

## Reshuffle in revenue sector may hamper reforms in Ctg Customs

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

The major reshuffle in the revenue sector is likely to hamper the reforms, including introduction of an easy and transparent taxation system and realisation of outstanding revenues at Chittagong Customs House.

Out of top 50 customs officials, National Board of Revenue (NBR) transferred its 12 officials from Chittagong Customs House on August 2.

The officials include Chittagong Customs (Export and Import) Commissioner Md Farid Uddin and Chittagong Customs (Import) Joint Commissioner -2 Matur Rahman, two mentors of reforms in Chittagong Customs House initiated by the customs

authorities and the taskforce formed by the joint forces.

Of the reforms that started in June is introduction of automation of taxation system.

The businessmen hailed the automation of taxation system which would help run export and import activities from home and free them from hassles of the middlemen.

The Chittagong Customs House officials and members of joint forces at a meeting on July 3 started primary task to introduce the automation system by January next year.

The meeting also decided to raise a fund called 'Development Service Fund' collecting Tk 70 in addition to the fixed document processing fees of Tk 30 against each bill of entry and bill of export

for procuring computer and other equipment for both the customs houses (export and import).

A committee has also been formed at the meeting with members from both the customs houses, joint forces, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Corrugated Carton and Accessories Manufacturers' and Exporters Association (BCCMEA), Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and other agencies concerned for determining and supervising the projects with the fund money.

The meeting was told that Tk 11.70 crore was needed to introduce the automation system and other facilities.

Tk 21 lakh has already been

collected as of August 8 since July 22, customs sources said.

In the meantime, as a part of the reforms customs houses and joint forces have taken measures to check fraud practised by a section of dishonest importers in connivance with some Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) companies.

Besides, regular monthly meetings and punitive actions by the customs houses and joint forces have started paying back as the number of writs against PSI related cases has come down to two in July where some 30 to 40 petitions were lodged a month earlier.

The authorities have also decided to introduce Direct Trade Input (DTI) and Management Information

System (MIS) for proper monitoring and checking tax evasion.

But, the order to transfer the reform mentors on August 2 just one day after the NBR was informed of the initiative for introducing the automation system on August 1.

The joint forces and intelligence agencies, however, on August 4 asked NBR to reconsider its decision to transfer Farid and Matur in vain.

The transfer order triggered resentment among all involved with the reforms at Chittagong Customs houses.

A stalemate prevailed over all sort of taxation activities at Chittagong Customs on Sunday when the new revenue officials came to join office.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Container carriers remain standing on a road for hours to carry containers from a container yard built recently adjoining the Patenga Sea Beach causing damage to the road and diminishing beauty of the important tourist site.

## AMIN JUTE MILLS LIMITED

# Workers for probe into corruption, not closure

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Amin Jute Mills Limited, the largest jute mill in the country after closure of the Adamjee Jute Mills,

will meet the same fate of other closed jute mills unless proper measures are taken immediately.

The mill, a losing concern for the last seven to eight years, has been running with manifold prob-

lems for long due to corruption and mismanagement by a section of officials and CBA leaders.

The workers of the mill urged the government to make a thorough investigation into the allega-

tions of corruption and irregularities instead of taking decision to close the mill.

Workers, staffs and officials now fear that the mill might be declared lay off at any time, creat-

ing uncertainty among 3000 permanent and shifting employees and their families.

Thousands of people who live on different occupations and small businesses, like grocers,

barbers, small shop owners, hotel owners, electricians, tailors, pharmacy owners and others are also in the same fear.

Two units, out of four, of the mill led by Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) were shut down a few years ago, sources said.

The unpaid bank loans, huge arrears wages, provident fund, gas bill, electricity bill, spare parts procurement and jute procurement stand at around Tk 100 crore. Besides, the mill bears liabilities like land tax and cost of handling or carrying goods.

The workers are not getting their outstanding wages for 10 weeks while around 318 officials and staffs are not getting salaries for four to five months. The salary approximately amounts to Tk 10.11 crore.

Aminur Rahman, project head of the mill, said they have been facing financial crisis due to lack of enough allocation from government for the last four years.

The workers and staffs said irregularities like mismanagement, carelessness, corruption in jute procurement and lack of

enough government allocation, are responsible for the crisis in the once profitable mill.

Blaming the successive governments for their carelessness about the jute sector, Nurul Islam, general secretary of Jatiya Sramik Federation, said due to belated allocation from government the mill, like other BJMC-led jute mills, is to buy raw jute in late season from the brokers in higher prices.

It has been happening for long, he said, adding that it helped the private jute mills to buy raw jute directly from the farmers in cheaper prices.

Nurul, also an adviser to the CBA of the Amin Jute Mills, said a section of dishonest officials in collaboration with a few CBA leaders are involved in corruption during purchase of jute showing excess weight in documents.

Like jute procurement there is also allegation of huge corruption in buying spare parts and other required materials, he added.

Echoing the same view Hafizur Rahman Mintu, a worker of unit 2 said a section of former CBA leaders own huge land in the mill

area where they have built a number of houses to rent to the workers and are making money.

General workers said they have heard this but they have no proof in this regard.

Head of the project Aminur Rahman refuted the allegation of corruption in jute procurement.

He said, "The mill has become a losing concern as it was not possible to start full capacity production for the last few years due to shortage of raw jute."

"We can purchase only 47 per cent of our required four lakh mounds of raw jute a year with the government allocation we get," he said.

Aminur, however, said the mill will be viable again as the BJMC has already sent us Tk 1.50 crore for purchasing jute."

The government has sanctioned Tk 150 crore for 18 public jute mills for jute procurement as part of its initiative to make the jute sector viable, he added.



Amin Jute Mills.



STAR PHOTO

## theweekthatwas

### 'Engage youths in dev work'

Speakers at discussion here on Sunday emphasised the need for involving the young generation with development activities.

They said development activities will accelerate if we can engage the young generation in the development work.

They were addressing a discussion organised by Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) at its head office at Chandgaon in the port city.

YPSA, a non-government organisation, organised the discussion on the occasion of "International Youth Day".

YPSA Coordinator (Field Operation) Mohammad Mahabubur Rahman presided over the meeting. Programme Officer Mohammad Ali Shahin, Mohammad Shahjahan, Sirazuddin

Belal, Sayed Akter, Rubaiyat Farzana Tania, Shahidul Islam and Masud Rana spoke at the discussion.

The speakers also called upon the young generation to come forward and extend their helping hands for development of the country.

### Call to formulate policy for kindergartens

Speakers at a function on Sunday underscored the need for a proper policy for the kindergartens to ensure advance and modern education in the country.

They said the kindergarten schools have created a great opportunity for advance education for a large portion of the students.

They were speaking at the gold

medal awarding ceremony and cultural programme organised by Kindergarten Education Association (KEA) at city's Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) Vice President Mahbul Alam Talukder was the chief guest in the ceremony with the Association Chairman Khurshid Alam in the chair.

The speakers said if policy is formulated in this regard it will be possible to develop a prosperous nation.

Primary and Mass Education Department Deputy Director Tapan Kumar Nath, Sunrise Maa O Shishu Hospital Chairman Dr Mohammad Yasin, Daily Ittefaq Staff Reporter Syed Abdul Wazed and Association Secretary General Moinuddin Kader Lovelu spoke at the function.

Later, the guests distributed gold medals, certificates and crests among the meritorious students.

### Meena Bazar supermarket opens

Meena Bazar, a subsidiary of Gemcon Group, launched a supermarket at CDA Avenue near Sholoshohor in the port city on Friday.

Gemcon Food and Agriculture Products Limited Chairperson Ameenah Ahmed formally inaugurated the supermarket while Gemcon Group Chairman Kazi Shahid Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kazi Inam Ahmed, Project Manager Modasser Ali, Purchase Manager ANM Abdur Rahim, Marketing Manger Sonia Shahid, Accounts Manager Nazmul Haque, Human Resource Manager Kamruzzaman and Assistant Manager Shaila Parvin were

present among others.

Ameenah Ahmed in her speech said Meena Bazar not only caters its customers, it also helps the farmers who sale their products to them.

"Customers would be able to find all kitchen items and essentials where they would also enjoy the privilege to buy conveniently," said CEO Kazi Inam Ahmed.

The organisers also hoped to open ten outlets of the supermarket across the country.

### Two cargo vessels fined

A mobile court on Sunday detained two cargo vessels in Sadarghat area and fined them Tk 90,000 on charge of risky movements at Chittagong Port channel.

The court in a drive led by Chittagong Port Authority (CPA)



STAR PHOTO

Students of Chittagong Medical College (CMC) prepare oral saline for the flood-affected people at the 'Saline Making Programme' organised by Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) on Sunday.

Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury found that several large cracks and holes have been developed at the vessel's deck due to lack of proper maintenance for long, posing risks of major accident any time.

The court also found that there was no protection for resisting water at the engine rooms of both the vessels -- MV Islami Taj and MV Basundhara Logistics -15.

The vessels were used for lightening cement clinkers from the outer anchorage.

The court detained the vessels, seized their survey certificates, fined Tk 90,000 and ordered the authorities

concerned to cancel their survey certificates.

### UP chairman held with firearms

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a Union Parishad (UP) chairman with firearms and contraband phensidyle at Dargahat in the port city on early Tuesday.

The arrestee identified as Mohammad Belal Hossain, 31, son of

late Abul Bashar of Khorarbag village of Sarwatali, was the UP chairman of Sarwatali Union under Boalkhali upazila, Rab sources said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-7 Chittagong raided the Dargahat area under the city's Double Mooring Police Station and arrested Bashar from in front of Azim Plaza.

The elite force also seized a Light Gun (LG), four cartridges and four bottles of contraband phensidyle from his possession.

He was handed over to Double Mooring Police Station the following day.



STAR PHOTO

Singers of Raktakarabi perform at a function titled 'Barshar Gaan' (songs of rain), organised by Chittagong Press Club (CPC) on Thursday at its auditorium.