



JOYDEBPUR-ISHWARDI DOUBLE LINE

Project cost to shoot up by 80pc

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The cost of the Joydebpur-Ishwardi rail line expansion project may increase to Tk 26,000 crore, over 80 percent higher than the original estimate, mainly due to long delay in starting work after China decided not to fund the project.

In November 2018, the Tk 14,250 crore project was taken up to turn the 165km Joydebpur-Ishwardi line, vital for Dhaka's link with the country's north-west, into a dual-gauge double line.

But work on the ground could not be started after China in March 2021 declined to fund it, more than five years after it agreed to finance it.

Japan, following Bangladesh's request, agreed to finance the project and reviewed its feasibility study. Japanese consultants estimated that it would now take Tk 25,949 crore to build the line, which is Tk 11,698.59 crore or 82 percent more than the original estimate.

ORIGINAL COST
TK 14,250.61CR

DEADLINE
DECEMBER 2024

PROPOSED COST
TK 25,949.2CR

DEADLINE
JUNE 2030

REASONS FOR COST ESCALATION

Jump in costs of materials

Depreciation of taka against dollar

Use of Japanese sophisticated technology

Inclusion of a new railway station

China had pulled out four months after the Prime Minister's Office ordered reducing the cost of the project by Tk 1,495 (10.49 percent) crore, saying the project cost was inflated.

Now, the project would cost 82 percent more and its deadline would be June 2030.

Because of the delay, Bangabandhu Railway Bridge over the Jamuna, which cost Tk 16,781 crore and is expected to be opened in January, will remain underutilised for at least the next five years, as the double-line bridge will be fed by a single line.

Railways Ministry Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, however, said, "This [line expansion cost] is an estimate by Japan and has not been finalised yet.

"We will discuss the cost with them," he told The Daily Star on November 30.

Fouzul said when Japan International Cooperation Agency officials met him, he appreciated Japan's support

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Members of Naripokkho light candles at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday evening to commemorate those who went missing during the Liberation War. This event, titled "Let the Darkness Fade in the Remembrance of Light", is organised every December to pay tribute to their memory.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

REGIONAL RESISTANCE

PART 5

During the 1971 Liberation War, dozens of regional forces emerged across Bangladesh. Just as the freedom fighters trained under the sub-sectors and the Bengal Regiment fought valiantly, these regional forces also put up tough resistance against the Pakistan army. In the month of victory, we bring you the stories of some of these heroic forces.

Halim Bahini of Manikganj

AHMAD ISTIAK

Through swift mobilisation, strategic brilliance, and devastating attacks against the Pakistani army, the Halim Bahini of Manikganj distinguished itself as one of the most effective regional forces that fought in the Liberation War.

Immediately after the March 25 massacre, Abdul Halim Chowdhury, a retired captain of the Pakistan Army, wasted no time and began forming the force, training recruits, and overseeing the overall war effort in the region.

The force's comprehensive recruitment campaign allowed it to eventually grow to about 2,000 freedom fighters strong.

According to the book "Bangladesher Swadhinota Juddho - Sector Bhitik Itihash (Sector-2)", the Halim

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Star INTERVIEW

Govt must improve law and order fast Says president of AmCham

SOHEL PARVEZ

Improving law and order has become imperative in recovering Bangladesh's global image that took a beating for domestic politics over the past decade, said a top chamber leader.

"Due to political instability and corruption, there has been significant damage to Bangladesh's reputation globally -- we need to work on rebuilding trust with international partners," Syed Ershad Ahmed, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star in an interview recently.

Factors such as law and order and political instability discourage foreign investors.

To attract foreign direct investment, demonstrable evidence of an improving business climate and

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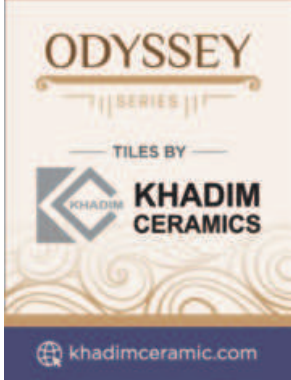


Syed Ershad Ahmed

49 Indian media outlets spread fake reports Finds Rumor Scanner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 49 Indian media outlets spread at least 13 false reports about Bangladesh in



around four months after the fall of the Awami League government, according to Rumor Scanner.

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