

PROPOSED DEEP SEA PORT

FM's 'move' to change spot slated in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Greater Khulna Development Coordination Action Committee (GKDCAC) has declared Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan an 'unwanted person' in Khulna for his alleged desire for setting up the proposed deep sea port in Kutubdia in Chittagong instead of Arkam Point in Khulna.

The foreign minister's desire for setting up the proposed deep sea port at Kutubdia in Chittagong instead of Arkam Point in Khulna and seeking financial assistance from Japan is attempt to create discrimination between south-western region and the rest of the country, particularly Chittagong, GKDCAC secretary general Shaikh Ashrafuzzaman alleged at a press conference held at at Khulna Press Club yesterday.

The GKDCAC leader gave the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of ports and shipping a 15-day deadline to give a 'satisfactory explanation' why the question of construction of

deep sea port at Akram point was not raised during talks between Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Morshed Khan. Taro Aso left Dhaka on Tuesday after a day's visit.

"Otherwise, all members of the parliamentary committee from Khulna division including City Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and Khulna City Awami League President Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP will also face public wrath", Ashrafuzzaman said in his written statement at the press conference.

He said the foreign minister is favouring setting up of a deep sea port at 'less important Kutudia instead of economically viable Akram Point. He has sidetracked greater national interest. His attitude has really stunned the people of south-western region of the country, Ashrafuzzaman.

The press conference was attended by, among others, Dainik Purbanchal Editor Liaquat Ali, president of Khulna Nagarik Committee Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda, chairperson of Khulna Citizens'

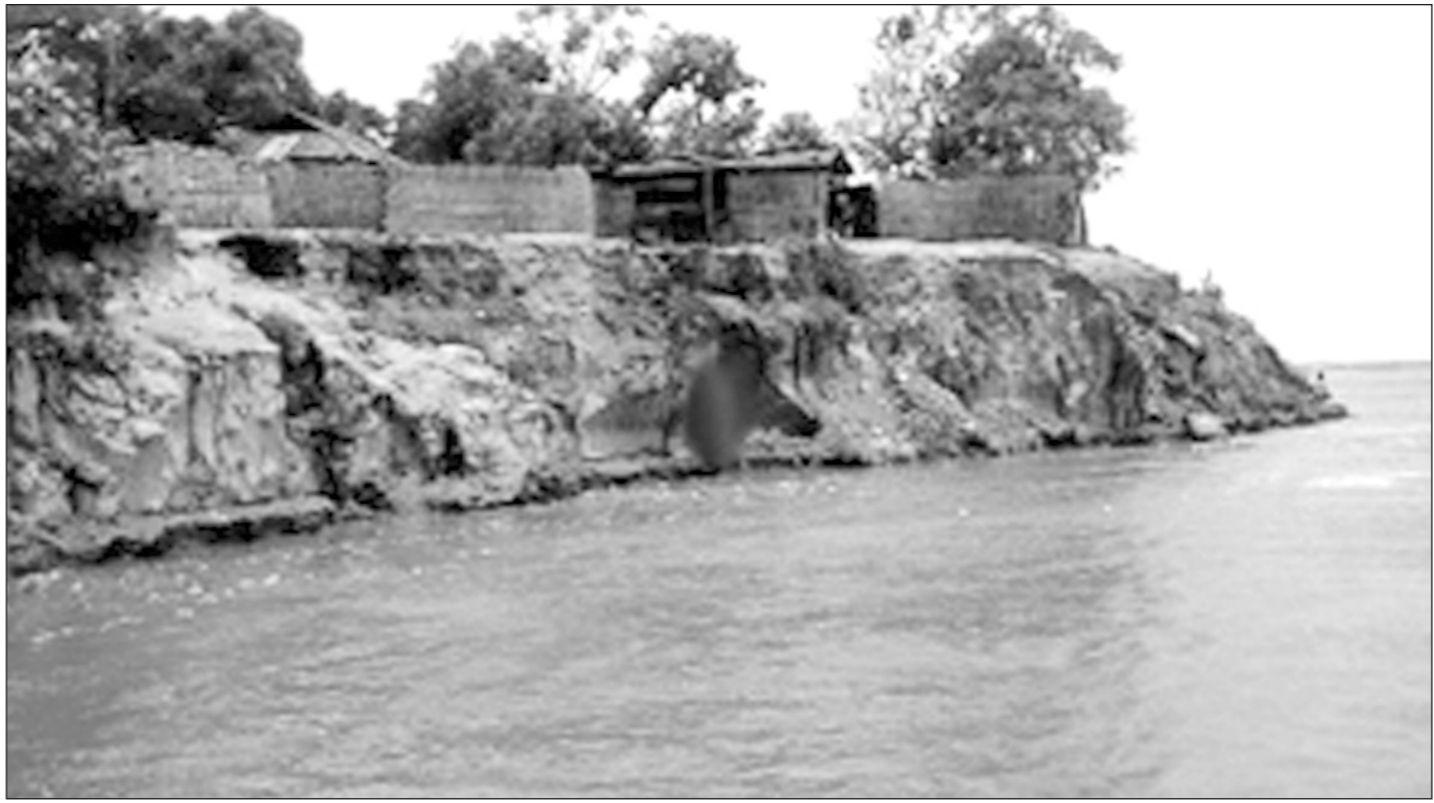
Forum Shaikh Abdul Kayum, leader of Khulna Newsprint Rakkha Committee Nizamur Rahman Lalu and Rafiqul Islam Khokon, director of Rupantar, an NGO.

