



# Star Chittagong

DHAKA WEDNESDAY APRIL 16, 2003

## Brick kilns threat to environment

**ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD**  
Most of the brick kilns here pose a threat to the environment as they produce bricks violating Environment Conservation Act. The illegal operation of the brick kilns destroys adjoining forests for firewood and either removes topsoil of the agricultural land or devours nearby hills for clay. Worst of all, the kilns without having chimneys equipped with wet-scrubbers or standard height pollute air in a massive way exposing the people of nearby areas to serious health hazards. According to the Department of Environment (DoE), Chittagong Division, 190 brick kilns are operating in the district. Most of them have no license and operate illegally. Some are set up with license from either the district administration or the DoE. According to the Environment Conservation Act of 2001, no brick kiln is allowed in the city, within three kilometers of the Upazila

Headquarters or reserved forests or at the bottom of any hill. But, most of the kilns are situated in the restricted areas in the city to avail transport. In the district or suburban areas they are mainly located near forest or at the foot of hills to get an easy and illegal supply of fuel wood and mud. There are over a dozen of kilns in the city, one in front of the Key Point Installation of Shah Amanat International Airport and others at Nasirabad, Pahartoli and Bakolia areas. The kilns are set up defying the land ministry circular that prohibits kiln on fertile agricultural land. The kilns of Hathazari, Raozan and Pahartoli are on agricultural land and are destroying the nearby cultivable land as well. A major portion of the road caved in following massive extraction of earth by three brick kilns on cultivable land beside Chittagong-Kaptai Road at Raozan Noapara.

There are some 18 kilns along the sides of strategically important Chittagong-Rangamati road at Raozan municipality area causing a serious land degradation as well as air pollution. Local people said the kilns are run in collusion with some dishonest officials. The owners of the kilns pay local extortionists regularly to tackle any untoward situation, they added. The kilns at the hilly and forest areas of Rangunia, Fatikchhari, Mirersarai, Satkania, Banshkhali are destroying forests in a massive way. The kilns prefer firewood as these are cheaper and available in the adjoining forests than pit-coal to burn brick. Minister for Forest and Environment Shahahan Siraj during his visit to Fatikchhari on January 2 seized some 1500 mounds of fuel wood from three brick kilns. However, the minister's visit could not stop the practice to use

fuel wood. The unscrupulous brick-kiln owners have some coal at the kiln area for show while have large stocks of firewood elsewhere. On the other hand, a very few of the brick kilns have chimneys with the standard height of 120 feet or equipped with wet-scrubber to check air pollution. It is common in the district. Mosharraf Hossain, the DoE director, Chittagong Division, said after introduction of Environment Conservation Act 2001 we are serving notice to the kiln owners in the city for relocating those in suitable and permissible areas. We are not issuing new clearance certificates to the kiln owners without verification of the proposed site, he said. Most of the kilns were using firewood, he said. To check this practice monitoring has to be strengthened, he added. "But, with the manpower we have it is difficult".



A brick kiln on agricultural land near the market of Fatikchhari upazila headquarters stands testimony to utter disregard to environment conservation act.

### NEWMOORING CONTAINER TERMINAL

## From Chittagong to Baghdad

**MOHIT UL ALAM**  
Mahbub Ul Alam (1898-1981) was a veteran of the First World War, and his book, Paltan Jibaner Smriti (1940)- Memories from the Battlefield- relates his experiences in Iraq as a soldier. His accounts are fascinating, humorous, bold and unpretentious. As he was very young at the time, and had left home leaving his newly wed wife behind, his descriptions are often a touch nostalgic. Mahbub went to Kolkata, got recruited there, and was first taken to Karachi, and then to Iraq. From Karachi they went to Basra first by a ship. From Basra they sailed upstream in a smaller ship toward Baghdad. Mahbub's final station was with the Company D as a member of the signal corps. Mahbub's company belonged

to the division engaged in the recapturing of Kut-ul-Amara, which the British lost to Turkey the year before under General Toundesend. Like Mahbub, young men from all over India joined this war, and his book encapsulates the bond of fraternity that prevailed among the Indians, despite difference in language and religion. The Iraqi deserts had fleas and mosquitoes, and Mahbub describes what happened to the troops when these fleas entered their uniform and feasted delightfully on their blood. Mahbub's colleague, a tall Brahmin from Orissa - who slept in the bed next to his, died suddenly of an attack of cerebral malaria. Mahbub describes how panicky the whole camp grew. Another episode mentions General Maud, the C-in-C of the

