

Fate of Motel Saikat hangs in the balance

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

The fate of much-talked about Motel Saikat Complex of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) has become uncertain as the project has been shelved for over three years.

The authorities concerned are now reconsidering implementation of the project that was scheduled to be completed in 2006.

BPC had taken the project of Tk 82.55 crore to provide world-class services to the tourists and promote tourism in the port city in 2004. Former prime minister Khaleda Zia also laid the foundation stone of the project on April 19 the same year.

The proposed eight-storied complex was to house a huge car parking lot, shops and departmental stores on the first three floors, bank and insurance offices on third floor, tourist information centre, a 300-seat hall room and 200-seat restaurant including a swimming pool and a bar on the fourth floor and

residential hotel of three star standard for the tourists on fifth, sixth and seventh floors.

The authorities demolished the old complex in the busy Station Road area in 2004 without any fund required for the proposed eight-storey Motel Saikat Complex, a modern shopping mall-cum three star hotel.

The authorities also floated a tender to sell possessions to raise fund for the proposed complex.

Only 22 forms responded to the tender that offered 260 possessions, said the sources.

Having the effort for raising fund failed, the authorities had to refund Tk 19 lakh it got as deposit money from the bidders.

Later in July last year, the authorities decided to hand over the project to private sector for implementation on BOT (build, operate and transfer) basis and floated tender in this regard, which was published as advertisements in different newspapers.

But not a single tender was dropped, said the sources at BPC. The BPC, the lone state owned

enterprise to help flourish tourism industry in Chittagong, is now running a motel at a rented space on the Chittagong New Railway Station Building premises amid many problems, tottering to attract visitors.

Motel Saikat has now a mere sale of Tk 1.7 lakh to Tk 1.9 lakh a month whereas it had profited over Tk 3 lakh a month at its old four-storey complex before demolition.

Earlier, the government used to get handsome revenue every month as value added tax (VAT) from its income, said the sources.

BPC at its rented office now spends around Tk 1.5 lakh as rent, bills for utility services, staff salaries and other expenditures.

BPC General Manager (Works) Abul Kashem said, "We are thinking of implementing the project". He was talking to this correspondent over phone on Sunday from Dhaka.

He, however, could not say about any initiative taken by the authorities to implement the project in recent time.



STAR PHOTO

The site of the proposed Motel Saikat Complex, left, and the foundation stone of the complex, right, that was laid by former prime minister Khaleda Zia on April 19 in 2004.

Policy a must to protect marine resources

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Scientists and fisheries experts emphasised the need for conducting a comprehensive survey and suggested formulation of a policy on marine resources of the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh territory.

They said the survey is needed for proper management, expansion and exploration of marine resources in the vast 1.66 lakh square kilometre area in the Bay of Bengal.

The vast ground of marine resources, which earn around 92 per cent of the annual export of fishes, is yet to be properly surveyed, managed and

explored, they said.

No remarkable survey could be done on the huge area identified as the "Exclusive Economic Zone" in the Bay of Bengal since the independence, they said.

As such the fishing area could not be expanded there and remained confined to only four specific "fishing grounds", they said, adding that it also created scope for illegal fishing in the Bay of Bengal by the outsiders.

"A comprehensive survey could have stopped the scope for misleading the government about the stock of fisheries resources in the Bay," said a senior scientist officer of the fisheries department while

talking to this correspondent yesterday.

Senior Fisheries Scientist Dr Giasuddin Khan of World Fish Centre in Dhaka said, "We are collecting only one-fourth of the total stock of marine fishes we have."

So, a policy for fishing and expansion of the fishing ground through a survey is essential, he said.

Meanwhile, speakers at a workshop on "Finalising a policy for exploration of marine fisheries resources" on Saturday opposed a recent decision to relax the restriction on fishing within 40-metre depth by trawlers.

They said it will put the ecosystem in the Bay at stake side by side with depriving some 30 lakh poor fishermen and boatmen of the coastal areas, who depend on fishing in the shallow water of the Bay for their earning.

The speakers blamed a vested quarter for prompting the decision on relaxing the restriction on the plea of non-availability of mother shrimps in the deep water due to shifting habitats to shallow water.