Speaking at the press conference, Liaquat Ali regretted the foreign minister's plea for construction of the proposed deep sea port at Kutubdia, avoiding the economic viability of such a vital installation at Akram Point.

He claimed that tender papers were prepared with a plan for construction of the port at Akram Point on the basis of a feasibility study. The feasibility study favoured Akram Point for the port.

Liaquat Ali called up the people in south-western region irrespective of political affiliation to unite to realise their rights.

Other leaders at the press conference warned that any more neglect to south-western region would be resisted. They also criticised what they called the inactive role of ruling party lawmakers from Khulna as regards development of the region.



Unabated erosion by the mighty Brahmaputra in Gaibandha districts has devoured several hundred homesteads in Balashi in Filchari upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

12 AL men handed over to police by BNP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

At least 12 Awami League (AL) activists in Matiranga upazila were allegedly tortured by BNP activists and handed over to police.

Khagrachhari district AL alleged that BNP cadres attacked houses of 300 party activists and tortured 12 of them on Tuesday. Over 200 AL activists fled houses in fear, they said.

Those who were tortured are Matiranga thana AL leaders Sultan Ahmed, Rustom Ali, Ibrahim Mia, Dr Al-Amin, Shiddique Mia, Sayed Ali, Abdur Rahman, Mujibur Rahman, Khorshed Alam, Rafiq Mia, Sagor Khan and Abdur Rahman.

District AL president Jatindra Lal Tripura has complained that false cases have been filed against them after torture. He demanded immediate release of his party men following withdrawal of false cases.

However, district BNP leader Abdus Salam refuted the allegations and termed the arrested as criminals. Because, he said, they burnt the house of Matiranga upazila BNP president Munnaf.

WATER-LOGGING IN BHABADAH

Jessore-Khulna highway barricaded for steps

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Several thousand people from Bhabadah yesterday blocked the Jessore-Khulna highway at Mahakal in Nawapara industrial town in Jessore for about three hours from 10 am demanding immediate steps to remove water-logging problem in the upazila.

This created several kilometres-long snarl-ups on both sides, causing suffering to thousands of bus passengers. Loaded trucks were also stranded for hours.

The agitated people also damaged a portion of railway bridge No 162 passing through the area.

After hearing the news, Mayor of Khulna City Corporation Sheikh Tayebur Ramhan and Additional Deputy Commissioner (general)

of Jessore Belayet Hossain rushed there and assured them to solve the problem.

Several thousands people in Bhabadah area comprising parts of Abgaynagar, Monirampur and Keshabpur upazilas in Jessore are also marooned following rains in last few days.

Water-logging is a long-standing problem in Bhabadah, caused by unplanned construction of sluice gates.

About 4 lakh people in the three upazilas and adjacent areas are affected by the water-logging.

The affected people there staged agitation programmes on several occasions earlier to resolve the problem, but to no effect.

On January 4, a large number of people including women and

children staged a day-long hunger strike at Nawapara industrial town for steps to remove the problem.

The Committee to Solve Water-Logging Problem, a local citizens' body organised the mass hunger strike at Nawapara Bus Stand.

On December 29 last year, a half-day hartal was observed at Nawapara industrial town and Monirampur and Keshabpur upazilas in to press the demand.

People of Nawapara including businessmen and shop owners also observed hartal in the town.

Earlier, on December 20, several thousand people from all walks of life in Bhabadah and adjacent areas staged a sit-in in front of the office Abhaynagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) to resolve the problem.

LACK OF SECURITY

Aug 17 blast case sent to Dhaka STT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The August 17 serial bomb blasts case has been transferred from here to the Speedy Tribunal Court-1 in Dhaka because of lack of adequate security, court and police sources said.

Two other cases relating to December 8 bomb blasts will also be transferred to the capital soon for the same reason, they said.

It is very risky to bring here the two main accused of the bomb blast cases, Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, due to absence of security, Netrakona Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Sazzad Hossain said. As Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai are accused in many cases in different places of the country, it is difficult to bring them here personally, the OC said.

On contact, public prosecutor (PP) Shafiqul Alam Kiron also expressed similar view.

Four persons were charge-sheeted in the August 17 serial blasts case, the OC said. They are Abdur Rahman, Kawser Alam Sumon, Sanaullah alias Amanullah and Kawser Ahmed alias Yunus.

