

LACK OF PROPER MANAGEMENT, MONITORING OF BOND-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Irregularities grip CEPZ, Karnaphuli EPZ

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Customs Bond Commissionerate Chittagong region will start overseeing the bond-related activities of Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) and Karnaphuli EPZ by next month as the irregularities have increased at the two export processing zones.

Customs Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong region is now overseeing bond-related activities of the bonded warehouses, including those in Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) and Comilla Export Processing Zone.

But, the CEPZ and Karnaphuli EPZ along with the bonded oil depots have been under the Chittagong Customs House (Export).

The customs house has to control bond related activities of these two EPZs side by side with looking after the delivery activities of imported raw materials. It also oversees export of finished products by 100 percent export oriented firms through Chittagong port or other private depots as well as auction activities of goods imported through Chittagong port.

It has become difficult for the customs house to give required attention and perform bond-related activities like determining quantity of raw materials for import, making export and consumption sheets through assessment and renewing bond license after conducting audit, said the sources at Customs House (Export) and Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong.

Due to lack of proper management and monitoring of bond-related activities and absence of proper physical examination of goods imported under bond facilities, irregularities have increased at the two EPZs in the recent months, the sources said.

The irregularities included pilferage of goods imported under bond facilities outside EPZ areas and import of contraband drugs, valuable machineries and electronic items through false declaration.

Though a few of such consignment of pilfered goods are seized, occasionally many of them are found in the open market depriving the country of huge revenue.

Jamal Hossain, commissioner of Customs House (Export), said many major irregularities remain untraced

or unearthed due to absence of annual audit of export and import of the firms inside EPZs and non-implementation of Bonded Warehouse Licensing Act 2008, Standing Order 14/2008 and 15/2008 by Chittagong Customs House (export).

When contacted, Chittagong regional Customs Bond Commissionerate Additional Commissioner Dr Md Matiur Rahman said they are ready to oversee CEPZ and Karnaphuli EPZ.

But, bringing the two EPZs under Bond Commissionerate through the usual process of gradual handing over of licence and audit files, irregularity related documents, import-export registers and transfer of database of hundreds of firms may take around four to six months.

Due to a lengthy handing over process, incidents of irregularities are feared to take place in a massive way threatening revenue collection.

"To avert irregularities National Board of Revenue (NBR) can issue an executive order for performing bond related activities of the two EPZs under Customs Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong regional office within the minimum time," he said.

"Such an order can immediately put EPZ branch of Chittagong Customs (Export) along with its manpower and setup under Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong," Dr Matiur told The Daily Star on Monday.

"It would also be helpful for uniting customs house (export) and customs house (import) while paving the way

for turning Bond Commissionerate, Chittagong into a full-fledged one as well," he added.

Customs Bond Commissionerate issues bonded warehouse licences to traders to import raw materials without any duty charge against commitment of exporting the finished products.

All the imported goods are stored at the bonder's warehouse and in case of failure in exporting products against imported raw materials they are to pay duty and taxes for the rest of the goods imported.

The bond commissioner checks misuse of bond facilities through risk management and preserve and record various data to ensure proper collection of revenue while facilitating the export business with bond facilities.

Chenghi erosion threatens Hawkers' village

JASIM MAJUMDER, KHAGRACHHARI

Erosion of the river Chenghi has taken a serious turn threatening 150 families at Hawkers village of APBn Muslimpara under Sadar upazila in Khagrachhari.

The Chenghi has the lone road connecting the Hawkers village with district headquarters and left several thousand people of this village almost detached from the mainland Khagrachhari as well as other parts of the country.

River erosion narrowed down the road to such an extent that children and elderly people can not walk over it. Some 100 children of the village are not going to school due to such condition of the road while the elderly people do not come out of the house in the evening, said the villagers.

Neither Khagrachhari Municipality nor Khagrachhari Hill District Council took any project to save the road from river erosion and restore road communication with the village despite repeated request, they said.

Mohammad Arif, a newspaper hawker said they appealed to the chairmen of Khagrachhari municipality and Khagrachhari Hill District (KHDC) on several occasions since 2007 to save their village from the river erosion.

"The 15 feet wide road by now has reduced to some two and half feet. The villagers temporarily repaired the road with bamboos in October last year. But, bamboo protection collapsed due to onrush of hilly water on June 12 this year. We are now in a helpless condition since we can not afford construction of any brick-built retaining wall to

save our village or homesteads from erosion," he added.

Mohammad Sujon, also a hawker, said they have requested the chairmen in vain to visit the affected area to witness the sufferings of the villagers and take step accordingly.

Hawker Mohammad Shipon said it is very difficult for them to communicate with the district town through the risky road while primary school children have stopped going to schools during the rainy season.

"Elderly people even can not go to mosque to say prayers after dusk," said Shipon, urging the authorities concerned to renovate the road and mitigate their sufferings.

Hawker Promod Dey said some 10 houses have been devoured by the river in the last two months while some 15 more houses of hawkers at risk of falling due to erosion any time.

When asked, Khagrachhari Municipality Mayor Mohammad Joynal Abedin said municipality can not take project like river training or construction of embankment. He said he has not visited the hawkers village as he could do very little for the villagers in this regard.

