

## 6 lakh tons of fertiliser smuggled out of country thru' Ctg a year

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

... Around six lakh tons of fertilisers are being smuggled out of the country through Chittagong every year, sources said.

According to the agriculture ministry, the country needs around 28 lakh metric tons of urea fertilisers annually, said the sources.

The government spends around Tk 1500 crore as subsidy in the sector.

The government has to provide a subsidy of at least Tk 300 crore for the fertilisers, which are being smuggled out of the country, they said.

Several syndicates, based in Chittagong, are engaged in the smuggling. The intelligence agencies here prepared two lists of such smugglers numbering over 20.

A total of 18 lakh tons of urea is produced in the state-owned urea factories at a maximum cost of Tk 6000 per ton. The government here gives over Tk 180 crore as subsidy.

After providing a subsidy ranging from Tk 900 to Tk 1200,

the government sells this fertilizer at Tk 4800 per ton at the mill gates. To meet rest of the annual demand, the government imports seven lakh metric tons of urea at 273 US dollar (equivalent to Tk 18,500 or Tk 20,000 depending on the value of taka against dollar) per ton and purchase three lakh metric tons from Kafco at the same international market price, said the sources.

While selling this 10 lakh imported and purchased urea fertilizer at Tk 4800 per ton, the government has to give subsidy of Tk 1300 crore.

But, a huge chunk of this urea fertilisers is being smuggled to Myanmar or India to sell at higher price, revealed the investigation reports prepared separately by the intelligence wings of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) 7 of Chittagong and the Detective Branch of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

The urea procured at Tk 4800 per ton from the state-owned mills is being sold in Myanmar at Tk 22,000 to 24,000 per ton, said the reports.

Fertilisers produced at the

state-run Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) are smuggled to Myanmar while being carried by trucks from Mazhirghat or by trawlers from CUFL jetty in the port city.

Fertilisers produced at Zia Fertiliser Company Limited (ZFCL) are smuggled to Myanmar while being carried in towllers to Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Chandpur, Habiganj, Netrakona and Kishoreganj from Ashuganj through the river Meghna.

The fertiliser-laden trawlers are diverted to Cox's Bazar through the Bay of Bengal to cross the Myanmar border later.

The difference between the estimated demand and actual demand creates the scope for smuggling, probe reports said.

Besides, dealerships are given without examining the intended dealers' identity or eligibility and in many cases fertilisers never reach the warehouse of the concerned dealers to be smuggled later.

The dealers in connivance with a section of dishonest officials place demand for fertilisers 20 to 30 per cent higher than the actual need.

As such at least 6 lakh tons of fertilisers are left there for smuggling, said a Rab high official who carried out investigation on the production, supply and distribution of urea fertilisers.

He said determining the actual demand of fertilisers was a must to curb the smuggling.

To get dealership one must have under his possession a storehouse with a storage capacity of at least 100 metric tons of bagged urea and a sale centre at a busy market of his district or upazila town or at the upazila, said the sources.

But, very often the conditions are ignored and dealerships are given to wrong persons. Sometimes dealerships destined for one district are seen as given to persons coming from other districts.

Sometimes many of the enlisted dealers never show up to draw the fertilisers and sell the DOs at the mill gates.

Most of the fertilisers drawn through the sold out DOs are diverted from the referred destinations and then routed for smuggling, said the sources.

A high official under whom the

CMP DB prepared a report on fertiliser smuggling said there are over 100 dealers in the port city where there is a little scope to use fertilisers.

During the peak monsoon (December to March), the purchasers of such DOs also create artificial crisis and make a huge profit selling the fertilisers in the crisis-hit areas.

The deputy commissioner or the deputy director of Agriculture Extension Department are supposed to be provided with the statement of the fertilisers issued and supplied against the names of the dealers in the district.

But, sometimes they do not have the statements and do not go for the follow-up activities like monitoring and necessary inspection.

In many cases the concerned agriculture officers certify the stock and sale registers of the dealers without examining them or visiting the warehouse and permit them to sell fertiliser, encouraging smuggling or artificial crisis, said the sources.

Moreover, the upazila or district fertiliser monitoring committees also show reluctance in



Fertiliser is being loaded onto the truck at Majhirghat in the port city.

discharging their duties as expected, they said.

The Rab report suggested formation of monitoring team comprising members from the factory authority, district adminis-

tration, Bangladesh Fertiliser Association and concerned authorities of rail, road and water transports to supervise and monitor the daily production, supply and distribution of fertilisers.

