We have submitted a revised DPP of Tk 60 crore, almost Tk 45 crore of which would be spent behind the shed on the western gallery, LED illumination, and press box centre. We anticipate receiving ECNCE clearance for the amended DPP in the first week of September and completing all work by June 2024.

SHAMSUL ALAM, NSC director of planning and development



BNS: An expensive facelift

ANISUR RAHMAN

The

National

Stadium

(BNS) was

supposed to

all around at

the end of its

biggest-ever

renovation

December,

at a cost of

taka as per

the original

budget. But

increase of

Tk 60 crore

in approval

of the new

the project

to renovate

premier

venue will

the country's

multi-purpose

likely take at

least six more

months from

the original

schedule to

complete.

budget means

and delay

work in

98 crore

a budget

get a new look

Bangabandhu

The lengthy renovation work has kept football and athletics — the two sports which used to be hosted here exclusively since cricket's exodus to Mirpur — for the last two years.

Established in 1954, the BNS, formerly known as the Dhaka Stadium, went through a number of quick-fixes over the last two decades before the ongoing renovation work started in late 2021.

The iconic establishment, for a long time, was a concrete structure accommodating as many spectators as possible, playing the role of a national obsession and hosted anything and everything whenever big sporting occasions came up. Unfortunately, the stadium never became a centre of sporting excellence or a place that people can refer to as a 'state-of-the-art' venue.

However, despite the delay there is hope in sports fraternity that once the new athletics turf is laid and once the pitch is ready, the whole venue will take a new look and will host domestic and international sporting events without any further interruption.

Before the ongoing project was taken up by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, The Daily Star Sport ran a story in early 2018, making recommendations to incorporate facilities that a modern stadium possesses

by curtailing unnecessary expenditures.

The ministry took the recommendations into cognizance, revising the project by including a well-equipped gymnasium, an international-standard waterlogging-free ground, overhaul of two shabby dressing rooms use for the domestic matches, women-friendly wash rooms on the top of the gallery and designated space for physically challenged spectators.

Project Start time:
September, 2021
Proposed Handover time:
December, 2023

Original DPP (Budget): 98.35 crore taka Revised DPP (budget): 158.44 crore taka

Major renovation work at BNS in last 20 years

YEAR	DESCRIPTION	EXPENDITURE
2002-06	Strengthening and repairmen	Tk 27.22 crore
2009-11	ICC World Cup opening	Tk 35 crore
2011	International dressing rooms	Tk 2 crore
2013-14	ICC T20 WC opening	Tk 1.74 crore

MAJOR RENOVATION WORKS

GALLERY SHED: The stadium was gradually developed since its establishment and the eastern side was one-storied until extension works began ahead of hosting the Asian Youth Football Championship in 1978. However, no initiative was taken to put

sheds above the gallery to give comfort to the spectators. The current project, though, will install sheds from the western to the eastern gallery, keeping 100 feet open either side of the torch.

The initial measurement of installing the shed was 80,000 square-feet, for a cost of Tk 23 crore but redesigning of the shed-structure saw its width increased to 123 feet from previous 67 feet. Thus, the total measurement of the shed has now stood at 1.5 lakh square-feet and the expenditure has increased by nearly Tk 20 crore. The shipment of PVDF membrane shed has already been completed and it will take nearly two months to set up the shed on the existing structures, according to the National Sports Council.

CHAIRS IN THE GALLERY: A total of 23,500 chairs were installed at the general and VIP galleries before the opening ceremony of the 2011 ICC World Cup but most of those chairs, especially at the general galleries, were damaged within 10 years. All 18,000 old chairs at the general gallery have been removed and are waiting to be replaced with new ones while another 5000 chairs for VIP galleries and VIP boxes have already been imported.

FLOODLIGHTS: All types of matches used to be held in daylight at the big bowl before floodlights were installed for hosting the Aga Khan Gold Cup in 1977. However, the brightness of the lights reduced gradually over the years. The initial the budget for the metal halide floodlights was estimated at Tk 13 crore, but it has jumped to Tk 40 crore due to the proposed installation of LED floodlights following suggestion from the Bangladesh Football Federation. The floodlights will be installed once the proposal is approved by the executive committee of the national economic council (ECNEC).

GROUND: Ground condition used to be a major issue when hosting football matches — domestic or international. Even in the face of moderate shower, the ground often turned unplayable due to poor drainage system, forcing the BFF to reschedule domestic matches quite often.

