

## Tactics to extract additional bill?

Kalurghat Bridge renovation is yet to be completed, contractor seeks more time as more than 50 per cent work still unfinished

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Milan Enterprise has failed to meet the deadline for completing renovation of century-old Kalurghat Multipurpose Bridge, with more than 50 per cent work still unfinished.

The renovation work that started in August last year was supposed to be completed in six months ending in January this year.

Although vehicular movement was suspended for the renovation, two local trains to

and from Chittagong and Dohazari run daily on the rundown track, risking severe accident and human casualties anytime.

Nobody knows when the renovation will be completed or vehicular movement to start again on this important bridge. As a result, the original budgeted cost is sure to cross beyond its limit.

Meanwhile, Milan Enterprise, the contractor firm, sought another two months' time to complete the work. "The extended time is needed

to replace the trap plate or deck, railing and channel as well as repairing the damaged girders," said Golam Faruk, manager of Milan Enterprise.

Sources, however, were skeptical about the contractor's fresh pledge and said the renovation might not be completed in next six months. They said that the contractor was now dilly-dallying the renovation deliberately with an intention to extract additional bill may be few lakhs for the two months he asked for.

Denying the allegation Golam Faruk said that initially we were asked to trap plate and railing only. But when we started the work we found most of the girders damaged and not fit for use. Additional 15 per cent cost is required to repair these girders, he added.

About 40 per cent work was completed in last six months and the rest to be done by April, he said.

Hundreds of thousands of passengers from Bandarban, Cox's Bazar and southern parts of Chittagong have been in utter miseries for the past few months as the uncertainty persists.

Worst more is that one of the four ferry services introduced by Roads and Highways Department as an

alternative to ferry the vehicles during the renovation period is no more in operation for four to five weeks.

An executive engineer of the department told The Daily Star on Sunday that another ferry would arrive from Dhaka soon.

"Besides, process is underway to build two bailey bridges on each bank of the Karnaphuli River to ease the rush in ferrying the vehicles," he said requesting anonymity.

The 2094-foot bridge was installed as a simple rail bridge of steel structure in between Janalihah and Gomdandi Railway Stations in 1930.

British engineers constructed the bridge with 13 types of spans that include one 150-foot steel girder, twelve 100-foot under-slung girders, five 80-foot and a single 40-foot deck-type span and twelve 16-foot joists. The bridge has approach roads of 560-feet at Chittagong end and 490-feet at the Dohazari end.

The bridge was commissioned for operation of trains in Chittagong-Dohazari section in 1931. It was modified into a rail-and-road bridge in 1962 considering the sufferings of the people of the vast region.



Renovation of the century-old Kalurghat Bridge is going on (top) and a view of the bridge before the renovation work (bottom).



Sea beach or kitchen market?— The sea beach at Patenga in the port city is gradually turning into a commercial place instead of a tourist spot. Shop owners and a section of hoodlums with the blessings and patronage of influential quarters, including ruling party men, continued to erect shops, hotels and other commercial establishments on the shore since long. The long lines of shops along the sea beach gives impression of the area more of a bustling kitchen market that block the natural vision of the beautiful beach. Visitors, especially teenage girls, often face stalking and harassment by youths and hoodlums. It is alleged that a former local minister played a role in leasing out the beach area to the shop owners, mostly BNP and JCD men.

## Hide traders unlikely to profit

Over two lakh pieces of hides of sacrificial animals were collected in the port city during Eid

ABDULLAH -AL MAHMUD

Hide traders and leather exporters in Chittagong are unlikely to reap the benefit of the strict check on extortion and smuggling that helped ease procurement of hides of sacrificial animals at a lower price during the Eid-ul-Azha.

Over two lakh pieces of hides of sacrificial animals were collected in the port city during Eid this year.

Only four to five tanners, including HRC, Rich Leather, Madina Tanneries and Orient, were procuring a small portion of hides allowing the rest to go to other districts, mainly to the capital, sources said.

In absence of any fixed price and monitoring by the government, a well-organised syndicate of the tanners and hide traders fixed a price lower than that offered by those who came from outside the district.

It deprived the field level small traders of profit when the large traders and tanners eye a big profit, sources said.

"We had a good collection of hides this year and expected a good profit. But, we were deprived of the expected price," said Jamal, a seasonal hide collector from the city's Lalkhan Bazar area.

Small hide traders of arats (where raw hides are collected from traders and preserved with salt) also feared a dull business.

"We are now selling the hides to the traders coming from outside as they offer a better price. After that we will be left with no other options other than selling them at a lower price as we cannot keep the salt mixed hides for long," small traders of Aurer Depot area said.

Aurer Depot is the main sale centre of salt mixed hides where most of the city's 165 arats are located. Besides, there are two sale centres at

Pathantuli and Chaktai. The fixed price by the syndicate, however, had a little impact on the large traders of the arats who were rushing for Dhaka with their hides for a better price.

On the other hand, the local tanneries were not in a hurry to procure and rather seemed to cling to the price they fixed.

