

## Smugglers rule outer anchorage, Karnaphuli

Two high-powered patrol boats are out of order for over last 3 years

NURUL ALAM

Two high-powered patrol boats of Chittagong Customs House have remained out of order for over last three years.

The boats --'Samikka' and Sophen-- were used by the anti-smuggling rummage team for launching regular drive at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port, Karnaphuli river and other vulnerable sea and river points.

But there is no move to repair the boats for reasons unknown, port and customs sources said.

As a result, anti-smuggling operation is has almost been suspended, which became a boon for smugglers' syndicates operating at the outer anchorage and the river Karnaphuli.

Some vested quarters in collusion with a section of customs officials made the patrol boats useless with a view to hindering the anti-smuggling drive at the high sea and river Karnaphuli, sources said.

Customs rummage team, however, denied the allegation, saying that letters

were issued to the authorities on many occasions seeking funds for repair of the boats.

"But they are yet to respond, so what can we do?" rummage team official Md. Habib said.

With the suspension of anti-smuggling drive at the sea, the rummage team members mostly pass their time doing nothing, sources said.

Some liner vessels, operating between Chittagong port and other foreign ports to carry cargo, were reportedly engaged in dropping smuggled goods at the outer anchorage, sources said.

Those goods are brought to the shore through different coastal routes and the river Karnaphuli by high-powered mechanised boats or fishing trawlers.

Due to lax anti-smuggling drive, the smugglers' syndicates now use the river Karnaphuli as a safe route to shore up the smuggled consignment, sources said.

Chittagong Customs House Commissioner Mosrur Ahmed said, "We are trying to procure fund to repair the two high-powered patrol boats".

"Without the patrol boats it is difficult

to conduct anti-smuggling drive at sea and river," Mosrur said, adding that our anti-smuggling rummage team now only concentrates on search operation on board the vessels that take berth at Chittagong port.

The biggest ever cache of smuggled arms and ammunition, including 1790 sophisticated AK-47 rifles, rockets and rocket launchers and 25,000 hand grenades, was seized on April 2 at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) on the bank of the river Karnaphuli near the rummage team's office.

Police and intelligence sources said that the consignment of the arms and ammunition was unloaded at the outer anchorage from where two fishing trawlers carried the same to CUFL jetty.

After the haul, customs intelligence and other government agencies are keeping a watch on three cargo vessels as those ships arrived at the outer anchorage the previous night.

These vessels are MV QC Honour, MV Orient Freedom and MV Ocean Moray, customs intelligence sources said.



Myanmar Prime Minister Khin Nyunt hands over a gift to the Bhande (monk) as a mark of homage (right) while visiting Balghata Buddha Mandir (Buddhist temple) in the hill district of Bandarban (left) on Tuesday.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SHIKDER

## 'Polythene method' brings hope for salt farmers

Output may exceed target of 10.5 lakh tonnes this season

ABDULLAH -AL MAHMUD

The salt farmers of Cox's Bazar and Banskhali are dreaming of good days ahead with satisfactory production this year following adoption of modern method of cultivation.

Some 50,000 farmers cultivate salts on around 68,000 acres of land in the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar and Banskhali in Chittagong to meet the annual demand of around 9.5 lakh tonnes for the country.

But, so far they could have hardly earned profit due to poor output attributed to traditional method of cultivation and inclement weather.

Besides, insufficient bank loan, middlemen and money lenders, and

loopholes of government purchase policy were there to worsen the situation, salt farmers said.

The farmers hope to reap a good harvest this year as the "polythene method" and the fair weather already helped them produce over six lakh metric tons of salt, two lakh tonnes higher than that of the corresponding period of last season (November to June).

They are hopeful of exceeding the current season's production target of 10.5 lakh tonnes, if fair weather continues. They also hope a good profit with the current price of their products.

