in dark is very risky, said the engineers. But the DCC failed to switch on the lights in 12 days.

Chief Engineer of DCC Mehedi Ali Khan is in dark regarding the handing over of the flyover's maintenance job, although it was handed over to DCC in June last year.

Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP) Director Syed Qudratullah said he received the papers needed to obtain the maintenance authority of the flyover in July 2006 and sent those to DCC zone-9 for maintenance. But DCC zone-9 executive officer Mahbubul Islam said they haven't received any papers.

It has been known that some

papers are there with executive engineer of zone-9 Arifur Rahman. But when contacted, Arifur said these papers are not sufficient to maintain the electrical equipment installed on the flyover.

"We haven't got the keys of the switch-room and that is why we are not able to maintain the streetlights regularly," he said and referred to Superintendent

Engineer of DCC Zafar Ahmed saying that the responsibility belongs to his department.

But Zafar said RHD has not handed over the responsibility to them.

The chief executive officer is sending a letter to the communications secretary today (Tuesday) seeking his interpretation on the handing over of flyover issue," said Zafar.

On the other hand, the chief engineer of DCC in a meeting on last Monday ordered his people to sit with the RHD officials to solve the problem.

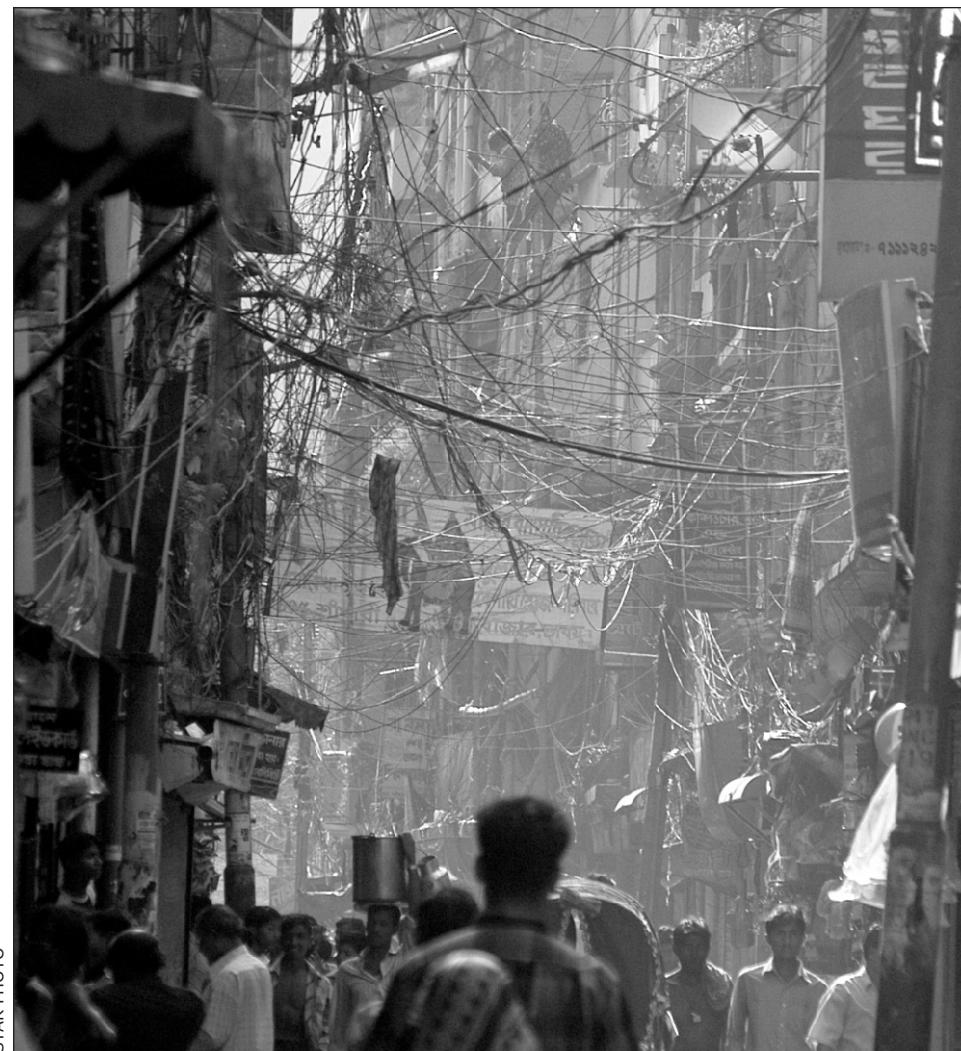
Confusion arose as the RHD still says that the handing over of the flyover is done.

Bishwajit Dey, the then project director of the Mohakhali flyover, said: "There is no scope to hand it over again. We have papers that DUTP, DCC received the papers needed to handover the authority of the flyover to DCC. We have closed the project in June last year after handing it over to them in a very transparent process."

The 1.12 km long Mohakhali flyover was constructed under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project at a cost of over Tk 1 billion.



STAR PHOTO



Maze of wires hang overhead in the narrow alley of Shankhari Bazar while pedestrians walk by.

Rajuk's dubious

FROM PAGE 21
a ward commissioner and brother of BNP leader Mirza Abbas, is working behind the scenes for possession of the land.

Caretaker of the grabbed land said "The magistrate and Atiq asked me to call them in case of any problem."

Dastagir, the magistrate, said, "This is funny that my name was mentioned in this matter."

Atiq Ullah is son of a retired clerk of Rajuk's estate department. Habib Ullah and is the managing director of Paramount Properties Limited.

"It is true that Khokon is my business partner in a project but it is not correct that I have exercised any influence on police or any other quarter," said Atiq. "May be landowners are trying to implicate my name."

"I have just reached a verbal agreement with the landowners to buy the plot and develop it," he claimed. The landowners would receive Tk 1 crore and 40 per cent of the flats built on the land, Atiq added.

Lokman Mahmud, brother of Asma Begum (one of the claimants of the land), said, "Neither Rajuk nor the district administration has anything to do with the demarcation. I am supposed to demarcate my land."

The ultimate goal of occupying the land on the edge of the lake is to grab a larger part of the lake gradually over time, said Rajuk officials.

A top official of Rajuk said seeking anonymity, "An organised syndicate of land grabbers in connivance with the government officials has long been active in capturing valuable lands exploiting loopholes in the law of

derequisition."

The syndicate resorts to various fake means and legal tangles to manage derequisition of lands in the name of private owners, he added.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) also said, "A well-organised syndicate of influential land grabbers in connivance with some sections of government officials is active in grabbing expensive lands across the city."

Five to seven years back, a large area of lakes and wetlands went under the grip of influential land grabbers in this manner by a law that allowed derequisition of acquired land. That provision is no longer in effect.

Lawlessness

FROM PAGE 21
correspondent that the efforts of the traffic authorities have been unsuccessful as powerful associations of drivers and owners of the public transport vehicles often override the enforcement of law.

"It is a common practice for the drivers to extract unjust fare and harass the passengers taking advantage of certain situations," added Jashim Uddin.

Like many officials in the public sector, the DMP joint commissioner (traffic) also passed the buck onto others, saying, "It is not possible for the police alone to improve the entire system. The owners' association should come forward and take some responsibilities to help the traffic department to enforce traffic rules in the city."

Lone mobile restaurant in city faces police ban

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Despite authorization, the lone mobile restaurants in the country are barred from catering at popular city spots.

Run by an organisation comprising freedom fighters the mobile restaurants usually cater at the Sangsad Bhaban area, passport office in Agargaon and other places frequented by tourists and visitors.

It was officially authorised in 2000 by the Ministry of Communications. Dilip G. Bepari, Chairman of Hemayet Bahini Mukti Joddha Sangstha, the organisation running the business said that most recently the police asked him to move away from the passport office area.

In April Bepari met with the passport office officials and showed them the authorisation. He was then allowed to continue. But after the victory day traffic policemen arrived on the

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with the police with his authorisation letters did not melt any ice. The police asked him not to return to the spot again.

Abdur Rob Hawlader, director general (DG) of Department of Immigration and Passport said that his office had written to the Dhaka City Corporation and the police to take steps to keep the main thoroughfare clear of traffic.

The officials concerned found the mobile restaurant creating traffic jam and they acted accordingly, I have nothing

to do in it," the DG said.

However Bepari said that he has been paying all taxes every year for running the business. "This business is supporting more than twenty families of freedom fighters, and we have all licenses required to run it, why they chase me away is a question that remains unanswered to me," Bepari said.

Lokman Hakim, Deputy Commissioner West of Traffic Department said that the catering vehicle could only do business where there is a car park. He failed to answer when pointed out that in Dhaka there is hardly any parking facility.

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Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday
Stadium Market-Friday
Bangabazar Market-Friday
National Museum-Thursday
Ahsan Manzil-Thursday
New Market-Tuesday
Gausia Market-Tuesday
Mouchak Market-Sunday
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Tuesdays
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
Eastern Plaza-Sunday
Farmview Super Market-Sunday
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Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
Shishu Jagduhar-Sunday

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