

Tk 60 lakh down the drain a year

Salary without work as Barisal regional food godown virtually abandoned but no decision on its fate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Barisal regional CSD food godown is virtually abandoned for 18 months after spending about Tk 3.5 crore for repair and maintenance. But about Tk 60 lakh is now spent

annually for salaries of its 60 staff without any work.

The government earlier decided not to store food grains in the godown any more because of the changed situation following improvement in road communica-

tion in riverine southern districts. But its fate is yet to be decided, Regional Controller of Food Md Kabiruddin told this correspondent.

The complex with 30 godowns was built in 1965 on 26 acres of land on the western bank of Kironkhola river near Barisal city to store and supply food grains to remote areas in the region.

More nine godowns were later added, raising the number to 39 and the total capacity to 28,330 tonnes.

Normally, up to 22,780 tonnes were stored there.

Over the years, road links have been developed in the southern districts. Food grains can now be reached to remote areas in short periods. So there is no necessity for long term storage of food grains in such a big complex.

Besides, system loss also created disinterest among a section of government officials in maintain such a 'white elephant'.

But the fate of this complex and its valuable lands worth several hundred core taka is yet to be decided.

Amid such a situation, Tk 3.5 crore was spent in for its repair and

maintenance in 2001.

The last consignment of only 2,500 tonnes of rice was stored in only one godowns in 2003 and the rest remained empty as usual. That was also emptied on April 29 this year. Since then, all the godowns are empty. Some pesticides and empty bags are now stored in one of godowns now.

The complex employs 60 officials and employees including one manager, three inspectors, 10 sub-inspectors, six assistant sub-inspectors, two lower division clerks, two upper division assistants, 28 security guards, 2 spray man, one T I and six sweepers.

The food department has to spend Tk 55 to 60 lakh annually for their salaries. Most of the staff do not come to the complex except on salary day, sources there said.

Its manager Abdul Kaium, when contacted, however declined to make any comment. Regional Food Controller Kabiruddin, said the huge complex has outlived its utility following improvement in river and road links. But he declined to speculate on the future of the complex and the lands.



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the desolate an empty Barisal regional food godown.

Strike at BSBMCH by pro-ruling party staff

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The tense situation on Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (BSBMCH) campus centring snatching of appointment letters continued yesterday as pro-ruling party employees observed a five-hour token strike from 10 AM to 2 PM.

They also staged a sit-in front of the hospital director, Dr. Aziz Rahim, and brought out a procession on the campus for cancellation of the list for appointment of people in 126 posts and removal of Dr. Aziz Rahim, also president of Barisal BMA and DAB for alleged corruption in the appointment procedure. They are agitating since October to press their demands.

2 killed, 45 hurt in road mishaps

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least two persons were killed and 45 injured in two road accidents at Taker Hut and Rahamatpur on the Barisal-Dhaka highway within two hours on Friday.

A mother and her son were killed on the spot and 22 injured when a Barisal bound bus (no. Dhaka-Metro-Ba-11-1581) from Dhaka hit a roadside ditch at Madaripur district at about 10 am. The dead could not be identified, police said. The bodies were taken to Madaripur Hospital for autopsy. The injured were taken to Madaripur and Rajoir hospitals.

In the other accident, at least 23 people were injured when another bus from Barisal to Dhaka fell into a roadside ditch at Rahamatpur in Babuganj upazila in Barisal district at about noon. The injured were rushed to Barisal SBMCH after. Among them condition of Shohag, Das.

Death threat for suing staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A trader at Mansha bazaar in Fakirhat upazila, Bagerhat faces death threat from outlaws for filing a case against his employee.

The businessman is Hashem Ali, owner of Messers Hashem Traders.

The threat came for filing a corruption case with Bagerhat court against the cashier of his firm, Mianan Sarder, son of Sahor Ali of Chhatbhog union in Rupsha upazila in Khulna district on charge of misappropriation of Tk 2,26,800.



PHOTO: STAR

Jessore Cantonment College Principal Md Kamruzzaman and Cantonment Executive Officer are surrounded by GPA-5 scorers from the college. Fifty-six students got GPA-5 in this year's HSC examination held under Jessore board.

Tender for 3rd Karnaphully bridge this month

Kuwait Fund to finance

CU CORRESPONDENT

Communication Minister Nazmul Huda has said the Kuwait Fund for Development has agreed to finance the third bridge over the Karnaphully river in Chittagong.

"We will hold a series of meetings with the Kuwait fund mission between October 4-12 in Dhaka to sign an agreement and hope to float tender for the bridge this month", he said while addressing a reception accorded to newly elected members of Bangladesh Bar Council-- Sheikh Razzak Ali and Advocate Shamsuddin Ahmed Mirza in the port city Wednesday evening.

Huda said he is optimistic that the construction work will begin soon.

He urged the countrymen to forge unity to resist what he called conspiracy by opposition Awami

League. "The August 21 incident is nothing but part of a conspiracy to topple the government in an undemocratic way", he added.

He congratulated the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) for its success in nabbing criminals. The coalition government wants to maintain peace in the society.

The BNP-led government enacted the Speedy Trial Tribunal for quick disposal of sensational cases and to mitigate the sufferings of plaintiff.

He criticised formation of the six-member probe committee led by Dr. Kamal Hossain to investigate the August 21 grenade blast.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin also spoke at the reception, addressed by, among others, advocates Joinal Abedin, SM Sirajul Alam and Md. Shahazada.

22 acre CPA land recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) in a day-long drive on Thursday recovered 22.18 acres of land worth around Tk 70 crore from alleged illegal occupation of Bangladesh Railway in Halishahar in the city for about 44 years.

A CPA team led by its Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury demolished structures with assistance of police and Ansars and took possession of the lands.

After recovery, the CPA authorities erected barbed-wire fencing around the lands and deployed a 50-member Ansar team for their protection from encroachers.

According to CPA sources, the lands were acquired through the then Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong in 1953-54 for development and expansion of Chittagong port. In 1960, the lands were officially transferred to the then Chittagong Port Trust (present CPA) and all records updated but those were not physically handed over, CPA sources claimed. The railway had so far been leasing the lands to

KCC revokes its tax increase notice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Khulna City Corporation (KCC) authorities have cancelled their decision to impose a higher holding tax.

Earlier, a notice signed by the KCC Chief Officer was issued asking 52,000 house owners to pay holding tax, six times higher than assessed in 1988-'89 financial year, with effect from July this year.

The notice triggered commotion among house owners.

Khulna Nagorik Forum, Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee and former leaders of opposition student organisations seized the opportunity to threaten a movement.

Realising the gravity of the situation, City Mayor Shaikh Tayebur, now staying in Kolkata, on Wednesday asked Acting Mayor and Ward Commissioner Moniruzzaman Mamun to cancel the decision.

Meanwhile, Tax Assessment Officer Hafizur Rahman and Assistant Tax Assessment Officer

Shafiqul Islam were suspended by the KCC authorities without showing any specific charge against them. Their suspension created discontent among officials and employees of the corporation.

As instructed by the City Mayor, Acting Mayor formed a three-member committee to probe into loopholes regarding assessment of new holding tax.

Headed by Water Works Department Executive Engineer Abdul Hannan, the two other members of the probe committee are Executive Engineer (Electricity) Shaikh Zahid Hossain and Administrative Officer Abdul Wadud. The body was asked to submit report within 45 days.

Acting Mayor told this correspondent, a notice to realise new holding tax was issued on September 20 without prior permission of Mayor. Departmental actions will follow against the officials involved in the foul play, he added.

Gaibandha Press Club body elected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A new 23-member executive committee of Gaibandha Press Club was elected for a two-year term at a general meeting of its members on Thursday.

Held at its hall room on Thursday, the meeting was presided over by Press Club Convener Gobinda Lal Das.

The speakers at the meeting emphasised on fair journalism that will undoubtedly bring welfare of people in general and nation as well. They also vowed to resist yellow journalism that caused unnecessary harassment of person concerned.

