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IN-DEPTH PLANNING AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION Keys to Bangladesh's mega projects



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to transform into a society in which techno-economic advancement will address the societal needs of the twenty-first century. Deep integration of physical space with digital cyberspace is on the horizon. For this to be achieved, several critical factors are meticulously weighed to ensure the optimal success of our mega-projects. Support for the agro-economy will be a focus.

ADAPTABILITY AND FORWARD-THINKING
What may be deemed crucial infrastructure today might be obsolete in the next century. Without foresight, projects run the risk of becoming obsolete before their intended lifespan concludes. This underscores the importance of adaptability and forward-thinking in infrastructure planning to ensure relevance and

sustainability over time. In Bangladesh, mega-projects are developed strategically, anticipating future requirements in a phased manner. For instance, in the construction of a large bridge, provisions are made for cars and trains. The primary framework of these mega structures is built robustly for long-term durability, whereas consumable features designed for shorter life cycles are considered



PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

Purbachal Expressway, Sheikh Hasin Swarani.

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Multiple mega-projects were initiated last year amid high expectations. In pursuit of these ambitious endeavors, Bangladesh has placed strong emphasis on careful decision-making, adopting a forward-thinking approach, engaging in extensive long-term planning, and ultimately formulating a comprehensive strategy for social integration. Through this integration, a significant portion of our large population struggling to achieve a quality of life, will need to quickly absorb new technologies, facilities, lifestyles, and amenities that they have been deprived of for generations. Faster absorption into society will hasten the economic returns of investments.

In the coming years, we anticipate stronger efforts, aiming to realize both national and global aspirations. We have



Dhaka Metro Rail Project.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

for eventual replacement with more substantial structures. The consumable parts of the design are adapted to the present vehicle types, allowing for modifications if heavy vehicles of a different kind emerge in the next two decades. This approach prevents economically unviable investments, such as installing heavy auxiliary elements prematurely.

INVESTMENT

In recent years, several infrastructure initiatives have been undertaken using public-private partnership (PPP) models, providing flexibility in execution through diverse approaches. In one scenario, the private sector covers construction costs through toll collections for a specified duration. Alternatively, the public partner may reimburse construction costs to the private investor in installments, contingent upon adherence

to agreed-upon performance criteria. When examining the terms and conditions of PPP projects, investments are consistently rooted in financial viability. Strategic investments are made, considering the significance of the national assets envisioned to be acquired through a PPP project with the foresight of its service lifetime.

SOCIAL VIABILITY

Social viability is an important aspect. Mega-projects, introduced through what we term 'soft openings' and gradual launches, execute a dual integration strategy: technical and social. For example, the metro rail's user base is steadily growing after overcoming the initial wave of use based on curiosity, reflecting a solid rising trend. This presents the possibility of faster social integration of the next metro

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