Marine Fisheries Survey Department Chief Scientific Officer Zafar Ahmed and Prof Dr Mohammad Zafar of Chittagong University Marine Science

Institute spoke at the workshop with Parixmit Datta Chowdhury, joint secretary (Fisheries), in the chair.

The Ministry for Fisheries and Livestock relaxed the restriction on fishing by trawlers at 40-metre depth in the sea last month for five months.

There are about 511 species of fishes, including 36 species of shrimps, in the marine fishing ground in Bangladesh territory against some 260 species of mild water fishes.

Of them, at best 30 species of fishes are collected, around 25 per cent of the possible stock of fishes in the Bay, they said.

Lack of management hampered proper exploration of the marine resources while unchecked fishing and rampant collection of fish fries caused a decrease in productivity of marine fisheries alarmingly, they added.

At present some 121 trawlers, 42 for shrimps and 79 for other fishes, and 21,400 fishing boats have been engaged in commercial collection of fishes in the Bay.

Many of the fishing boats have no license and are fishing on the continental shelf, even during the spawning season, said the sources.

Nothing could be done to

check this menace or develop the marine fisheries, they said blaming institutional weakness and absence of a policy in this regard.

Moreover, there were 170 types of duckweed, lichen and algae, which are consumed as food in the Bay of Bengal under the country's territory. Cultivation and export of Hypnea sp., Caulerpa, Mollusc like Green Mussel (Perna Viridis) Crassostrea sp. and Mretrix meretrix can enrich the country's economy immensely, they said.

But, there is no initiative for developing, managing or collecting these seafoods, they

added.

They said over 1,000 tons of Hypnea sp. collected from Saint Martin Island in Cox's Bazar are being exported to the neighbouring countries.

Apart from this, there is also a huge stock of oyster, cockle and bivalve mollusc, which remained almost unnoticed, said the researchers and the experts.

In this regard they at a workshop organised by the same Department of Marine Fisheries last year called for setting up a separate department of marine fisheries.

But, no progress has been made to this end until today.

the week that was

'Take measures to fight AIDS'

Acting mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) M Manjurul Alam on Wednesday called for making efforts in a coordinated way to chalk out various preventive measures against AIDS.

He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural session of a daylong workshop on 'Prevention of AIDS' at CCC auditorium.

CCC organised the workshop under its Multi-Sectoral HIV/AIDS programme in cooperation with German welfare organisation GTZ. Over 50 officers from different organisations participated at the workshop.

Manjurul in his speech called for forming a multi-sectoral committee with representatives from CCC, different educational institutions, commercial firms and government and non-government organisations to fight AIDS.

CCC Health Adviser Dr Nurjahan Bhuiyan said Chittagong as a port city is vulnerable to AIDS.

GTZ Principal Adviser Dr Sujan Green told the workshop that under the programme around 26 doctors have been specially trained up to provide training to 86 other doctors on AIDS/HIV who are now working at different hospitals and NGOs.

'PIP can bring significant change in factory'

Speakers at a seminar on Saturday stressed the need of knowledge-based economy where Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) could bring about a significant change in production, technology and other factory related matters.

They were speaking at a seminar on PIP organised by Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) in association with European Commission (EC) at the conference room of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI).

CCCI President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury was the chief guest while BKMEA President Fazlul Hoque, BGMEA

leaders and concerned factory owners were present.

Fazlul Hoque in his address of welcome narrated how the PIP can help factories with production, cost-effective management and other relevant technical issues.

He said a BKMEA branch office will be opened in Chittagong in near future with a view to extending hands to knit factories here.

Saifuzzaman lauded BKMEA for thinking of modernising the factories through PIP and wished the programme a success.

Advisers of BKMEA PIP Cell Selina Begum, Arifa Sultana and AKM Kais-bin-Zaman made separate presentations. BKMEA R&D Chief Abdus Samad Azad, Secretary Sulav Chowdhury and Social Compliance officer Md Altaf Uddin were present in the seminar.

Aktel-Drishti debate ends

An eight-day debate competition ended here on Friday with a call for using logic in every aspect of life for the betterment and advancement of the society as well as the country.

The debate titled, 'Aktel-Drishti Debate Competition' was organised by Drishti, a cultural organisation.

