

Syedpur BSCIC estate makes a difference

Industrial units on all 90 plots: Investors want expansion

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The Syedpur BSCIC industrial estate is different from others in the country. While most areas in other estates are virtually grazing fields, the Syedpur BSCIC authorities have appealed to the government for expansion following pressure from investors.

Thirty-seven out of 47 industrial units in the estate are running in full swing, two are ready to go into production soon, one is under construction and seven are 'sick'.

These produce a variety of items including foodstuff, cosmetics, iron

and rubber products, spare parts and small equipment, electric goods, jute products and organic fertiliser.

Despite odds and disadvantages for being in the remote northern part of the country involving higher transportation cost, the units are operating profitably and marketing their products all over the country.

BSCIC (Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation) completed the estate on 10.93 acre land in 1990 at a cost of Tk 1,46,78,000.

There are 90 plots in three categories—A, B and S—according to size. 'A' and 'B' type plots cost Tk 77,479 each

and 'S' type costs Tk 51,652, all payable in 10 equal installments.

Chief Estate Executive Engineer Rahidul Islam told this correspondent that all the 90 plots were allotted to the 47 industrial units, some occupying more than one plot.

The estate authorities help the investors in all possible ways to get bank loan, in preparing project proposals, getting power-water supply, importing raw materials and marketing the products.

They also provide the investors with latest information on invest prospect and technology and technical assis-

tance also, he said.

"Despite many disadvantages our products have good market in the country", said Aminul Islam, owner of Khalil Automatic Flour Mills Ltd. The demand is increasing day by day, he said.

Investors here are enterprising, industrious and practical. "Cheap and skilled manpower and all out cooperation from the BSCIC estate officials are also major factors in our success", Islam said.

"Our products have to compete with imported goods and more privileged industrial units in Dhaka and Chittagong. They enjoy government subsidy given to many sectors but we do not get anything here", he said.

Shawkat Chowdhury, General Secretary of Syedpur BSCIC Industrial Unit Owners Association, had some allegations.

"Despite recommendation from BSCIC authorities, public sector banks do not give us loan", he alleged.

"Private sector banks co-operate with us but their interest rate is too high—from 14½ to 16½ percent.

"So we have to count huge interests even before going into production".

Electricity rate is also "very high", Tk 7.50 for pick hour consumption and Tk 3.50 for the rest, he said.

As investors we do not get any extra facility, he regretted.

Three industrial units were auctioned for failure to pay huge bank interest.

"We have no gas supply enjoyed by units in Dhaka and Chittagong",

Shawkat said. Their production cost is lesser as they use gas.

Investors in Dhaka and Chittagong get big bank loans by mortgaging small land property because value of land there is at least 10 times the value here, he said.

Shawkat said carrying cost of imported raw material from Chittagong to Syedpur is Tk 14,000 per truck. But it is around Tk 6,000 for investors in Dhaka.

He demanded reduction of bank interest rate, power subsidy and supply of gas for investors in northern districts.

Despite all these disadvantages, no plot is vacant in the estate since 1996.

Now prospective investors are demanding expansion of the industrial estate.

The BSCIC authorities said they sent a proposal to higher authorities in 1999 to acquire more 15 acres of land for expansion of the estate.

A high-powered five-member team visited the area and submitted a report approving the proposal, they said.

The Industries Ministry approved the proposal and sent it to the Finance Ministry, one source said.

The BSCIC estate authorities said they have at least 75 prospective investors in hand, ready to set up industrial units, if plots can be arranged.

They said the the Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami during a visit to the estate one and a half years back had said that he would take steps for its expansion. But it is yet to be materialised.



PHOTO: STAR

Idle recreation facilities at the deserted Planet World, snapped yesterday.

Civic bodies demand Barisal park reopening, criticise BCC Planet World owner to go to court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Closure of the lone children's park in the city by the Barisal City Corporation (BCC) is a talk of the town. Many people are criticising the authorities for this.

The BCC authorities on Sunday took over and closed the park, saying the 30-year lease of the area to Planet World during Awami League rule was "unlawful".

The Planet World, owned by two influential AL leaders, created recreation facilities which attracted people in large numbers, even from outside the city.

Following the closure, the BCC mayor called a view-exchange meeting on the issue on Monday and invited people from all sections to discuss the matter.

But the meeting turned out to be a gathering of BNP men and its supporters.

The speakers there praised the Mayor for the park's takeover by the BCC. The meeting failed to arrive at an acceptable solution to reopen the park.

The meeting was not attended by human rights activists and non-partisan

persons acceptable to all sections of people, meetings sources said.

Mayor Mazibur Rahman Sarwar MP addressed the meeting first. He defended his action and claimed that the park would be maintained as before and reopened soon.

He told the meeting that the park was "occupied illegally" during Awami League through an "unlawful" contract. Other speakers supported his views.