He said he has submitted an application to KHDC chairman to take a project to save the people from river erosion under the municipality.

Khagrachhari Hill District (KHDC) Chairman Kujendra Lal Tripura said he told the villagers few days back that there is no scope to include a project for the river protection as the projects have already been finalised for 2010-2011 financial year.

He said he has asked the Khagrachhari Hill District Council chief engineer to take up a project to save thousands of people in these areas from river erosion.



Workers are busy in making vermicelli in an unhygienic condition at a factory in the Chaktai area as the demand for the item has increased ahead of Eid-ul-Fitre. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO ANURUP KANTI DAS

the week that was

Mayor asks hawkers not to do business on sidewalks

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor Mohammad Manjur Alam on Sunday urged the hawkers not to do business on the sidewalks causing obstruction to public movement.

He also urged them to be more careful so that no gridlock could be created causing sufferings to the people during Eid shopping.

He was addressing a view-exchange meeting with

the leaders of different hawkers' associations at the CCC conference room.

Footpaths and streets are for the public and vehicular movement, he said, adding that hawkers should not do their business occupying them creating gridlock and hassle for the people.

He assured the hawkers of taking initiative to launch holiday market or evening market for rehabilitating them. He urged the hawkers' leaders to unanimously choose a place in this regard.

Leaders of Chittagong hawkers' League, Chattagram Footpath Hawkers' Samity, Sammilito Hawkers' Samity, Hawkers' Federation, Sammilito Hawkers' Federation

were present at the meeting.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Additional Commissioner Abdul Jalil Mandal, Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Mazumder and DC (Port) Kushum Dewan were also present.

'Bring back condemned killers of Bangabandhu'

Speakers at a discussion urged the government to take steps to bring back the absconding killers of Bangabandhu to complete implementation of the court verdict.

They were addressing the discussion marking the 35th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at KB Abdul Aziz auditorium on Sunday.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Chittagong University (CU) unit organised the discussion with its Joint Secretary Joynal Abedin in the chair.

BCL central leaders Md Mohiuddin Sohel and Rizwan Raihan and CU leaders Mohammad Yusuf, AKM Aminul Islam Suman and Shiekh Jahid Ur Rashid spoke at the meeting.

They urged the BCL leaders and activists to play a vital role in establishing the Digital Bangladesh announced by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They also called upon them to remain cautious so that none can create anarchy in the country to foil the war crimes trial.

Proposal to establish one high school at each ward

The newly formed Standing Committee on Education of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) proposed for establishing at least one high school at each ward in the port city.

The standing committee members placed the proposal at its first meeting at the office of CCC chief education officer on Sunday.

Committee Chairman and Ward Councillor Advocate Rehena Begum Ranu presided over the meeting.

The committee decided to send a proposal to the University Grant Commission (UGC) and Ministry of Education for keeping a provision to make mayor or his representative president of the Board of Trustees of the private university.

It also decided to request the Premier University authorities to submit a complete report on income and expenditure of the university since its establishment to the Board of Trustees.

Ward councillors Md Shamsuzzaman Helali, Sirajul Islam and AKM Jafrul Islam and CCC Chief Education Officer Prof Iftekher Ahmad Khan, Education Officer MA Bari and Assistant Education Officer AR Faruquee were present at the meeting.

Eid Sales Festival begins

'Eid Sales Festival 2010' began on the Bangladesh Women Association School premises in the port city on Friday.

Women Boutiques House Owners' Association of Bangladesh and Women Fashion Design House Owners' Association of Bangladesh jointly organised the festival under the supervision of Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CWCCI).

Bangladesh Women Association, Chittagong Chapter President Kamrun Malek inaugurated the festival that will continue till the Eid day.

CWCCI Senior Vice President Khaleda A Awal, Chittagong Ladies Club President Zinat Azam and Woman Association Chittagong Chapter Secretary Rokeya Jaman were present as the special guests at the inaugural ceremony.

A total of 70 firms, mainly women entrepreneurs, are taking part in the festival with garment products and household items.

Schooling for Lions Club officers

Club officers' schooling of Lions District 315B-4 Bangladesh was held at a restaurant in the port city on Saturday.

Lions District Governor M Aslam Chowdhury was the chief guest at the programme while Vice District Governor Prof MDM Kamal Uddin and immediate Past District Governor Shah Mohammad Hasan were present as the special guests.

Speakers at the programme said members of the Lions Clubs are dedicated to the service of the distressed humanity in 205 countries in the world since its journey in 1917.

The new members who are taking part in the programme will take lesson about the humanitarian activities at the programme, they said.

Former District Governor A Gaffar Dohdash, Nazmul Hoque Chowdhury, Rafique Ahmed, Akram Hossain, Cabinet Secretary AHM Kafil Uddin and Cabinet Treasurer Mohammad Ilias were present at the programme.



STAR PHOTO

Bangladesh Mahila Awami League observes candle light vigil in front of Central Shaheed Minar in the port city of Chittagong on Friday in memory of the victims of the August 21 grenade attack.