

DRIVE AGAINST ENCROACHMENT CONTINUES

Japan dev partner returns with Tk1380cr projects

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The coordinated drive against encroachment that hindered expansion of the city streets encourages a foreign development agency to come forward with financial assistance for infrastructural development of the port city.

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) recovered land worth around Tk 100 crore from illegal occupation since its eviction drives that began on January 17 as part of the coordinated efforts initiated by Army with a view to streamlining the traffic movement and planned growth of the port city.

At the changing scenario after a silence of several months, Japan Bank of International Corporation (JBIC) came back to help CDA implement three major development projects worth Tk 1380 crore, CDA Chairman Shah Mohammad Akhteruiddin said.

A high-powered JBIC team arrived here on a three-day visit on Sunday and held meetings with the concerned authorities of CDA, Roads and Highway, Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet).

JBIC delegates at the meetings with the development authorities has shown interest in implementing two projects, including Chittagong Bypass Road and River Embankment-cum Ring Road.

Construction of the Chittagong Bypass, a four-lane road between Dhaka and Trunk Road and the proposed 4th bridge on the river



Authorities demolish century-old Kobiraj Bhaban illegally occupied for long at Firingibazar in the port city.

Karnaphuli on the north of the city would involve Tk 480 crore while that of River Embankment-cum Ring Road stretching from Sadarghat to Kalurghat along the river Karnaphuli would involve Tk 340 crore, CDA sources said.

Another project for construction of a coastal road from Patenga to Faujdardhat will involve Tk 560 crore, they said.

JBIC proposed for construction of the roads after it carried out a study under an agreement with

the government for infrastructural development in Chittagong, sources added.

But, since submission of the report by the middle of last year JBIC kept silence regarding implementation of the projects until its delegation's visit on Sunday, sources said.

"The delegation held meeting with CCC mayor on and is likely to stay for another day to discuss different aspects of the infrastructural development in

Chittagong," said CDA chairman Akhter.

"Within two weeks a technical team of JBIC is expected to visit Chittagong to finalise the feasibility report and consequent implementation of two projects," he said.

They were also interested in the development of overall infrastructure focusing mainly on road network here, he added.

Earlier, a good number of road network and infrastructure devel-

opment projects could not be implemented as the land falling inside the road alignment or acquired land could not be recovered, sources said.

The joint efforts, however, paved the way for going ahead with the development projects CDA took up under a comprehensive and integral planning.

"CDA wants to develop the city under an comprehensive plan to improve traffic system, enhance quality of life and create jobs, creating more urban villages," Akhter said on Thursday.

"The efforts have created a scope for developing the city as CDA dreamt of," he said.

Eviction drives already helped CDA to develop two new bus stands --- one for inter-district buses of Chittagong-Dhaka route on 164 katha of land at Faujdardhat and the other for buses of Chittagong-Rangamati and Chittagong-Khagrachhari routes on over 120 katha of land at Oxygen Intersection.

Of 52.436 acres (equivalent to 3233.77 katha) of land worth over Tk 110.53 crore, only a few land remained yet to be recovered, sources said.

CDA expects to recover rest of the occupied land before February 15, sources added.

Besides, CDA started a drive to demolish some 1540 structures, including high-rise buildings, yesterday at different areas of Bayezid Bostami Road , Sadarghat Road and Firingee Bazar.

Of these buildings, 340 were in a most dilapidated and miserable state posing a risk of accident any time, sources said.

CITY BUS SERVICE, HUMAN HAULERS

Row over routes increases suffering

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Row over routes to streamline traffic movement keeps around one third of the city buses and human haulers off the roads, causing untold suffering to the commuters in the port city.

Some 639 buses and 550 human haulers had been plying the city streets on four routes by rotation determined by the owners and workers' organisations.

The number of city bus came down to 350 as against the required number of 900 after the traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) rearranged the routes to streamline the traffic movement.

Under the new arrangement the number of routes was raised to 12 and the buses were evenly distributed in all the routes, covering almost every corner of the city roads.

The owners, who got their transports on the routes with fewer passengers, have kept their vehicles off the routes, saying the association leaders entrusted with the responsibility of furnishing the Road Transport Committee (RTC) with the list of buses of different routes favoured some owners with busy routes for money.

They resent distribution of same number of transports in all the routes.

Earlier, the owners preferred to ply their transports on the route No-10 (Kalurghat to Patenga Sea Beach), route No-2 (New Market to Kalurghat via Sholashar Gate No-2) and route No-7 (New Market to Bhatiani), they said.

As per the new arrangement 185 buses were fixed for these three routes as against the minimum requirement of 300, they said.

Now some 100 buses are plying on these routes while owners of other routes have stopped plying their transports due to lack of passengers, said bus driver Mostafa Kamal.

Only 150 buses, out of 454, are plying on nine other routes, sources said the sources.

On the other hand, most of human haulers, numbering around 550, are keeping off the roads as the owners were not invited to RTC meeting to discuss the new arrangement,

The number of city bus comes down to 350 as against the required number of 900 after the traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) rearranged the routes to streamline the traffic movement

sources said.

"There was no fixed route for city buses while the human haulers were plying on four routes with route permit of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA)," said Human Hauler Owners and Workers' Association President Prof SM Aby Tayyab.

He said they can't accept new arrangement after cancellation of their route permits.

He said it will force them to

take a three-year fresh route permit each for a fee of Tk 1645 which they obtained only one or two months ago spending the same amount of money.

"Only 30 human haulers were fixed, later the number was raised to 50, for Kalurghat-Sea-Beach route where some 200 plied earlier," he said.

"Such a plan ignoring the demand of the routes is causing the commuters to suffer in the busy routes when the human haulers plying on the routes with less passengers count loss," he said.

City Bus Minibus Human Hauler Association President Md Zakaria refuted the allegation of favouring or depriving anyone of coveted routes.

"A few owners who did not get their desired routes came up with the allegations", he said.

Lokman Hakim, Lineman Secretary of the association, said many of buses are not plying now fearing seizure by traffic police as they have no required documents, including licenses, fitness certificates and route permits.

Abu Sufian, DC (Traffic) of CMP, said RTC made the arrangement of routes at a meeting in presence of the representatives of the bus owners and workers associations.

"We won't allow movement of vehicles without required documents and certificates or in violation of rules to streamline the traffic movement," he said.

Referring to the suffering of the commuters, Sufian said situation will be normal within a few weeks when the public transports start plying after necessary repair work with required certificates.

theweekthatwas

Death to adulterators demanded

Speakers at a seminar here urged the government for trial of the manufacturers and traders of adulterated food in special tribunals and demanded their death sentence.

Terming the dishonest traders 'murderer', they said proper enforcement of the existing law is enough to award the criminals capital punishment.

They were addressing a seminar titled 'Adulterated Food and Our Responsibility' organised by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (BELA) at a local hotel in the port city on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Chittagong Al Nuri Faizur Reza was the chief guest with Prof Shaque Haider in the chair. Dr Md Shafiqur Rahman, chairman of Microbiology Department of Chittagong University (CU), presented a paper on "Adulterated Food and Its Impact on Human Health."

Dr Shafiqur said there are three types of sources of adulterated food like physical hazard, chemical hazard and biological hazard, which can cause

dangerous diseases or permanent injury to human body with immediate or long term exposure.

Al Nuri said he will write to the Imams of every mosque in the district to discuss about food adulteration and its harmful consequences during Khutba in Juma prayers.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Munir Chowdhury, a pioneer in conducting anti- adulteration drives in the port city, said all out support from all section of the society is needed to carry out such drives.

He said he faced tremendous political pressure, non-cooperation of high officials and strong opposition from the business community during the drives.

Thai Airways introduces special food

Thai Airways International introduced on-board special food like halal menu for the Muslims and baby meal for kids without additional charge.

The items will be ordered before 72 hours of departure.

