

THE WEEK THAT WA

Medicines seized: Huge quantity of medicine without having required government registration was seized from different pharmacies in the city and sub-urban area of Patiya here on January 2 and 3.

A team of Drug Control Administration, Chittagong led by Assistant Director and Medicine supervisor Md. Jalal Uddin in a sudden drive seized the Pakistan and India medicines without registration from different pharmacies at Bayezid Bostami, Oxygen and Hathazari Road area in the city and Shantirhut under Patiya.

The confiscated medicines include Decomethorphen tablets, Practin tablets, Cintocin injection, Neorobin injection, Tetanus Toxide injection, Ciofemol tablet, Syproheptadin tablet, Beralgin tablet, Phenobarbiton tablet, Neorobion fort tablet and injection, Polybion injection, Baskopan Compositum injection and Kenakort K injection.

Legal actions were being taken for keeping these medicines against the concerned pharmacies.

Pirate Baksu arrested: Imam Baksu, a notorious pirate of offshore island of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar, was arrested on January 4. He was sentenced to 44 years' imprisonment in jail in connection with four criminal cases and remained absconding for the last ten years.

Police and the members of joint forces had been on a three-month desperate hunt in the locality, forests as well as in the sea before Moheshkhali police arrested Baksu having over 50 criminal cases against him in a pre-dawn raid.

Baksu of Mogriarakata village maintained a strong network of around 200 criminals and unleashed a reign of criminal activities including piracy, robbery, murder and repression on children and woman. Baksu succeeded to the criminal network after its previous linchpin Ebad Ullah of Kutubdia was arrested two years back.

After his arrest the people living in the huge coastal belt of Cox's Bazar and also that of Chittagong heaved a sigh of relief. They offered special prayer and thanked Moheshkhali thana police.

Directive to CDA: Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas directed Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) to take up more projects for developing residential areas and construction of apartment buildings. He also directed for bringing in dynamism in official works of CDA through recruiting manpower in its vacant posts.

Mirza Abbas exchanged views with the board members and officials of CDA at the CDA board room on January 4. He also gave guidelines for the development of the port city.

The meeting with CDA chairman Brigadier General M Sharful Alam in the chair earlier informed the minister about different development projects of CDA.

Project to check malaria in hill dists: The implementation of Roll-back Malaria Project -- a project to check the onslaught fatal disease of malaria, started in three hill districts of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban on January 1.

The two-year project involving Tk. 32 crore is being implemented under the supervision of health ministry with the financial assistance of World Health Organization (WHO). Three Chittagong Hill Tracts districts were chosen for the project as they are regarded as the most malaria-prone zones in the country, sources said.

Under the project three research programme centres would be set up in the CHT district headquarters. Arrangement would be taken for special training in 15 batches and creating massive awareness spraying medicines, distribution of treated mosquito-nets and providing treatment to malaria patients.



Mobile Muktiuddher Jadugar at Bijoy Mela at Laldighi Maidan. PHOTO: STAR

CCC, Z&Z Power sign agreement: Z & Z Power Company would install a 10-megawatt power generation unit in the city under the supervision of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) soon. In this regard a bilateral agreement was signed between CCC and Z&Z Power Company at CCC mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury's office here on Monday last.

The installation of the power unit on BOT basis is likely to be completed by the end of this year and it would involve around Tk. 60 lakh. After signing the agreement mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury said CCC took initiatives for setting up such small power generation units to overcome load-shedding crisis.

CMKS Hockey Committee formed: Chittagong Metropolitan Krira Sangstha (CMKS) formed a strong hockey committee for the year 2002-2003 here recently with Deputy Police Commissioner (Traffic) of CMP Md. Rafiqul Islam as chairman.

Other office-bearers are Anwar Ahmad of Bangladesh Shipping and Trading Company and Amir Azam Chowdhury of AM Computer Ltd., vice-chairmen. Nasir Uddin, general secretary; Advocate Ziauddin Ahmed and Md. Akter Hossain Chowdhury, joint secretaries.

Stop illegal playing of vehicles: Chittagong District Sarak Paribahan Malik Group on January 2 in a memorandum to the communications minister demanded to take measures to stop playing of vehicles without route permit along Chittagong-Nazirhut-Khagrachhari and Chittagong-Rangamati routes here.

