

Karnaphuli Paper Mills struggles for survival

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Irregular supply of raw materials poses a threat to the existence of Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM) when it strives to emerge as a profit-making one and avoid disinvestment.

KPM, one of the biggest state-owned enterprises, is situated at Chandraghona of Kaptai under Rangunia upazila in Chittagong. It made a profit of Tk 3.5 crore last

tons of pulp wood and bamboo from its own forest in the CHT and there is no shortage of raw materials, one official said preferring anonymity.

The forests, built on 150 acres of land, provides with 35 to 40 thousand metric tons of bamboo and wood a year, he said.

He said that a vested quarter wanted to make the mills a losing concern while around 2,000 workers and officials were struggling for its survival.



Karnaphuli Paper Mills.

financial year (2003-2004) after incurring loss for seven years.

Industries minister told the authorities concerned last year that the KPM would face the fate of its sister organisation Karnaphuli Rayon and Chemicals (KRC) that closed down in December 2002 unless it could overcome the loss by June, sources said. After that, the KPM was making profit, sources added.

The KPM authorities purchased bamboo from a private supplier of Sylhet at a higher price in July following crisis of raw materials.

The authorities said that non-availability of raw materials in the forests in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) forced them to purchase bamboo from Sylhet. But sources at KPM said that a section of dishonest officials of the mills influenced the authorities to buy bamboo from Sylhet for their personal interest.

It, however, caused loss once again.

The KPM meets its 70 per cent of annual need of one lakh metric

Besides, the KPM forests were being destroyed for the last couple of years due to lack of proper management and embezzlement of money allocated for afforestation.

A lion's portion of the money for the afforestation under the department of Kaptai Pulpwood Garden was misappropriated, sources said.

However, KPM Managing Director Engineer Shamsul Haq said that there was no shortage of raw materials at present.

About the purchase of bamboo from Sylhet, he said that it was nothing exceptional and such supplies from other districts also came on different occasions earlier. "We are hopeful of making profit this fiscal and making efforts to this end," he said. Measures have been taken to achieve the target, he added.

Profit of the mills depends on demand and condition of the market that largely depends on import of papers from abroad, he said.

AUTO-RICKSHAWS OCCUPY LALDIGHI MAIDAN



Historic Laldighi Maidan has been occupied by CNG-run auto-rickshaws for most of the time in the last week. These vehicles are queuing up for CNG from a nearby refueling station, blocking the open space. But the authorities concerned are indifferent to the problem.

CMCH runs without ambulance!

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN RIAD

Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) has been running without ambulance for long, causing immense sufferings to thousands of patients.

But the CMCH authorities show an annual expenditure of Tk 18 lakh on maintenance of ambulances.

The authorities blame it on shortage of drivers for their inability to provide the ambulance service for the patients. But all three drivers are reportedly working as 'personal drivers' of two CMCH high officials and some doctor association leaders, sources said.

There are six ambulances for around 2,000 patients of the hospital. Two of them have been lying at the garage for last eight years. The two ambulances can be operative after repair.

Besides, two other ambulances are engaged in carrying of oxygen cylinders to the hospital as well as give lifts to some influential doctors' leaders tied to the ruling BNP and Jamaat.

But the ambulances are supposed to carry the serious patients to the hospital or shift them somewhere else.

On the other hand, two other ambulances received from the government cannot be used due to bureaucratic tangle. Of the two new ambulances, the 'mobile ambulance' remains out of order as it is left under the open sky outside of the garage since its procurement.

Sources said a total of Tk 3.3 lakh has been allocated for

maintenance and repair of the ambulances this year. Besides, Tk 1.5 lakh goes against the salary of three drivers. Apart from this, the department concerned draws Tk 30,000 every month in the name of service to the patients.

With the absence of ambulance service, a section of CMCH employees run private

ambulance business with the help of some senior doctors forcing the patients to pay high fare. They provide just 'microbus service' instead of ambulance service.

A powerful 'syndicate' comprising of trade union and student leaders and police is involved in the ambulance business.

Around 50 such ambulances wait in front of the hospital.

A doctor on condition of anonymity said that the syndicate has around 50 ambulances and doing their business without any permission from the CMCH authorities. "The hospital authorities can make an acceptable fare chart for hiring those ambulances what they did not

do." "So the syndicate has become more pitiless and robbing the patients," he added.

Abdul Mannan, a relative of a patient, who was looking for an ambulance at the hospital's main gate on Sunday morning said that most of the drivers of the private ambulances had demanded unreasonable fare from him. He said that a syndicate ran the business on mutual understanding. "I could not hire an ambulance even after one hour effort to take my cousin to home at Mirersharai after a caesarean operation to her as almost all the drivers demanded over Tk 2000," he added.

