

## STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLAN

## First phase fails to ease traffic congestion

ERSHAD KAMOL

The first phase of the ambitious Strategic Transport Plan (STP) of Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB) has almost failed to achieve its target of easing appalling traffic congestion in the city.

In its first phase, the STP envisaged construction of an elevated expressway, two flyovers, a tunnel linking Tejgaon with the Airport and six new roads to connect the eastern and western part of the city. It also included strategies for the improvement of traffic management.

Of the proposed construction works and traffic management projects, only one road has seen the light of the day. It is a two and a half kilometre stretch of the road from Zia Colony to Mirpur Road which is now being constructed by the DCC. The road, which is at its final stage, will connect the eastern and western part of the capital.

A DTCB source preferring anonymity said the other component of the plan is a World Bank-funded road management project on Uttara-Moghobazar-Ramna-Sadarghat route introducing a mass rapid transit (MRT) system in the city's one of the busiest thoroughfares. The project is still at its feasibility study stage, and if finished it is expected to be functional in four years.

Rests of the projects under the first phase of the STP are either yet to start or will have to be reviewed due to construction of alternative roads violating the master plan.

Which is why the recommendations of STP need a review, said a high official of DTC.

The 20-year-long master plan, which was prepared at a cost of Tk 12 crore, has three phases. The tenure of the first



PHOTO: STAR

Traffic gridlocks are now a regular phenomenon in the city.

phase is 2005 to 2009.

Construction works under \$ 413m first phase were to be executed by Rajuk, Roads and Highways department, Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), while the improvement of traffic management strategies were to be implemented by DTCB, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC).

"Projects such as Tejgaon-Airport Tunnel and the road connecting Panthapath and Rampura as mentioned in the first phase are not viable after the construction of a road beside the Dhaka Cantonment and the construction of 'Hattirheel Beautification Project'. Besides, there is no future for

other construction projects of the first phase," he said.

Initiated in March 2004 by the government with the assistance of World Bank, the \$5.52b Strategic Transport Plan was completed in December 2005. However, the STP got approval four years later in June 2008.

Sources at DTCB have blamed the lack of power of the agency as coordinating body, frequent change of three governments since the preparation of the master plan, bureaucratic tangles and lack of will among the policy makers for failing to achieve the target of the first phase.

"The first three years of 20-year programme were wasted due to dillydallying of the government in taking up the project under the wings of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and finalising the

organogram. It was also late in giving approval to the STP," said a DTCB high official.

"After getting the approval of STP in 2008, we faced some other problems like lack of capacity building, dual control over DTCB and the tendency of other organisations to violate the master plan without consulting us," he said.

The experts also blamed the government for not allowing the DTCB to function on its own.

"As a coordinating body DTCB is not functional at all. The agency is under the Ministry of Communications although the mayor of DCC is the chairman of DTCB. Moreover, it has no power to force other agencies concerned to follow its recommendations," said Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, who

is the chairman of STP Advisory Committee.

"Not only in the case of STP, it is a common practice in Bangladesh that the government usually does not execute the studies properly. To me, the government is always suffering from 'analysis paralysis' which indicates its lack of will to implement any study," he commented.

The experts demanded formation of another regulatory authority and a revised master plan in the light of STP considering the present scenario.

"For proper execution of any transportation master plan, DTCB is not enough. There should be a higher authority, may be directly under the prime minister's office, including the DTCB, Rajuk and Wasa," said eminent urban planner Prof Nazrul Islam while talking to The Daily Star.

"That authority will coordinate and force the agencies concerned to execute the plans. Otherwise no master plan will be implemented. Moreover, STP needs to be reviewed, since the policy makers are coming up with new proposals not mentioned in the STP," he added.

SM Salehuddin, additional executive director of DTCB, informed that funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), a Japanese team will give a revised master plan with the vision of introducing mass rapid transit (MRT) focussing on metro.

"It will be a metro-based master plan. Moreover, we are focusing on capacity building of different government agencies concerned to ensure the optimal use of existing roads, highways and flyovers. We will also initiate awareness generating programmes on traffic rules," he added.

