

Poor planning fades prospects of circular waterway project

Observe transport experts; lack of link roads and right transport modes seen as major obstacles

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Lack of proper link roads and transportation modes may lead to failure of the Dhaka circular waterway project designed as a solution to the ever-increasing traffic loads in the city streets, said transport experts.

Termining the waterways project 'very poor,' Dr Rahmatullah, a policy adviser to Transport Sector Management Reform of the Planning Commission, said the authorities should have worked on the project in a more coordinated manner.

"Embankment in the city's eastern fringe, link roads for each landing stations and terminals of the waterway, and adequate transport modes in the connecting roads are fundamental to making the waterways successful," said Rahmatullah.

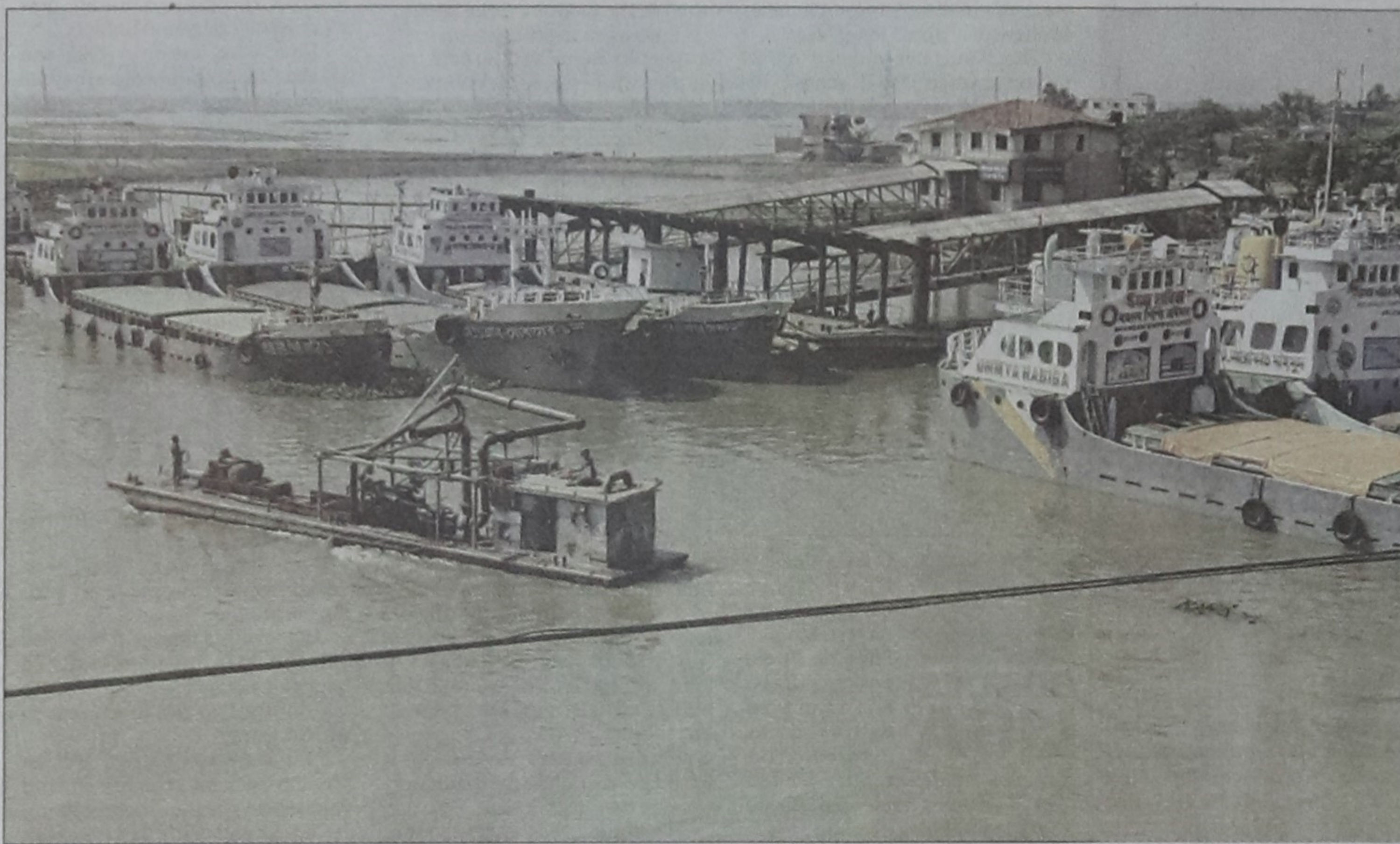
Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) implemented the 30-km Sadarghat-Ashulia route along the rivers Buriganga and Turag at a cost of Tk 36 crore in the first phase of the project from July 2000 to early 2005.

The BIWTA started the second phase in July 2007 to implement a 40-km waterway from Ashulia Bridge to Kanchpur Bridge along the Balu river via Tongi and Ichhapur at a cost of Tk 47.5 crore with the deadline of June 2010.