When contacted Dr Ismail Amanullah, assistant director of CMCH denied the allegation of not providing the hospital's ambulance service to the patients. He, however, said that patients seemed interested in hiring the private ones than the government ambulances. "There have some official formalities to get allocated the ambulance and perhaps the patients are indifferent to go for that," he added.



Private ambulances (right) wait in front of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) to take patients while those of the hospital are left idle (left) only to count bills against fuel and drivers' salaries without giving any service to the patients.



theweekthatwas



Models walk down the catwalk at Rowshan's Kids Camp-Prothom Alo Alokito Eid Fashion Competition at Swiss Park auditorium on Wednesday.

Mir Nasir criticises mushrooming of pvt universities

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin said the mushrooming of private universities was one of the main reasons for the deterioration of quality and standard education.

"The mushroom growth of private universities everywhere, even in some cases on the drain or footpath or market, is deteriorating the overall quality of education," Mir Nasir told the concluding and prize giving ceremony of Education and Cultural Week of Ispahani Public School and College (IPSC) on Thursday.

He said these universities lack basic requirements of good educational institutions including accountability, sincerity, education atmosphere and committed teachers. "Most of the teachers teach at more than two institutions at a time."

"But some private institutions like Ispahani in Chittagong are doing excellent job. They have earned reputation because of their strong supervision, good management and accountability and sincerity," Mir Nasir added.

Presided over by IPSC Principal Hasina Zakaria the ceremony was also addressed by Assistant High Commissioner of India Ashoke Das, Chittagong Education Board

Chairman AJM Shahidullah and Prothom Alo Resident Editor Abul Momen.

ICAB seminar on auditing

The Chittagong regional committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) organised a seminar on 'Bangladesh Standards on Auditing' for its members at Hotel Agrabad on Tuesday.

Former ICAB President MJ Abedin was present as chief guest while incumbent President Akhtar Sohail Kasem and Vice-President Chitta Ranjan Majumder were special guests. Vice-President Nasiruddin Ahmed presented the key-note paper.

Former president AK Chowdhury, vice-president Shahkat Hossain, regional committee chairman Sidhartha Barua and member of council ASM Nayeem also spoke.

Create awareness about disaster

The Chittagong ADP, World Vision Bangladesh observed International Day for Disaster Reduction-2004 on Wednesday.

To observe the day, World Vision Bangladesh took different programmes including a colourful procession and discussions.

Speakers at the discussion titled 'Learning from Today's Disaster for

Tomorrow's Hazards' termed Chittagong a vulnerable place for earthquake and emphasised the need for preparing an action plan to mitigate the impact of any kind of disaster along with earthquake.

"This action plan should be at wards and family levels in the city corporation," they said. They also urged the government, non-government organisations and television channels to take initiative to create awareness among the people on earthquake and other natural calamities.

Repression on women protested

Leaders of Chittagong district Samajtantrik Mohila Forum at a rally on Thursday protested the increased incidents of repression and violence against women across the country.

"Law and order has in recent time taken a sharp slide, side by side violence on women has also increased," they told the rally at New Market Intersection. They urged the government to take effective and tougher measures to stop violence against women.

Moni Deepa Bhattacharya, Jannatul Ferdous Poppy and Taslima Akhtar Beauty addressed the rally with Poppy Chakma in the chair. The Forum later brought out a procession.

Expatriates allege mismanagement

Bangladesh Samity leaders at a press conference at the Chittagong Press Club on Thursday drew the prime minister's attention to the "mismanagement" at government level and lack of rules that hindered financial aid for the flood victims and contribution to the country from the expatriates.

Bangladesh Samity is an organisation of around 4 lakh Bangladeshi expatriates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They said that a team of the organisation flew all the way from UAE to Bangladesh to hand over Tk 5 lakh for the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

"Unfortunately, despite prior appointment the 7-member team could not hand over the money on October 10 and 11," they said.

They also placed 12-point demand to ensure the rights of expatriates and save them from harassment by a government quarter at different occasions.

The demands included voting rights of the expatriates, end to harassment at airports, immediate handing over of the Rajuk plots at Purbachal to the expatriates and formation of a separate NRB bank. Samity President Md. Rafiq Sikder read

out the written statement.

Training for garment workers' leaders

Bangladesh Garments Workers Trade Union Centre arranged a training workshop for its Chittagong unit leaders on Friday.

The workshop was held at the office of Bangladesh Railway Workers Union with its vice president Rahatullah Jahid in the chair. Three papers -- 'What is workers movement and why it takes place', 'Labour law and its effectiveness' and 'The present situation of garments workers movement' -- were presented at different sessions of the workshop.

The speakers said that garment workers are often deprived of their rights and dues, and faces unjust and inhuman treatment from the owners. They emphasised the need for enacting a stricter law to ensure better working environment and wages for garment workers.

Trade union leader Mrinal Chowdhury, M Mossiudowla and Rulul Amin spoke as resource persons.