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Eastern bypass left in cold storage

Work hasn't started 12yrs after approval; estimated cost spirals by Tk 1,000cr

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Implementation of the Dhaka Integrated Flood Control Embankment -- Eastern Bypass Road Multipurpose Project or the Eastern Bypass Project -- is yet to start 12 years after it was approved.

According to sources in Water Development Board (WDB), which initiated the project, its estimated cost has over the years risen to around Tk 3,000 crore from Tk 2,000 crore.

The project, okayed by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council in 1998, envisages building a 30-kilometre-long dyke-cum-bypass road along the Turag and Balu rivers on the eastern fringe of the capital. The bypass will encompass 124 square km of fast-

growing urban and semi-urban areas between Tongi railway bridge and Kanchpur bridge.

Official sources said failing to find a financier for the project, the government recently asked the WDB to break down its components and distribute those among other agencies such as Rajuk, DCC, Department of Environment, and Roads and Highways Department for implementation. The idea is to reduce cost and facilitate financing.

"Almost every year since the project was put into Annual Development Programme in 1998, we have to revise and update it," said a top official of the WDB.

He noted that without the eastern bypass, a vast area on the capital's eastern fringe remains unprotected from recur-

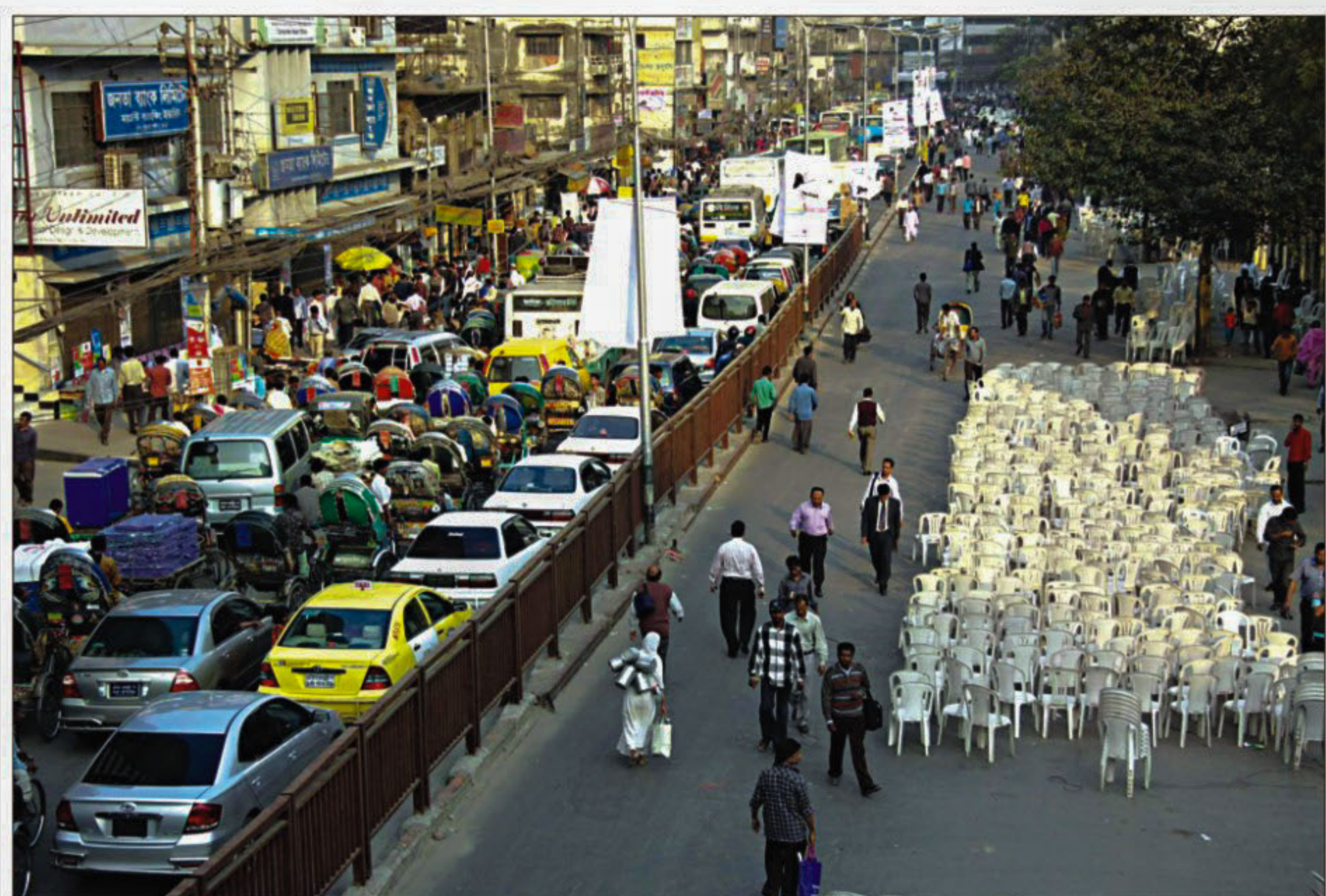
ring flooding.