Production increased after the farmers had adopted modern "polythene method" introduced by the salt

project of Bangladesh Industry for Small and Cottage (BISC) in Cox's Bazar. Salt is produced from salty water gathered on polythene-covered salt-beds. The salts produced under new method are clean and white, as they do not get mixed with sand.

A group of salt farmers from Chakoria in Cox's Bazar said this while they were talking to this correspondent at Sadarghat in the port city on Monday.

The officials told the farmers that they would get at least 15 per cent higher production if they introduce modern method. They produced over 30 per cent higher than the traditional method yielded, farmers said.

The salt farmers from Cox's Bazar said that the higher rate of production

encouraged them to go for the modern method. Though it cost a bit higher and rate of barga (rate of leased out salt-bed) went up by more than two times. The farmers brought 12,000 acres of land under salt cultivation under "polythene method" as against 5,000 acres last season, they said.

The barga rate went up as high as Tk 13,000 per kani this year against Tk 4,500 per kani last year, they said.

"Yet, we hope to get expected profit this time as the price of our products is satisfactory this year," they said.

Salt was sold at Tk 80 per maund in the salt-bed last season while it sells at Tk 240 this season and in Dhaka at Tk 300, they said.



A good number of vessels often remain anchored haphazardly at the outer-anchorage of Chittagong port to block passage and hamper movement of other vessels to and from the port.

## theweekthatwas

### 13 vessels fined

The first class magistrate of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury conducted raids along the port channel on river Karnaphuli on Sunday and Monday and fined 13 vessels for evading tax and polluting environment.

Of the vessels, 11 were penalised for tax evasion while the two others for contaminating the river water, said a CPA press release.

"The vessels were supposed to pay the required charges of port, river and mooring as per CPA law but they always found evading those taxes".

A team from Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) assisted the port magistracy during the raids.

### Seminar on agro-processing products

Speakers at a seminar emphasised the need for extending export volume to keep pace with the competitive world as well as bring a balance for Bangladesh economy.

They also urged for creating newer commodity markets abroad. Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Chittagong organised the seminar titled "Export opportunities in agro-processing products" at its Agrabad regional office on Sunday. EPB director Mohammad Ishaque chaired the seminar.

Senior vice president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Ershad Ullah and first vice president of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association

(BGMEA) MA Salam were present as chief and special guests. Chief Scientific Officer of Bangladesh Centre for Science and Industrial Research (BCSIR) Dr AKM Faizul Hoque was moderator.

### BNWLA celebrates silver jubilee

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) on the occasion of its silver jubilee held a discussion meeting with local elected representatives at Chittagong Club auditorium on Wednesday.

Ward commissioners of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) took part in the discussion titled "Violence against women and children".

Speakers said that the elected body was unable to help the suppressed people of the society with limited power. Termining the existing laws 'bureaucratic', they said it hindered actual punishment against criminals.

Advocate Wahida Iqbal presided. Former parliament member Rosy Kabir, ward commissioners Payer Mohammed, Rehana Kabir, Ajali Kunda, Md. Kafiuddin, Abdul Malek, Women Entrepreneurs representative Khaleeda Awal, women activist Nurjahan Khan, journalists Daisy Moudud, Sumi Khan and Shamim Ara Lucy attended the meeting.

### 'Help the disabled'

Speakers at a view exchange meeting urged the people to come forward for welfare of the country's 1.40 crore disable people.

"The disable people are not social burden. They can also lead a life like us. What they need is our compassion as well as helping hands in all of their efforts," they said.

Non-government voluntary organisation Jugantar Samaj Unnayan Sangstha (JSUS) organised the meeting on Thursday to mark the World Health Day and the National Disabled Day.

Executive Director Yasmin Parvin, Director Saidul Arefin, organisation executives Fuad Saifuddin, Ohidul Alam, Joyrab Begum and Hasan Murad and beneficiaries Rahima Begum and Roksana Begum spoke. Dr Rehana Saifuddin presided.