For quick rain water removal, the ground has been developed with three layers of sand, brick and soil beneath perforated RCC pipes installed all around to take away the water to the drain. The surface of the ground is likely to be better than before as there will be a mixture of two types of grass – Royal Bengal and Bermuda – planned by a company under the supervision of the BFF. To turn the surface wet before the start of games, auto-sprinklers have been installed. It is hoped that matches will no longer be deferred due to ground conditions.

ATHLETICS TRACK: The previous athletics track was installed in 2005 for a cost of Tk 10 crore, but the track suffered wear and tear over the years – resulting from hosting some big events, including

the opening ceremonies of 2010 SA Games and 2011 ICC World Cup and the Tri-Nation Big Show. The wear and tear and holes put athletes in risk of major injuries, prompting the authorities in deciding a new track. The new track will cost Tk 19 crore, which will include expenditure for track-cleansing machine and an electronic timer to record timing of track & field events.

bressing rooms: Ahead of the international friendly football match between Argentina and Nigerian in Dhaka in 2011, two well-decorated 22-seater dressing rooms were built, with enough toilets, urinals, ice-baths, hot-and-cold showers and lockers. Those two dressing rooms were later renovated. However, the two dressing rooms on the ground floor for domestic matches were in shabby condition, which will be turned into well-decorated 17-seater dressing rooms following the renovation work.

GYMNASIUM: There was never any gymnasium at the stadium, which forced athletes do workouts at private gyms. After the renovation, there will be an 800-square-feet gymnasium in between the two international dressing rooms with cycling machines, multi-gym stations and other equipment.

PRESS BOX: Nearly 100 sports journalists survived catastrophe after a hanging roof of the BNS press box collapsed a few hours after Bangladesh's FIFA World Cup prequalifying match against Tajikistan in October 2007. Following that incident, the seating arrangement of the press box was built up with vertical columns with entrance inside the gallery. The renovation will see a spacious press box, better washroom facilities, an additional floor for VIP guests, an extra space for TV camera stands, strengthening the existing pillar and a new stair built outside the gallery. The initial budget for press box was Tk 1.8 crore while the revised budget is Tk 5.2 crore.

OTHERS: The project authority could not restore the original washrooms from the shop-laden stadium but it set up eight women-friendly washrooms on the galleries, each washroom featuring two high commodes, two lowpans, four urinals and three basins.

The authority also has a plan to have a designated area for physically challenged spectators, who will likely take their seats either side of the VIP gates. The revised project will also see a wider entrance of the VVIP gate, with archive board on both walls along with a mural depicting Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's life.

Apart from the digital advertisement boards to be installed on three corners of the football pitch, there will be generators, an LED giant screen, security lights, PA system, ticket counters, seating arrangements in dugout and a 20kw solar panel.

KAZI SALAHUDDIN BFF president

The [Bangabandhu National Stadium] ground development was mandatory, and I appreciate the initiative. I know the ground will be fine if some Tk 100 core to Tk 200 crore is invested, but since I only have one international stadium in Dhaka, I will claim the planning was incorrect if you take it for three years.

At present my players are not playing [in Dhaka] and one generation has left football. I can't hold the international matches while the journalists

remain absent at seven venues outside Dhaka but somehow file their reports. Moreover, I almost got Argentina to play here on the back of Tk 60 crore, but I was unable to do so due to the ground's unavailability.

I am not against the ministry but... if there is no football in Dhaka, people think football is dead. I think they [development authority] should discuss the matter with the concerned stakeholders, whether it is football or cricket, before committing to such renovation works. They may give many reasons for the delay but, my point is that, it was possible to complete the renovation works within one year after addressing these reasons.

ABDUR ROKIB MONTU BAF general secretary

The related work behind establishing the athletic track appeared to be good, but no equipment such as short-put, batons, discus, javelins, hurdles, high jump pits, standards,

and many others were provided along with the new track, despite the fact that that equipment is generally provided with the new track.

They will only offer photofinishing machines for sprint events, but we also need them for throw and jump events. We asked that they include all of them. They never listened to our expert advice and made the list on their own.

After a two-year hiatus, we are

considering holding the National Athletics Championships in October, and the National Sports Council has verbally granted us permission without the use of galleries.

We have no choice but to use the BNS because we suffered greatly while organizing events on other grounds. We were unable to obtain alternative locations or use the lighting in accordance with our plans, and instead had to rely on the owners' plan to hold national championships during the previous two years.

We also had issues with electricity, internet, washroom and rest-room facilities, media, and other things. We thought the installation of a new track at BNS should have been finished considerably sooner. We expect that the authority in charge will inspect the track installation at the divisional headquarters and complete the work as soon as possible.