Dredging of the river Balu in the eastern fringe under the second phase has started without any embankment and link roads. Dredging was done in the western fringe as well along the Sadarghat-Ashulia route.

None of these components has been planned in an integrated manner, according to Rahmatullah, who also worked as an urban transport planning expert in the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) of Dhaka.

There is lack of properly



The Amin Bazar landing station of circular waterway is lying idle without any passengers. Cargo barges stay moored occupying the pontoon.

planned landing stations with functional road connections with the city's road network, he said. "Mere dredging of the rivers or canals will not do. There have to be feeder transport modes for passengers."

Rahmatullah suggested that fast-moving long-tail boats (known as waterbus in Bangkok) are required to attract passengers to the waterway.

According to the urban and transport experts, Dhaka is one of the few cities in the world where natural rivers can be developed into a circular waterways around it to free the capital city from the traffic mess.

Rivers including the Buriganga, Dhaleswari, Turag, Balu and Shitalakhya, and Tongi canal encircle the capital city.

Prof Nazrul Islam, a noted

urban expert, said that circular waterway is a crucial need for Dhaka to tackle transport, drainage and environmental problems.

The first-phase Sadarghat-Ashulia waterway failed to serve the purpose of carrying passengers due to selection of wrong type of watercrafts, said Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who headed a 31-member advisory expert committee on STP and is vice-chancellor of BRAC University.

"Slow moving transport modes naturally failed to attract passengers," he said adding that lack of coordination between existing road network and the circular waterways also added to the failure.

The river route was revived but there were no road connections with the landing stations. Connections between landing

stations and regular roads and developing more functional landing stations for cargo transport are essential, he said.

Objectives of the circular waterway are to enhance navigability, reduce Dhaka's traffic congestion, facilitate transportation of cargo goods in a relatively shorter time, resolve Dhaka's waterlogging problem and help improve environment.

"But the purpose of carrying passengers has failed due to infrequent trips of passenger launches," said BIWTA Chairman Md Abdul Mannan Howlader.

There is a lack of coordination among agencies concerned like BIWTA, Roads and Highways Department and Railway, he said.

Md Golam Rabbani, BIWTA engineer and director of second phase waterway project,

said the motor vehicles can speed up to 60 to 70 km in Dhaka streets in the morning while normal speed of the watercrafts is only 8 to 12 km.

The waterway route has some physical obstacles too. Height of one railway bridge and two road bridges of Roads and Highways Department on the Dhaka-Mymensingh road across the river Turag is so low that even ordinary boats face difficulty to pass under them, said Rabbani.

The Ashulia Bridge (Daur bridge) on the Dhaka-EPZ road across the river Turag is another obstacle to making the waterway circular.

The second phase is set to miss the completion deadline by two years. "It will actually take up to 2012 to be completed," said the project director. "So far, only 17 percent of the project work has been

accomplished."

Abul Qasem, BIWTA additional chief engineer and project director of the first phase, said BIWTA was supposed to introduce fast-moving water transport modes for passenger travel in the circular waterway.

The absence of necessary link roads between the landing stations and nearby roads in true, said Qasem. "For example, there is no link road between Birulia and Savar to connect with Birulia landing station," he added.

BIWTA has regained the dredging cost, Tk 16 crore, of the first phase in five last five years with an annual income of Tk 3 to 3.5 crore leasing out the route facility for cargo transport. The first phase route was opened in March 2005.

BIWTA proposed a Tk103-crore second phase project to be implemented jointly with Local Government Engineering Division. But the Planning Commission on third revision postponed LGED component of road constructions.

Four landing stations with pontoons, steel gangways, passenger guestrooms, terminals, and spud will be built at Tongi, Ichhapura, Kayedpara and Kanchpur.

Tongi and Kanchpur will have major stations. Rampura, Meradia and Gobindapur canals will be re-excavated under this phase.

BIWTA officials said that total length of the circular waterway would be 110 kilometres including 40-km waterway from Kanchpur to Sadarghat via Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

The Japan Debt Cancellation Fund will finance the second phase. A total of 10 landing stations have been built at Sowarighat, Kholamora, Basila, Rayerbazar, Lalbagh, Shinnirek, Birulia Bazar, Aminbazar, Mirpur and Ashulia.

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.

"It is difficult for BSTI alone to ensure food safety. The institution tests hundreds of products -- food and non-food -- of their first batches only. Any next batches of the same products may be adulterated."

-- Dr Shakil Ahmed

Assistant Professor, Paediatrics, Salimullah Medical College
Said at a discussion on legal and scientific issues relating to baby milk organised by the School of Law of BRAC University at the BRAC Centre, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"The country is already on the highway of election and it is now time for our political leaders to bring about qualitative change in politics."

-- Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman

Education and Commerce Adviser
Said at a seminar on international quality control organised by Bangladesh Society for Total Quality Management at Sheraton Hotel, on Friday. Source: The Daily Star

"Big flies tear through the cobweb but the small ones get stuck."

-- Justice Habibur Rahman Khan

Chairman, Truth and Accountability Commission
Said at a press briefing expressing frustration that political leaders are yet to approach the commission, on Wednesday. Source: Prothom Alo

"In 1971 they killed freedom fighters in the name of religion. Now they have recognised the contribution of freedom fighters in their constitution. They are an example of all kinds of duplicity."

