

Written questions to the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement

Issue 1: Road constructions in Southern Bhutan

The construction of roads and communication infrastructure such as bridges in southern parts of the country has huge ramifications on our national security concerns. Besides enhancing connectivity within the dzongkhags, these roads provide alternative to travels through Indian highways. However, many road constructions in the south are either delayed or suspended for various reasons. It is in this context that the following issues and questions are raised with the Royal Government.

Case 1: Samtse-Phuntsholing Highway and Amochhu Bridge

The construction of Samtse-Phuntsholing Highway has taken over 12 years and still remains incomplete despite the resolution of the then National Assembly to complete it within the 10th FYP. Most importantly, the Ammochu bridge (which was reported to the last session of National Council by the Hon'ble Minister, MoWHS as due for completion) is seen to be having problem and costing the government a huge budget. Therefore, the National Council would like to know ask the Royal Government the following questions.

- a) Why have there been inordinate delays in the construction of Samtse-Phuntsholing highway?
- b) What is the actual loss incurred due to cost escalation since the road was not completed on time?
- c) What is the present status of the Ammochu bridge?
- d) When is the bridge construction likely to be over?
- e) What was the initial estimated cost, how much is spent and what is the additional budget required for completion?

Case 2: GC Road-Bridge over the Toorsa River

The GC Road-Bridge over the Toorsa River connecting Dorokha and Denchukha is still waiting for installation of bailey parts. The experts from the ministry are said to carry out the work. However, the installations are not done although the apartments were completed last year.

- a) Why hasn't the installation been done, and when would the ministry send the experts and technical people to do the installation works?

Case 3: National highway between Dagana and Lhamoi Zingkha

The construction of 80.58 km Secondary National Highway was started on 29th September 2014 with the aim of connecting Dagana Dzongkhag and Lhamoi Zingkha Dungkhag covering three gewogs). It consists of construction of 59.36 kms of road from Dalbari to Gesarling and improvement of 21.22 kms of existing road from Gesarling to Dagapela. The work is packaged into three parts namely section A, B and C for the ease of construction purpose. Section A was awarded to M/s Kakika Yangkhil, Section B to M/s Tundi construction and Section C to M/s SPML Gaseb JV. Unfortunately, the work was suspended on 20th January 2015, on the grounds of corruption. Since then, no further development has taken place.

In this regard, the National Council would like to raise the following questions with the Royal Government:

- a) Although works have been suspended owing to allegations of corruptions, no corruption accountability has been fixed more than a year and half later. This is leading to loss of time, money and benefit for both the contractors and people. When will the Royal Government resume the constructions? Is there a realistic deadline set for the completion of the highway?

Answers:

Case 1: Samtse-Phuentsholing highway and Amochu Bridge

- a) Why has there been an inordinate delay in the construction of Samtse - P'ling highway?**

The construction of Samtse-Phuentsholing highway is funded by RGoB. The works commenced in the 9th Plan (2005) from both sides i.e. from Samtse side departmentally and from Phuentsholing side through contract and the construction activities are executed in every financial year as per the yearly budget allocated by the Ministry of Finance.

In the last few years, the budget proposal had been made highlighting to complete the road activities but the proposed budget has been slashed down in every financial year and the targeted works could not be executed. However, now the works are in full swing and due for completion as detailed below:

- i. On Samtse side, 4 km of the highway falls within the Thromde & the Dhamdhum Industrial Estate. There were delays in finalizing the alignment within the Thromde & the Industrial Estate. The issues have now been sorted out and the Formation cutting works have been started.
- ii. Out of the total 50 km from Samtse to Amochu bridge, 35 km is completed in all respects (till blacktop level). Presently, Base Course & Black-topping works are in progress on the 11 km stretch. Base course and blacktopping works on the remaining 4 km will be done in FY 2016-17.
- iii. **On Phuentsholing side:**
The total distance from Amochu Bridge to P'ling town is 8 km. Formation Cutting & Permanent works has been completed on the 4 km stretch from Amochu bridge to Chamkuna. The road construction activities on the remaining 4 km stretch from Chamkuna to P'ling is yet to be started due to non-finalization of the Amochu Land Reclamation Project. The detailed design study is being carried out under ADB project.

b) What is the actual loss incurred due to cost escalation since the road was not completed on time?

The total allocation for the project is **Nu. 1.189 billion** (spread across 9FYP, 10FYP & 11FYP). Total expenditure till date is **Nu. 805.00 million** and following works have been completed thus far:

- i. Formation Cutting - 54 km
- ii. Base Course - 46 km
- iii. Bituminous Sealing - 46 km
- iv. Permanent Works - 54 km

Major component of the road construction; viz. formation cutting was completed by early part of 10FYP. Other works such as base course and bitumen sealing are being carried out in phase manner in accordance with the budget approved by the Ministry of Finance. Since the proposed amount of budget required for completion of the work was not provided at one time, the overall cost of the road is still well within the initial outlay; hence there is no direct cost escalation that can be computed. Even when the remaining works are completed, the total cost of the road will be within the total outlay of Nu. 1.189 billion.

- c) What is the present status of Amochu Bridge?**
- d) When is the bridge construction likely to be over?**
- e) What was the initial estimated cost, how much is spent and what is the additional budget required for completion?**

The design of Amochu Bridge is very unique and aesthetically pleasing one as the arch section not only stretches in 2 dimension, it is also extended into third dimension; thereby forming the complete 3D arch bridge. The single span 3D bridge type was selected to improve lateral stability of the bridge system against earthquake and wind loads.

Due to complexity of the bridge design, a new technology with specialized construction technique was required. Because of poor performance of the Joint Ventures and unreasonable delays, the contractors engaged for the construction work had to be terminated. When the two contracts were terminated, the percentage of work completion was about 95%.

The balance bridge work was going on smoothly and on schedule, until the massive flood on 1st July, 2015 when the temporary erection tower collapsed and hit one of the main members of the bridge and ripped off the main member which further delayed the completion of the bridge.

The Ministerial Level Tender Committee of MoWHS through selection process awarded the supply, fabrication and rectification of the main girder member to M/s Santallal & Brothers, India at **Nu. 24.30 million** and is expected to complete in July 2016. The firm has completed the fabrication of the main girder beam and installation is under progress.

After the main girder is installed, the department will carry out the remaining works on the bridge deck and approach roads and expected to be completed by December 2016.

The initial estimated cost of the project was **Nu. 161.607 million** (2008 price). The expenditure till date is **Nu. 299.201 million** including the works executed by the Department valued at Nu. 50.01 million, cost of hanger cables amounting to Nu. 14.498 million and fabrication & erection of the damaged girder by M/s Santalall & Brothers at Nu. 24.43 million.

In order to complete the departmental works and pending bills, a sum of **Nu. 39.220 million** is budgeted for FY 2016-17.

Case 2: GC Road Bridge over Toorsa River

The construction of a 400 ft Bailey suspension bridge over Amochu on the Dorokha – Denchukha GC road is central program implemented by the P'ing Regional office of DoR. The construction of the bridge comprised of two components, i) Construction of the Bridge Abutment & anchorages and ii) Launching of the Bailey suspension bridge.

The construction of abutments, anchorage blocks and river protection works of Amochu Bailey suspension bridge was awarded to M/s Druk Phuensum Construction Company Pvt. Ltd, Sarpang at the agreed value of Nu. 18,605,599.00 (Ngultrum Eighteen million six hundred five thousand five hundred ninety nine only) The contract duration allotted for the construction was 18 months starting from 15th December 2012 to 15th June 2014.

The total time taken to complete the above works including the initial contract period was 27 months.

With regard to launching of the bridge, the Department of Roads procured the bridge parts and launching of bridge was awarded to M/s Rama Engineering based in Kolkata.

The bridge is expected to be completed in all forms by mid of July 2016.

A copy of the detailed report submitted to Hon'ble Prime Minister by the Dzongkhag Assessment Team is attached as **Annex-I**.

Case 3: National Highway between Dagana and Lhamoizingkha

The construction of 80.58 km of Dalbari-Dagapela Secondary National Highway (SNH) under Dagana Dzongkhag started in October 2014. The work was packaged into three parts namely Section A, B and C (Section A: Dalbari-Odalhang: 29 kms, Section B: Odalhang-Gesarling: 20 kms and Section C: Gesarling-Dagapela: 31.58 kms). Unfortunately two packages Section B and C was suspended on 20th January, 2015 on the ground of mis-procurement.

Thereafter, this Ministry has initiated lots of effort to resume the work, although there were many hurdles and challenges with contractors.

Coming to the fixing of corruption accountability, the in-depth scrutiny revealed that, it was not as a result of failure of the Department of Roads or this Ministry to perform its due diligence, but due to the flaws and lapses in the system, within which all of us are working and operating. In addition, there was no corruption involved at all. Therefore, no accountability has been fixed by the Royal Audit Authority as well.

The plans to resume the construction are already underway. The Ministry obtained the formal endorsement from ORIO counterpart on the new implementation structure on 26 April, 2016.

Since then, the Ministry has almost completed all the procurement formalities and works will be tendered out shortly, so that construction can be resumed latest by September, 2016.

The Ministry has already set up the realistic deadline to complete the project by June 2018 as shown below:

