

hello dhaka

Weekly weather forecast for the city	Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Low: 28 °C High: 35 °C Mostly cloudy and very warm	Low: 28 °C High: 32 °C Overcast, 1-storms; humid	Low: 27 °C High: 33 °C Cloudy, 1-storms; warm, humid	Low: 28 °C High: 33 °C A morning 1-storm; cloudy	Low: 28 °C High: 34 °C Mostly cloudy; warm and humid	Low: 27 °C High: 32 °C An afternoon 1-storm or two	Low: 27 °C High: 32 °C A couple of thunderstorms

Source: www.bmd.gov.bd
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BIJOY SARANI-TEJGAON LINK ROAD

Dec 15 deadline likely to meet some hurdles

TAWFIQUE ALI

The Bijo Sarani-Tejgaon link road is unlikely to be completed by December although the government has set December 15 as deadline to complete the project.

The project consists of three components -- 500 metres long and 60 metres wide surface road, a 618-metre overpass and demolition of the 22-storey Rangs Bhaban.

The road could be ready by December but removal of the giant Rangs Bhaban and construction of the overpass at

deadline to build the overpass at Tejgaon level crossing at a cost of Tk 39 crore, said the project officials.

Rajuk Chief Engineer Md Shah Alam said work of the foundation piling of the overpass is now going on while only groundwork of 50 percent of the surface road is underway.

The much-hyped project is apprehended to face uncertainty after the caretaker government steps down and new government takes over following general elections in December, according to sources concerned.

the project area.

While talking to this correspondent on September 15, Haque said he would be able to start the work of making sub-base (ground preparation for base) of a small stretch of the road by next week. Then laying base course and asphalt carpeting will be done.

"But we cannot work in full swing because of obstructions of different kinds," said Haque. "This kind of delay increases the construction cost."

Haque also said they cannot make the full use of equipment

the road's alignment.

The government had to acquire a total of 24 structures to build the link road. A number of owners of the acquired buildings filed cases in April against the office of Dhaka's deputy commissioner (DC) and Rajuk demanding adequate compensation.

Rajuk chief engineer Md Shah Alam said all the cases filed by building owners have been resolved. "We have deposited due compensations with the DC office for the acquired property and now there is no legal complications in implementing the project," he said.

Replying to whether they would be able to complete the project by December deadline, the chief engineer said, "It is difficult to foretell it now but our target is December."

Ujjal Mallick, executive engineer of the project and in-charge of demolishing the Rangs Bhaban, said the government has attached the highest effort to this project.

"Let's see how far we can go, we are working day and night to complete the project," he said. "We will be able to pull down the whole of Rangs Bhaban structure by December and will require some more time to clear off the rubble."

Rajuk started demolition of the building on August 3, 2007 and it has so far been able to knock down only upper half of the 22-storey structure.

According to experts, the 60-foot wide link road will create severe bottleneck in traffic movement instead of easing it up. The 120-foot wide Bijo Sarani will be narrowed down to 60 feet at the linking point.

Actual carriageway of the proposed road is 46 feet (each of the two lanes is 23 feet wide) with 6-foot wide footpaths on the drainage pipelines on both the sides and a two-foot wide median.

It will obviously create a 'funnel-like situation' for traffic movement, according to Prof Mujibur Rahman of civil engineering department at Buet.

The Department of Architecture (DoA) and Rajuk jointly prepared the alignment of the extension of Bijo Sarani in 2000, as part of Nakhpara Development Project. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council approved the link road project on August 28, 2007 at a cost of Tk 122 crore.

like soil compactor, excavator and drum truck in such a situation. Conflicting claims for boundary line by the private plot owners is another complication that hinders smooth progress of the work.

On the other hand, a stretch of at least 100 metres of the proposed road is occupied with the rubble of Rangs Bhaban. Authorities will not be able to remove it before end of November, said official sources.

However, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), implementing agency of the project, has meantime sorted out some court cases filed by affected building owners.

On a visit to the site, at least seven buildings were found being manually demolished on



STAR PHOTO

Work of Bijo Sarani-Tejgaon Link Road in progress.

Tejgaon level crossing will take more time, experts said.

"In fact, practically the whole project requires at least three more months to be completed properly," said a project official on condition of anonymity.

But Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, who headed a 31-member advisory committee on Strategic Transport Planning (STP) for Dhaka, said normally it takes one to one and a half years to build a railway overpass.

The government has set December 16, the Victory Day, for opening the road.

Rajuk issued the work order to a joint-venture construction firm of Rupayan Prokoushali (RP) Constructions and Udayan on June 24 with a six-month

"It would be better if the present administration completes the project within December," said Aziz Ahmed, a local trader in the project area.

While Bhuiyan Engineers Ltd has got the work order for construction of the road, Six Stars, a ship breaking firm, has got contract for demolition of the Rangs Bhaban. Bhuiyan Engineers got Tk 3.80-crore work order on March 25.

Enamul Haque of Bhuiyan Engineers said they formally started the work on June 17. But there are lots of obstructions in constructing the proposed road. At least 7 to 8 buildings on the road are now being demolished. Apart from this, there are gas, sewer and electricity lines that need to be removed from



A big bazaar occupies most parts of the 50-foot wide Mazar Road in Mirpur. The road has so much narrowed down that sometimes even a rickshaw finds it difficult to pass through the point. When the road remains free three minibuses can move side by side. This situation continues in spite of the presence of traffic police in the area and in full knowledge of DCC, locals alleged.

Fruits too pricey this Ramadan

Imported varieties dominate market

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Prices of fruits this Ramadan have gone beyond the buying capacity of the common men although most fasting Muslims love to see fruits at iftar.

Traders said the prices have doubled due to high demand in the month of Ramadan.

