

# U-loops for easing gridlock

Land acquisition related complications leave project in limbo



This U-loop on Airport Road near Uttara-3 was opened to traffic around six months back, with an aim to ease traffic congestion.

**HELEMUL ALAM**

Though the U-loop project from Uttara to Sastrasta was undertaken with an aim to ease traffic congestion in Dhaka, it could not be completed over the last three years due to land-related complications.

The project was initiated by the late Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Annisul Huq. So far only two out of 11 U-loops have been completed and work on another is going on.

Project director of the U-loop, Khandoker Mahbub Alam of DNCC said the construction work of eight U-loops could not be started due to complexity in land acquisition.

The complication has already been resolved and a revised project proposal of Tk 31.81 crore has been sent to the Planning Commission on October 7 through Local Government

Division, he added.

He said the complication -- involving land -- has been resolved verbally and they are just waiting for approval from Planning Commission.

"Once we get permission, we will start the work and hope it will be completed within six months," the project director said.

Now they are trying to implement the project taking land from government agencies, he said.

The project cost was Tk 24.83 crore initially. It has gone up due to compensation to relocate structures of Road Transport and Highways Division, he added.

The U-loops will be constructed at Kuril level crossing, Banani-27, near Banani Railway Station, Banani Chairmanbari, Amtali, Mohakhali Bus Terminal, Kohinoor Chemical Intersection and Sastrasta in Tajgaon.

Two U-loops near Uttara Jasim

Uddin Road and in front of Rab-1 Office were completed and opened to traffic around six months back, he said.

Ninety percent work on another at Kawla has been done, he added.

DNCC needs 1.36 acres of land from Roads and Highways Department (RHD), 0.22 acres from Bangladesh Railway, 0.09 acres from Land Record and Survey Department and 0.06 acres belonging to National Housing Authority to set up the U-loops.

The revised project proposal was sent to the LGD in September incorporating the compensation of Tk 5.50 crore to Roads and Highways Department and it was sent to the Planning Commission on October 7 this year, said Mahbub.

DNCC initially took the decision to build 22 U-shaped loops along a 36-kilometre stretch of Dhaka-Gazipur Road to ease traffic congestion.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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# Intent to save rivers creates row between BIWTA, railway

Cabinet division to hold meeting today

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The row over giving vertical clearance to several railway bridges between Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Bangladesh Railway (BR) has now reached the Cabinet Division.

Failing to solve the problem at an inter-ministerial meeting on December 9, the railways ministry requested the Cabinet Division to come up with a solution.

The division is scheduled to hold an inter-ministerial meeting with the cabinet secretary in the chair today, said BR and ministry officials.

The conflict started after BIWTA, in its bid to save rivers and increase their navigability, changed categories of several rivers at different points.

It issued a gazette on November 13 last year, replacing the earlier one [April 2010], said a BIWTA official. To construct a bridge across a river, any authority has to take both horizontal and vertical clearance from BIWTA, the official added.

But a railway ministry letter sent to the cabinet on December 12 said the changes in the category has created complexity for several under-construction and soon-to-be-constructed bridges as well as bridges under consideration.

It mentioned Kalurghat Bridge in Chattogram, Tongi Bridge and Garai Bridge in Kamarkhali. BIWTA officials present on December 9 meeting could not give any

specific opinion over the issue, it added.

If the issue of vertical clearance [of rail bridges] is not resolved, it would create an impasse over the project. Besides, cost and duration of the project will escalate, the letter said.

Vertical limit means the distance between standard high water level of a river and the main navigation span of a bridge.

The limit has been divided into four categories. The first category mentions that vertical clearance has to be minimum 18.30 metres, second category 12.20 metres, third category 7.62 metres while fourth 5 metres.

Meanwhile, work of Tongi Bridge has already started under the project of "Construction of 3rd and 4th Dual Gauge Line in Dhaka-Tongi and Dual Gauge Double Line in Dhaka-Joydevpur Sections".

But it remained suspended from April following opposition from BIWTA, project director Shahidul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday. BIWTA upgraded the category of this point of Turag river to second from third, he said.

"Physical work of Tongi Bridge has already started. How can we change the vertical limit now?" said Md Shamsuzzaman, director general of BR.

On the other hand, the letter said BIWTA in November 2011 gave vertical clearance to a new Kalurghat Bridge over Karanphuli river under the third category. But it has upgraded the category at Kalurghat point in



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