Addressing the closing ceremony of the debate as the chief guest at a local hotel President of Bangladesh Economic Association, Chittagong Prof Mohammad Sikander Khan emphasised application of logics without keeping them confined only to debates.

Resident Editor of the Prothom Alo Poet Abul Momen and Head of Corporate affairs of TM International Javed Tareq also spoke at the ceremony with Drishti Chief Adviser Farid Ahmad Chowdhury in the chair.

Drishti, Chittagong President Masud Bakul, General Secretary Saif Chowdhury and Joint Secretary Adnan Mannan also addressed the function.

Prof Sikander said the logic carried by the debaters is more important than the ideology they had.

Abul Momen said the nation needs logical people to face the political and national issues with logical minds.

University of Science and Technology of Chittagong (USTC)



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Buses with passengers cross over the Madunaghat Bridge with a great risk that connects Chittagong with Kaptai, Rangunia, Raozan and Chandraghona. The construction work of the bridge remained suspended for the last few years with the authorities turning a blind eye to the problem.



STAR PHOTO

Winners of Aktel-Drishti Debate Competition pose for photograph with the guests at the closing ceremony at a hotel in the port city on Friday.

became champion in the university level English debate while Saider International School became champion in the school level English debate.

Safkat Fahmid of Saider International School was adjudged debater of the year.

Nine schools and seven universities took part in the competition that started on May 11.

CU Rangpur assoc formed

Golam Farhad Fuad and Nobel Ahmed were elected president and general secretary of Greater Rangpur Students' Welfare Association of Chittagong University (CU) for 2007-2008 on Wednesday.

Former general secretary of the organisation Mahmudul Hasan Major conducted the election at its Annual General Meeting at the CU Martyred Intellectual Square.

Other office-bearers of the 13-member executive committee are Vice-President: Shahed Ahmed, Assistant General Secretary: Rani, Organising Secretary: Tuhin, Office Secretary and Treasurer: Mostak Ahmed, Publicity Secretary: AKM Shariful Islam Sharif and Cultural and Publication Secretary: Jobayer Ahmed.

The outgoing executive committee handed over the charges to the newly elected committee at a function immediately after the election.

The newly elected president vowed to work together in promoting the organisation in the greater interest of the students studying in the university hailing from Rangpur.

S Korea to sign MOU

With a view to increasing export of human resources from Bangladesh to South Korea, the two countries are going to sign a Memorandum of Understanding next month.

Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Suk-Bum Park said this at a view exchange meeting at Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) in the port city on Tuesday.

The Korean envoy emphasised

enhancing bilateral trade and diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

Park said different air agencies of Korea were keen to set up direct air link with Dhaka.

But, it would be possible if Bangladesh could utilise its potential tourism, he said.

Earlier, CCCI President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury in his address of welcome talked about the huge trade gap between the two countries.

He said export from Bangladesh to South Korea stood at 45 million US dollar and 41 million in 2004-2005 fiscal and 2005-2006 fiscals respectively while export from Korea to Bangladesh during this time stood at 414 million US dollar and 457 million US dollar respectively.

CCCI President urged the Korean ambassador for measures to reduce the trade gap through more import from Bangladesh and making investment in different labour intensive industries like backward linkage of ready-made garments here.

Korean EPZ (KEPZ) President Jahangir Sadat and Korean Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Sung-Kyu Kwak were also present at the meeting.

Fake cables seized

A mobile court here on Thursday seized 3,500 yards of fake cables in 32 coil of country's lone electric cable manufacturer "Eastern Cables" from a shop at CDA Market in the port city.

The court fined Tk 30,000 and sealed off Kazi Electric Store, and arrested one person in this connection.

The court led by Chittagong Port Authority Magistrate Munir Chowdhury seized the fake cables with false trademark and label of Eastern Cables.

When sent to Eastern Cables Laboratory, the seized cables were found as showing a thermal stability, which was around 50 per cent less than its average 80, sources said.

These fake cables with lower quality were posing threat for electric short-circuits that might result in fire incident and damages of valuable electronic goods, they added.

Pahartali police, officials of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute and Eastern Cables assisted the mobile court during the drive.