"Although paju, chhola, beguni and jilapi are the most popular iftar delicacies, the fast breaking meal is never completed without fruits as it is healthy. That is why during every Ramadan fruit sales increase," said a vendor at Hatirpool.

During a visit to city's main fruit markets it was found that fasting consumers were mostly purchasing dates and banana. Date is considered the divine fruit with religious value and the most preferred item during Ramadan. Dates cost around Tk 90 to Tk 220 a kg depending on the quality.

The price of banana has also increased despite a good supply during this time of the year. A dozen of bananas used to be around Tk 35 and Tk 40 only a month ago, which now sells at around Tk 55.

To avoid the heat of the market consumers are also opting for some cheaper fruits like pomelo (jambura), papaya and the white-fleshed melon (bangi) although their prices have also increased. The price of jambura is around Tk 30 to Tk 40 per piece. A papaya costs around Tk 50 to Tk 70 and melon cost Tk. 40 to Tk. 50.



STAR PHOTO

A roadside fruit vendor at Baitul Mukarram.

Grapes, the most expensive fruits, cost Tk 280 to Tk 300 a kg while apple is selling at around Tk 140. Australian orange costs Tk 100, Indian ones Tk 80 while mandarin costs around Tk 120 a kg. Price of pomegranates is between Tk 200 and Tk 220 per kg.

Mango, still available in a very small quantity attracts only a segment of customers with well-off wallet. One kg mango cost about Tk 180.

Traders said consumers are

even substituting popular fruits with not so popular ones like golden apple (amra) and star fruit. "Children do not like these fruits. But still I bought it, as we must have fruits on the iftar plate. Fruits are very refreshing than all the greasy foods that we usually eat," said Haji Haris Munshi, a resident of Ibrahimpur Pakarmatha.

Traders also said the Bangla months of Bhadra and Ashwin are off-season for local fruits,

which played a part in the price hike.

"This is not a season for local fruits in Bangladesh. Ramadan sales this year is mostly depended on imported fruits but the supply have not increased as per the need of the holy month," said a wholesaler at Karwanbazar.

"Many fruits now grow throughout the year but not enough to meet the current need," he added.

Massive drive against honking of horns after Eid

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

On a fine morning last week, uniformed law enforcing officers equipped with signs, leaflets and stickers with 'no unnecessary honking' slogans took over city streets.

They marched across several city avenues, showing the signs to the motorists, handing out the leaflets to drivers and pedestrians, and pasting the stickers on passing vehicles.

They also removed hydraulic horns from city buses, seized vehicles and filed cases against fifty-nine cars, taxis, buses, lorries and auto rickshaws for excessive honking during the stormy drive. Another hefty number of motorists was let off with harsh warnings.

The message of the four-day campaign from September 14 was loud and clear -- to remind motorists that there is a law against unnecessary noise and that the authorities are ready to enforce the law.

"The idea was to create awareness among general people -- to pass the message that noise pollution is harmful to the human senses," said Billal Hossain, a deputy director at the Department of Environment (DoE) and the top official regarding noise pollution. "We want to alert motorists before going all-out against the senseless honkers."

"While the idea was to create awareness, we also went into action against a number of offenders to demonstrate that we are ready to enforce the laws when necessary," he said.

Led by the DoE, officials from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) also participated in the drive.

DoE officials said the operation would continue after Eid-ul-Fitre until its objectives are met -- to create awareness among general people about noise pollution.

A massive drive will be launched to go all-out against motorists violating Noise Pollution (control) Rules-2006,



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Law enforcing officials are checking papers of a bus during a drive against honking of horns on a city street last week.

sources said, adding that the rules do not allow people to use horns which produce sound over 85 decibels on the city's thoroughfares.

The campaign comes at a time when noise pollution in city streets has reached unbearable levels.

Commuters in this capital city say it has become harder to be heard and to have a voice in the streets. They want a relief from deafening background noise of a city crammed with 14 million people, and thousands of mindless drivers who always have one hand on the horn.

"Whenever I talk to people, they always say-why are you shouting?" said Abdul Hamid, 56, a barber whose two-chair shop is on a corner near the Farmgate bus stop -- one of the busiest bus bays in the city.

Hamid himself, of course, was shouting. "It may not be enough to make you crazy, but it is very tiring," said Jamal Hossein, as he sat on worn plastic chair

outside the food shop his family has owned for 10 years. He was shouting as he talked about the noise, though he did not seem to realise it.

Research reports from World Health Organisation (WHO), Unicef and World Bank (WB) say noise pollution is one of the 12 environmental pollutants that causes 30 serious diseases. They can range from loss of hearing to problems with unborn babies.

Honking in heavy traffic can hit the hazardous zone of 80 or more decibels, but without prolonged exposure, the effect is largely psychological. "It drives me absolutely up the wall," said Dr. Emdad Hossain, an otologist from Dhanmondi.

Among those who bear the brunt are traffic-enforcement agents, especially when they hold up traffic to clear an intersection after the light turns green. "They (drivers) honk at any little thing that irritates them," said Imtiaz, a

traffic sergeant from the west zone.

A study carried out by the Department of Environment (DoE) about two years ago showed that the decibel level in residential areas and commercial areas was hazardously more than permissible to human health.

The standard set by the DoE allows the noise level between 45 and 75 decibels depending on the zone. In residential areas, for example, the maximum level of noise allowed is 50 decibels during day and 45 at night. And in industrial areas, it could be as high as 75 decibels during daytime and 70 at nights.

However, noise level in the busiest city thoroughfares tend to be around the 85 decibels mark, a bit louder than a freight train 15 feet away, said a DoE report. At certain locations, the report said, the noise often reaches 90 decibels, which is only slightly quieter than standing next to a jackhammer.