-- Rashed Khan Menon

President, Workers Party of Bangladesh
Said at a discussion at his party office, on Tuesday. Source: Prothom Alo

"Parents, not the government, will determine whether they will give powdered milk to their children."

-- Firoz Ahmed

Finance Secretary
Said at a press briefing after an inter-ministerial meeting on powdered milk, on Sunday. Source: Prothom Alo

"There are some things which you are forced to do."

-- Khandaker Delwar Hossain

Secretary General, BNP
Told reporters about doing registration with the Election Commission (EC) under pressure from the government and EC, on Sunday. Source: Bhorer Kagoj



Workers sorting through garment leftovers at a jhoot godown in Mirpur.

Garment waste processing now job provider for thousands

The thriving industry needs patronisation, security

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Recycling of waste raw materials left by garment factories has emerged as a good income generating source for many people in recent times.

As the informal sector requires small investment, it attracts a good number of investors who are employing thousands of people, mostly from under-privileged classes.

The garment leftovers, called jhoot by the people involved in the trade, are virtually turned into useful materials.

Every bits and pieces of waste raw materials starting from cut-pieces of clothes, zippers, buttons, thread, elastic fasteners, used plastic packets, broken cloth hangers, empty bobbins to rejected pants, shirts and t-shirts are sold from the garment factories.

Md Abdur Rashid Sheikh, secretary of Al-Amin Bahumukhi Babosayee Samobai Samiti, a garment waste traders association in Mirpur 10 Jhootpatti, said, "Rags discarded by one are treasure for another. We are helping to relieve the garment industry of a huge burden that was once

thrown away in dumpsters."

Rashid said each garment factory announces an auction for waste raw materials in every alternate week. The best quality waste cloths sells at Tk 35-40 per kg while the price for one kg low quality clothe can be as low as one taka.

Prices also change along with the market price of fabric and other products. Cotton clothes and white clothes cost more as these are widely used to reproduce cotton and yarn.

First stage of recycling starts with sorting, which is usually done by colours, type of fabric and its condition. The usable clothes are bought by small garment factories with one or two machines reproducing clothes with it. Children's frocks, skirts, shirts, pyjamas, pillow cases are produced with this usable portion of the wastage.

Rashid said these reproduced items are mostly sold in street side stalls all around the city. A large amount goes to Bangabazar, Doza market and New Market extension.

"Because of the jhoot trade the poor segment of the society can buy clothes at a cheaper prices", said Rashid

The unusable parts and

extremely shredded clothes are recycled into waste cotton. Dhaka's bedding industry is dependent on these shredded clothes. Mattress, pillows, cushions, seat stuffing and padding in cars, public buses and rickshaws are usually done with these recycled clothes and processed cotton.

In the market one kg recycled cotton costs around Tk 20 per kg.

One of the jhoot traders claimed that even bandages are being reproduced with leftover white cotton fabrics.

While buttons, zippers, elastic fastener, hangers and plastic bags are resold to mini garment accessory sellers. These are sold at Tk 40 to Tk 80 per kg.

Buttons, zipper, elastics fasteners are mostly purchased by local tailors, said an accessory seller.

According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) there are about 4,500 units of garment factories in Bangladesh.

Around 500 textiles and garments waste processor units are currently under operation in the country and they

produce around 500 tonnes of processed waste cotton every day, said sources at Bangladesh Textile and Garments Waste Processors and Exporters Association.

However, there has not been any proper survey on the industry throughout the country.

Largest garment waste processing zones have developed in and around Dhaka surrounding garment industry belts like Mirpur, Tongi, Gazipur, Savar and Narayanganj.

The largest jhootpatti (area for jhoot trade) is located at Mirpur Section 10 where around 400 stores have employed around 10,000 people for collecting and sorting of the jhoot items. Most of the workers are women.

With flourishing of garment sector in early 1980s, some people got interested in the trade. Before that these waste materials were simply thrown away polluting land and waters around the factory zones.

Jhoot traders said, while the trade of garment waste is thriving with the pace of the garment industry, problems related to this informal sector

are many.

"Since the sector is still informal and runs with small investment without a strong foundation, harassment by police and local goons for toll collection is regular," said Md Abul Hashem, auditor of Mirpur Kata Kapor Babosayee Somobai Samity Ltd (Mirpur Garment Wastage Business Owners Association).

"These jhootpattis do not have land to set up suitable establishments. So almost all the stores are located at encroached government lands. Fear of eviction always remains," said a trader of the area requesting anonymity.

Clashes among local musclemen over control of the trade occur frequently, sometimes leading to even murder, he added.

Md Rabiul Islam, a trader at Mirpur 10 Jhootpatti, however, said, "The negative notion about the jhoot trade is slowly fading away. It would even be quite possible to earn a huge amount of foreign exchange with these wastes. Dear items like carpets and rugs can be produced if a modern mechanism can be developed to process this jhoot."