As per the government's recent decisions, seven ministries with the water resources ministry in the lead will implement the project. Besides protecting a vast area from floods, the project will help expand the city and divert east and south-bound traffic from northern region of the country.

Contacted, WDB Chief Engineer (central zone) Md Humayun Kabir said work on the bypass project began with the help of the Engineering Corps of Bangladesh Armed Forces in 1998 but never got through.

Initially, the concept was to build embankment by dredging the Balu river. "But it was abandoned when we found

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Seating arrangement on the road near the northern gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque for participants rehearsing for the SAF games opening ceremony created daylong gridlock in the area.

Govt to seek one more year for tannery relocation

UNB, Savar

Industries Minister Dilip Barua yesterday said the government will seek another year from the High Court to relocate tanneries outside the capital from Hazaribagh area.

"There is a court order to relocate the tanneries from the city's Hazaribagh area outside the capital by February 28. The government will seek another year to do so."

The minister said this while exchanging views with industry owners, journalists and local elite after visiting tannery industrial site at Harindhara here.

The HC in June last year ordered relocation of the tanneries within February 28, 2010 to a place outside the city.

The minister said steps would be taken soon for development of the tannery sector, one of the major sources of earning foreign currencies.

Earlier, Dilip Barua visited various establishments in the industrial area, including newly constructed administrative building, police check-post, fire service shade, power plant and pump house.

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Bird flu hits another poultry farm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bird flu virus H1N1 struck a poultry farm in Sirajganj yesterday, two days after it infected a farm in Joypurhat.

Officials of the Directorate General of Livestock confirmed that Akmal Poultry Farm at Ranigram of Sirajganj sadar upazila was infected with the bird flu virus.

Earlier on January 5, the virus was detected at Yati Poultry Farm less than half a kilometre away from Lata Poultry Farm.

The Directorate General of Livestock has asked the farm to cull some 3,000 birds.

While talking to The Daily Star Director General of Directorate General of

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JS body unhappy at rice price hike

Finds ministry report "not convincing"

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over price hike of rice and formed a sub-committee to find out reasons behind it as the explanation of the food ministry was not "convincing".

Ministry officials told the parliamentary standing committee on food and disaster management ministry the hike was temporary as rice mills could not operate in full swing due to dense fog.

"We're not satisfied with the ministry's explanations on the price hike of rice. There is no reason for price hike at this moment after bumper production of IRRI and a healthy stock of rice in the government's granaries," Muhammed Sayedul Hoque, chief of the parliamentary body, told The Daily Star after a meeting.

He said 11 lakh tonnes of food grains including 10 lakh tonnes of rice is in the government granaries and import of seven lakh tonnes wheat and 50,000 tonnes rice is underway.

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MPs go against cabinet decision

Oppose changes in vested property return law

SHAKHAWAT LITON

In an unprecedented move, a high profile meeting of lawmakers yesterday rejected all proposals approved by the cabinet for amending the Vested Property Return Act 2001, saying if translated into law, it will go against the country's minority community.

Chaired by Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, the meeting termed the proposals unnecessary and said if enacted, the law will also destroy the basic spirit of the original act passed by the Awami League-led government in 2001, meeting sources said.

The law and land ministers, chiefs of parliamentary standing committees on law, land and education ministries and senior officials of the land ministry attended yesterday's meeting, an

extraordinary one as such meeting was never held in the country's parliamentary history.

