

# Activities at Kamalapur ICD come to a halt

## 3 main handling equipment out of order

RAFIQ HASAN

Handling of export and import goods at the lone public sector inland container depot (ICD) at Kamalapur in the capital came to near standstill as the three main container handling equipment remained out of order for the last couple of days.

The non-functioning of handling equipment created a serious deadlock, causing stockpile of around 1,664 containers laden with export and import items at the depot.

Only one straddle carrier (container lifting equipment) is working while three others broke down and remained inoperative at the depot, sources said, adding that Global Agro Trade Company (Gatco) that was appointed for container handling work at the depot is not repair-

ing the equipment timely.

Dhaka Customs Agents Association in a letter to the Chittagong port chairman yesterday alleged that Gatco has become unable to handle container at the depot. It requested the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) for appointment of a new company for container handling at the depot and taking over of the handling job by the CPA as an interim measure.

The company that had obtained the job through non-transparent ways became frustrated after the recent change in government, sources said, adding that a son of a former minister is one of the company directors and they lost enthusiasm in conducting the handling job.

As a result, container handling at the depot is being heavily disturbed

for last couple of months. With the worsening of situation recently, container delivery has drastically declined.

Normally, goods from around 100 containers are delivered a day but on Wednesday only 58 containers were cleared, said a high official of the depot. A total of 1,664 loaded containers have been stockpiled at the depot, he said.

Another 4,178 TEUs empty containers are also stockpiled at the depot.

The office of the company at the depot also remains closed most of the time, sources said. This correspondent found the office locked yesterday afternoon.

An official of the company who

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# Bishwa Ijtema begins today

UNB, Gazipur

A three-day Bishwa Ijtema, the second largest congregation of Muslims, begins on the bank of the Turag in Tongi today amid tight security.

Hundreds of thousands of devotees from home and abroad are expected to join the congregation.

Nearly 7,500 law enforcers, including police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and BDR personnel, have been deployed to ensure security at the Ijtema venue.

CCTV camera has been installed at each entry point while Rab has set up five observation towers at important places.

Devotees will be allowed to enter the Ijtema venue after checking by metal detector.

A total of 24 mobile courts have already started operation to oversee various matters, including the standard of food for the devotees.

Tablig Jamaat Bangladesh arranged the Ijtema, which is being held every year since 1964.

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Devotees head for the Bishwa Ijtema ground in Tongi yesterday. The second largest congregation of the Muslims begins today.

PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

The breakdown of three major container handling equipment at the Kamalapur inland container depot in the capital has paralysed activities at the depot.

# Yunus opens Grameen Trust India

UNB, Mumbai

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday stressed the need for enacting laws relating to the micro-credit programme to make it a success in India.

"You need a legal framework to make a depository bank for running micro-credit programme and it is essential," he said while speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the Grameen Trust India (GTI) and a two-day Grameen International Conference on "Micro-credit in India" at Hotel Mirador.

Prof Yunus said money is not a constraint to make it happen if there is a legal framework in the country. He inaugurated the programme by lighting a lamp.

"You can make a legal

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# US senators unite against troop surge

## 9 killed in attacks across Baghdad

AFP, AP, Washington, Baghdad

Democratic and Republican senators have agreed on compromise wording to a resolution opposing President George W Bush's plan to increase US forces in Iraq, as the US war of words with Iran simmers.

The breakthrough measure, reached late Wednesday and likely to gather wide legislative support, means that the White House could face an embarrassing -- but ultimately symbolic -- vote of no confidence in its latest military plan.

The agreement was announced just hours after Democrat Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House of

Representatives, met Bush at the White House and found "areas of agreement" on Afghanistan and Iraq. And it follows days of increased rhetoric against Iran for its alleged involvement in supporting attacks on US troops in Iraq.

Some legislators fear the president is setting the groundwork for US military action against Iran, as the US aircraft carrier John Stennis heads to the Gulf to join the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, already in the region.

In the meantime, the unpopular war in Iraq "is perhaps the most vital issue facing our country," said Senator Susan Collins and one of

the members of Bush's Republican Party, as she announced that a compromise resolution opposing the troop surge was reached.

"It is crucial that the Senate go on record expressing its opposition to the president's plan to send 21,500 troops to Iraq," she said.

The announcement was at odds with the warm feelings expressed after Pelosi met with Bush.

"It was a very constructive meeting," said Pelosi, a tough Bush critic. "It was respectful and we found some areas of agreement in terms of our sizing up what the challenges are there."

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# UP chairman dies in army custody

## Army claims he died from respiratory problem

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A union parishad (UP) chairman detained by army personnel yesterday morning was declared dead at Moheshpur hospital in the afternoon.

Abdus Sobhan, 50, chairman of Kazirber union parishad, was rushed to Moheshpur hospital as he suddenly fell sick during interrogation at the army camp, a police officer of Jhenidah said, adding that army men had arrested the UP chairman from a bus.

When contacted, on-duty doctor Tabibur Rhaman said he felt the pulse of Abdus Sobhan immediately after he was brought to the hospital and found him dead. The body bore no marks of injuries, he added.

The detained UP chairman was suffering from blood pressure and he died of respiratory complications, said Lt Col Ehteshamul Huq when contacted.



# Rear Admiral Sarwar new Navy chief

UNB, Dhaka

Rear Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam has been appointed chief of naval staff of Bangladesh Navy.

"He replaces Rear Admiral M Hasan Ali Khan," an official announcement said yesterday.