The Group submitted the memorandum to Nazmul Huda at Chittagong chamber auditorium. In the memorandum the Group leaders said illegal plying of vehicles like jeeps, maxis and tempos was pushing some 500 buses into uncertainty.

They said a section of dishonest officials of BRTA was issuing route permit to those vehicles illegally and in violation of motor vehicle acts.

The signatories to the memorandum include Abul Kalam Chowdhury, Monjurul Alam Monju and Abdullah Al Hasan.

Orientation programme: The orientation programme of the first batch of the MBBS course of BGC Trust Medical College was held at the college auditorium at Chandanaish here on January 1.

On the eve of the orientation class, a talk was held with the teachers, students and the guardians.

Presided over by Justice Habibur Rahman, Vice-Chancellor of the BGC Trust University, Prof. Saiyeda Nur Jahan Bhuiyan, Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr. F. K. Sharif, Prof. Dr. Abijit Gangulee, Dean of the BBA faculty, Prof. Dr. DB Barua, head of the Anatomy department, Prof. Dr. M. Sultanul Alam, head of the community medicine department, KB Barua, Prof. Faruq-or-Rashid Chowdhury, head of the bio-chemistry department, Dr. Prosun Pal and Dr. MM Zunaid spoke at the programme.

Acting registrar Dr. Minhazur Rahman conducted the programme.

Justice Habibur Rahman said they built the medical college to ensure the better treatment to the poor people especially for the south east region of the country. "We ensured all modern medical education facilities for the students and hope that within a short time it will be a prominent medical college as well centre both nationally and internationally," he said.



Mohara Water Treatment plant - first project. PHOTO: STAR

Acute water crisis in port city

Mohara Water Treatment Extension Plant gets a nudge

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Crisis of drinking water in the port city of Chittagong has been acute for years. And its demand is increasing fast with the growth of population day by day.

The authorities concerned in Chittagong WASA could not meet even 50 per cent of the demand so far. Although there was no dearth of WASA officials using hyperbole regularly, they rarely take any initiative in this regard. They are quite accustomed to giving promises of new projects to mitigate the perennial water crisis in the second biggest city of the country. But not a single project has yet seen the light of the day.

However, a glimmer of hope has been raised with the recent visit of Sutumu Uchida, the Bangladesh representative of Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), in the port city as well as his subsequent meeting with the WASA officials including its chairman here.

The city with nearly 35 lakh people needs 10 crore gallon of water everyday. But Chittagong

WASA has capacity for supplying only 2.5 crore gallons against the daily demand. In such a situation, a large section of the city dwellers have long been deprived of smooth running water. They are to pass their everyday life in untold sufferings due to this crisis.

The situation further worsened in the recent past following rise of irregularities, system loss and feud among a section of officials. As a result, Chittagong WASA had lost accountability and earned a bad name, thereby displeasing the donors to a great extent.

Irregularities and corruption at a time at Chittagong WASA reached such a height that one major donor from Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) got seriously disturbed and threatened to withdraw financial support assured by it for some key WASA projects involving huge amount of money. Later on, JBIC set some pre-conditions for grant of Tk. 500 crore as grant for one of the largest projects of WASA - Mohara Water Treatment Extension Project -- at city's Kalurghat area near the bank of

river Karnaphuli. The conditions include reduction of system loss, irregularities and corruption at different levels within the WASA and enhancement of revenue collection.

A task force formed midway last year to check corruption and irregularities, however, have done some commendable job bringing forth a little bit of pride for this important government institution. As per recommendation, the authorities removed some top officials and staff for their alleged involvement in irregularities, corruption and embezzlement of government fund during the last seven months.

Although suspension of a few officials had drawn mixed reaction and left question marks to the 'real intention' of the authorities, it is true that the 'cleansing' efforts is now paying dividends to run smoothly this institution and to implement the major projects like Mohara Treatment Project. System loss and irregularities have been reduced quite substantially paving the way for obtaining green signal in terms of financial assistance from JBIC.

The Tk 505 crore Mohara Water

Treatment Extension Project was taken up during the Awami League government in 1999 to mitigate the water crisis and to produce additional two crore (20-million) gallons water per day. The project has been shelved till date due to irregularities, system loss and corruption at Chittagong WASA.

JBIC chief Uchida visited Chittagong WASA and its different plants and projects and had elaborate discussion with WASA chairman Brigadier General Azizur Rahman and other high officials in November last. WASA chairman had apprised the JBIC boss of the overall activities of WASA and its future projects.