British forces in Iraq who had paid a visit to Mahbub's company thus elevating its status, but died two days after his visit of cholera. Mahbub's book contains a picture of the grave of General Maud in Baghdad. In yet another episode, Mahbub describes what happened to them when they went to a nearby bazaar to buy potatoes. As they did not know the Arabic word for potato, they indicated something round-shaped, at which the shopkeeper produced everything from eggtoonion except potato. From Mahbub's description the Iraqis appear to be very simple and generous, and the one word they used with the foreigners was 'Rafique', that is friend. There are many pictures in his book of Iraqi individuals, obviously chosen with his characteristic penchant for the heroic type. On page 63,

there is a picture of Sheikh Gadban, a tall turbaned Arab of the Bani Lam tribe whom he captions as 'a moving boiler', and who easily brings to our minds the image of Saddam Hussein. The common Iraqi women, mainly those who sold essential commodities in the bazaars, have a generous mention in the book, many of whom seem to have attracted him for their sheer beauty. Mahbub does not forget to record a particular incident where at one checkpoint as he suspected an Iraqi woman of carrying arms, she instantly opened wide her hood to expose a belly pregnant with child. Besides, the book describes a lot of history of Iraq, which might interest the present day readers shocked at the occurrence of the present Iraq War.

## NCT moves at snail's pace

**NURUL ALAM.**  
The construction work of the Newmooring Container Terminal (NCT) at Chittagong port is yet to be started though the foundation was laid six months back. Port users and unions have intensified their demand for construction of the NCT to match the rapid growth of container cargo. The process to begin civil works is delayed due to bureaucratic red-tape. Some vested quarters reportedly are bent upon lingering the process of implementation works while the Chittagong port is facing a heavy load of containers day by day, sources said. They reportedly have a clandestine link with a foreign company lobbying for a proposed private container terminal

here, sources added. They are trying to create a situation by lingering the process when the port users have to welcome the foreign private port. The dock workers and socio-political organisations here have been opposing the private terminal in Chittagong. The NCT director Sirajul Islam, however, said bids for construction works had been received and that the evaluation process was on. "But issuing work order may take time since this needs approval of the higher authorities in government. After completion of tender process we will place it to the board of Chittagong port authority for onward recommendation to the Ministry of Shipping," Islam said. "The Ministry of Shipping would

send it with recommendation to inter-ministerial committee from where it may even go before the top authority for approval," he said adding, "In spite of that we hope to start construction works by the end of third quarter of this year." The Tk 750 crore project was taken in 1996 to cope with rapidly growing container cargo, port sources said. But the project remained hanging since then due to red-tape. Chittagong port is supposed to fund this project. The project was shelved even after the approval of ECNEC in 1999, sources said. The installation of this container terminal is now a crying need of the hour to face the challenge of global containerisation in transportation of

cargo through ships, trade circles and port officials said. But the delay in implementing this project deepened the crisis at Chittagong port. Consultants were engaged to prepare documents for floating international tender in 2000. But they could not prepare the tender documents timely, sources said. The project was scheduled to be completed for commissioning in 2005. When completed, this might allow at least five container vessels take berth for loading and unloading container cargo, port sources said. The container terminal will have 1000 metre berth with a capacity to handle 300,000 TEUs containers annually, they added.

