

50 pc units at Nasirabad industrial belt closed

NURUL ALAM

About 50 per cent of industries at Nasirabad industrial belt have been closed in the past ten years due to frequent labour unrest, wrong government policies, bad management and flow of smuggled goods into the local markets.

Thousands of workers and employees were thrown out of jobs following closure of the industries, sources said.

Nasirabad industrial belt was once known as the largest industrial hub in the port city.

Over 200 small, medium and heavy industries are located at Nasirabad where mills and factories started to be set up from 1964, sources said.

Nasirabad industrial belt was initially launched as Sholashahar light industrial area that later flourished as the main industrial hub with the set up of more factories.

This area once hummed with huge number of workers and employees.

Acting President of the

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCC) Ershad Ullah said, "Introduction of free market economy backfired forcing closure of about 50 per cent of the industries at Nasirabad".

"Besides, wrong government policies, freestyle black market operation in the country, bad management and labour unrest

gradually became sick. But the corrupt officials of the nationalised mills became rich though the organisations fell sick, Ershad added.

Later, those sick industries were disinvested by the successive governments in a bid to reactivate them, Ershad said adding high production costs and inefficiency of management almost baffled the

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caused a serious damage to this industrial belt," CCCC leader said.

This industrial belt had witnessed some changes immediately after independence as the units earlier owned by non-Bengali people, were nationalised under corporation system, Ershad said. Due to bad management and corruption by a section of officials, the nationalised mills and factories

move to make those sick units profitable.

Some of the owners were even forced to close down factories due to frequent labour unrest, he said. Some owners of the sick and disinvested industries reportedly managed huge bank loans in the name of running capital and reforms.

But most of the loans reportedly were diverted to other business

instead of pumping the money for better operation of the sick units, sources said.

Even some of them reportedly invested the loan money, taken against the sick industries, in smuggling to make quick bucks, sources added.

The bankers should be liable for such diverting of fund, Ershad said. The banker had connivance with those loan borrowers and as such it was not properly monitored to identify the lapses at the field level of investment, he added.

Former president of Nasirabad Industries Owners Association (NIOA) Monwar Ahmed said it was the market situation that led to the closure of about 50 per cent industries.

"Fall in demand of local products, high manufacturing costs and uneven competition with the goods of neighbouring countries compelled to close down those industries", Monwar said.

'EXTORTION' IN THE NAME OF CHECKING ?



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SKIDER

Most of the drivers of auto-rickshaws, both the two-stroke three wheelers and the CNG ones, in the port city have to go through an ordeal every day. The on-duty traffic police frequently intercept the auto-rickshaws and sometimes force the passengers to get down in the name of checking documents or searching for criminals. It has been a common practice, especially at city's Jamal Khan and Ghani Bakery intersections, since long. The auto-rickshaw drivers and owners alleged that this is a means of 'extorting' toll from them. Those who do not give in to their demand often faces harassment, they said. Some passengers also accused the police of misbehaviour. On August 2, the auto-rickshaw drivers and owners took out an unprecedented procession of over 200 auto-rickshaws in the city in protest against such harassment. The long caravan had started from in front of the Jamiatul Falah Mosque at Dampara area and ended in front of the CMP headquarters at Laldighi. Later, the leaders of Auto-rickshaw Driver-Owner Oikya Parishad submitted a memorandum to the police commissioner and sought his cooperation. A top-ranking CMP official, however, denied the allegations and said a few cops may be involved in the illegal act, but it would not be fair to put the blame on the entire traffic department.

Story by Shahidul Islam



Chittagong fears final jolt

MOHIT UL ALAM

Since November 1997, when the greater Chittagong was jolted by a severe earthquake, reading more than 5 on the Richter Scale, Chittagong so far experienced numerous tremors.

In a word, the people here are living dangerously under death sentence, awaiting their link with life to be severed by one final jolt. Then everything will be plain dead.

The other day The Daily Star published a seismographic map of the inner plates of the earth in which the location of Chittagong showed itself to be at the centre of the zone, which receives the most vibrations. Is Chittagong then to be sacrificed to the bowel movements of the earth?

Of all natural calamities, earthquake is the most unpredictable. There is, arguably, no knowing a second earlier that it will occur. Therefore, it owes

nothing to human responsibility. Precautionary measures may be taken, but of what help they would be nobody knows.

But the environmental scientists will disagree with the above view. They rightly think that the occurrence of an earth-tremor may not be foretold, but it is partly man-made, and proper nature and urban planning can lessen the extent of damage. And, that is true.

The earth inside is somewhat similar to the human belly. There are constant motions and counter motions going on in the stomach in order to adjust itself to the pressure that the digestive system is subjecting it to. Our mother earth is also patiently tolerating the thousands of acts of digging, boring, piling, dynamiting, embanking, and under-grounding on the surface of the earth and in the sea. All these human acts create strain, stress, tension

and anxieties on her, and she moves a plate there, or turns on her side, or just does something to relieve herself a bit. Her slightest movement may spell disaster for her children, particularly of Chittagong.

So what the humans should do is to create lesser and lesser pressure on the mother earth. In my layman's view the reason why Chittagong is vulnerable to a greater frequency of earthquake can be attributed to the installing of the hydroelectric project in the hills at Kaptai.

