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Ctg WASA launches project to meet water crisis in CEPZ

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, July 24: Chittagong WASA has undertaken a separate project to solve the water-crisis that gripped the country's first operational export processing zone based near Chittagong Port.

According to sources, test-drilling under this project has already started at a place near Karnaphuli market at Agrabad area in a bid to lift suitable water for supplying to Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) which so far housed 60 operational industrial units

mostly on foreign investments. Chittagong WASA presently supplied about seven lakh gallons of water every day to CEPZ as against its daily requirement of around 11 lakh gallons, showing a shortage of four lakh gallons, sources said. The demand of water inside CEPZ may increase in future with the installation of more industrial units by foreign investors.

CEPZ authority battled for ensuring required supply of water to the investors for the past one year and a half.

CEPZ authority wrote to WASA time and again while the Prime Minister's Secretariate was communicated about the water crisis here, concerned sources said.

Earlier, some industrial units at CEPZ on their own arrangement performed test-drilling there to lift water. But the efforts were in vain as the lifted water carries maximum degree of salinity due to vicinity of sea, officials of CEPZ said.

As a result, CEPZ unlike Dhaka export processing

zone has to depend on WASA for water supply, officials informed.

Dhaka EPZ has its own arrangement for water. CEPZ officials say water also plays as a raw material to some industries of textile goods, garments and dyeing, located here.

CEPZ became operational in 1983 and the investors here mainly came from Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, UK, USA and Germany both with hundred per cent and joint venture investments.

Prices of major food items up

Prices of major food items marked a sharp rise in the city, between 2 per cent in case of rice and 50 per cent for vegetables in less than one month, reports UNB.

During the current month (July), prices of rice, pulses, spices and vegetables rose on an average by nearly 20 per cent over the prices of June, according to a market survey of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh released Saturday.

CAB attributed the price hike to market manipulation by unscrupulous traders on the pretext of flood.

Vegetable prices have increased by 50 per cent with potato selling at Tk 8 per kg, brinjal Tk 20-22, ladies finger Tk 20-24, green papaya Tk 10, patai Tk 16 and karolla Tk 24 per kg.

Prices of spices rose by more than 18 per cent with almost all types showing sharp rise. Onion rose by 27.39 per cent, garlic by 15.38 per cent and dry chilli by 22.70 per cent.

Prices of all varieties of pulses have also climbed markedly.

Peerless keen to start joint venture with BPC

India's Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Limited is keen to enter into tourism business here in joint venture with Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), reports UNB.

Chanelal Chakrabarty of Peerless Travels and Tours, a Peerless subsidiary, told newsmen here yesterday that they were mainly interested to set up joint-venture resorts in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

A team of the Calcutta-based group, now on a week-long visit to Bangladesh, was scheduled to meet the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism yesterday to discuss the possibilities of joint ventures.

They will also discuss ways to boosting tourism between Bangladesh and India, Chakrabarty said, suggesting direct road communications between Dhaka and Calcutta for the purpose.

The main objective of the visit of Peerless executives,

however, is to apprise Bangladeshi people about its recently-established 332-bed hospital in the West Bengal capital.

Peerless Hospital and B K Roy Research Centre, said Peerless Group's Joint Managing Director S K Roy, offer high-tech health facilities in all fields, particularly in heart and by-pass surgery.

The hospital covers ophthalmology, orthopaedics, gynaecology, neonatology, general surgery, stomatology, neurology, pathology, cardio thoracic surgery, gastroenterology, cardiology, internal medicine, paediatrics, ENT, dermatology and X-ray and imaging.

Krishna Sen, Executive Director of Peerless hospital, informed that some 150 Bangladeshis had been treated in the hospital during last six months.

Now a one-billion-dollar company in India, Peerless Group was founded in Narayanganj of Bangladesh in 1932 and, in course of time,

has become the leading non-banking investment company in the neighbouring country.

Peerless has diversified from savings and investment to housing, finance, merchandising, oil exploration, tourism and travels, hotels, computer software, exports and healthcare.

P K Dash Gupta, Chief Executive (Projects) of Peerless Group, informed that they are negotiating with a Bangladeshi enterprise the setting up of a CAD (computer-aided design) Training Centre in Dhaka.

Disclosing its plans to popularise Bangladeshi products in India, Group's Joint Managing Director S K Roy said they would arrange a Zamdani exhibition in next Shrawadiya Puja and a carpet fair at the end of this year.

Group's Media Consultant Soumitra Dastidar, Public Relations Officer of Peerless Hospital Sangkar Sen and TV actress Kheyali Dastidar were present at the news conference.



Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Ltd of India arranged a press conference at the VIP lounge of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

Saifur meets IDB president

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, now on an official visit to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, had a meeting with the President of the Islamic Development Bank Osama Jafar Faquih yesterday at the IDB headquarters in Jeddah, according to a message received here yesterday, reports BSS.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister briefed the IDB President on the development priorities of the Bangladesh government and sought the bank's active participation for implementation of the development projects.

He said the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia succeeded to bring discipline in the financial sector.

JICA suggests adoption of industrial development plan for Ctg

CHITTAGONG, July 24: The Japanese consultant firm, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has suggested adoption of an industrial development plan for Chittagong and development of Chittagong Special Economic Zone (CSEZ) on the southern and northern bank of the river Karnaphuli to achieve socio-economic progress for Bangladesh, reports BSS.

JICA considers that CSEZ would be strategic stimulator and starter for a full-fledged industrialisation programme of Bangladesh.

JICA suggestions for industrial development of Chittagong have been made in its final draft on the study on industrial development of Chittagong region conducted from August 1994 to June 1995.

JICA, in its remarks said, Chittagong should be given priority consideration within the industrial development policy taking into consideration its primary function as the national gateway having international port facilities and its inherited trade and industrial base functions. The successful implementation of industrial development plan in Chittagong region will largely depend on how it can be dealt with as a national project based on a consensus formulated within the administration. JICA observed.

JICA conducted the survey on industrial development of

Chittagong region in the areas suggested by Bangladesh Board of Investment, the Chittagong City Corporation and other concerned agencies.

JICA has suggested establishment of Chittagong Development Company for implementation of the projects contained in its final draft. It is estimated an expenditure of Taka 374 crore for establishment of social economic zone in Chittagong

by the year 2000.

JICA is optimistic of flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Chittagong special economic zone as the developed nations have been assisting the least developed countries. It said, Bangladesh as late comer to this fiercely competitive environment, should make strenuous efforts with creative and innovative concepts and approaches to lesson gaps with forerunning neighbouring economies.



Mahbubur Rahman, Chairman, Eastland Insurance Co Ltd (C), seen addressing 8th Annual General Meeting of the company at a local hotel on Sunday. M Azmal Hoque, Executive Director & Chief Executive (L) and Chowdhury Abdullah, Secretary, are also seen in the picture.

Eastland Insurance Declares 18 pc dividend

The 8th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Eastland Insurance Co Ltd (Eastland) was held on 23rd July '95 at a local hotel. It was presided over by Mahbubur Rahman, Chairman of the company, says a press release.

The AGM has approved a total dividend of 18 per cent to its shareholders including 10 per cent interim dividend paid earlier.

Women Entrepreneurs

Sharmeen Murshid — chief executive of *Brotee* says
Commitment alone can help materialise dream of an entrepreneur

By Rashda Khan



Sharmeen Murshid

"There is no other option for true development other than business. Without financial independence we will always be dependent on others for aid and thus be dictated," says Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive of Brotee.

She defines true development as that which generates human resources and income. And she believes that the entrepreneur's need to succeed ensures that whatever project is undertaken will get his/her full commitment and best chance of survival.

"Social activists have many dreams and ideas but who is going to pay for it? A profitable development project has more chances of being viable and established," explains Murshid.

She proudly points out that Brotee is the first firm to merge the development and business worlds together and is also the first all women consultancy, research and training firm.

Brotee means "the committed ones" in Bengali and is committed to sustainable and gender sensitive development through privatization and the use of women's resources.

Brotee, first started in 1989, has two major components. The first component is the consultancy provided by a staff of professional women. They specialise in providing participatory training, communication and research services.

Participatory training is an innovative method of educating, especially suited to adult participants. Murshid describes it as the most democratic training system available. "There is no teacher who lectures and is an expert. Instead we have a facilitator who facilitates the information dissemination. Both she/he and the participants learn from each other," says Murshid.

Thus, she says, hierarchies are removed and all participants are given the respect that they deserve. Besides participatory training they also do many scientific and economic research and provide training in communication skills development.

Brotee has even extended itself into international consultancy. "We have worked in Bhutan and Addis Ababa on government and Unicef projects," says Murshid.

The second and newer component of Brotee is its partnership with Plasma Plus, an application laboratory. This is a lab that provides diagnostic services as well as demonstrations of the

received from her husband. "When I have to go out of town, my husband offers to take care of our daughter and does so. Of course, as soon as I return she is entirely my responsibility. But when I really need it, his support is there," she says.

Murshid holds that a husband's respect for his wife's creativity and ability is very important. "Without spousal support there is a lot of mental trauma involved. I don't know how much can be achieved in that state," she says.

On the social side Brotee has a strong eco-feminist ideology. The professional members of Brotee contribute to a special fund which is to be used for women and women's causes in Bangladesh. Loans will also be available to members and other women to develop their own projects.

Murshid believes that the urban population of women is a largely neglected area. "Awareness and exposure is also needed among the middle and upper class women. We need more women to enter professional and management fields. We need stronger leadership building," she says.

She also feels that Bangladeshi women are not at a greater disadvantage than their Western counterparts. "We are fighting at a very basic level. Our violence and poverty is very obvious," says Murshid. "But in the West, the women often don't recognise their exploitation because it's coated in glamour. Their consumerism and certain cultural norms have also kept Western women behind."

She perceives that there are two parallel phenomenon taking place in Bangladesh. One is a negative force consisting of social violence and fundamentalism. The other is a positive force involving idealism, progress and greater initiative among the people. "The positive force would not be able to exist if the negative force was really strong. As such I think women have many options."

Murshid says it is only a question of focus. "People need to focus on the positive and carry on from there."

"Every girl has wished once in her life time to be a boy. She thinks if I were a boy, I could have done this. As she grows up, she gains confidence in herself and things why can't I do it?" says Murshid. Then she adds, "Well, women can do a lot. And they have done a lot. As to what women can do? I think the sky is the limit."

different, up-to-date machinery involved. Thus, they transfer technological knowledge to other interested parties.

Brotee's participation is for developing a self-sustaining health care service targeted towards women and children. "It's not a question of money but availability," says Murshid. "Our medicine sector is generalised, and doesn't meet the specific needs of women and children."

They provide mammography, ultrasonography, pap smear, gynaecology, family planning and other related services.

To be able to maintain the quality of services ("we meet international standards," says Murshid) they cannot afford to give free services.

However, they still have special reductions days and discounts available for women, students and other persons. "We decided to cut costs of patients instead of providing a percentage to the doctors unlike many other labs," she says.

Murshid hopes that gradually they will be able to provide low cost health services to a wider range of people. In the plans are now development of a medical management project.

The medical sector has three sides. The service (doctors and nurses), the technical, and the administrative. In our country, these three are not clearly defined.

We believe that if they were separated, the medical sector would be better managed," she said.

Brotee is also planning to develop a special workshop dealing with gender issues and gender sensitivity.

Murshid says that in general the all women's business firm has been received with much appreciation. However, the negative aspects are there too.

Stereotypes, such as 'what can women do,' still have a stronghold in the society. "We have had to deal with many skeptical and chauvinistic participants in our training programmes. But at the end of the day they all usually say 'Today we learned what women are capable of,'" says Murshid.

"Because of the same reason people tend to judge us more harshly. In case of a setback, they immediately say 'what can you expect of women?'" she says. "But we are all humans. Men and women all have their frailties and every business has its ups and downs."

Another problem is because not many women had ventured into the business world. Brotee is competing with other older and established firms. "As a result we are at a slight disadvantage. Our reputation is exceeding our earnings right now, but I am satisfied with that," adds Murshid.

A large factor behind her success is the support she

BCA team of UK in city to explore investment opportunities

By Staff Correspondent

A seven-member delegation of the Bangladesh Caterers Association (BCA) in Great Britain, now on a visit to Bangladesh, is exploring the possibilities of investment in this country.

Al-haj Alauddin Ahmed, a Senior vice-president of the Association, who is leading the team, informed the newsmen at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

He, however, said that only two things were bothering the Bangladeshi settlers in Britain in investing in Bangladesh, which he described as, firstly, political turmoil and secondly, one of cumbersome administrative policies.

BCA, which was founded in 1960, represents about 10,000 restaurants around the UK employing over 60,000 people with an annual turnover of 1.5 billion pounds.

Addressing the press conference, the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Peter J Fowler said the image of Bangladesh is starting to change and the emphasis is increasingly shifting to focus on trade, investment and other links. "This is a very healthy sign and encouraging rather," he said.

The High Commissioner said, BCA represents in many ways the wealth, employment and organisational core of the

large Bangladeshi British community in the United Kingdom.

During last few weeks, I have addressed a series of conferences and seminars in Britain designed to update the image of Bangladesh and to interest British businessmen, including non-resident-Bangladeshis, "NBRs", in two way trade and investment opportunities," said Fowler.

Referring to a FBCCI mission led by Salman F Rahman, the High Commissioner said, "We plan more seminars in Britain and I am delighted that Maksud Khan plans to lead a similar mission to Britain from the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry."

He said, investment is starting to rise although it takes a little longer to get going and will not reach satisfactory level until necessary

reforms and infrastructure improvements have been further made in Bangladesh, and until the current political uncertainties are overcome.

In a written speech, Saad Ghazi, Secretary General of BCA, said the association is promoting tourism through frequent travels by BCS's members on specially negotiated areas both on Binan and British Airways.



Peter J Fowler, British High Commissioner in Bangladesh, addressing a press conference organised by the Bangladesh Caterers Association (BCA) in Great Britain at a local hotel yesterday. Also seen in the picture (from left to right) Saad Ghazi, General Secretary, Alhaj Alauddin, Senior Vice President and Mohib Uddin Chowdhury, Assistant Treasurer of BCA.