The meeting decided to enforce the act of 2001 by bringing some minor amendments to it.

A number of senior parliamentarians present at the meeting expressed surprise as to who drafted the proposals and how they managed to get the cabinet's nod, the sources said.

The cabinet approved the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Act last November under which vested properties of the minority community members are supposed to be returned to them.

Incorporating the proposals, a bill was supposed to be placed in parliament on January 11, but following objections the land minister at the eleventh hour declined to submit it.

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UNDER THREAT

Killing, capturing and trapping of wild animals are criminal offence. The government was unable to implement the law over the years, which resulted in slow extinction of the country's last remaining endangered animals. This poor fishing cat was captured at a bamboo grove in Kanaiya Dokkhipara of Gazipur and then tied up for display.



PHOTO: STAR

School ground used for fair defying ban

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

A trade fair has been arranged at the playground of a Moulvibazar school in violation of the recent education ministry ban on holding any commercial fair or show on school premises without the ministry's permission.

Guardians of the students who attend the Kashinath Alauddin High School in Moulvibazar town expressed dismay at commercial use of school ground thereby, distracting their wards' attention from study.

Bright Multipurpose Cooperative Society, a local organisation that arranged the fair, earlier announced that Jute and Textile Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui would inaugurate the fair. The society also installed a number of arches in the district town welcoming Abdul Latif Siddiqui but the minister did not go there to inaugurate the fair.

On Saturday, fair organisers announced that Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin would inaugurate the fair. They also mentioned the names of some VIPs who would be present there as special guests but none turned up.

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GAZIPUR UNREST Police sue 'unknown' people, no arrest yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to arrest the driver of the bus that killed garment employee Sujjan

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Prayer Timing		
January 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-43	5-47
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

EARLY RESULTS IN LANKA VOTE Rajapakse gets public sector backing

AFF, Colombo

Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse won strong backing from the country's civil servants in the presidential election yesterday, according to the first counts of postal votes.

Election officials said counting of ballots from the bitterly contested election was under way and they hoped to release results throughout the morning today.

The first results to be announced were of postal ballots, the votes cast by mail by public servants deployed for the election in which Rajapakse's main challenger was his former army chief Sarath Fonseka.

In the districts of Ratnapura, Puttalam and Moneragala, Rajapakse polled 23,317 votes while Fonseka picked up 10,402, official results showed.

Officials said they estimated about 75 percent of the 14.08 million electorate turned out to vote at an election the opposition

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Trade fair extended by a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended the 15th Dhaka International Trade Fair 2010 by a week and it will now conclude on February 7 rather than January 31.

The commerce ministry made the decision following a request by participating business organisations.

"The Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday approved the application," said a handout by the ministry.

It mentioned that the fair was also extended due to the huge enthusiasm among the visitors.

The trade fair started on January 1.

Feuds force BNP to stall 1 dist council

2nd phase of reorganisation suffers jolt

STAR REPORT

The second phase of reorganisation of BNP suffered a jolt on the first day yesterday as one of the two district unit councils scheduled for the day could not be held due to intra-party conflicts.

The party unit council in Dinajpur was held peacefully but that in Brahmanbaria was postponed as the local administration imposed Section 144 following violence centring it.

In Dinajpur, the councillors cast votes to elect a new leadership of district BNP.

But in Brahmanbaria, supporters of an expelled party leader attacked the district unit convener's house that created tension among

the party men, BNP Joint Secretary General Mohammad Shahjahan told The Daily Star when contacted.

"Both the factions chased each other, and taking advantage of this, the administration imposed Section 144 to foil the council," he said.

The administration should have ensured security for holding the council instead of imposing Section 144, he added.

Brahmanbaria unit council was due to begin at 10:00am at the local municipal auditorium while a rival faction of the party unit BNP convened a separate meeting at the same time at Abdul Quddus Makhon open-air podium

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OnlinePoll ✓

Do you think the government should immediately identify the persons involved in the violent protest over road accident in Gazipur and take stern action?

Yes (91.6%)
 No (7.0%)
 No Comments (1.4%)

Total votes: 1111

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir that BNP did not show any negative attitude despite Awami League-led government's failure in last one year?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net