Meanwhile the Nagarik Parishad, a people's forum and other local bodies, have demanded immediate reopening of the park.

Local AL leaders in a statement alleged that BCC action was taken only because the Managing Director of Planet World was an AL man.

The meeting however formed a 101-member committee with the Mayor as its head to "protect and recover all BCC lands property".

The meeting was addressed by, among others, former municipal chairman Golam Mowla, former president of Barisal Press Club S M Ikbal, DR. Habibur Rahman, Jamat-

e-Islami Moazzem Hossain Helal, Member Secretary of district Muktiyoddha Sangsad Muid Khan Khokon, Dr Mizanur Rahman, Mohiuddin Manik, advocate Fani Bhushan Das and Anis Talukder.

The gates of the park were opened on Monday but recreation facilities could not be used as Planet World employees who operated the facilities were absent.

The park was taken under Section 72(c) of the Barisal City Corporation Act. Shawkat Hossain Hiron, Managing Director of the Planet World and convenor of city AL, has said he will go to court as BCC violated the lease terms.

Ahsan Habib Kamal, expelled city BNP president and ex-Mayor of BCC, who was a signatory to the lease contract on behalf of BCC said, the contract was "fully legal under BCC Act".

He said leasing the park does not need approval from the ministry or any other authorities. Such approval is needed only in case of sale or permanent lease, he said.

Rallies, processions in Rangpur Arrest of spurious drug producers demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Leaders of different political parties and Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry have demanded arrest and punishment to the persons responsible for producing spurious medicines and adulterated fertiliser and cement.

District unit of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Khalequzzaman) brought out a procession here in the morning. Led by its president Abdul Quddus, the procession paraded the main streets of the town.

A street corner meeting followed the procession. After the meeting the processionists handed over a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Rangpur demanding arrest of the culprits.

Town unit of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) also took out a big procession in the town. Its president and secretary Dr Ekramul Hoque Swapan and Sakwat Ranga led the procession.

They also held a rally in the court square here. Dr Ekramul Hoque, Sakwat Ranga, Masud Nobi Munna, Goutom Roy and Saidur Rahman addressed the rally.

Criticising police inaction, the

speakers demanded immediate arrest to the culprits who supplied spurious medicine in Rangpur Medical College Hospital and seven upazila health complexes from the hidden laboratories in Dhap area of the

town.

They urged the authorities concerned to cancel license of Iftear Pharmacy, supplier of spurious medicine to the civil surgeon's depots.

Later, they handed over another memorandum to the DC demanding a probe into the incident of supplying spurious medicine to RMCH and Civil Surgeon's depots.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) brought out a procession in Rangpur town on Monday demanding arrest of spurious drug producers.

23 face 'death threat' from Bangla Bhai in Satkhira

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Twenty-three persons of Kaliganj upazila in Satkhira were asked recently to pay Tk 10 lakh as illegal toll or 'face death'.

The threat came through postal mail with name of 'Bangla Bhai.'

The persons are Moslem Ali of Chachai village, Ershad Ali Sana, Abu Taleb Sarder and Monindra Pal of Mukundapur village, Siddiqur Rahman of Sridharkati village, Md Rashed Dhal of Parulgacha village, Haji Mansur Ali Morol and Hamid Morol of Bandakati village, Abu Bakar of Faridpur village, Samir Mondol, Shankar Sarder, journalist Rahunath, Dr Santosh Baidya, Professor Subrota Sarder and Damodar Sarder of Bishnupur village, Nurul Islam Sarder of Nilkhanthapur, Lal Sarder, former UP member Shamsur Rahman Nrisinghho Hajra and another unidentified person of Gobindokati village.

However, they are yet to know the name of the person to whom they would pay the toll or the place

where to meet them for the purpose. There was also no mention about the deadline in the letters.

Sangbad newsman granted bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A magistrate's court here on Sunday granted bail to a staff reporter of the daily Sangbad, Zahangir Alam Aakash in a defamation case filed by a BNP leader.

First Class Magistrate Zebunnesa Karim of the Second Rajshahi Court granted the bail after surrender of Aakash before her court.

BNP worker Mamtajul Alam Khondoker filed the case against him for filing a report on an illegal liquor shop in Puthia by BNP leader and Puthia municipality administrator Abdul Latif Biswas.

The report, based on a joint statement of people was published on August 22. Later, a rejoinder of Abdul Latif Biswas was also published in the daily.

Awards for breast-feeding

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A discussion on breast-feeding was held here on Monday.

Family Health Clinic organised the discussion marking the Breast-feeding Week-2004. Project Director of the clinic Dr Mosaddek Hossain presided over the discussion while Acting Civil Surgeon of Satkhira Dr Hazrat Ali Ahmed was present as chief guest.

Dr Asaduzzaman, Dr Shabnam Momtaz Rozy and Dr Mamunur Rashid were present as special guests. Dr Anjana Khan delivered the address of

welcome.

