

# Prospective Chilahati land port yet to be opened as red-tapism stands in the way

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, *Nilphamari*

Bordering Chilahati town in Nilphamari district is yet to be declared as land port despite assurance from and initiative by authorities on different occasions.

Situated at a suitable geographical position for running multi-national business, the area has all infrastructural facilities including road and rail communication with different parts of the country. Especially, direct rail link with Khulna near Mongla port makes it a cost-effective and feasible one.

There are good power supply facilities, modern telephone exchange, two commercial bank branches, a BDR camp, a police station, a 'dak bango' (government guest house) and a government college at Chilahati.

Declaration of Chilahati as a land port and reopening of Chilahati-Holdibari rail route would facilitate Bangladeshi traders' export and import business with 'seven-sisters' states of northeast India where there is good demand for Bangladeshi goods. The Indian exporters and importers of Shillong and Darjeeling also want Chilahati land port.

Some 200 exporters and importers in the district, who use land ports in other districts, have to bear 30%-40% additional carrying cost.

Nepal and Bhutan are also interested to use Mongla port of Bangladesh for their international trade, traders in the districts said.

The distance between Chilahati and Kakorita, a bordering business town of Nepal, via Holdibari and Shillong of India is only 95km while the distance between Chilahati and Funt Soling, a business town of Bhutan, via Holdibari, Shillong and Joiga of India is 180km.

Chilahati-Khulna rail route can help the two countries to transport their goods up to Mongla port at cheaper cost and shorter time.

Nathula mountain pass, a newly constructed route aimed at boosting trade between India and China, can also be used by Bangladesh to enhance trade with China as the distance between Chilahati and Nathula of China is about 250km. It is the shortest distance for trading between Bangladesh and China.

The opening of Chilahati land



A train waits at the country's northernmost bordering railway station at Chilahati. Development of 11.34km of railway in Bangladesh and Indian parts would help boost regional trade.

port will help to accelerate economic activities among the Saarc countries. Abul Musa, convenor of Chilahati land port implementation committee, said.

Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Sohel Parvez said Chilahati land port can contribute a new life to Uttara EPZ as the EPZ products might get new market in India, Nepal, Bhutan and even China. Besides, new employment opportunity could help to solve monga in the region.

A land custom and traffic office near rail station was set up in 1953 for incoming and outgoing passengers and goods. It was in operation till June 28, 2002. Government employees are still attending those offices without any work.

National Board of Revenue in July 2006 declared Chilahati as a land port revenue station and

requested the secretary of navigation ministry to declare it as land port, said several exporters and importers of the district.

Representatives of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry during their separate meetings with commerce secretary Sohel Ahmed and the then commerce adviser Barkatullah Bui in last year got assurance to declare Chilahati as a land port as early as possible, they said.

Nilphamari chamber President Sohel Parvez told this correspondent that the then navigation minister Akbar Hossen told parliament on June 9, 2004 that the work to develop six land ports of the country including Chilahati would come to end soon. Sohel alleged that the work is yet to be started let alone its completion.

The distance between Chilahati rail station of Bangladesh and Holdibari rail station in India is 13.34km. Of which Bangladesh has 8.10km and India 3.24km.

From British era up to mid 60s of the last century the famous 'Darjeeling mail' train used to run between Darjeeling and Kolkata via Chilahati and Holdibari.

Big railway godowns built by the British ruler to preserve unloaded goods from trains are still seen in Chilahati. The 'Merchants association of Chilahati' was the biggest business organisation in the then Rangpur and Dinajpur.

After the inauguration of Bangabandhu bridge across the Jamuna, the then Awami League government decided to declare Chilahati a land port. Tk 4.50 crore was sanctioned to repair the 8.10km rail line inside Bangladesh to re-open Chilahati-Holdibari rail route. But the work did not even start.

PHOTO: STAR

## ACC CASES AGAINST EX-MP ABBASI, OTHERS

# Lack of IOs hinders investigation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

The final investigation into the Anti-Corruption Commission cases against former BNP lawmaker MA Karim Abbasi, his wife and two sons, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar's APS Mirza Haider Ali, his wife, and Babar's cousin Salauddin Chowdhury is yet to be started as no Investigation Officer (IO) has been appointed.

Assistant Director of Netrakona ACC Md Nuruzzaman filed cases against Abbasi, his wife Hamida Karim Abbasi, sons Hamidul Karim Abbasi and Mahmudul Karim

Abbasi, Mirza Haider Ali, his wife Beauty Akther, and Babar's cousin Salauddin Chowdhury.

In the cases filed with Madan, Durgapur and Netrakona Sadar Police Stations on September 13 and September 12 this year, they were accused of concealing information in their wealth statement.

The joint forces arrested MA Karim Abbasi at his Durgapur residence on February 10 this year while Mirza Haider Ali and Salauddin were arrested on March 7 in front of Netrakona ACC office when they were returning home after submitting their wealth statement.

# Victim family demands protection from land grabbers

RU Correspondent

Members of a victim family from Dighi village in Ullapara of Sirajganj yesterday demanded immediate withdrawal of 'false cases' filed by a land grabber.

At a press conference at Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club, the victim family alleged that the land grabbers, an influential NGO director and his associates, are using political influence to capture their land.

"Rezaul Karim Bachchu, executive director of 'OREDAR' NGO, started his conspiracy against our family when we refused to allow over our house an electric line that would connect to his house," Asma Begum, a teacher of Ullapara Government Primary School, said at the press conference.

Bachchu wanted the electric line over their house to save cost, she said, adding, 'As an act of vengeance, Bachchu and his relatives filed a false case against my husband Abdul Baki, his brother Abdul Baki and sister's husband Rakibul Islam on August 6, 2007.'

Bachchu's associate Idrish Ali filed another false case with Sirajganj court accusing my husband and Rakibul Islam on August 12."

"Later Bachchu grabbed our 29 decimal land by preparing a false document.

"Bachchu also demanded Tk 2 lakh as toll for withdrawal of the two cases against us and threatened my father-in-law for vacating rest of his land.

"Following the threat, we filed a general diary (GD) with Ullapara Police Station on August 14, seeking protection.

"But police did not take any action against land grabber Bachchu," Asma said.

She showed documents and copies of court orders supporting their ownership of the land.

"Bachchu forced us to vacate our Dighi village houses by threatening to get my husband, who is a superintendent of Boroqalibor Dhakil Madrasa in Ullapara, arrested by police and brand him as a militant.

Asma and her family members demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the land grabber to save the family.

Asma's husband Abdul Baki, his brother Abdul Baki, Asma's father Humzur Ali Khan and his relative Shahinur Rahman were present at the press conference.

When contacted over telephone, Rezaul Karim Bachchu, executive director of 'OREDAR', said the allegations against him were not true and he was not involved in the land-grabbing act.

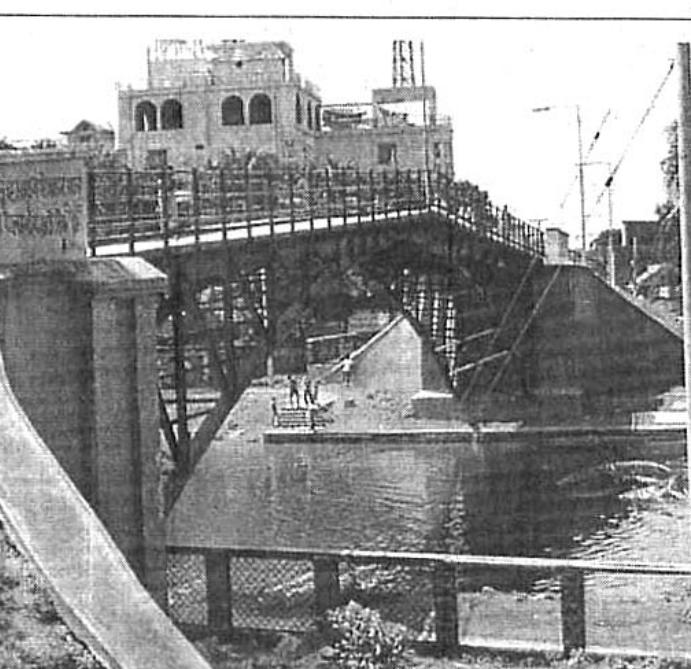


PHOTO: STAR

Spectacular Eliot Bridge built over a century ago is one of the tourist spots in Sirajganj town.

# Eliot Bridge attracts tourists in Sirajganj

GOLAM MOSTAFI JIBON, *Sirajganj*

Eliot Bridge, a glorious heritage of the district town, still attracts thousands of tourists from home and abroad.

Built over the Baral in the middle of the town during the British rule, the bridge has no pillar. Popularly known as 'Baropul,' the bridge connects the eastern part of the town with its western part. The bridge stands as a witness to many important events of the this sub-continent.

The western bank of the Baral was under the jurisdiction of the then Jaminder Siraj Ali Chowdhury. He realised the importance of the place and established a river port in 1808. Later, the area was named as Sirajganj after the Jaminder.

In 1869, Sirajganj municipality was established and later a police station was set up. In 1866, it was upgraded to a sub-district town in 1984.

In the 18th century, boats and steamers were found to move through the Baral. In absence of railway, goods laden water vessels

plied to Assam and other parts of West Bengal through Sirajganj. Trade and business flourished on both banks of the river.

In 1892, Bitonbell, a Briton became the sub-divisional officer (SDO) of Sirajganj. Later, he became the governor of Bengal and Assam.

One day he was returning home from the western bank. All on a sudden, he heard a groaning sound of a poor man. The man bought food from his day-long earnings. As he had no single paisa, the boatman was not allowing him to get on board his boat. Observing his plight, Bitonbell helped the man cross the river. After this event, Bell decided to build a bridge across the Baral. He formed a committee consisting of businessmen of the town. They contributed generously at its fund and the District Board granted Tk 1,500.

Sir Charles Eliot, the then government of Bengal and Assam laid the foundation of the 180 feet long and 16 feet wide bridge named after him on August 6, 1882.

Stuart Hartland, a British firm

constructed the pillarless bridge at a cost of Tk 45,000.

The bridge was repaired during the immediate past BNP-led alliance regime.

## Robber killed in gunfight with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kishoreganj*

A gang leader of armed robbers was killed in a gunfight with police in Karimganj upazila yesterday.

The notorious robber is Bachchu Mia, 35, of Dakkhin Nansri village in Karimganj upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team reached Pansahar village at deep night where the robbers were taking preparation for robbery, police said.

Bachchu and his gang opened fire at police who retaliated. At one stage, Bachchu died and an assistance sub-inspector of police (ASI), Tajul Islam received bullet injuries. Later, the ASI was shifted to Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital for treatment.

## Voter listing starts in Sunamganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Voters' registration with photos and national identity cards began in Sunamganj pourasava and an adjacent union of the district headquarters yesterday.

The programme was launched in the morning at Government Jubilee High School where Lt Col Zillul Haque, Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner Saber Hossain and Deputy Election Commissioner of Sylhet division Khondaker Mizanur Rahman were present.

The officials later visited some other centres in the city as registration work began at eight centres in the town and three in Mollapara union. Earlier enumerators completed house to house visit in the town and Mollapara union of Sadar upazila during.

Voters' registration will be done in Sunamganj pourashava and nine unions of Sadar upazila in three phases.

After completion of the first-phase work in Pourashava and in Mollapara union on October 31, work in Mohanpur, Kathoir, Lakkshmansri and Gourarang unions will be done in the second phase from November 2 to November 10. In the third phase, the job will be done in Aftabnagar, Surma, Rangarchar and in Jahangirnagar unions from November 11 to November 19.

## Rifle found on RU hall roof

RU Correspondent

A country-made rifle was recovered on the roof of Bangabandhu Hall of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday, the day before reopening of RU dormitories.

A hall cleaner first marked a 'rifle-like object' on the roof and informed the hall staff and the provost.

On information, Mother police rushed to the spot and seized the rifle for experiment.

Someone might have left the rifle to create panic among the hall students, RU Proctor Enamul Haque said.

RU halls of residence will reopen today and the classes will begin on October 28.

The university authorities have asked the students to show their identity cards at the entrance of the halls. The students have also been asked to carry the cards on the campus.

# Tk 3cr touchstone idols 'theft' not yet unearthed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Police is yet to unearth the 'mysterious theft' of three touchstone-made idols at Dasbhaja Temple in Durgapur upazila on July 17, 2005 although two months have passed after police started vigorous investigation in the incident.

On July 17 of 2005, three valuable touchstone made idols of Hindu deities Vishnu, Mahamaya and Kali went 'missing' from the temple.

Fresh investigation into the incident started after Netrakona Deputy Commissioner Aliyat Ullah Majumder on August 8 this year issued a directive to the Netrakona police superintendent following a written complaint from District

Puja Uddipan Parishad's Joint Secretary Kashob Ranjan Sarkar, Durgapur police said.

In that written complaint submitted on July 21, the Puja Uddipan Parishad leaders said several leaders of Dasbhaja Temple Supervision Committee were directly involved in the 'mysterious stealing' of the three touchstone idols weighing 15kg each worth about Tk three crore.

"The idols were smuggled into India with the help of Local BNP leader and Durgapur pourasava chairman Shubandu Sarkar Pintu and some other local BNP leaders," read the complaint.

After the incident on July 17 in 2005, police filed a general diary (GD) with Durgapur Police Station and started investigation but it

could not proceed much due to local BNP leaders' pressure to suspend the investigation.

Bangladeshi cattle trader shot by BSF dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

A Bangladeshi cattle trader, fighting for life for over a month after receiving bullet injuries by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Panthi border in Swapnagar in 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, succumbed to his injuries at Khulna hospital last night.

The deceased, Khalil Islam, 28, son of Amir Ali of village Ghona in Sadar upazila, was returning to Bangladesh with cattle along with other cattle traders on September 15 when BSF men of Panthi camp opposite to Ghona BDR camp opened fire at him, BDR said.

After returning to the country with bullet injury, he was admitted to Sadar hospital and later shifted to Khulna hospital as his condition deteriorated.

## 5 houses gutted in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhenidah*

Property worth Tk 1 lakh was gutted as five houses were burnt to ashes at Porahat union in Jhenidah Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon, officials sources said.

Later, army, police and fire service personnel brought the situation under control after frantic efforts at about 3pm.

# Manikganj lawyers hail separation of judiciary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

Members of Manikganj Bar Association, in a joint statement here, hailed separation of judiciary from administration.

They also vowed to foil any conspiracy against its implementation. They condemned and protested the activities of members of the administration cadre on Sunday in Dhaka. They termed their activities a deep conspiracy

against the government move.

Signatories to the statement issued on Tuesday night are Bar Association president Rahmat Ali, secretary Lutfor Rahman, former secretary Khalilur Rahman, senior members Devendra Nath Poddar, Azad Hossain Khan, Khandaker Sharif Mia, Sakhawat Hosain Khan, ATM Shahjahan and others.