keeps referring to the 2003 MoU and that the government must take the charge of relocation costs and other expenditures."

The central ETP project, intended to be completed in 2014, is almost halted now without approval from the Planning Commission and Ecnec. The government has decided to invest in the project provided that the BTA pays back the cost in instalments in 15 years. An engineer at Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), requesting anonymity, says "Unless the BTA gives their consent regarding paying back the amount taken as a loan, the Planning Commission will not approve the government's decision to invest and the project will not move to Ecnec."



Plastic and rubber piled up for 'recycling.'

Peripheral Businesses: Unremitting Pollution

The delay in relocation, meanwhile, is taking its toll on a number of issues. Apart from the undiminished pollution caused by the tanneries, the peripheral businesses that have grown in Hazaribagh have also been harming the environment. It employs a huge number of workers who work under extremely hazardous and unhygienic conditions - a clear threat to their health and safety.

To have an idea of how the tannery area looks like, we take a tour stretching from around Rayerbazar Martyr Graveyard to Lalbagh in Old Dhaka. The air is heavy. Tannery workers are seen laying out small pieces of soaked cloth-like material along the water bodies. They say these are low quality leather they are commissioned by the factory to dry out in the sun. One of them says they earn 120 taka per rickshaw-van and one can dry out as much as three vans full of leather a day. The acrid smell should be shocking for a newcomer in this area but the people distributing it and the bystanders moving around seem to be quite indifferent.

Along the road towards Lalbagh, there are women working behind heaps of plastic materials, cutting used shoes and sandals, mostly made of rubber and plastic, into small pieces. They inform these materials are sold to factories for some reason they are unaware of. They get up to 3,500 taka a month for the task. An onlooker informs these materials are 'recycled' in factories and used to produce household goods like plastic buckets.

Up the road to Lalbagh, there seems to be another exemplary instance of 'recycling'. Piles of shredded rubber-like pieces are being shoved into huge metal boxes over large stoves in the open air. The stuff is apparently melting into something else, that's all the workers in charge say through the thick fog over the stove. There is no supervisor around for further queries but a person requesting anonymity informs that these are cattle skins being melted to produce gums for shoes.

Some of these peripheral businesses at

Cattle skin being melted 'to produce gum for shoes' the in open air.

