

EXPORT OF FROZEN FOODS

Poor roads, drainage may create bad impression on EC team

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Non-development of the roads and drainage system in the surrounding areas of the fish processing plants in the port city is likely to create a bad impression on the European Commission (EC) delegation which might hamper export of frozen foods to the EC countries.

Bangladesh exports frozen foods worth around Tk 1500 crore annually, sources said.

The EC delegation is scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh on November 7, sources at Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association (BFEEA) said.

The EC in a letter on October 22 to the Department of Fisheries (DoF) informed that the delegation would include the officials of its Food and Veterinary Office (FVO).

During its 11-day tour the delegation will visit FIQC labs, Monoharkhali Fish Landing Centre, fish processing plants, fishing trawlers and shrimp culture areas (enclosures) in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar from November 13 to 15, sources

said.

The exporters and owners of the fish processing plants carried out activities to improve different aspects of quality control, production and supply of frozen foods as per the guidelines of the Ministry for Fisheries and Livestock and DoF, sources said.

They improved and reformed their establishments and firms with their own fund following the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) manual strictly to achieve the export target of Tk 34 crore in 2005-2006, sources said.

The DoF and Department of Fisheries and Live Stock (DoFL) organised a 25-day workshop for the field level workers and others involved in production, preservation and supply of frozen foods in the city from August 24 to September 9. They also held a two-day seminar on quality control of frozen foods at FIQC office in the city on October 23 and 24.

Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) also developed and reformed its



A muddy road leading to the fish processing plants of BSCIC industrial area at Kalurghat stands as testimony to the indifference of the authorities.

Monoharkhali fish landing centre in the city under a project of Tk 17 lakh, sources said.

But, the roads leading to the fish processing plants and other establishments at the BSCIC Industrial Areas at Sagorika and Kalurghat under the city's Pahartali and

Panchlaish thana areas lie in a most dilapidated condition to create a bad impression on the delegation, they said.

Most of them are muddy without any drainage system and inundated after a little downpour, said the BFEEA sources.



Besides, slums and illegal structures in the surrounding areas will jeopardise the purpose and objectives of the brisk preparation of the exporters, they said.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman held a meeting with Chittagong City Corporation

(CCC) and the representatives of BSCIC, BFEEA and DOF in this regard recently.

The meeting decided in principle that the CCC would develop the infrastructure and drainage system and demolish the illegal structures in the Sagorika and Kalurghat BSCIC indus-

trial areas and Patharghat Iqbal Road which leads to Monoharkhali fish landing centre.

Another meeting with Noman in the chair at the fisheries ministry on July 13 urged the Local Government and Rural Department (LGRD) secretary to allocate Tk 1 crore for CCC for the infra-structural development at Sagorika and Kalurghat.

However, with less than two weeks left for arrival of the EC delegation, no initiative is yet to be taken.

A row over responsibility of developing the roads by CCC, CDA and BSCIC resulted in the situation, sources said.

BFEEA President Maksudur Rahman said, "We have developed the fish processing plants and other related establishments to maintain the standard of different aspects of quality control, production and supply as per HACCP manual."

"We are confident of satisfying the delegation about our standard," he said. "If there is any dent on the image of the sector it will be due to the environment and poor state of

roads outside our establishments, which is out of our jurisdiction," he added.

"We repeatedly urged the LGRD and administrations concerned for the infra-structural development. But, they paid no heed to us and showed a sheer negligence to ignore potential sector, he said.

The country earned around Tk 2300.92 crore in 2003-2004 and Tk 2588 crore in 2004-2005 as against Tk 1863.27 crore in 2002-2003 from the export of frozen fish, particularly frozen fish, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) sources said.

BFEEA sources said the revenue target of the frozen foods for the current fiscal year is set at Tk 3400 crore, 47 percent from the export to EC countries.

Of the EC countries, the United Kingdom comprises 24.71 percent of the total export while Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium 6.48, 4.81 and 3.55 percent.

The country at present has 82 fish processing plants of which 58 are European Union approved.

Eid market in a frenzy

DWAIPAYAN BARUA and NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

With barely nine days to go, Eid shopping gains momentum in the port city.

All the shopping malls, arcades and markets have been bustling from morning to late in the night. While markets are in a frenzy, the buyers and sellers

have expressed mixed reaction blaming price hike of essentials which they said would dent to some extent their Eid festivity.

The middle or lower middle class people have cut down their budget due to financial constraint while the affluent have nearly completed shopping.

Customers usually throng the posh shopping malls -- New Market (Bipani Bitan), Amin Centre, Reazuddin Bazar, Chittagong Shopping Complex, Central Plaza, Mimi Super Market, Apollo Shopping Centre, Lucky Plaza, VIP Tower, Southland Centre, Chawk View, Terri Bazar and Singapore-Bangkok Market.

