

DHAKA ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

Construction picks up the pace

TAWFIQUE ALI

Finally, after over seven years of toiling exercise of preparatory work, construction of the much-talked about 47-km Dhaka Elevated Expressway commenced formally on April 1, 2018.

The expressway scheme has so far made an overall ten percent progress, while the 7.5 km-long first section stretching from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Banani has progressed by a quarter, said its project director Quazi Muhammad Ferdous.

Bangladesh Bridge Authority issued the work order to the private partner on March 29 this year, marking the beginning of 25 years concession era, including three and a half years construction period, he said.

"By October 2020, we expect the expressway will be ready up to Moghbazar, and be open for public use," he said. "The expressway is designed to carry motor vehicles traveling to the city's southern end, easing

of the work order.

The progress made so far includes preparation of a construction yard by Airport Road, construction of some piers, acquisition of 26 acres private land, resettlement, shifting of utility service line and demolition of structures on the way of the expressway, said Ferdous.

The entire 71-acre land required for the first section has been handed over to the private partner, and physical construction work in this stretch is now going on in full swing, he said. Acquisition of the remaining 149 acres is done with the resettlement payment to those affected underway.

Ital-Thai has finished more than 900 pillings out of 1,200 needed in the first section.

The government was able to hand over the entire land of this segment only last year due to complications in land acquisition, resettlement and relocation of utility network.

The bridge authority signed a deal with Ital-Thai Development Public Company in January 2011 to build the expressway stretching from Shahjalal International Airport to Kutubkhali on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway under public-private-partnership at a cost of Tk 8,703 crore.

The deal was revised and signed again in December 2013, with the cost revised at Tk 8,940 crore and incorporating alteration to a 4km alignment in the southern end of the project to avoid land acquisition.

The government is to spend Tk 4,885 crore on land acquisition, resettlement and relocation of utility service lines. Therefore, the total cost of the project is Tk 13,825 crore.

Ferdous said that the government has already spent 65 percent of the ground preparation expenses.



A construction site of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway near Banani.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Government also has to pay Tk 2,413 crore of the project costs as Viability Gap Fund after completion of the first segment, as per contract agreement.

Ital-Thai Ltd had difficulties getting funds from the very beginning. Initially, it intended to seek a loan from International Finance Corporation of the World Bank, which requires Environmental and Social Impact Assessment report for approving loans. Ital-Thai failed to get the assessment done on time.

In 2015, it signed a contract with China Railway Construction Corporation, but it amounted to nothing. It signed another deal with Chinese Investment Global Foundation Company in December 2016 and that too did not work.

Though there was a sovereign guarantee that the concessionaire's revenue generation would not be hindered in any way, the government unilaterally

altered two vital ramps, one on Manik Mia Avenue and the other at Palashi, said a technical expert formerly involved with the scheme.

Similar unilateral changes to ramp layouts took place in Tejgaon and Kakoli. Of the 31 ramps, four have now been altered and shortened.

About 28 percent revenue return was calculated with the Manik Mia Avenue ramp and its alteration might have dampened the prospective financiers, according to Prof Shamsul Hoque, a member of Dhaka Elevated Expressway's technical expert team.

Ital-Thai, representing Montchai Musicabud, earlier told The Daily Star that the layout design of the expressway had been changed more than 100 times to resolve land availability issues and accommodate reservations raised by various government and private organizations.

The physical work started informally

in August 2016.

The company has spent nearly \$90 million on mobilizing machines and equipment, physical work, design work and management fees, he further said.

The Expressway

The proposed route of the expressway is Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport-Kuril-Banani-Mohakhali-Tejgaon-Moghbar-Kamlapur-Saidabad-Jatrabari and Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Kutubkhali.

The 47km length includes the length of the mainline (20km) and 27km of the 31 ramps in the original design. The first segment is nearly 7.5km long, the second one is 6km and the third segment is 6.5km long. The entire scheme requires 220 acres of land. The government has to acquire 26 acres of private land along the entire route and at least 7 acres for the first segment alone.

The progress made so far includes preparation of a construction yard by Airport Road, construction of some piers, acquisition of 26 acres private land, resettlement, shifting of utility service line and demolition of structures on the way of the expressway.

traffic pressure on the core city area."

Two foremost reasons why the scheme faltered time and again over the years were government's failure to hand over the right of way to the expressway's private investor that too failed to procure the fund, he said. They have, however, committed to close the fund arrangement process within six months



16339

www.bashundharacement.com

BASHUNDHARA CEMENT IS A PROUD STAKEHOLDER OF THE PROGRESS OF BANGLADESH.

The First Dhaka Elevated Expressway will cover a distance of 46.73 km starting from Shahjalal International Airport to Kutubkhali. Bashundhara Cement is proud to be the only cement in this project that's taking Bangladesh forward.



BASHUNDHARA
C E M E N T
BONDING GENERATIONS