

On many occasions during the journey we had to wait out traffic jams or back up to allow an oncoming vehicle to pass on narrow, dilapidated bridges.

At the 600-kilometre mark we encountered over 40 heavy trucks that were stopped or were lying in a ditch. If you assume that the average load carrying capacity of a truck is 10 tons, then there were hundreds of tons of freight urgently required by enterprises and construction sites that the truck drivers would be delivering late. And there is another loss that must be taken into consideration here - one which many haven't even begun to consider.

The situation we have here is that of far too many cooks spoiling the broth. Take the "Magadanavtodor" organization, for example. They say God himself commanded it - the main highway firm of the oblast - to take control over the entire "Kolyinka".

"Unfortunately, the highway was being excessively travelled before that," says A. Popov, head of the operations department. "And we weren't able to maintain the road by ourselves. The "Severovostokzoloto" (Northeastern Gold Mining) Association, now the main boss of the road, is of little assistance. It gives all of the best equipment to the mines, and we get the poorer quality stuff."

Many years ago the Khabarovsk Branch of the State Institute for the Planning and Design of Highways developed a long-term program for development of a unified highway network for the region. Plans called for an orderly, step by step approach to implementing it. And what was especially important was that all of the interested organizations, ministries and government industries would participate on a share basis in carrying out the plan, the scope of which was colossal. Discussions of this issue have been going on for ages, but without results. Persuasion and appeals to reason would be of little avail in this case - parochial tendencies were in the way. There