Jahur Hawker Market, however, remains the most popular outlet for the lower middle class and the poor. Most of the markets have announced attractive prizes, discounts or gifts with their items. They have come up with the latest collection of readymade garments, shoes, ornaments and gifts. The foreign brands have also drawn attention of the customers.

Sarees are in top demand for the female customers while Punjabis for the male. Indian sarees have great demand.

Mayabe, a saree shop at Amin Centre, has brought collections of cotton, georgette, chiffon and silk with prices varying between Tk 1500 and Tk 90,000. Their special item is "Condoliza Art" from Mumbai priced at Tk 80,000. They already sold a few pieces. They have also imported other varieties from

Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Surat. An Italian Craft named Sonia, an Italian brand, is available here at Tk 28,000. Md Osman Gani, proprietor of "Mayabe" said, "The selling is good but not better than the last year."

A similar picture is seen at Odud Fashion, famous saree shop at New Market. Here customers can get "Chiffon's Karchupi" with Nalpathi at Tk 18,000, Italian Silk with stonework from Tk 5,000 to Tk 35,000. Vaired types of Kashmiri Lehenga like Fancy are also found here. Fancy is priced at Tk 1,20,000.

"Nilachal", a shop at Reazuddin Bazar, has showcased different types of sarees varying Tk 500 to Tk 9,000. Other well-known saree shops like Chirikot and Silk Paradise have a wide range of collection.

Salwar Kameez, named after Indian films such as Bunty aur Babli or Veer-Zaraa or produced following the TV channel Stars, have become the craze among the girls.

The sellers of "Sat Rang", a shop exclusively for three-piece at Amin Centre, said they have good collection of three-pieces of multi-designs. The

customers can pick various designs like Rup Rekha from Rajasthan, Biscoss, Nandini, Bizwala and Bunty aur Babli. A piece of Rup Rekha costs Tk 3,000 to Tk 8,000 while Nandini Tk 4,200 to Tk 5,600 and Bunty aur Babli Tk 3,800 to Tk 7,000.

GM Hasan of "Sat Rang" said they have sold 800 pieces of Bunty aur Babli so far. "We can't make good profit this year due to prices hike of items." He blamed the devaluation of taka for the price hike.

Amir Abbas, a banker, bought two pieces of Bunty aur Babli-brand Kameezes for her daughters. "I have bought these to satisfy my daughters' demand which cost much more than 2004. I have to curtail my budget to adjust with other expenditures."

Tasmina Khatun, a schoolteacher at Amin Centre, said "Though the quality of the sarees here is good but I will not buy those due to higher price."

"Parishan", a one-stop shop at Reazuddin Bazar, has showcased attractive Punjabis. Here, Indian brand of ND Punjabi ranges Tk 1,000 to Tk 5,000 and Classics Tk 900 to Tk 8,500. Rajshahi Silk Punjabis are priced at Tk

800 to Tk 1,600, ND Silk Tk 800 to Tk 1,200 and Cotton Tk 250 and Tk 2,000.

Some posh outlets such as Revlon, Menz Klub, Ruby Red and Khakki also have nice collections for gents. Revlon at New Market brought a new brand of shirt named "SMS Shirt" priced from Tk 600 to Tk 700. The lowest price for trousers here is Tk 700.

Revlon Manager Mohammed Jahangir said about 600 pieces of SMS Shirt were sold during Durga Puja and their target for Eid is 2,000 pieces.

Shirts, both casual and formal, can be found at Cats Eye and Menz Klub from Tk 600 to Tk 900.

The shoppers prefer Apex for quality shoes and Bata for durability.

Thousands of buyers from lower middle class and lower class such as garment workers, nurses, restaurant workers, rickshawpullers, helpers and conductors of buses or tempos, domestic helps, peons or guards have not paid much attention to this frenzy. They, however, are busy shopping at makeshift markets on footpaths around the city.



A salesman displays a Lehenga with an asking price of Tk 1.00 lakh at a shop at New Market.



A shop arrayed with garments of latest design at Amin Centre.

theweekthatwas

Aids awareness project for rickshawpullers

The South Asian chapter of Health Solutions International organised a meeting titled, "Lessons Learned Sharing Session" at its local office at Khulshi here on Thursday.

The meeting was held on the occasion of the completion of the project titled "HIV, Aids and STI Prevention Project for Rickshawpullers in Chittagong." The project was taken to create awareness among the rickshawpullers at the Sholoshahar area.

Project Manager Amar Krishna Baidya moderated the meeting with South Asian chapter manager of Health Solution International and the project director Sarwar Chowdhury in the chair.