It also suggested legal and punitive measures against the sale of DOs at the mill gate and exemplary punishments to those involved in the smuggling.

### TOURISM IN KHAGRACHHARI

## Potential remains untapped

JASIM MAJUMDER

... With its panoramic landscape and varied culture, Khagrachhari could become a hub of tourists.

The hill district could not yet attract optimum number of tourists due to lack of proper development of tourist spots and accommodation facilities, sources said.

The development of tourism is possible in Khagrachhari with its natural wild beauty of contrasting topography of high hills, vast lakes and scenic valleys. Its ethnic and cultural diversity is also different from other parts of Bangladesh.

Away from the monotonous life, to take a break and stay with real nature anybody can spend holidays in Khagrachhari.

They can stay at both private and government hotels, motels and boarding at cheaper cost.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) has a motel with capacity of 48 people and an amusement centre on seven



A lake adjacent to Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Motel in Khagrachhari.

acres of land adjacent to the Chenghi river. The motel is decorated with modern amenities for

the tourists.

Many private hotels have also been constructed here to encour-

age the tourists. The hotels are Hotel Zirani, Hotel Labiyat, Hotel 3Star, Hotel 4 Star, Hotel 5 Star,

Chowdhury Boarding, Bhai Bhai Boarding, Gazi Boarding, Need Mohal Boarding, Raju Boarding, Sabuz Boarding and Shili Boarding.

The main attractions for the tourists here are Alutilla, Matai Pukhuri Lake,

Rajbari of Mong (Marma) chief and Ramgarh tea estate.

Alutilla, an attraction for the tourists, is about 10 miles from Khagrachhari district headquarters. Its main attractions are panic spot, towers and a 100-meter long dark cave with a mountain stream flow. It is surrounded by deep forest with panoramic views along with a tower from where one can see the whole Chenghi valley, Khagrachhari town.

Matai Pukhuri Lake is above 1500 feet from the ground at Nunchhari. According to Tripura myth, its water never dries and turns dirty. That is why it is called 'Mathai Pukhuri' or the lake of God.

Arranya Kuthir, a research centre for Buddhists and the high-

est Buddhist statue of South Asia, is situated Panchhari upazila here.

Rajbari of Mong (Marma) chief, is also here. His traditional house is at Manikchhari upazila where tourists can see a royal bed made of ivory.

The 100-year old Ramgarh tea estate is situated at the bank of the Feni river.

Besides, if tourists visit Khagrachhari in April they can enjoy the Biju Festival, the main function of indigenous people. The indigenous people perform dance, songs and hold many cultural functions of their own during the festival. The hill people go to the temple, river or canal to seek for peace and prosperity from the lord Buddha. The tourists also can enjoy amazing indigenous life and culture.

The tourists can go to Khagrachhari from Dhaka by air and train via Chittagong and from Chittagong by road.

There are also direct bus services between Dhaka and

Khagrachhari.

A section of indigenous people think that if tourism booms here it might disrupt their social harmony while the government officials say it will bring economic freedom of the people of the area as well as the country.

Leaders of the indigenous community said it would destroy their culture and tradition.

District Jana Sanghati Samity General Secretary Sudakor Tripura said the development of tourism will not only damage our culture but also make us landless. He said it will not bring any good for us except deprivations.

Nagorik Committee Secretary Santushita Chakma alias Bakul Chakma said though it has some economic prospects, no indigenous people support tourism here because we will lose our tradition, culture and heritage. If the government continues its tourism project here we would start agitation against it, he added.

NGO worker Relly Chakma said in the name of tourism devel-

opment the government oppress us as we are more backward and minority. But today or tomorrow the indigenous people will be united and fight for their interest, she hoped.

Forkanur Rashid, a tourist from Kustia, said it's like Nepal and it has great prospect for tourism. He said authorities should ensure more security for the tourists.

Khagrachhari Parjatan Corporation Manager Zakir Hossain Sikder said the number of local tourists is increasing every year but the number of foreign tourists is not increasing due to security reasons. The US government advised its citizens not to travel to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), he said.

Police Super Nawsheer Ali said they have all sorts of preparation to provide security to tourists. Khagrachhari is now a safer place than any other district of the country as the security agencies are on alert here, he added.

### theweekthatwas

#### New container vessel introduced

QC Shipping Limited introduced a newly built container vessel MV Martha Russ in Chittagong-Singapore route.