### Call to practise corporate governance

Speakers at a certificate distribution ceremony of two-day long training workshop emphasised the need for practising good corporate governance and following International Accounting Standard (IAS) to restore investors' confidence.

"Although capital market has been suffering since 1996, we are still behind from proper implementation of IAS and corporate governance", they said.

The two-day training workshop held at CSE conference hall on Monday on 'International Accounting Standard and Corporate Governance'. Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) in collaboration with Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) under "capacity building of SEC and market participants" project of Asian Development Bank organised the function.

Representatives from Chittagong

Corporate sectors, accounting and finance executives of CSE listed companies, Merchant Bank and CSE members participated in the workshop.

CSE president Habibullah Khan distributed certificates among the participants as chief guest. SEC Executive Director Anwarul Kabir Bhuiyan, M Mansur Alam, Asian Development Bank (ADB) representative Keith Kothish and Dr. Kazi Rezaul Haque were present.

### Independence Day procession at Patiya



Little book lovers hold candles in a symbol of enlightenment at a festival organised by Bishwa Shahitya Kendra, Chittagong, at the Municipal Model High School ground on Friday.

### Patiya

Progressive Kindergarten School in Patiya brought out a procession on Wednesday on the occasion of the Independence Day.

Students, teachers, directors of managing committee and guardians joined the procession that paraded the entire Dhalghat village of the Patiya upazila to make the common people of the locality know about the history and spirit of the War of Liberation. The processionists carried colourful festoons, banners and placards with

various slogans.

Later, a meeting was held on the school premise with its director Ashish Das in the chair. Directors Prof Partha Sarathi Dutta and Chandan Das, acting principal Samir Sen, senior teacher Rina Das Gupta, Reshmi Das, Shahnewaj Talukder, Meneka Chakrabarty and Pranab Das addressed the meeting.

### Orientation of CMC freshers held

The orientation of freshers of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) was held at Barkat Bakritra room on Saturday.

CMC Director Brigadier General Dr. Md. Towfiqul Alam attended the function as special guest with Principal Chowdhury Badruddin Mahmud in the chair.

Dr. Imran Bin Younus of nephrology department in his brief speech highlighted on the responsibility and accountability of medical students.

Prof Sahara Khatun, Prof Mahmudul Haque, Dr Swapan Kumar Chowdhury, Dr Naima Akhter and Dr Shaikhul Islam also spoke.

Classes of the newly admitted MBBS students will begin on May 4.

Leaders of Chittagong Export Processing Zone (Cepz) Workers Forum demanded immediate implementation of their 13 points.

Their demands include rights to trade union at Cepz, weekly holiday on Friday, cancellation of forced overtime and stoppage of late night duty of the women workers.

They placed the 13-point demand at a press conference at Chittagong Press Club on Sunday.

Forum General Secretary M Nazrul Islam read out the statement. Forum Chief Advisor Siddiqur Rahman, President Shahidul Islam Sumon and Assistant General Secretary Abu Taher were present.

### Bishwa Sahitya Kendra activities at CCC schools soon

Founder of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra and noted litterateur Prof Abdullah Abu Syeed said that the activities of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra will be launched at all the educational institutions soon under Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

He said this while he was exchanging views with the teachers of CCC affiliated schools and colleges at the city corporation auditorium on Saturday.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was present at the meeting.

### Cepz workers press for 13 points

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### Khelaghar condemns attack on CU students

Leaders of Khelaghar Chittagong city unit at a meeting condemned the recent attack on the peaceful procession of general students of Chittagong University (CU) on the campus and demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the culprits.

The meeting was held on Friday with its president Dr AQM Sirajul Islam in the chair.

Vice presidents Ashish Sen and Dilip Das, General Secretary Nasru Kamal Khan, Rupak Chowdhury, Advocate Shafiqul Alam, Arifullah Hai and Tahmina Yasmin Rimi spoke.

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