The appointment will come into effect on February 10, said a gazette notification of the defence ministry.

Rear Admiral M Hasan Ali Khan will "proceed on normal retirement on February 10", it said.

# 5 lakh sacks of fertiliser, rotten commodities seized

STAR REPORT

Joint forces yesterday seized around 3.6 lakh sacks of rotten basic commodities including wheat, sugar, lentil and over 1.5 lakh sacks of fertilisers from Chittagong and Khulna.

The forces also arrested eight people for involvement in food adulteration and fertiliser hoarding.

The army and Rapid Action Battalion in separate operations yesterday seized over 1.5 lakh sacks of fertiliser, 1.9 lakh sacks of rotten wheat, sugar, lentil, etc. and arrested two people in Majhirghat area, our staff correspondent in Chittagong reports.

A team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) led by Lt Commander Shamim raided two large warehouses, owned by AKM Monaf, in Majhirghat area of Doublemooring at around 12:00noon.

Rab seized 90 thousand sacks fertilisers including TSP, Urea and

MP and arrested two people. The arrested are Mintu and warehouse caretaker Uttam Kumar Sharma.

Quoting the arrestees, Rab officer Shamim told journalists that three fertiliser hoarders -- Nasir Uddin, Mohammad Hossain and Ratan Kumar -- have been importing fertilisers for the last couple of years and stockpiling those in the two warehouses.

The three hoarders imported fertilisers through Akhtar Enterprise, Islam Trading and Desh Trading.

One of them, Nasiruddin, is president of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, Chittagong chapter. The three belong to a smuggling cartel that have been smuggling out huge quantities of fertilisers to neighbouring countries, sources said.

Meanwhile, a team of army seized around 1.9 lakh sacks of inedible low-grade basic com-

modities including wheat, sugar, lentil, etc. and around 60 thousand sacks of fertiliser from two warehouses of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) that were rented out to a few importers.

BIWTA Deputy General Manager (commercial) Nurul Alam Akand said Parvez Mohammad Kamaluddin, owner of Ahmed Ullah & Brothers, rented the warehouses two years ago.

In Khulna, joint forces arrested six people and seized 1.7 lakh sacks of rotten wheat, lentil and sugar worth over Tk 7 crore from five warehouses at Roosevelt Jetty under Khalishpur thana, reports our staff correspondent.

Magistrate Atique Huq led the operation and sealed off the warehouses.

The warehouses belonged to Razzak Brothers, Baghdad Trading

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of the joint forces raid a fertiliser warehouse at Majhirghat in Chittagong yesterday. They seized 1.5 lakh sacks of fertiliser at the warehouse along with 1.9 lakh sacks of rotten commodities like wheat, sugar and lentil.

# Jalil demands release of Hasina's APS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday demanded immediate release of AL President Sheikh Hasina's assistant personal secretary (APS) Dr Awlad Hossain and two others, who were arrested on Wednesday night.

Though it was reported that two of them were freed later, the party sources confirmed yesterday that all three are still in custody of the security personnel and were kept in an unknown place.

The other two are -- Mahmud Hasan Babul, AL chief's personal

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# Manjoor Rahim new foreign secy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government appointed AB Manjoor Rahim, Bangladesh ambassador to Berlin, as the new foreign secretary, according to an official announcement yesterday.

The post of foreign secretary had been vacant for more than two months after foreign secretary Hemayetuddin joined the OIC Secretariat in Jeddah as its director general.

Manjoor is a Grade A ambassador with the rank and stature of a secretary. He is an official of 1979 BCS batch. Prior to joining Bangladesh

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# Sweetmeat shops, bakeries fined for unhygienic condition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court in Dhaka yesterday filed two cases against two bakeries and fined a few bakeries and sweetmeat shops Tk 3,40,000 in total for not maintaining proper hygiene in the stores and using harmful substances to prepare food.

The court led by Magistrate

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# RAJUK, BIWTA CONTINUE DRIVES 300 structures knocked down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday knocked down around 300 illegal structures along Mirpur Road and the Birganja riverbank.

During the drive, Rajuk authorities also instructed owners of restaurants, department stores and fast-food shops, including Xin Xian, Helvetia, Western Grill and Haat Bazar, along the Mirpur Road to

move their business from their current locations as they have violated Rajuk's building guidelines.

"We intended to demolish those structures but the owners assured us, in writing, that they themselves would leave those places soon. So we left those untouched," said ASM Emdadul Dastagir, the magistrate leading the Rajuk team.

"The owners of most of the buildings did not follow the original designs," he added.

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# Fog disrupts ferry, launch services for 11 hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Ferry and launch services on Daulatdia-Paturia-Nagarbari routes were suspended for 11 hours yesterday due to dense fog.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation officials at Paturia said more than 1,000 vehicles with about 50,000 passengers were stranded for 11 hours on both sides of the Padma at Daulatdia, Paturia and Nagarbari points.

The ferry Bhasha Shaheed Barkat was stranded mid-stream

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# Rejoinder, our reply

Chairman of High Speed Group of Companies KM Mahmudur Rahman in a rejoinder protested a news item headlined "Rajuk evicts lake grabbers" in The Daily Star on January 19 clarifying that "one Nilufar Mustafa" owns the lakeside house no-36 on road-118.

Rahman said since he is an environmental activist, association of his name in connection with the eviction of illegal possession of land on the lake bank by the house owner has tarnished his image.

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Prayer Timing		
February 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation