

Jamuna Bridge Connects Bangladesh's Two Halves

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CHALLENGE

The Jamuna River splits Bangladesh in half in terms of both areas and population. In the past, ferries plied across with an average waiting time of 36 hours for the more than 700 trucks that waited to board daily. Improving the flow of goods and passengers and connecting infrastructure from one side of the country to the other was critical and central to unlocking economic growth.

APPROACH

The project constructed a 4.8 km long bridge for a four-lane road, a railway line, an electric power inter-connector, a gas pipeline and telecommunication facilities with two end viaducts (128 m each), two guide bunds (2.2 km each) and two approach roads on the embankments at each end of the bridge. Measures were taken to mitigate the effects of the construction on people, the environment, fisheries and wildlife. Technical assistance was provided by IDA for project management, construction supervision, and establishment of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA).

RESULTS

More than 30 million people are now connected to the country's transport and infrastructure network, and enjoy lower transport costs and quicker travel times.

Highlights:

- Transportation of natural gas, electricity and telecommunication is faster, cheaper and more reliable.
- Bus travel time from Dhaka to the trade city of Bogra was reduced from eight hours to four. Truck travel time from Dhaka to Bogra was reduced from 20 hours to 6 hours.
- Transport costs have been reduced and access to key consumption centers like Dhaka has improved. Average truck rates per ton went down 30 percent (from Tk450 to Tk320) after the bridge opened.
- Traffic over the bridge has increased by 11.5 percent per year since its opening in 1999. In 2005, 1.72 million vehicles used the bridge (50 percent trucks, 35 percent buses, 15 percent cars) compared with 0.89 million in 1999.
- The distribution of non-leafy vegetables from the Northwestern region to the Eastern part of the country has increased by at least 50 percent, according to truckers.
- Good progress is being made to ensure the sustainable operation and maintenance of the bridge. Revenues from tolls collected from vehicles are expected to recover the cost of the

project in 30 years. Annual toll revenue amounts to US\$24 million for FY 2006-07 and is expected to continue to rise.

IDA CONTRIBUTION

- Total project cost was US\$754 million, US\$204 million from IDA, US\$154 million from the government of Bangladesh, US\$198 million from the Asian Development Bank and US\$198 million from the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (currently Japan Bank for International Cooperation).
- IDA acted as the coordinator for project implementation at the request of the government. This enabled IDA to take a more proactive role within the partnership with Japan and the ADB in resolving key issues during implementation.
- Timely completion of the project within a reasonable budget increase. The physical components were completed by June 1998, six months behind schedule but one full year ahead of the project closing date. The project cost was 16 percent over the initial budget.
- The Jamuna Bridge provided Bangladesh with the opportunity to handle the social and environmental impacts of an infrastructure project in a comprehensive manner for the first time. IDA helped prepare an Environmental Management Action Plan to mitigate the environmental and social impacts of the bridge as mandated by a "Category A" rating. All policies and plans adopted followed World Bank standards, and a Resettlement Action Plan was fully implemented.
- A Panel of Experts was established to help resolve key technical issues, such as adopting measures to counteract water erosion.

PARTNERS

The Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh and Japan were co-financers. Implementation was facilitated by Milestone Decision Meetings that brought together government agencies, co-financers, consultants, the Panel of Experts, contractors and NGOs at regular intervals.

NEXT STEPS

- The Jamuna Bridge has triggered several complementary transport sector investments that have multiplied its benefits, such as the Jamuna Bridge Access Road to Dhaka and the Nalka-Hatikamrul-Bonpara Road, also financed by IDA. The latter provides a bypass for east-west connections at the western side of the bridge.
- Streamlined border and transshipment arrangements with India would make the bridge a critical transport link on the trans-Asia highway and rail, facilitating movement of trade from Nepal, Bhutan and Northeastern India to and through Bangladesh.
- The success of the Jamuna Bridge has inspired another mega-bridge project, the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project over the Padma River, to connect Dhaka with the southwest region of the country. The government of Bangladesh has requested IDA to participate as a co-financier of the Padma Bridge.

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Jamuna Bridge Project (1994-99)

[Project documents](#)