The Kaptai Dam was built about 40 years ago for storing of water of the River Karnaphuli in order to produce electric power by the pressure of water. It has done, I believe, a fundamental damage to the ecological balance in this part of the world. The hills are holding up a huge mass of water on a very fragile foundation, the nearest analogy of

which can be a tender-aged child carrying a heavy pitcher on its shoulder with water full to the brim. The child may collapse under the pressure, and so can the Kaptai Dam.

Modern engineering disproves of turning a river's direction by building bank on it. Besides, after 40 years of exhaustive use, the Kaptai project has developed inefficiency, and its output is now much below a desired rate. There are other power producing plants in the country doing a better job.

Given the political turmoil that the Kaptai Dam has given birth to, I think, it is now time we dismantled the dam, gradually, phase by phase, and let Karnaphuli flow in its own original style, the water-level come down in the Rangamati Lake, and the hill people live ever happily after; and Chittagong to remain tremor-free.

theweekthatwas

Discussion on cataract treatment

Speakers at a discussion here on Friday said the disease of eye cataract is spreading fast due to malnutrition and lack of proper treatment. The disease can be treated effectively by applying proper homeopathic doses without even any operation, they said. Royal Homeo Academy organised the discussion at its office at Bangladesh Cooperative Book Society building with academy president Dr BK Das in the chair. Dr. Arun Chandra Pal, Dr. Azizur Rahman Prodhan, Taslima Afroz, Shuvan Das, Pramila Das and Dr. Shyamol Das also addressed the meeting.

'Upgrade CGVC to university'

Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Dr. Manik Lal Dewan said despite huge potentiality, the veterinary profession did not flourish up to the expectation in the country in long 50 years.

Dr Dewan said this while he was speaking as chief guest at a seminar on 'A delivery of veterinary services by the teaching veterinary hospital of CGVC: Looking to the future' on

Thursday.

Bangladesh Veterinary Association (BVA), Chittagong chapter, organised the seminar at Chittagong Government Veterinary College (CGVC) with its president Dr. Farhad Hossain in the chair.

The speakers stressed the immediate need for upgrading the CGVC to a full-fledged veterinary university for flourishing of livestock.

CGVC teacher Md Ashiqur Rahman presented the keynote paper at the seminar. Principal Dr. Nitish Chandra Devnath, central BVA President Dr. Syed Abdul Quader, Secretary General Dr. Md. Emran Hossain Khan and Chittagong Divisional Livestock Department Deputy Director Sunil Chandra Ghosh were present as special guests.

Duty-free shopping centre opens at airport

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) on Thursday opened a duty-free shopping centre at the terminal building of Shah Amanat International Airport. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin inaugurated the shopping mall as chief guest.

Mir Nasir asked the officials concerned of the centre to earn consumers' trust through honesty, good manner and sincere services.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Secretary Shafiqul Islam, Chairman Harunur Rashid Bhuiyan and Civil Aviation Authority Chairman Air Commodore Jahed Qudus were present at the function.

Tribute to 3 personalities

Speakers at a condolence meeting paid rich tribute to three personalities of Banskhali upazila of the district and recalled their contribution to the fields of social welfare and education.

The three personalities were noted lawyer Pradip Bhattacharya, social workers Mozaffar Ahmad Sikdar and Saber Ahmad Chowdhury.

Momtazul Haq Smriti Sangsad organised the meeting at East Chechuria Primary School at the upazila on Friday. Sangsad Presi-

ties concerned to rename three roads of the union after them.

Token hunger strike observed

About one hundred students observed a token hunger strike on the Chittagong Shaheed Minar premises on Saturday protesting what they said 'discriminatory result and artificial debacle' in this year's SSC examinations.

The students said their academic future has faced an uncertainty due to this result. They demanded formation of a committee to probe the result debacle and re-examination of the answer sheets.

Mouli, Tari, Menon, Boby, Sagar, Payel and Nadia addressed.

New CPA chairman for skilled manpower

Newly appointed Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Chairman AMM Shahadat Hossain said at this very age of globalisation there is no alternative to creating skilled and highly qualified manpower in the shipping sector to develop marine trade keeping pace with the global marine trade.

Shahadat said this while he was distributing certificates among the participants of a workshop on 'Making and delivering effective presentation' at the CPA Training Institute on Wednesday evening. The workshop was jointly organised by the Engineering Staff College and CPA Training Institute.

CPA Member (Finance) Ahmad Golam Mosharraf Faruqi, Rector of Engineering Staff College MA Hannan, CPA Director (Administration) ANMA Momin and course coordinator Liakat Hossain also addressed the function.

Blood donation

A blood donation programme organised jointly by Lions Club of Chittagong City, Leo Club of Chittagong and Raozan Club was held on Thursday.

Speakers at the function called for donating blood regularly and creating mass awareness across the country.

Raozan Club Advisor Mesbahuddin Akbar presided over the programme. District Governor of Lions District-315 B/4 Rafiq Ahmad, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) Organising Secretary Reaz Haider, Lions officials SM Ishaq, Baduuzzaman Khan Nani, assistant manager of Beximco Group in Chittagong Muhammad Mohsin Chowdhury, club advisors Syed Monjurul Haq Monju, Dr. Omar Faruk, president Md Azad Khan and secretary Nasiruddin Babul also spoke at the function.

Foundation of



Raozan Club organised a tree-plantation programme to encourage people in afforestation at Raozan upazila on Saturday. Lion Alhaj Rafiq Ahmed, newly elected governor of Lions District 315-B 4, inaugurated the programme at the club premises as chief guest.