It was announced on Wednesday on aircraft, when a group of travel agents

visited newly introduced wide body aircraft Airbus AB7 on Chittagong-Bangkok-Chittagong route, said airlines sources.

The aircraft would fly every Wednesday while it has three flights in a week on the above route.

General Manager of the airline Weerawat Sawasdebutra, Rahul Das Gupta of Al Siraj Travels, Mohammed Abu Zafar of Concord International, Hasib M Shakoor of Capco Aziz, Mohammed Shah Alam of Gulf Travels, SM Mazhar Alam of JF Bangladesh, Abdul Hai Chowdhury of Keya Enterprise, ABM Manju of SB Agha, Shikha Roy Chowdhury of Travel International and Kamrul Islam of Travel World were present on the occasion.

Jobs ICT Road Show ends

The two-day long Jobs ICT Road Show-2007 concluded at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) on Saturday with a view to increasing the knowledge of the students in information technology.

Jobs ICT Private Limited organised the show as part of its countrywide programmes, first of its kind, at Cuet central auditorium.

More than 100 students contested gaming and typing competitions on the second day of the show.

Mohammed Tahsikul Alam stood first in gaming event while Mohammed Rizwanul Salam and Syed Imran Hossain became second and third respectively.

Rizwanul Salam and Upal Das stood first and second in the typing competition.

Cisco Chittagong Region Director Prof Shyamol Kanti Biswas was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony while Jobs ICT Director Alley Takajaki and Engineers Institute Chittagong chapter President M Ali Ashraf were present as the specials guests.

Cisco Chief Instructor Abdul Wajed and Cuet Computer Science and Engineering Department Assistant Professor Shamsul Arefin spoke at the ceremony.

Rehabilitation of hawkers demanded

Leaders of Chittagong Metropolitan Hawkers' Association in a statement here on Saturday demanded rehabilitation of the evicted hawkers across the country.

President Amir Hossain and General



Lack of maintenance causes drains to overflow and forces drainage system to collapse even after a downpour in the port city. The Shital Jharna, which forms a part of the city's drainage system at Aturar Depot area, remains silted up even in the dry season to bear the testimony to the negligence by the authorities concerned. Local people think it's time to re-excavate the canal and avert the inundation of a vast area of Aturar depot, Hamzarbag and Mohammadpur caused by the canal during the rainy season every year.

Secretary Mohammed Masud Rana said around seven lakh hawkers who lead their family trading on footpaths have become unemployed after the eviction drive.

"The hawkers along with their families are living in a miserable condition and frustration," the said.

They urged the government to take immediate steps to rehabilitate the hawkers and save their families.

CCCI welcomes CDA drives

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury welcomed

the on-going drives by the Chittagong Development Authorities (CDA) against illegal structures, bus terminals and billboards in the port city.

The illegal structures, bus terminals and billboards were set up occupying the government lands, drains and footpaths that were disrupting the normal life of the city dwellers apart from serious traffic congestion in the city, he said in a statement on Saturday.

He said a section of dishonest people occupied the lands and are running business constructing building and shopping centres defying the law.

He assured the authorities concerned of all out support from the CCCI and called upon them to continue the drives and remove all illegal structures.

Blankets for the poor

Sharan, a non-government organisation, distributed 3,500 pieces of blankets among cold-hit poor people of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Rangamati.

The organisation started their distribution programme on January 28 and distributed at Chandanaish in Chittagong , Rajasthali and Betbunia in Rangamati and Ukhiya in Cox's Bazar.

The organisation distributed the blankets with the financial support of the Swiss Solidarity Foundation and CO-OEPAD.



A five-day workshop for children, organised by Ai Ai Limited, a UK-based theatre group, in association with British Council begins at Shishu Academy in the port city on Sunday.



Noted artist Alok Roy beside his works at a sculpture exhibition organised by Alliance Française, Chittagong at Nazrul Square. The 10-day exhibition titled "Ecology of Mind" ends tomorrow.