The speakers said the project succeeded in bringing about a positive change among the rickshawpullers of the area as they acquired knowledge about the reasons, precautionary measures and prevention of such diseases.

They also put forward some recommendations for making such prevention activities successful.

Exhibition on works of Perse

A six-day exhibition on the French poet and Nobel laureate Saint-John Perse began at the Alliance Francaise, Chittagong auditorium on Saturday.

Alliance Francaise, Chittagong organised the exhibition from 3:00pm to 5:00pm everyday.

The works of Saint-John Perse reveal many important episodes related to the World History during the turmoil situation of the Second World War and his role as a diplomat and poet in the tenure of Vichy, a government backed by Nazis.

The important texts, originally in French, have been transcribed in Bengali for the viewers at the exhibition, it said.

Protect infants' right

Speakers at a discussion on Wednesday urged the people to be aware of and come forward to protect infants' rights.

Alo Infant Education Programme, an ongoing project of Unite Theatre for Social Action (UTSA), organised the

meeting on the occasion of "Infants' Right Week" on the Foy's Lake Zoo premises.

The speakers called for taking the infants to open spaces and parks like Foy's Lake and Zoo for entertainment and helping their proper mental growth.

UTSA School Committee President Mohammed Zoyan Abedin presided over the meeting moderated by Dipan Kanti Bhattacharya.

Social worker Mostafa Kamal Bachchu, Jasim Uddin, Absar Ali and Zahedul Islam also spoke at the meeting followed by a cultural function.

Safe Road Day observed

Nirapad Sarak Chai (Nisacha), Chittagong city unit on Saturday organised programmes, including discussion and procession on the occasion of the National Safe Road Day.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman called upon the drivers as well as the people to make coordinated efforts side by side with government to prevent road accidents.

He was addressing as the chief guest a meeting on the Chittagong



A woman carries a placard demanding safe roads at a procession brought out by Nirapad Sarak Chai (Nisacha) in front of the Chittagong Press Club in the port city on Saturday.

Press Club premises

Nisacha also organised a discussion and a prize giving ceremony of essay competition on this occasion.

Nisacha city Convenor Advocate MA Naser, also the local ward commissioner, chaired the meeting. Chittagong City Corporation Acting Mayor Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, the Suprabhat Bangladesh Chief Reporter M Nasirul Haque, Shafiq Ahmed Sajeeb, Principal Mohammad Hossain Khan, FH Khan Fazul, Lion Hakim Ali, Advocate Abdul Malek, journalists Abul Hasnat of ATN Bangla, Chowdhury Farid of Channel i, Nurul Mostafa Kazi of Danik Naya Diganata, Arich Ahmed Shah of Ntv, Shah Newaz Riton of the Ittefaq also spoke.

Workshop on earthquake preparedness

A two-day workshop on "Preparedness and Response to Earthquake" concluded here on Wednesday.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Chittagong City unit organised the workshop in participation of 25 members of Youth Red Crescent at Chittagong Gymnasium Conference room.

Red Crescent city unit General Secretary SM Saiful Alam attended the

concluding ceremony as the chief guest while executive committee members Advocate Mafizur Rahman, AJM Golam Rabbani, Mohammed Yunus Mia, Mohammed Aferudun Siddiqui, Mohammed Nurul Amin and Sazeda Begum were special guests.

Executive committee member HM Salaudun, also the head of Youth Red Crescent, chaired the concluding session.

Two water tanks inaugurated

Alhaji Mostafa Hakim Welfare Foundation set up two water tanks to supply pure drinking water to the city dwellers at Bandarila intersection and Cement Crossing areas on Thursday.

Executive director of the foundation Alhaji Mostafa Hakim and local ward commissioner M Manjur Alam inaugurated the tanks.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony they said the tanks, each having storage capacity of 2500 litres, will supply drinking water twice a day and help mitigate the sufferings of the local people during the holy Ramadan.

They also called upon the social workers to come up with such measures and contribute to the society.

Ward commissioner Mohammed

Stop violence against women at family level

Speakers at a view exchange meeting emphasised enacting specific law and creating public awareness to stop violence against women at family level.

Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), an associate organisation of Action Network to Combat Violence Against Women, organised the meeting at Jamal Khan on Thursday.

The speakers urged the members of the families to be aware of the negative impact of violence against women in families.

Acting mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury was the chief guest at the meeting with Chittagong Action Forum Convenor Advocate MA Naser, also the local CCC ward commissioner, in the chair.

Mafizul Hoque Bhuiyan, Mohammed Zakir Hossain, Rekha Alam Chowdhury, Shahnaz Malik Helen, Nasir Uddin Selim, Mostafa Kamal and Saiful Alam spoke at the meeting.