

Heavy vehicles still use old road just to avoid tolls

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

Heavy vehicles still prefer to use the old Port Connecting Road instead of Chittagong Port Access Road in order to avoid paying toll, causing massive traffic congestion in the port city.

Chittagong Port Access Road was constructed two and a half years ago to facilitate faster transportation of goods to and from Chittagong port and ease traffic congestion in the city as well.

The government is being deprived of huge revenue everyday due to poor utilisation of the road.

Sources said lack of proper monitoring by the authorities concerned is responsible for this.

Around 50 percent of the

heavy vehicles including trucks, oil tankers, covered vans, container movers and lorries continue to ply the old Port Connecting Road round-the-clock dodging tolls for Port Access Road, sources said.

Plying of heavy vehicles along the Port Connecting Road through the city centre causes a serious tailback in the city's Colonel Hat, Olankar Intersection, AK Khan Gate and Nayabazar areas during the peak hours, said the sources.

While visiting the toll plaza at the port-end on Sunday three of the six entry points were found closed.

To run all the six counters at a time is unnecessary as the number of vehicles plying the road is insufficient, said a staff of the firm

engaged for operation and maintenance.

Private firm Monico-ATT Consortium has been running the toll plaza on the operation and maintenance (O&M) basis since October 16, 2008.

Engineer Al Amin, in-charge of the Toll Plaza, said on an average 2,500 to 2,800 vehicles ply the Access Road earning them on an average Tk 11 lakh a day.

A total of 87,854 vehicles passed through the road in July while 90,763 vehicles in June, he said.

Number of vehicles decreases in the holidays and on the workdays the number depends on the loading and unloading activities at the port jetties, he said.

Collection of tolls from heavy vehicles at Port



Three of the six entry points of toll plaza on Chittagong Port Access Road remain closed as many vehicles do not use it to avoid paying toll. The photo was taken on August 16.

ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIDDER

Connecting Road could have ensured proper utilisation of the Access Road and huge revenue everyday, he added.

The drivers of heavy vehicles also get scope to park their vehicles, mostly trucks, at different points of the road due to poor utilisation of the road.

When asked Roads and Highway (R&H) Sub Divisional Engineer Hasibur Rahman said they are emphasising increasing facilities rather than forcing the vehicles to ply the road.

free road they will use the Port Access Road spontaneously," he said.

Assistant Commissioner (Traffic Port) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Mostafizur Rahman told The Daily Star that the number of vehicles would

increase here after completion of the under-construction flyover that would connect the Port Access Road with Chittagong EPZ.

"We always encourage and motivate the drivers for using the Access Road

to ease pressure of vehicular traffic on the roads running through the city centre," Mostafiz said. Some of the trucks, however, go through the city heart to reach their terminal at the Port Connecting Road, he said.



HK-TG Garments Ltd.

Sorry state of Ctg RMG factories

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Kazi Golam Kabir, a Chittagong-based entrepreneur, launched a knitting factory in joint venture with his Chinese partner in April last year at port city's busy commercial hub -- Agrabad.

The small factory, HK-TG Garments Ltd, with 160 machines and a workforce of 400 employees took virtually no time to attract major foreign buyers like the USA for its good quality products and impressive design.

With monthly (average) order of 60,000 dozens of garments from the buyers, things were pacing well and smoothly until May this year when Kabir and his factory couldn't avoid the inevitable 'the impact of global recession.' Hit hard by the economic meltdown, Kabir found no alternative to closing his factory in early June.

"I was not ready at all for such a day or fate even 12 to 13 months ago when I launched this factory. It's a big blow but I've to accept it," Kabir, managing director of HK-TG, told this

correspondent recently.

Although production of the factory is closed for more than two months, the owner continues to pay salaries to nearly 170 workers with a hope that he would get fresh orders from foreign buyers once the recession is over.

Kabir said the workers now use to come to the factory in the morning, pass their time by gossiping and leave in the afternoon. And at the end of the month, withdraw salaries.

"I had to pay Tk 22 lakh as salaries to 400 workers when my factory was in production but now I pay only Tk 6 lakh a month to the workers," Kabir said.

Sheuli Akhter, a sewing worker, and Kamaluddin, a quality control staff, said that they would not have taken the salary without work should they have any alternative.

"It is really painful to see our factory being closed for months and we take wages without any work," they said.

Kabir is not only facing such a situation. Forty-six other small and medium-sized factories in Chittagong

have also been shut down due to recession plus other problems, including power shortage in six months since February this year.

Another such factory is GMC Apparels in Bandartila area under Bandar Police Station. Hit by recession and acute power shortage, the production of the factory, which started its journey in November 2008 with only 92 machines, came to a halt in June this year too.

"We are not getting any order for the last few months for poor production capability due to serious loadshedding and power crisis everyday. I just couldn't afford to run a generator that requires huge amount of money," Mostafizur Rahman, director of GMC, told The Daily Star.

He said the factory made a shipment of over 5,000 dozens of T-shirt just prior to the shutdown.

"It took us three months to produce those T-shirt instead of one month because of power crisis. This delayed production cost us dearly and we lost any further order," Mostafiz said.

the week that was

Agri, fisheries and livestock tech fair ends

A three-day National Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Technology Fair-2009 concluded at city's Laidighi Maidan on Thursday.

Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University Vice Chancellor Dr Nitish Chandra Devnath was the chief guest at the concluding and prize giving ceremony with Agriculture Department Deputy Director Anisur Rahman in the chair.

District Fishery Officer Seraj Uddin, Livestock Officer Abu Taher Mridha and Marine Fisheries Department Assistant Director Rafiqul Islam were present at the ceremony as the special guests.

Dr Nitish in his speech said agriculture industry has a great contribution to countries economic development. He called upon the government to increase agricultural production using the new technologies and subsidy for the sector in national budget.

Lake View Nursery was adjudged the best nursery and its Proprietor Abu Naser was given prize.

seats the authorities would be able to give admission to 570 students in 2009-2010 academic year as against 420 of 2008-2009 academic year, said Cuet Vice-Chancellor Prof Shymol Kanti Biswas.

7th council of Drishty held

Drishty, Chittagong, an educational and cultural organisation, held its 7th council in the port city on Saturday with a call for working for advancement of the society.

Drishty Adviser Principal Safia Gazi Rahman inaugurated the council where banker Md Roshangir Bachchu and journalist Omar Kaiser were the chief guest and the special guest respectively.

Speakers at the meeting held at Drishty Office said practice of logic can help overcome any problem and take the society and the country ahead.

Drishty General Secretary Saif Chowdhury briefed about the activities of the organisation of 2007 to 2009 with President Masud Bakul in the chair.

New system to pay gas bill

GrameenPhone (GP) Limited and Bakharabad Gas Systems Limited (BGS) signed an agreement on Sunday to introduce electronic bill payment system for the gas consumers.

BGSL Company Secretary Chowdhury Ahsan Habib and GrameenPhone Deputy Director (Financial Services) Delwar Hossain Azad signed the agreement on behalf of their respective side.

The clients will be able to pay their bills through any GP approved "Bill pay" centre or through their GP connection following the agreement, sources said.

It would also help the GP clients to know the bill status through message or dialling 1200.

Users of other operators would also be able to know their bill status dialling 01713-234567, they said.

Cuet opens two new departments

Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) authority at a syndicate meeting on Friday decided to open two more departments and create 90 more seats in existing departments.

The two new departments of Architecture and Town Planning would have 30 seats each in the first batch.

The authorities in the meeting decided to raise number of seats to 120 from 60 in computer sciences and engineering department and 130 from 120 in each of electrical, mechanical and civil engineering departments.

With new two departments and increased

Training workshop on VAT

A daylong training workshop on "VAT statement" for the officials of Pubali Bank Limited was held in the port city on Saturday.

Chittagong Region General Manager (GM) Fazlul Haque of the bank presided over the workshop organised for the officials of 56 branches under the GM Office.

The Head Office General Service and Development Department Assistant General Manager Abdus Sabur and Principal Officer Kitab Ali were the trainer in the workshop.

The Bank Chittagong South and Hill Tracts Region Deputy General Manager Rawshan Akter, CDA Corporate Branch Deputy General Manager BM Shahidul Haque and Chittagong North Region Assistant General Manager Mohammad Khorshed Reza attended the workshop.

Speakers at the workshop talked about the definition and rate of VAT in different sectors, VAT realisation, methods of reporting and sending.

They also emphasised the need for depositing the realised VAT in the government treasury timely.

Eid Sales Festival begins

Month-long "Eid Sales Festival" began at Yunusco City Centre, a posh shopping mall at city's GEC intersection, on Sunday.

The Centre Traders' Association President Shamim Mahmud Chowdhury inaugurated the festival cutting cake.

The Festival Committee Convenor Shankar Barua, Traders' Association General Secretary HM Nazam Uddin, leaders Ahsanul Karim Ashraf, Alimuzzaman Pietu, Saiful Islam Mukul, Maksudur Rahman, Mohammad Ilias and Nazmul Huda were present at the inaugural ceremony.

During the festival, the buyers will be provided with coupons and attractive prizes including motorcycle, refrigerator and television will be given through raffle draw later.



Artistes of Mancha Mukut Natya Shampradaya present the "Prothom Partho" at a drama festival titled "Badal Shanjher Natak" at Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) auditorium on Sunday.

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