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The wait gets longer

More time needed to complete construction of elevated expressway

“Our target was to open the 10km portion of the expressway from Patenga to Nimtala in December. But Chattogram Wasa is delaying the moving of the pipeline from the project area.”

MAHFUZUR RAHMAN
project director and executive engineer of CDA

SIFAYET ULLAH

Chattogram residents will have to wait further for the port city's first elevated expressway as Chattogram Development Authority (CDA), the project's implementing agency, sought a two-year extension due to a lack of coordination with other government agencies.

This means the opening of the elevated expressway, one of the largest infrastructure development projects of the port city, is likely to be deferred.

The project has seen overall progress of 60 percent to date, with 8km out of the proposed 16km done so far.

This expressway is being constructed from Lalkhanbazar to Patenga in four phases, of which, the work of two phases is almost complete.

The project authority announced the launch of the first two phases of the expressway in December.

But while working on the second phase, complications arose with the Chattogram Wasa pipeline, postponing the completion of the second phase.

Mahfuzur Rahman, project director and

executive engineer of CDA, said, "Our target was to open the 10km portion of the expressway from Patenga to Nimtala in December. But Chattogram Wasa is delaying the moving of the pipeline from the project area."

"We couldn't start constructing the three-kilometre section, including the route from Barik Building to Customs, due to the issue of the water pipeline. Hence, it will not be possible to open the expressway this year."

"Moreover, Railway is yet to hand over land from Tigerpass to Dewahat Rail Line for the project. After getting the land, the works from the Lalkhan Bazar to the Dewanhat section will start," he added.

Iftakhar Ullah Mamun, Chattogram Wasa assistant engineer, said the tender for the pipe removal work has been delivered. "The pipeline will be moved from the project area soon."

The Ecne approved the mega project in July 2017. The project involving Tk 3,250 crore is being implemented with the government's fund.

CDA initiated the project to develop smooth communication between the Chattogram and districts and upazilas in the south of the Chattogram division, cut distance and cost for

commuters in the city and ease movement to and from the port and airport.

CDA, earlier, constructed two flyovers connecting the Bahaddarhat and Lalkhan Bazar areas in the city. After the implementation of the expressway, the two ends of the city will be connected through the flyovers and the elevated expressway.

The 16km elevated expressway will be a four-lane path with a total width of 16.5 metres. It will have 24 ramps at nine points from Lalkhan Bazar to the airport. With the ramps, the total length of the expressway will stand at 28.5 km.

The ramps will facilitate entry and exit at Tigerpass, Agrabad, Barik Building, Nimtala Biswa Road, Customs, CEPZ, Karnaphuli EPZ, Kathgarr, Sea-beach and Airport intersections. The CDA opened the 6.8km "Akhtaruzzaman Flyover" from Muradpur to Lalkhan Bazar on June 16 in 2017.

A ramp in front of Nasirabad Boy's School and the 70-foot high loop connecting the Baby Super Market on Bayezid Bostami Road and the GEC intersection reduced traffic congestion significantly in the busy area of Sholoshahar Gate No 2.

CMP proposes new police lines

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

With an aim to provide safety and security to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under Karnaphuli River, Chattogram Airport and different economic zones in Anwara upazila, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) placed a proposal to form new police lines in Karnaphuli area.

The proposal, signed by former CMP commissioner Saleh Mohammad Tanvir, was sent to Police Headquarters. It is now pending approval from the home ministry, said sources.

In the proposal, CMP asked for around 25.18 acres of land near Chattogram Urea Fertilizer Limited (CUFL) factory for the police lines.

Tanvir said CMP's territory and jurisdiction will be extended through this.

"Apart from that, there are ongoing projects in Anwara and Karnaphuli areas, like Korean and Chinese EPZs and the Karnaphuli Tunnel. Besides, there are some security issues at Chattogram airport. Considering all aspects, we have demanded new police lines on the river's other side," he added.

The four new police stations are Bangabandhu Tunnel East Police Station in Karnaphuli upazila, Bangabandhu Tunnel West Police Station in Patenga, Kattali Police Station, and Mohora Police Station.



Currently, CMP has two police lines – in city's Mansurabad Police Station and Dampara Police Lines. Dampara is the oldest, situated on around 50 acres of land with five male barracks and one female barrack. Apart from that, CMP school, divisional police hospital, and central armoury are also located at Dampara police line.

Following the space crisis in Dampara, CMP established its second police lines at Mansurabad in 2015 with one barrack and several other establishments.

Contacted, CMP Deputy Commissioner (Estate and Development) SM Mostain Hossain said, "From the home ministry, the proposal will be forwarded to the land ministry for land allocation."

"As there are several key infrastructures and tourist spots on the other side of Karnaphuli River, law enforcers can easily move from the police lines during emergency situations," he said.



CHAKTAI-KHATUNGANJ

Waterlogging: a never-ending issue for traders

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Many areas of Chaktai-Khatunganj, the wholesale essential commodities market in Chattogram, were flooded with tidal water as Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) could not complete the dredging works of the canals and construction works of the sluice gates on time.

More than 500 traders and residents of these areas are suffering due to rising tidal water for five days now.

According to traders, huge losses are incurred as the area becomes badly waterlogged during the rainy season and high tides.

In the last five days, the tidal waters destroyed a huge consignment of essential commodities including onion, garlic, rice, lentil, sugar, and spices, said the businessmen.

A study finds that Khatunganj traders incurred losses over Tk 514 crore in the year 2020, just for the waterlogging issue which brought damages to stock and sales reduction.

Year-long research titled "Study on economic Impact of Waterlogging on Local Trade: The Case of Khatunganj, Chattogram" conducted by National Resilience Programme (NRP) was published in 2021.

The report found that the prolonged waterlogging issue has also brought other financial losses to business enterprises in terms of damages to infrastructure and properties, loss of capital assets, renovation costs, relocation cost of business, as well as some non-financial impacts like mental trauma, anxiety or psychological pressure, demotivation of doing business and reputational damage.

Sagir Ahmed, general secretary, Chaktai-

Khatunganj Warehouses Samiti, said, "Several times we've approached the city mayor, the chairman of the Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) and the commerce ministry, but no one pays any heed to our pleas for saving Khatunganj."

He added, "CDA couldn't complete the sluice-gate construction and re-excavate the canal yet, although CDA took upon a project five years ago. If this problem isn't solved quickly, traders will turn away from this 200-year-old market."

Traders said the wholesale hub houses about 4,000 businesses and more than 5,000 warehouses that have been suffering from waterlogging and flash floods since 2007.

They said, "Most businesses have built two to three feet high walls to keep out the water to save goods from tidal and rainwater. But during the full moon and new moon, nothing can prevent the water from entering the houses."

CDA is implementing two projects worth Tk 6,926 crore for re-excavation and canal expansion to alleviate waterlogging in the port city.

Under these two projects, around 60 percent of work has been completed, however, CDA couldn't complete the construction of 12 sluice gates at the mouth of five canals and the construction of regulators and pump houses at the mouth of 12 canals.

Contacted, Project Director and CDA Executive Engineer, Rajib Das, said, "Infrastructure work has been completed for all sluice gates. Pump houses will be installed end of this year."

"Chattogram city including Khatunganj commodity market will get rid of waterlogging after implementation of the projects," he added.

A persistent crisis

Syndicate comprising some CMCH staffers stealing govt medicines from hospital

ARUN BIKASH DEY

The stealing of medicine from different wards of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) has not stopped despite the authorities' initiatives to stop it from occurring.

At least six CMCH staffers have been arrested with stolen medicine in the past six months.

According to sources, a syndicate comprising a section of CMCH staffers and outsiders have been active in siphoning government medicine from the hospital. At times, police manage to arrest some of the members of the syndicate but the masterminds remain out of the reach.

Police have recently arrested three ward staffers of CMCH with medicine stolen from the operation theatre of the hospital's orthopaedics ward on

MEDICINE THEFT AT CMCH

3 ward staffers held with stolen medicine worth Tk 10,000 on July 11

Another office assistant arrested on June 21

2 staffers held with stolen medicine worth Tk 3.5 lakh on Feb 7

July 11.

On June 21, police arrested an office assistant of CMCH with stolen medicine from the hospital premises. On February 7, two CMCH staffers were arrested with stolen medicine worth Tk 3.5 lakh.

CMCH sources said police started an investigation after the arrest of Sumon Barua (30) in front of the operation theatre of CMCH's orthopaedics department on July 8.

After primary interrogation, he mentioned some names of the theft ring's members.

Based on the information, three people were arrested along with a large quantity of stolen government



medicine from in front of CMCH's main gate, said sources.

Contacted, CMCH Police Outpost in charge Nurul Alam Ashek said, "A man was arrested in connection with the medicine theft last week and a case was filed. The three accused in the case have been arrested on July 11, with government medicines worth around Tk 10,000."

Asked how the three detainees were identified, he said, "Our investigation started immediately after filing of the case. Their names came up in the investigation."

They have a big gang in CMCH and they are trying to arrest all their members, he added.

According to CMCH sources, the gang is mostly active in the general surgery ward, orthopaedics ward, gynaecology and obstetrics ward, medicine ward and paediatrics ward.

Asked why the stealing of medicine has not stopped yet, Inspector Sadekur Rahman (investigation) of Panchlaish Police Station said there might be a lack of monitoring and supervision in the CMCH administration in this

regard.

"In our investigations, we have found that CMCH staffers take medicine from the hospital's store to distribute to patients in different wards. The stealing occurs on the way from the store to the wards. As a result, the medicines never reach many patients," said the inspector.

"If CMCH's internal monitoring was strict, identifying the culprits would be far easier. Merely arresting some members of the ring based on information from sources will not be enough to stop the occurrence," he added.

Contacted, Dr Aung Shui Pru Marma, CMCH deputy director, said different steps have been taken to thwart stealing medicines in the hospital.

"We have tightened the security in every ward. Ansar members have been deployed at the entrances of the wards and the hospital. We have engaged our source to identify the staffers responsible for the theft," he said.

"We are also taking legal and administrative actions whenever we identify someone," added Dr Marma.