## ADMISSION PROCESS

## Universities asked to introduce online system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has asked authorities of different public universities to use information and communication technology related matters to ease sufferings of the admission seekers of the academic session of 2009-2010.

The ministry asked the university authorities to use online system and mobile phone service for distribution and submission of admission forms, collecting admission fees and publishing seat plans and results, said a government handout yesterday.

The university authorities will inform the ministry about their activities to this end as soon as possible.

The handout said the universities will publish all the necessary information about admission on their websites along with admission forms that can be submitting online.

The admission fees will be received through mobile phones or by using online banking system, reads the handout, adding that these initiatives will play a vital role in building a Digital Bangladesh.

## NUKE POWER PLANT

## Team to visit Russia next month

UNB, Dhaka

The trip of a Bangladesh delegation to Russia has been finalised to ink deals for installing a nuclear power plant in the country to mitigate the ongoing power crisis, official sources said.

According to tour schedule, the delegation, led by State Minister for Science and Information Communication Technology Yeafesh Osman, will fly to Moscow on October 17 and stay there from October 19 to 21.

The proposed visit was earlier supposed to take place in August. But, on the plea of security clearance, it was delayed by two months, the sources said.

The government of Bangladesh received a Russian invitation in July and prepared an eight-member delegation list.

But the Russian government took time to do security-clearance formalities for the Bangladesh team to visit their nuclear installations.

As per Russian security system, any foreign delegation willing to visit any nuclear power plant needs security

clearance.

Officials of the ICT ministry said they are hopeful that, during the visit, an agreement would be signed between the two countries at the state level to move forward the nuclear-power project in Bangladesh.

"The purpose of the tour is to strike a deal between the two nations and to have experience and learn about the Russian nuclear-power technology," said one official.

Earlier on May 13, Bangladesh and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Dhaka agreeing to enhance cooperation between the two countries for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The main purpose of the initial accord, in the form of MoU, is to take necessary steps for building a 600-1000-megawatt power plant in Bangladesh.

As per that accord, the state-owned Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation-Rosatom-will work together to push the proposed power-plant project forward.



PHOTO: STAR

Local residents form a human chain in front of Panchlaish Police Station in Chittagong yesterday demanding punishment to the killers of Mahfuz. Criminals killed Mahfuz as he protested the teasing of girls in Sulakbarah area in the port city recently.



PHOTO: STAR

Garment Sramik Federation takes out a procession at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding payment of salary arrears and Eid bonus to garment workers.

## 'Pay salary, Eid bonus soon to avoid labour unrest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Garment Workers Unity Council (BGWUC) yesterday demanded the garment owners pay workers' monthly salary and Eid bonus immediately to avoid labour unrest in the garment sector.

They threatened to go for a tough movement if their demands are not met within the shortest possible of time.

The labour leaders said this at a workers meeting at Muktangan in the city with central leader of the organisation M Delowar Hossain in the chair.

Labour leaders Rokeya Sultana Anju, Najma Akhter, Towhidur Rahman, Sirajul Islam Rony, Tahmina Rahman, Khaleque Nannu, SM Masud, Hosneara, Sahera Begum and Nahidul Hasan Nayan spoke at the meeting.

The leaders mentioned the names of some garment factory unit yet to pay the salaries and Eid bonuses to their workers.

The factories include Shamiraj Garments, Trust Trousers Ltd, Mango Knit Composite, Green Knit Apparels, Raihana Apparels, Eshar Apparels, Eurenus Garments at Mirpur, Cambridge Garments and Capri Garments at Farmgate, Garmex Ltd at Tejgaon, Millennium Dress, Euro Zone Fashion, Waymart Fashion, games Design at Kuril Bishwa Road, Tesco textile at Shyamoli, Karuna Fashion at Uttara, Surma Apparels at Gazipur, AS Fashion at Jurain, Sajib Fashion and Lopa Fashion at Gandaria and SIS Garments Ltd.

They also called on the government not to provide money from the stimulus package without getting details of BGMEA and BKMEA's steps to use it.

They urged the government to take a decision considering the rights of 30 lakh garment workers who are running the sector with very low payments.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra demanded the garment owners pay the salary arrears and Eid bonus by September 16.

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