The new office bearers include Gobinda Lal Das (Jugantar)--President, KM Rezaul Hoque (Daily Star)--Vice-President, Dipok Kumar Pal (Jano Sangket)--Secretary, Shahbul Shaheed Tota (Prothom Alo)--Assistant Secretary, Naser Ahmed Sufi (Bhorer Surjo) --Organising Secretary, Nuruzzaman Parodhan (pathojatra) --Treasurer, Joberyer Ali (Sangram)--Office

51 hurt in Barisal clashes

Two extortionists caught in another incident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 51 people were injured in three clashes in Agailjhara and Gournadi upazilas in Barisal on Friday and the day before.

In another incident, two alleged toll collectors were beaten by people and handed over to police in Uzirpur upazila.

Police said 16 people were injured, four of them critically, when villagers clashed over cutting earth from a canal in Magura union in Agailjhara upazila on Friday.

On information, police came and quelled the violence. The injured persons were taken to Goila and Gournadi health complexes.

In another incident on the same day, 16 people were injured in a

clash over land in Nalchira union in Gournadi upazila. They were treated at the local health center.

On Thursday night, villagers clashed over a trifle in Magura union in the same upazila, leaving at least 19 people injured. The clash ensued from alleged snatching of money from a carpenter. The injured were treated at Gournadi health complex. Police visited the spot but a case is yet to be filed.

In Uzirpur, people caught two alleged toll collectors on Thursday night when they went to realise Tk 60,000 from Sukhdev Mandol, demanded earlier. Mizanur Rahman and Abul Hossain were handed over to police after a mass beating but two of their accomplices fled away, police said.

11 Magura hospital staff unpaid for 16 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Seventy staffers including 11 physicians of Magura Sadar Hospital are not getting their salaries for 16 months.

They staged demonstrations and abstained from work demanding their salaries but in vain.

They are forced to lead a sub-human life due to non-payment of salaries, Jagadananda Roy, Medical Officer (MO) of Magura Sadar Hospital told this correspondent.

Sources in Magura Civil Surgeon office told The Daily Star they were appointed in 1998 under a development project to upgrade the 50-bed Magura Sadar Hospital into a 100-bed one.

Following its upgradation they were recruited on June 28, 1998.

However, after expiry of the stipulated time of the project they faced irregularities in receiving their salaries.

The staffers got their salaries till May 2003 under revenue sector. The Finance Ministry stopped allocation of fund in this project.

However, employees appointed under the same project at different hospitals in the country are still getting their salaries, according to victims.

A staffer of Magura Sadar Hospital preferring anonymity told this correspondent, 'Staffers in Meherpur, Feni and Cox's Bazar hospitals under the same project are getting their salaries

regularly'.

On contact, Magura Civil Surgeon Md Fariduddin Ahmed said he had informed the matter to the higher authorities. Salary disbursement might begin after clearance of the Establishment Ministry, he added.

Two fish traders beaten by army

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Four fish traders were beaten by army men in a dispute over price of fish at Koralia bazaar in Galachipa upazila on Thursday.

One of them--Zakir Hossain, 45, has been admitted at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical Collage Hospital and the other-- Babul-- at the upazila Health complex.

Army is now engaged in construction of Probirpur Abasan Project there, a cluster village for rehabilitation of landless people.

Local people claimed that four army men beat two fish traders in a dispute over price of Hilsha fish. Several hundred people gathered there. They later informed Galachipa UNO Mesbah Uddin of the incident.

SNAPS

Additional security for Sylhet mayor withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Six police men out of eight deployed for security of Sylhet City Corporation Mayor and city Awami League President Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran have been withdrawn. The six were engaged for his security after the August 7 bomb blast at the Gulshan Centre in the city which killed his close political aide city AL Publicity Secretary Mohammad Ibrahim and injured 30 others. Kamran had been seeking security since after the shrine blast in June this year, saying that he received death threats. The administration at last deployed six additional policemen for his security after the August 7 deadly blast. Kamran told this correspondent that three of the security men were withdrawn on Thursday and three others three weeks ago. Now, he enjoys security by two policemen as before. When contacted, Deputy Inspector General of Police AKM Mahfuzul Haque said the Mayor is being enjoying his "due security". Additional security men were deployed for him "considering a different situation after the August 7 blast", he added.

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