



star

chittagong

DHAKA WEDNESDAY MAY 21, 2003

JUBILEE ROAD TURNS INTO DUSTBIN



The entire eastern lane between Tinpolermatha and Amtol at Jubilee Road has virtually turned into a dustbin with heaps of garbage spreading all around.

ZOBAYER HOSSAIN SINGER

Safe haven for smugglers

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

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Smuggling through Bangladesh-Myanmar border at Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar continues unabated.

Fuel oil, fertiliser, medicine and daily commodities are being smuggled out of Bangladesh while wide variety of stationery and cosmetics items as well as drugs and illegal firearms are coming to the country through the Myanmar border.

Myanmar goods like iron locks, cloths, umbrellas, sandals, current nets, torches, ropes, chick-peas, salts, fishes and food-products such as Aachar (pickle), Kasue-nuts flooded the markets of Cox's Bazar. Later, the goods make way to different parts of the country.

Some products of third countries are also being smuggled through Myanmar where they have duty-free access or access with a nominal duty, sources

said.

At the same time the border is being used as a route for illegal drugs and arms peddling. On the other hand there is an acute crises of rice, diesel and fertilisers at the border areas of Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar following smuggling of those to Myanmar.

Rice is being smuggled into Myanmar through waterway along the border stretching from Balukhali of Ukhiya to Shahparir Dwip in Teknaf in Bangladesh side. The smugglers also use land and hilly areas of Ghungdhum - Tumbru upto Reju in this purpose.

In the recent months, it created a serious crisis of rice in border areas of Thaingkhali, F a l o n g k h a l i , T u m b r u , Ghungdhum and Balukhali. Rice is being sold at Tk. 20 per kg.

Measures to check the smuggling rather aggravated sufferings to the local people as traders raised the price of rice further on the plea of shortage of supply,

sources said.

Smuggling of rice got an increasing trend as on the other side of the border it sales at 450 to 500 riat (equivalent to Tk. 25 to Tk. 28) per kg in Myanmar currency. A section of dishonest businessmen, mostly from Hnila and Shahparir Dwip, are reportedly involved in smuggling kerosene and diesel to Myanmar.

They collect diesel and kerosene as the fuel of hundreds of engine boats and fishing boats moving on the river Naaf or in the Bay.

The unscrupulous elements draw tank lorry-loads of fuel oil from different agencies in Chittagong throughout the day in the name of people of Teknaf and Ukhiya but smuggle them to Myanmar at night, sources said.

Smugglers use different village and hilly paths of Naityangpara, Jaliapara, Hnila, Noyapara, Shahparir dwip, Anjumanpara and Tumbru and rivarine routes of the river Naaf.

The smuggling sometimes result in a serious fuel oil crisis for local engine and fishing boats. It also threatens small mills and factories of those areas of closure.

Due to an artificial crisis, fuel oil sells at Tk. 5 to Tk. 8 higher than the government fixed rate per litre, sources said. It sells at Tk. 30 per litre in different bordering areas in Myanmar, they added.

The mills and factories and water transports along the border areas from Mongdu to Amtoli on Myanmar side depend on the fuel oil smuggled from Bangladesh, sources said. The smuggled fuel oil is also used in generators of business firms and even for meeting household needs in the border areas of Myanmar, they said.

The authorities concerned in Myanmar inspire smuggling of fuel oil into the country from Bangladesh, sources said. The dealers of Myanmar pay money in advance to their Bangladesh counterparts for fuel oil, sources said.

Where no big money rolls

MOHIT UL ALAM

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Agrabad Commercial Area should have been the Wall Street of the country; instead it has grown into just a modernised Khatunganj, the old commercial downtown of the city.

ACA is a big square block, a few acres, with buildings as sparsely located as you would find in a housing society. No tall buildings, no futuristic mansions, no big shopping malls, no architecturally admirable office premises that is what Agrabad is. There are even fewer roads in the area than you might find in other parts of the city, and the condition of the roads is as poor as that of the beggars who ambush you at the street signal. Be it a red signal, these beggars will make a heck of your life whether you are on a rickshaw or in a car. You may call it the entreating of the third kind.

ACA is a sleepy lazy area; banks, business and government offices open at nine in the morning, but you will be disappointed if you hit the area by nine. The business transactions

begin very slowly, first the office keepers move their limbs a little bit, then the bosses begin to arrive, their smart shiny shoes clack on the tiled floor or the sound gets shushed by the carpet, then they order their orderlies for their first cups of tea.

The business peaks around lunchtime, but the bosses leave their chambers for lunch, so business is again halted, and in the afternoon as the bosses get tired the work is kept pending for the following morning.

This is the picture you get more or less of Agrabad on a busy working day. The big government building on the west side of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Road you may visit only to feel deeply frustrated about that nobody is working nowhere. The empty chambers and the vacant chairs are more a rule than an exception here. Let us rue the fact.

The commercial enterprises are also horribly run. The dominant business in Agrabad is clearing and forwarding (C&F), followed by shipping and merchandising, and tea brokering and touring. Recently a number

of garment industries have cropped up there. But the flurry of activities is never seen, as if business is better transacted secretly; perhaps it is, but business is a concatenated affair, a matter of links, and this you never feel while you are at Agrabad.

Then there is this lopsided affair, only one good hotel in the whole area Hotel Agrabad, a three-star showpiece, peered by some Chinese restaurants. But all the banks, private and government alike, are concentrated in Agrabad.

You wonder that when not much of business is going on what may be all these banks doing here! Perhaps they are promoting business by giving loans. Money rolls on loans!

You always hear that Agrabad has taken over from Khatunganj that all the big offices have shifted here, but in reality, Agrabad seems to be the index of the country's dwindling economy.

Or, it may be the measure of the neglect that many claims is being shown to Chittagong.

Sorrow of Chittagong

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

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Much water has flown down the 5.6-kilometre Chaktai Khal, but the promises to address the sufferings of the people have never been implemented. For more than three decades, Chaktai Khal remains as the 'sorrow of Chittagong'.

Pitiably, the all-important canal that zigzagged through the prime locations of the city has always been used as a means of harvesting cheap political gains by the successive regimes.

The rainy season comes as a curse for around five lakh city dwellers living on the banks of the canal. Most of them had to face untold sufferings as they live in shanties or huts. Even a moderate shower during the monsoon causes inundation on the adjoining areas and washes away their ramshackle houses.

Chaktai Khal has lost its original depth due to constant silt and rampant dumping of garbage on it over the years. It has now a depth of only five feet instead of 20 to 25 feet 20 years ago. Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and other authorities concerned have so far taken no measures in this

regard.

Money has been spent in the name of excavations in the past. But people have never seen the result yet. And the woe remains the same for them.

The areas along the canal where people suffer most are Chawk Bazar, Bakalia, Katalgonj, Kapasgola, Bohaddarhat, Chandgaon, Patharghata, Chaktai, Khatungonj, Asadgonj, Firingee Bazar, Sholoshahar and Muradpur.

The 5.6-kilometre Chaktai Khal has originally catchment of 6.5 sqm. The catchment absorb 8.5 crore cft water in monsoon while the canal's water releasing capacity is only 1.4 crore cft per hour. The rest 7.1 crore cft water mainly causes deluge, sources in CCC said.

Ministry of LGRD approved a Tk15-crore project for CCC to excavate and concrete the canal bed to cope with the inundation in future. But the corporation has so far received Tk 2 crore only, sources said.

We can not start remedial works due to shortage of fund and we are helpless here, an official on condition of anonymity said. Yet, we always keep our works on from our own resources, he added.



Chaktai canal, the backbone of drainage system of the port city, has silted up to such an extent that even a little shower causes severe water-logging.

theweekthatwas

Tidal surge washes away houses, shrimps

The tidal surge under the impact of depression in the bay and full moon washed away houses and shrimps of over Tk 1 crore in Cox's Bazar in the last few days.

Tidal wave four feet to five feet higher than usual ones washed away around 50 houses of Dhalghatadwip of the off shore island of Moheshkhali. It also posed threat to another 500 houses and a cyclone shelter of Dhalghata at Sutaria Bazar.

Tidal water also entered shrimp enclosures measuring 500 acres at Badarkhali, Shaharbin and Rampur under Chakoria upazila and washed away shrimps worth over Tk. 1 crore.

Rly to recruit after 18 years

Bangladesh Railway has finalised the recruitment process for 900 posts out of around 8000 vacant posts after long 18 years.

A total of 1.13 lakh candidates submitted applications for the posts in eight different categories.