Uchida reportedly expressed his contentment over the present situation and activities at Chittagong WASA and assured WASA officials of proper step and initiative in releasing the aforesaid grant as early as possible for the Mohara Project, sources said.

WASA officials are of the view that if the project is implemented it would help ease water crisis in the port city greatly.

Huge revenue can be earned by turning Ctg into tourist spot

CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury tells *The Daily Star*

NURUL ALAM

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury said huge revenues could be earned by turning scenic Chittagong and its surrounding areas into tourist spots through utilisation of its vast potentialities and prospects.

Talking exclusively to The Daily Star, the CCCI president said, "Chittagong is a virgin place for developing tourism industry to attract foreign tourists."

"Chittagong has a combination of hill, sea and river which is unique in the world and foreign tourists will definitely like such natural beauty," Humayun said. "We now need to focus our attention on developing tourism," he added. "We must have to stress the need for developing tourism and agrobased industries here to generate business activities."



Amir H Mahmud Chowdhury

the private hospitals in Chittagong to cater for medicare service.

CCCI president said during his recent visit to China he had highlighted the prospects of Chittagong as a tourist spot and the entrepreneurs of Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan province, expressed their interest to develop link with Chittagong in this regard.

"Even I have suggested introducing flight service on Kunming-Yangon-Chittagong route to facilitate arrival of tourists here. The flight which operates on Kunming-Yangon route can easily be extended to Chittagong," Humayun said.

Humayun said the hills located in Chittagong and its surrounding areas could be used, without destroying them, for plantation to produce fruits including orange, lichi, tamarind and banana for local consumption as well as for export.

"Our hills should not be cut flat for selling plots, but these hills can be shaped with slopes to develop plantation and vegetation for producing seasonal fruits like that of Chiangmai of Thailand," Humayun said.

"We must give emphasis on agrobased indigenous products to earn foreign currency to bolster our economy," Humayun said.

Replying to a question, CCCI president said some pragmatic suggestions were being prepared by his chamber to be submitted to the government shortly to turn Chittagong into a commercial capital in the true sense by developing its infrastructure, port and other facilities.

"We hope to submit the suggestions to the government by next March and if those suggestions are translated into action, it will help check business migration from Chittagong to Dhaka," Humayun said.

"We want empowerment in all local offices of government, semi-govt., autonomous and private bodies to turn Chittagong into a commercial capital. We don't want head offices here," he said replying to another question.

He said a joint study team was working to identify the barriers and problems in the way of developing trade facilities with the north eastern states of India through Chittagong.

The team will also give recommendations in this regard which will be placed to the government of the two friendly countries, he said.

CCCI president said there were immense prospects to promote

trade with the seven sister states of India.

"Chittagong will gain more importance if trade link can be set up with these north eastern states," he said.

Turning to installation of world trade centre in Chittagong, the chamber president said approval for additional plot of land for this was already received from the prime minister. "We hope to initiate the construction of world trade centre shortly," he said.

The world trade centre, a project of over Tk100 crore, will house a big display centre of exportable items, five star hotel and information cell equipped with statistics and data, he said.

International hotel chain of management may be involved in the five star hotel inside world trade centre, he added.

However, Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury who was elected president of CCCI five months ago, listed some of his achievements after his takeover.

He claimed because of his sincere efforts and approach, the government had agreed to set up an independent office of Bakhrabad gas in Chittagong to cater to the clients here.

He said such a move was taken as 93 per cent of the gas users was based in Chittagong. The CCCI president said he was also making efforts to expedite the government process for construction of the third bridge on the river Karnaphuli to facilitate better road communication.

Botanical Garden and Eco-Park at Sitakunda

MOHIT UL ALAM

In his autobiography, Jakhan Chhoto Chhilam (when I was young), the late Satyajit Ray recorded an incident of his life. As a child he was taken to Tagore at Jorashanko's Thakoor Bari. He was carrying a notebook with him. When he offered this to Tagore for an autograph, the latter turned to a page and instantly wrote a poem there and signed his name. That poem happens to be the one in which Tagore exclaims that he has gone out to see many distant countries, many mountains and seas, but has not opened his eyes to see the lonely drop of dew on a lonely sheaf of rice-paddy just two steps beyond his dooryard. The summary, of course, is an apology to this great poet, but what Tagore has ruded in this poem reflects the way we tend to ignore the beauty near at hand.

Yet then, Chittagong's natural beauty is anything but ignorable. And the Botanical Garden and the Eco-Park at Sitakunda, which started functioning as a tourist resort from 1999 under the Forest Department, is going to become a popular haunt for the nature lovers.

In 1871 Chittagong Forest Division was established. In 1901, by a Kolkata Gazette Notification, the Southern Sitakunda Reserve Forest was formed consisting of 23040 acres of land. Presently, the Park is built and organised up on the road that finally leads to the famous Chandranath Temple at 1400 feet of the Chandranath Hill. Sitakunda is a great hill range and the green hills are providing a sanctuary to the plant and the wild lives available here and the idea of creating an eco-friendly habitat was struck upon rather timely. The Botanical Garden and the Eco-Park cover an area of 2000 acres of land of which the former covers 1000 acres. The development cost for the total project is estimated at Tk 3.6 crore. The Park is supposed to be completed by the end of next year.

About 35 km or 40 minutes' journey from Chittagong, the main gate to the Park is about 200 meters on the right off the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. There is a gate fee of Tk 10 per person or Tk 100 for a group. From here a narrow but regular road winds upward into the engulfing hills. Down the valley one can see golden (Sonalai flower) and white (Kashful flowers) seasonal flowers displaying their ethereal beauty in the sunshine. Cars and microbuses, jeeps and pick-ups ply upward, including some darddevil rickshaw vans, but people mostly prefer to negotiate the climb on foot, so the road is always full of pedestrians -- men, women and children.

The walking may prove to be arduous, because the picnic spots in the form of temple-shaped concrete sheds do not start until an hour's very laborious hiking is completed. There are about ten to twelve sheds spread over surrounding hilltops, with scant toilet and water facilities. The picnic paraphernalia, including food and water, should better be borne up by transport.

The last picnic shed is on a peak about 1000 feet high from which the Sandwip Channel can be seen covered under heavy wintry mist. On the far horizon the coastal trees of Sandwip look like a dark patch floating on the water. On the right from the mount a path descends sharply into the valley where the stream known as Sahasradhara (a thousand streams) falls from a height of thousand feet. The path leading to the fall is built of concrete stairs half the way and the rest is built of a cascade of mud steps. People, mainly young men, venture to climb down the mud steps for a dip into the water, but when they climb back to the shed above, their huffing and puffing tell you that even for them the climb is too steep. But who cares, even couples in their fifties cannot resist the temptation of going down close to the fall for some memorable snapshots.

The Chandranath Shib Temple, however, is still far away, about three kilometers away on another peak, which is the highest in this range. In spring, that is, in Falgun, when the yearly fair takes place thousands of devotees make their pilgrimage to this temple, which can be climbed by a flight of two hundred and fifty steps from the hill road or sixteen hundred steps from the ground below. The Vaishnab singers and dancers congregate here for piety and worshipping.

The Hindu myth about the temple is that it was created to mark the spot on which one of goddess Sita's many severed parts (her right ankle) had fallen. In another section of the park is located another fall, namely Suptadhara (the sleeping stream), which can be reached by a detour. On the northern side can be seen hills after hills waving toward Hathazari and Fatikchhari, and finally to Tripura and Myanmar.

Sitakunda Eco-Park is the first of its kind in Bangladesh and the primary objective behind its founding was to grow and protect a genetic pool of plant life of various breeds. Producing various species of bamboo and cane is found easier here. In the Botanical Garden, hundreds of herbal and medicinal plants are nurtured. Providing an eco-friendly habitat for the wildlife and creating a healthy tourist resort are its priorities too.

Of the flowers kept in the nursery may be seen various types of indigenous and foreign flowers and fruits. Some native plants that are identified are joytun, nagalingam, banshpata, tamal, peduk, tezpata, etc.

Of the trees preserved here the identifiable ones are garjan, dharamara, dheua, halud, gutguta, bohera, jarul, palash, dumur, sonalu, shimul, kanchan, chapalish, bura, haritaki, amloki, and haimanti.

Of the wildlife one can see deer of various species, monkey, hanuman, bear, hare, and among the birds, parrot, crow, finch, owl, etc.

It is also claimed that the Royal Bengal Tiger was once found here.

The Botanical Garden and the Eco-Park at Sitakunda should be developed and modernised to be a part of the world environmental programmes.



Candidates submit nominations for the UP elections at Hathazari upazila hqs. PHOTO: STAR