While addressing, the chief guest said that there is no alternative to breast-feeding as it gives babies the best nutrition, protects them from diseases and helps them grow intelligent.

Dr Shabnam in her address as special guest termed the aggressive marketing policy of powder milk producers as the main obstacle to promotion of breast-feeding. Other speakers stressed on turning maternities into baby friendly hospitals.

Later, 25 breast-fed children were awarded prizes.



PHOTO: STAR

Twenty-five breast-fed babies were awarded prizes by the Family Health Clinic at a function marking the Breast-feeding Week-2004 in Satkhira on Monday.

SNAPS

Cotton farming target

BSS, Chaudanga

Bangladesh Cotton Development Board (BCDB) has fixed a target to bring 9,000 hectares of land under cotton cultivation in Chaudanga zone during the current cotton cultivation season. The production target has been fixed at 11,150 metric tons, according to official sources. BCDB also undertook a plan to distribute 22,500 kilogram of high yielding variety (HYV) of seeds among 2,226 farmers at a fair price in the zone. The board already distributed 4,000 kilogram of seeds among them. The cultivation will continue till first week of September.

Girl not yet rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A ten year-old girl student abducted by miscreants from Khordo Batra village in Kalaroa Upazila could not be rescued 27 days after the incident. Quoting local people, police said Asma Khatun, 13, daughter of Nur Ali was abducted on July 16 allegedly by Fazlur Rahman, son of Ejahar Ali and his accomplices Mannan and Razzaq, all from the same village, when she was going to a nearby pond for a bathe. Nur Ali had filed a case with Kalaroa Thana accusing the three on July 28. Her father alleged that the accused are threatening his family to withdraw the case.

NGOs realising loans in flood-hit Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Non-government organisations (NGOs) including some leading ones are realising micro credit loans in flood affected areas, at times with pressure, many recipients alleged.

Many distressed recipients in worst affected upazilas said NGO filed officials are visiting their houses off and on for payment of loan installments. But they declined to be named or quoted, saying this will create problem for them.

The flood washed away their crops and damaged homesteads but NGO men are creating pressure for installments, they said.

This correspondent also saw some NGO field workers moving door to door to collect arrears or installments.

Local people said CARITAS men are moving in Kalmakanda, Durgapur and Purbadhula upazilas in Netrakona district. About 25 NGOs including CARITAS, BRAC, Grameen Bank, PADAKKAP, ASHA, VDS, SHIKHA, Sabalamby Unnayan Sanity (SUS) are operating in Netrakona.

When contacted, Chitta Ranjon Sangna, Regional Director of CARITAS, Mymensingh admitted that their men are collecting loan installments in flood affected arrears because there is no instruction from the head office to postpone loan realisation. Ahasanul Kabir, Community Manager

of PADAKKAT in Netrakona said they are realising loans only from urban area, not from flood affected area.

Golam Mustafa, Project Director of SUS said they did not collect installments from flood affected areas.

BRAC Regional Manager in Netrakona was not available for comment.

Mentionably, the government has postponed realisation of Krishi Bank agricultural loans in flood affected areas.

Magura JCD leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Police on Monday arrested the district joint secretary of Jatiyatadb-adi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Sanaul Huq Tanmoy and his cousin Abid Hossain on charge of collecting illegal toll and assaulting a transport workers' union leader.

Unruly youths allegedly led by Tanmoy and Abid collected toll illegally from different vehicles on the Magura-Faridpur highway in Bhaina area in the morning on the day. They also beat up the district joint secretary of the district transport workers' union, Amir Ali who resisted them from collecting toll.

A case was filed with the Sadar police station.

Jam at Benapole port

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Imported goods have piled up at Benapole land port, creating a jam of trucks.

About 1000 Indian trucks laden with imported goods are stranded both inside the sheds and on the road.

The situation has been created as most of the importers did not take delivery of goods since the floods in the country turned serious, inundating and damaging roads, port officials and other sources told this correspondent during a visit on Monday.

Indian truck driver Dharendra Kemar said, "Our trucks are stranded on the road beside Shed No 22 for four days".

An official said about 300 Indian trucks enter Benapole land port every day. But importers are not taking delivery of goods since the beginning of

the floods. Huge quantities of goods are piled up inside the four warehouses also.

All the 27 sheds with a total capacity to accommodate 30,000 tonnes of goods are packed. Each day more Indian trucks carrying rice, wheat, onion, garlic, pulses, dried pepper, cloth, fruits, iron rods and other goods are arriving at the port, he said.

When asked over telephone about the reason, the Joint Commissioner of Customs suggested this correspondent to talk to the shed-in-charge.

When contacted, Shed-in-Charge Abdus Sobhan said the situation will improve within a few days. He said for quick delivery, they have arranged loading of Bangladeshi trucks directly from Indian trucks inside Transshipment Yard No 22. This will hasten delivery, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Goods piled up at Benapole land port. The photo was taken on Monday.