Six persons were charge-sheeted in two cases relating to December 8 bomb blasts. One is for murder while the other under Explosive Acts. The charge-sheeted accused are Siddikur Rahaman alias Bangla Bhai, his wife Fahima Chowdhury, Ataur Rahaman Sunny, Kawser Ahmed, Asaduzzaman Panir and Salauddin.

The PP said a case is lying with the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Mostafa Dewan while the other one was with a magistrate court.

Cop held for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested a constable of the Customs Department on charge of extortion from truckers at Rajabari BDR check post.

Muhammad Mohiuddin, 52, of Rajshahi Customs was caught red-handed by Rab while taking Tk 100 from a trucker at the check post. He hailed from Badalgachhi in Naogaon.

On interrogation, he said his senior officials had asked him to collect illegal toll.

Enam Ahmed criticises BNP MP Mokbul's role

To contest in coming election from Sylhet-6 with alliance ticket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Privatisation Commission Chairman Enam Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday criticised ruling party lawmaker Syed Mokbul Hossain for his role in Golapganj on July 17 when the foundation stone of an extension project of Gopalganj Upazila Health Complex was demolished half an hour after it was laid by him.

Enam Ahmed, also an advisor to BNP chief Khaleda Zia, was talking to newsmen at Sylhet Press club yesterday.

On July 17, at least 50 people were injured during clashes and chase and counter chase between supporters of Enam Ahmed and Mokbul in Golapganj. Mokbul had to hide in a building there for about three hours to avoid people's wrath for his comments against Enam Ahmed and allegedly prompting the demolition.

In another incident in the area on that day, a JCD activist was shot dead at Dhakadakhshin bazaar, 3 kilometres off the health complex.

Without naming Mokbul at the view exchange meeting, Enam Ahmed said, politics should be free from clutches of black money and muscle power because people want healthy politics.

Replying to a question Enam Ahmed said, legal and disciplinary

measures should be taken against those responsible for the heinous attack and damaging the foundation stone.

Such people should be resisted in politics in the sake of democracy, he added.



Begum Abeda Chowdhury MP and a number of BNP leaders also attended the view exchange meeting with newsmen.

Enam Ahmed said, "I went to lay the foundation stone as per a decision of the Upazila Development Co-ordination Committee. Besides, the health minister also asked me to do the job", Enam claimed.

The health complex is close to the ancestral house of Enam Ahmed.

Enam Ahmed alleged that Mokbul publicly announced to foil the foundation laying function. Peace loving people will not tolerate such things, Enam asserted.

He said Mokbul had also filed a writ with High Court questioning legality of Enam Ahmed's use of protocol of a state minister.

The High Court on 8 July of 2003 rejected the writ terming it 'frivolous and misconceived'. The court also fined him (Mokbul), Enam said showing the court order.

Replying to a question, Enam Ahmed said he would contest the next election in Sylhet-6 constituency (Golapganj and Beanibazar) from the ruling alliance.

Four days after the July 17 incident, Mokbul Hossain resigned from the post of Beanibazar upzila BNP president, which gave rise to speculation that he is preparing to run in the polls race as independent candidate.

BNP sources said, since Enam Ahmed is an advisor to the BNP chairperson and had been with a party stalwart like Saifur, he may get the party nomination.

Mokbul was elected lawmaker from the area in 1986 and in 2001 as an independent candidate. He joined BNP in 2003 and extended support to ruling party lawmaker M Ilyas Ali in July last year when Ilyas openly took a position against Saifur.

TIPAIMUKH PROJECT

Strike called in Manipur today in protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Tipai Mukh Project Resistance Action Committee, a combine of 26 organisations in Manipur, called a 24-hour general strike in the Indian state for today to protest implementation of the Tipaimukh dam and power project.

The Action Committee has also demanded immediate scrapping of the MOU signed by the Indian government for implementation of the project, saying it would cause flooding and ecological imbalance in Manipur, Assam and Nagaland states, according to news published on Tuesday in two regional dailies here Shyamol Sylhet and Dainik Jalalabad. The two dailies quoted reports from a Assam daily.

Besides, several thousand people including aborigines will have to be evicted from their ancestral homes in the three Indian states, the Assam daily said quoting Action Committee leaders.

North Eastern Electric Power Corporation signed a MOU on January 9, 2003 for construction of the megaproject to generate 1500 MW power by harnessing water of Borak river at a cost of 6,000 crore Rupees.

It includes construction of a 162 metre high dam to create a water reservoir. For raising the water flow for the hydro-electric project, Borak in Manipur and Tuivai river in neighbouring Nagaland will have to be linked.

Implementation of the project will cause a disaster for Bangladesh, with greater Sylhet bearing the brunt. Withdrawal of Borak water in dry season will dry up rivers in the Surma basin and release of water during monsoon will cause flooding.

Borak, originating in Manipur hills, enters Bangladesh through Assam and is divided into two streams Surma and Kushiya.

People of greater Sylhet have been protesting implementation of the project since it was planned by the Indian government.

6X3

4X2

10X3