The vessel having 1,116 TEU's capacity and 20.6 nautical miles speed replaced the company's older vessel, says a press release on Sunday.

The vessel will take only three days to reach Chittagong from Singapore.

#### Tribute paid to Rasul Nizam

Members of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) at a meeting paid rich tribute to its former vice president and director ORA Rasul Nizam.

Former commerce minister and CSE founder president Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury was the chief guest in the meeting at the CSE auditorium on Saturday.

Amir Khasru said Nizam was a honest, hard working and impeccably broad-minded in every respect.

"Nizam was one of those rare personalities who delivered his ideas, thoughts, and shared experiences generously to form the second dynamic

bourse in the port city," he said.

He termed Nizam, who was also the honorary consul of France, as a legendary figure in the revolution of country's tea industry during his illustrious life.

CSE President MKM Mohiuddin, First Vice President Nasir Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, vice presidents Fakhor Uddin Ali Ahmed and AQI Chowdhury and directors of the board and CSE members attended the occasion.

#### Second unit of asphalt plant set up

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has set up the second unit of sophisticated asphalt plant here in the port city.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury inaugurated the plant at Sagorika Yard of the CCC on Thursday.

The CCC built the plant, based on Chinese technology, at a cost of Tk 5 crore for smooth construction and repair of city roads and streets.

Mohiuddin said the plant will help accelerate the development work of the metropolitan area to a great extent.

North Kattali Ward Commissioner M Manzur Alam presided over the function. Chinese engineer Liu Ning and Ham Bing, mayor's adviser Sultan Mahmud, CCC Chief Executive Officer

Mostafa Kamal Uddin and Chief Engineer Mokhtar Alam were present.

Later, the entrusted local company Jubilee Traders' directors Hossain Haider Ali and Sajjad Hossain handed over the key of the plant to CCC Mayor.

#### 'Corruption responsible for poverty'

Speakers at a seminar held corruption in every sector, weak governance and politics of hatred responsible for poverty in the country.

Bangladesh Economic Association, Chittagong chapter organised the seminar on "PRSP and Planning Challenges Under Market Realities" at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) Chittagong auditorium on Friday.

Termining the poverty as a big challenge for Bangladesh, they emphasised the need for combined effort to free the nation from the curse.

The Association President Prof Dr Sikander Khan presided over the seminar. Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) Executive Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman took part as the key speaker.

Prof Jyoti Prokash Dutta, Dr Mohammed Sirajul Haq, Dr Nitai

Chandra Nag and Khorshedul Alam Kaderi also spoke.

#### Reception to GPA-5 achievers

Around 300 students of seven upazilas of the South Chittagong, who obtained GPA-5 in this year's HSC examinations, were accorded a reception on Friday.

South Chittagong Talented Student Reception Award Committee organised the function at city's Municipal Model High School auditorium. Committee chairman Abdul Jabbar Chowdhury presided over the function. Former lawmaker Akhtuzzaman Chowdhury Babu was present as the chief guest.

The chief guest called upon the students to be attentive to their studies and uphold the country's image by their creative activities.

Sammitto Ainjibi Samonnaya Parishad Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Mutual Trust Bank Senior Vice President Khorshed Alam Chowdhury, Dhaka Bank Senior Vice President Mujibul Kader, Integrated Development Foundation (IDF) Regional Representative Lutfar Rahman and the Committee General Secretary Mohammed Idris also spoke.

Later, the chief guest handed over prize bond to the students.

#### Champion and the runner-up teams of Khagrachhari Inter-school Debate Competition pose with the guests at the concluding function in Khagrachhari recently. Global Village organised the debate.



#### Orientation for engineers

A weeklong practical orientation course for fresh graduate engineers concluded here on Thursday.

Job Procurement and Entrepreneurs

Committee of Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) Chittagong Centre organised the course.

A certificate giving ceremony was held with IEB Chairman M Ali Ashraf as the chief guest.

Ali Ashraf in his speech hoped that the orientation would be effective and

helpful for the fresh graduates in the competitive world. He called upon the fresh engineers to continue their contribution to the nation through innovative activities.

Vice Chairmen Manzarey Khorshed Alam, M Noorul Karim and Honorary Secretary Abul Kashem were present as

the special guests. Later, the guests handed over the certificates among the participants.

More than 150 fresh graduate engineers from civil engineering, electric and electronics engineering and mechanical engineering divisions took part in the course.