Railway stopped recruiting since 1985. As a result till date its workforce declined to 35,000 from 63,000 of 1980 while it has 40,000 sanctioned posts. The Railway also invited applications for 659 posts of 16 categories in 1999. It earned Tk. 1 crore 82 lakh and 50 thousand from sale of application forms. But the recruitment process was postponed with appointment of 129 security guards (Nirapatta Bahini) and SLW (Khalashi).

New tempo service introduced

Shah Amanat Bridge (Karnaphuli bridge) - New Market tempo service was introduced here on May 16.

Chittagong division Sramik Dal president Alhaj AM Nazimuddin opened the new route.

While addressing the inaugural ceremony at Shah Amanat Golchattar (square) as the chief guest, Nazimuddin said tempo service in the new route

would benefit hundreds of daily passengers coming from other side of the Karnaphuli. Chhattagram Auto-tempoo Sramik Union president Jahed Hossain presided.

Annual convention of Lions ends

The two-day sixth annual convention of Lions District 315 B-4 held at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong centre ended on Friday. National Professor Dr. Nurul Islam and elderly rebellion Binod Bihari Chowdhury were accorded receptions at the convention for making remarkable contribution to their respective fields.

The speakers at the closing session said the members of the world's largest welfare organisation (Lions) were committed at least to identify national and social crises and design models for their solutions. District governor PR Sinha presided.

Lion Rafiq Ahmed and Lion Ekram Hossain were elected governor and the Vice-governor of Lions District 315 B-4 for the year 2003-2004 respectively at the convention.

Army comes to the aid of people



The army come forward to help mitigate the suffering of city people. Two Zones of the Army (16-ECB and 19 -ECB) have been engaged to help WASA distribute water among the city dwellers since May 11. WASA water is now being supplied by Army vehicles at different areas of Agrabad, Halishahar, Pahartoli, Madarbari and Olonker under of the supervision of 16-ECB while at Muradpur, Sholoshahar and Shersah colony under the supervision of 19-ECB. The distribution continues from 8am to 5pm every day and the programme would go on until the situation improves.

Free trade accord with Bhutan soon

Bangladesh and Bhutan would hold ministerial level meeting to sign Free Trade Agreement and Industrial Agreement between the two countries soon. Commerce and Industry Minister of Bhutan, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said this while he was exchanging views with the members of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) on May 13. Wangchuk emphasised on an increased bilateral activities for developing tourism industry in both the countries.

Earlier, CCCI acting president Ershad Ullah in his address of welcome called upon the Bhutanese minister to come forward to remove the existing trade deficit and help enhance export-import business between the two countries. Bhutanese ambassador in Bangladesh Dasho Dopho Tshering, Director General of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Bhutan Achyut Bhandari were present on the occasion.

Bus terminal

demanded

Inter-district Bus Owner Samity and Bangladesh Inter-district Road Transport Workers Union leaders demanded an inter-district bus terminal at the abandoned railway land at Baropole under Halishahar thana in the city. The leaders made the call at a meeting at the samity office at the BRTC market on Sunday with Samity president Alhaj Kafiluddin Ahmad in the chair.

Silk Air offers two new package tours

Silk Air has offered two new package tours named "Experience Langkabi" and "Experience Phuket" to travel Malaysian islands of Langkabi and the largest Thai island of Phuket respectively from Thursday.

The three-day and two-night tours were introduced in Chittagong-Singapore-Langkabi-Singapore-Chittagong route and Chittagong-Singapore-Phuket-Singapore-Chittagong route. The Langkabi tour would cost 255 US dollar per head while the Phuket tour would cost one 263 US dollar.

Silk Air authority at a press conference at its Agrabad office on Wednesday said the package tours would continue till July 31.

Earlier, Silk Air introduced two package tours between Chittagong and Bali island in Indonesia and Chittagong and Chiang Mai in Thailand.

BGC Trust University to launch 500-bed hospital

The 500-bed hospital of BGC Trust University at Kanchon Nagor of Chandanailash in south Chittagong would start functioning next year. Engineer Aferuddin Ahmad, founder of BGC Trust University and chairman of Begum Gool Chemonara Trust, said this while he was addressing the freshers' reception and cultural function of the university as the chief guest on Sunday.

Vice-chancellor of the university Justice Habibur Rahman Khan presided. The function was also addressed by pro-VC Prof Dr. Noor Jahan Bhuiyan and Treasurer Prof Shayesta Khan.