

## Feasibility study for deep-sea port soon

Kutubdia channel may get priority in the study

NURUL ALAM

The government will carry out a feasibility study for installation of a deep sea port to facilitate the handling of deep draught mother vessels that can not enter Chittagong port, highly placed sources said.

A high powered four-member committee headed by Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain was formed recently to run the process, the sources said.

Three other members of the committee included Cabinet Secretary Dr. Shahadat Hossain, Shipping Secretary Ismail Jabiullah and Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Chairman Shahadat Hossain.

It will take one year to complete both feasibility and economic study.

The feasibility study will be conducted at three locations Kutubdia channel, Sandwip channel and Akram point of Mongla port, the sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star CPA Chairman Shahadat Hossain said "We will launch the feasibility study to select the convenient and acceptable location for setting up a deep sea port."

"But Kutubdia channel may get the priority in the study for installation of such a deep sea port. We will also study the Sandwip channel and Akram point," he said.

"With the completion of total study, the project will be prepared for the deep sea port and it, however, may take time," he said. "If the deep sea port is installed here it will be easier for handling the cargo carried by the mother ves-

sels and cost will come down," he added.

The need for a deep sea port at Kutubdia channel was being felt for over the past ten years with the increase of import and export cargo as the trading activities continued to rise day by day.

A plan for installation of a deep sea port was taken after foreign shipping circles and experts' suggestions on various occasions, port sources said.

But the plan was shelved for years together as it did not get any green signal from the government.

The issue of deep sea port came up for discussion in various meetings and seminars at Chittagong port and higher level of the government.

Now the ship of only 9.2 meter draught can enter Chittagong

port jetties for loading and unloading of import and export cargo while the large size mother vessels wait at the outer anchorage near Kutubdia channel for lightering of the cargo, port sources informed.

Some local lighter ships are engaged to carry the cargo from the those mother vessels to the jetties which forces the traders to incur higher costs, port sources said adding that the excess costs were imposed on the goods that raised the prices in the markets.

A senior port official seeking anonymity said, "prices of imported goods will automatically be reduced if handling costs at the deep sea port come down. Besides, the mother vessels will not be required to stay for a long time in case of handling them at the deep sea port."

## ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OF DEFORESTATION



Miscreants are felling trees indiscriminately along the two-km stretch of Sonachhari coast, inviting ecological catastrophe. The trees were raised under coastal afforestation programme by the Forest Department in Sitakunda.

## Construction of 3rd Karnaphuli bridge uncertain

Govt rejects Dutch offers and lobbies for Kuwaiti fund



Local leaders of the ruling BNP-led four-party alliance express solidarity with the journalists, right, who staged a token hunger strike recently demanding immediate construction of the Third Karnaphuli Bridge and the foundation stone, left, of the bridge laid by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on April 19 this year.

ABDULLAH - AL MAHMUD

Construction of the third bridge on the river Karnaphuli has become uncertain due to complications in raising fund and administrative tangles.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of the bridge on April 19 this year to construct it by 2006 at a cost of Tk 450 crore.

The government at its first meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Enec) approved the project on priority basis as it was part of the proposed Asian Highway.

The government took initiative for Dutch fund immediately after it came to power and Communication Ministry sent a letter to the Dutch-Swedish Consortium in this regard in 2002.

The Consortium offered 36.5 per cent of the total estimated cost of 70 million euros as grant,

28.20 per cent as interest-free loan and 20.30 per cent with a three per cent interest leaving 15 per cent (10.5 million dollars) to be financed by Bangladesh government.

Five Dutch teams, including three technical and two financial ones, visited Chittagong and hold several meetings with the private sector business leaders for feasibility studies.

The Dutch fund was verbally confirmed last year while official confirmation came few months back this year.

But the government rejected the Dutch offer through a letter officially some time by the end of September or early October, sources said. The government decided to reject the Dutch offer and go for fund from elsewhere, particularly keeping a possible offer from Kuwait in mind, simultaneously early this year, sources added.

All the procedures for construction of the bridge went in

vain with Dutch assistance following administrative complexities, sources said.

The government, however, took a fresh initiative to construct the bridge with the financial assistance from Kuwait instead of Netherlands.

Under the new initiative, Kuwait will give 52 million dollars for construction of the bridge as loan at two per cent interest rate, sources said. But it was not confirmed yet by the Kuwait government and Bangladesh government will have to bear rest of the expenditures, sources added.

Tender will be floated for construction of the bridge after fresh assessment of pre-qualifications and short-listing of the intended bidders, designing and evaluation.

All these procedures will take at least another one year to start construction of the bridge, sources added.

Meanwhile, people from

all walks of life have been staging demonstration here demanding construction of the bridge.

Construction of the bridge could have opened up a huge scope of industrialisation on the other bank of the river Karnaphuli linking the tourist city of Cox's Bazar and south Chittagong.

At this situation, common people, businessmen and journalists have raised a voice for immediate construction of the proposed bridge.

Chittagong journalists on November 5 observed a token hunger strike at Chittagong Press Club premises demanding implementation of the project.

Local leaders of ruling BNP led 4-party alliance and opposition parties, professional and business organisations as well as people from all walks of life expressed solidarity with the programme.

## theweekthatwas

### PSI training for R & H staff

Bangladesh Roads and Highways Employees Union organised a Public Services International (PSI) campaign and training session on Friday to bring 7500 work-charged employees under regular establishment for service security.

General Secretary Moazzem Hossain inaugurated the day-long session at the Sarak Bhavan at Agrabad in the city. A total of 60 representatives from district wings of the organisation participated in the programme.

Central leaders Tuhid Uddin Mahmud, Shahana Akhtar Sima, Nurul Islam Mintu, Jahangir Alam Rana, Chittagong District President Kabir Ahmad and General Secretary Mahmudul Haq Siddiqui also addressed the function. Central committee president RM Darain distributed PSI campaign certificates to the trainees.

### Basic computer course for journalists

Speakers at a function here on Saturday

emphasised the need for basic computer application for journalists to attain more skill and professional and technological advancement.

"Basic computer knowledge is a must today for a journalist to keep pace with the journalists abroad as well as to acquire more competitive edge in profession," they said.

They were speaking at the certificate giving ceremony of journalists who had taken part in a month-long training course organised by Daffodil Institute of Information Technology (DIIT).

Chittagong Press Club (CPC) President Abu Sufian was present as chief guest in the function chaired by

DIIT Chittagong Campus In-charge M Faruk Islam. Academic Director of DIIT Mohammed Nuruzzaman and course co-ordinator Shafiqul Islam also spoke.

### Judicial probe in Mohim's killing demanded

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of Omar Ghani MES College unit and Chhatra Sangsad brought out a procession on the campus on Sunday to protest the killing of central leader and former Sangsad Vice President Mohim Uddin alias Mohim in 'crossfire' in Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) custody.

Later, the BCL leaders at a rally in front of college gate demanded judicial inquiry into the killing of Mohim.

College unit President Abu Hossain Abu presided. Sangsad VP Wasim Uddin, General Secretary Arshedul Alam Bachchu, Unit Secretary Sanjoy Bhoomik Konkan, BCL leaders Osman Gani Alamgir, Habibur Rahman Tarek, Din Mohammad Sohel and Nasiruddin Rubel spoke at the rally.

### Ctg Bar demands withdrawal of case against Dr Afsar

Chittagong District Bar Association President Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul and General Secretary Monotosh Barua in a statement on Sunday condemned the filing of a case against

Chittagong City Awami League Organising Secretary Dr Afsarul Amin.

"The case was filed at the behest of a certain quarters with vested interest only to harass noted physician Dr Afsar and his family and tarnish their social dignity," they alleged.

The association leaders demanded immediate withdrawal of the case and an end to the 'ill-motivated harassment' against Dr Afsar.

### Investor Welcome Service booth at airport

Board of Investment (BoI) has established an 'Investor Welcome Service' booth at Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport on Wednesday to provide complimentary services to the investors arriving in the port city.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin inaugurated the booth in a formal ceremony. Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCCI) President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury was present as special guest with BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman in the chair.

The booth will help visiting foreign investors in completing customs and immigration formalities and, if necessary, obtaining landing permit. Besides, booth staff will provide them with other services including investment counsel, information collection, hotel booking and arrangement of transport.

Mir Nasir emphasised the need for taking country's economy ahead through proper coordination between

private and public sectors. "The government will not do any business but remain as a regulatory body to provide necessary financial, technical and expertise cooperation to different industrial and economic sectors," he added.

### Business leaders for post-MFA strategy

Business leaders at a function here on Saturday underscored the need for immediate preparation for a strategy for

the garment sector to face the challenges of globalisation with the passing out of the quota facilities only after few weeks.

"With the expiry of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) from January next, Bangladesh will have to face tough competition from many Asian garment manufacturing and exporting countries in getting the market in the international arena," they said. "And Bangladesh needs massive homework to withstand the coming situation," they added. The business leaders were speaking at a training course on "Industrial Sewing Machine Maintenance Technology" at a hotel.

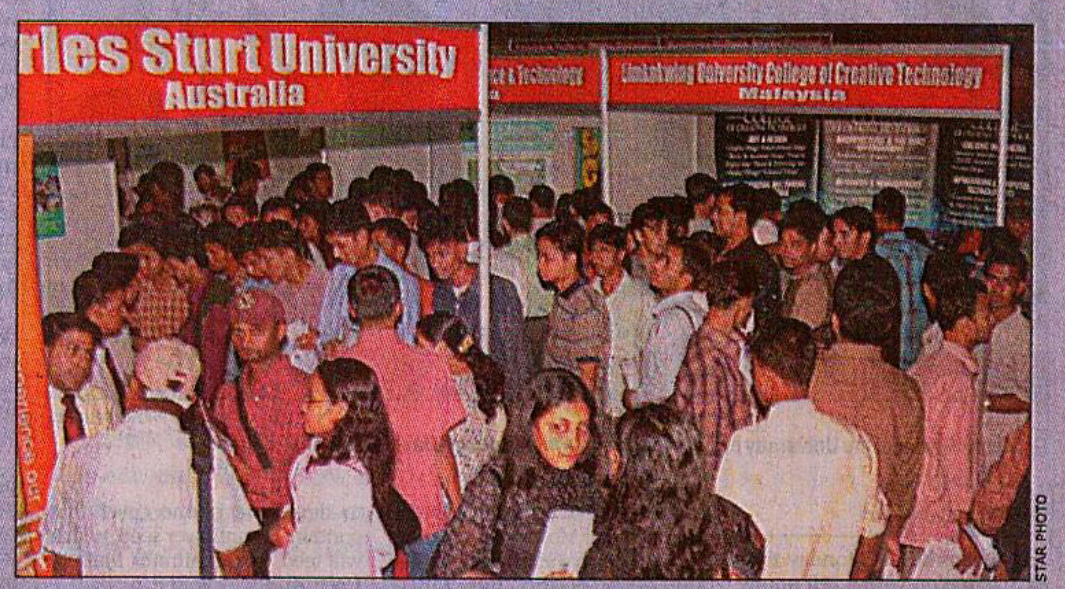
Association for Overseas Technical

Scholarship (AOTS) of Japan organised the six-day programme in cooperation with JUKI Corporation Japan, JUKI Singapore (Pte) Limited and JUKI Bangladesh Ltd. Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Director SM Nurul Haque was present as chief guest at the inaugural function.

Honorary Consul General of Japan Muhammad Nurul Islam, AOTS representative Dr AKM Moazzem Hussain, JUKI Bangladesh Chairman Md Zakaria Bhuiyan and JUKI Singapore's Assistant Manager Daniel Heng also addressed. JUKI experts M Yoshitomi and M Tanaka conducted the course.



Women Development Agency of Bangladesh (WODAB) brought out a colourful procession in the city on Saturday to create awareness about violence against women.



Young students intending to go abroad for higher studies thronged the two-day education fair at the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB), Chittagong Centre auditorium. BSB Global Network organised the fair that ended on December 6.