An official of Madina Tanneries preferring anonymity said, "We cannot buy hides at a price that will cause us suffer financial loss."

Asked about the higher price offered by the traders from other districts, he said that as the demand was higher in Dhaka and other places, they could offer better price.

On the contrary, a small tanner said on condition of anonymity that they could not offer higher price as they themselves do not procure hides and were compelled to wait for the leftovers after the procurement by the traders com-

ing from outside the district. Poor procurement by the local tanners will raise the price of finished leathers of local tanneries and affect the local leather-based industries afterwards.

Extortion and smuggling forced the tannery and leather business to decline fast in Chittagong. Leather traders here had become the hostage to the extortionists and hoodlums.

The number of tanneries here came down to some 18 due to this whereas Chittagong once witnessed a thriving business in this sector. There was a brisk operation of some 50 tanneries at Mohora with some 400 leather and leather-based industries.

The check on smuggling of hides this year offered a ray of hope for revival of the leather industries here but the reported foul play by the syndicate dashed all hopes, sources observed.

## theweekthatwas

### Cuta condemns killing of Kibria

Chittagong University Teachers Association (Cuta) President Dr Mohammad Nurul Anwar and General Secretary Dr Gazi Salehuddin in a statement on Friday condemned the killing of former finance minister And Awami League Advisory Committee member Shah AMS Kibria.

"A great personality like Kibria was the latest victim of the ugly and violent political culture that is now persist under the regime and patronage of four-party alliance government," they said.

They said the killing was perpetrated as part of a serial blue print to annihilate the progressive and pro-liberation forces from the country.

The CUTA demanded proper investigation into the killing soon.

### SUB syndicate meets

The syndicate of Southern University, Bangladesh at an emergency meeting on Friday sought

cooperation from all to make the university a dignified ones in this region.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Moinuddin Ahmed Khan presided. Vice-President and Treasurer Sarwar Jahan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr Sharifuzzaman, former Deputy Prime Minister Jamal Uddin Ahmed, industrialist Khalilur Rahman, United Commercial Bank Ltd Executive Director Abul Kalam, Professor Dr Abdul Matin, Registrar Professor Jahiruddin Ahmad and Assistant Professor Israt Jahan were present.

The syndicate discussed the plan to run the 'varsity smoothly in view of the much-talked-about report on private universities by the University Grant Commission that come to the light recently.

### Uninterrupted power supply stressed

M Monzel-E Morshed Khan, chief engineer in-charge of Power Development Board, Chittagong Region, stressed the need for uninterrupted supply of power at

any cost in the port city.

He was exchanging views with senior officials and CBA leaders on Saturday at the Agrabad Bidyut Bhavan.

"Common people have much expectation on you than other government sectors and we must respond to this with an attitude to render highest possible service to them," he said.

Superintendent Engineer Md Kamal Uddin, DS Barua, magistrates Md Nurul Amin and Abu Naser, Deputy Director (Admn) Nurul Haque, CBA leaders Abdullah Harun Akhangi, Syed Abul Kashem, Shamsul Alam Chowdhury and Gazi Aiyub Ali also spoke.

### Computer training

Lions Club of Chittagong Imperial City and Rotary Club of Chittagong Ocean Blue jointly organised a computer training course for youths on Friday.

Amir Azam Chowdhury inaugurated the course as chief guest. Joynal Abedin, SM Habibur Haque, Jahid Hasan, Mohammad Ilias, Nuruddin, Ziauddin Chowdhury,

Ruhela Khan Chowdhury and SM Shahidullah addressed the function. The speakers emphasised the need for computer learning to have competitive edge with the fast growing world.

### CPB protests killing of Rajesh

Leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Chittagong district unit condemned the killing of six-year-old Rajesh at village Banigram of Banshkhalia upazila recently.

President Mrinal Chowdhury and General Secretary Shah Alam in a statement on Thursday said that a section of influential people was trying in connivance with unscrupulous police to protect the killers.

They demanded immediate arrest of the culprits and capital punishment to them.

### Workshop on HR

Speakers at a workshop urged the



Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury of Appellate Division of Supreme Court addresses the annual feast of Chittagong District Bar Association at the court building on Wednesday. Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-Chairman Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, sitting second from left, was present.

government officials to take care of human rights issues while discharging their duties.

Young Power in Social Action, an NGO based in Sitakunda upazila, organized the workshop on human rights for government employees at the upazila auditorium on Thursday.

Project officers Gias Uddin and Mohammad Harun moderated the workshop. The speakers called upon all to follow properly the human rights charter declared by the United Nations and also the rights of children.

### Agrani Bank branch shifted to new bldg

The corporate branch of Agrani Bank at city's Agrabad Commercial Area was shifted to a newly constructed building recently.

Director of bank's managing committee SM Nurul Haque inaugurated the new office at new building as chief guest. Deputy Managing Director KM Asaduzzaman and General Manager of Chittagong Circle Md Mofazzal Hossain also addressed the function.