



TALK TO EXPERTS- SERIES -4

Author

Reasons responsible for languishing projects

Last week, while discussing the reasons responsible for languishing projects, we studied the problem of land acquisition by the government for some social welfare project.

This reason is in fact attributed to the government, and not to the concessionaire.

Another reason in the same line is said to be Environment/Forest clearance.

A massive road project needs vast tracts of land, both separate and contiguous. A highway road covering many hundred kilometers of distance demands continuous stretch of land so that the very purpose of laying roads, namely, hassle-free travel

by people and smooth transport of goods, is effectively achieved. Invariably, when the land is acquired even from the government, the project must have been cleared by the Environment and Forest departments.

Getting environmental clearance is a complex affair. First, the project must be people-oriented in the sense that it brings benefits to the people at the same time without damaging the environment. Sometimes, the project-land may pass through some human settlements. Then, adequate attention must be given to provide alternative place for the displaced human beings to build houses and settlements with all the basic facilities they were enjoying before displacement. Or adequate compensation must be given to the people to meet their rehabilitation. All these facts involve human consideration and it takes lot of unpredictable length of time. Delay caused in getting these matters resolved ends up in the inevitable escalation of the cost and extension of time; it means the project not only suffers delay but is subject to cost overrun. In turn, the project needs revision of the budget which also takes time because there are well-defined procedures for such revision of the budgets.

And when the project needs the land that passes through a forest, it must obtain forest clearance. Forest clearance also takes a long period of examination of the project. First, the forest department would not prefer the forest land to be used for non-forest purpose; it means the land must be used for strengthening the forest. It may at last agree to part with the land for some very significant project that guarantees benefits to the public in the long run. Say, like railway lines or even for the defense purposes. Above all, it takes care of the wild life. The project must not harm the wild life there, endangering the species.

All this goes to prove that before a project involving huge cost and long period of time is assigned to a concessionaire, complete attention is given to all such matters. Careless and ineffective planning incurs limitless expenditure besides denying the proposed benefits to the citizens whose money is after all spent. A reasonable margin of delay can be understood since what involves human beings cannot be mathematically calculated. Ultimately, the enormous loss of money and unjustifiable deprivation of benefits do not make a nation proud.