### the week that was

**Tribute to journalist**  
Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) and Chittagong Press Club (CPC) at a joint meeting on Friday paid rich tribute to noted journalist Fazlur Rahman who breathed his last recently in UK. They recalled his contribution towards the betterment of the nation as well as journalist community in Chittagong through his bold and unflinching reporting during the tumultuous period before and after the War of Liberation in 1971. Editor of the Daily Azadi Prof Mohammad Khaled, CPC president Abu Sufian, member of Bangladesh Press Council Moinuddin Quaderi Showkat, general secretaries of CPC and CUJ Kalim Sarwar and Abu Taher Mohammad, senior journalist Obaidul Haq, Swapan Mahajan, former president of Chittagong Bar advocate Shafiqul Alam and late Fazlur Rahman's younger brother Matiuur Rahman addressed the meeting. CUJ vice president Pankaj Dastider presided. Fazlur Rahman had worked the daily Sangbad, Ittefaq, Purbodesh, Azadi and Holiday. He was the Chittagong correspondent of

Bangladesh Observer and the Dawn of Karachi. In 1974, he went to the UK and lived there till his death on March 20 this year. He was elected councillor of British Labour Party in 1986 and Mayor of Waltham Forest, a county, in 2002.

**Heart disease to top list**  
Heart disease would emerge as the No. 1 fatal disease in the world by the

year 2002. Heart disease specialist Dr. Tarun Praharaj of Birla Heart Research Centre in India said this quoting the survey report of World Health Organisation here on Saturday. He was exchanging views with the

journalists at the local press club. However, it is very much possible to resist the disease, said Dr Praharaj. Only awareness and punctuality can lessen the risk of heart disease attack to a great extent, he said. Dr. Praharaj said that chest pain, respiratory problems and high blood pressure are major symptoms of the fatal disease and urged to report to physician as soon as any body frequently complains of such problems. Chittagong Press Club president Abu Sufian gave the address of welcome at the meeting where CUJ president Mostaq Ahmad and journalist leaders Kalim Sarwar, Shahidul Alam and elderly journalist M Nasirul Haq also spoke. Power tariff hike resented The subscribers of Rural Electrification Board (REB) expressed resentment over increase of power tariff by Tk 10 per meter with effect from March 1. The consumers also complained of frequent loadshedding. Hathazari Dhurang REB Subscribers Association president Harun Ur Rashid in a statement here on Saturday called upon the authorities to withdraw the tariff hike and put an end to the suffering of the subscribers from loadshedding.

**Bashanta Utsab ends**  
A 5-day Bashanta Utsab (Spring festival) and Milon Mela (reunion fair) of the Hindu community ended on Saturday. Chittagong Central Puja Observation Council organised the five-day Utsab and Mela at JM Sen Hall to celebrate the occasion for the first time. The Utsab and Mela held on the occasion of Bashanti Puja the previous form of the Hindu community's largest festival of Durga Puja, were being organised separately at few places. The whole premises of JM Sen Hall remained resonant with different programmes throughout the festival that started with candelion of Mongal Pradip on Tuesday. The programmes included discussions, drama and cultural functions.

These would be done under the government's comprehensive plan for developing the commercial capital and port city of Chittagong. A special cabinet meeting would be held here next month in this regard. Minister for Food Abdullah Al Noman said this while he was addressing the biennial general meeting of Inter-district Bus Owners' Association at a local community centre here on Tuesday. The minister emphasised on shifting the headquarters of at least one commercial bank and one insurance company to Chittagong. He said desired level of infra-structural development of the commercial capital was yet to be made. He said financing of the third bridge on the Karnaphuli would be announced in the coming budget session of the parliament.

Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam and science fiction writer Md. Zafar Iqbal inaugurate a children's Baishakhai Mela by lighting candles in the city.



Artists of Juddha Birodhi Oikyabaddha Nagorik Samaj perform an anti-war mime at central Shaheed Minar in the city recently.



Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam and science fiction writer Md. Zafar Iqbal inaugurate a children's Baishakhai Mela by lighting candles in the city.