

Bijoy nagar LC station has no customs house for 14 years

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

Since its inception in 1997, the Bijoy nagar import-only Land Customs Station is operating without a customs house or security check-point, letting truckloads of 'coal' into Bangladesh everyday almost without any checks.

The LC Station was opened 14 years ago to facilitate coal import from India but so far no initiative has been taken to man the overland import point.

A tin-shed room, which

remains locked round-the-year, is the only sign of the facility that sees coal worth crores of taka getting into the country. At times a constable is seen roaming around the spot without much to do other than witnessing the arrival and departure of the Indian trucks, some importers and people in the vicinity said.

At least 47 coal importers of Bangladesh pay taxes with the Netrakona-based Customs and Excise office and place their order with

the Indian exporters. Indian trucks loaded with coal enter Bangladesh unchecked and return after unloading. Regarding the nature of the goods or quantity, whatever is shown on paper is final. Nobody is there at the border point to physically check how much coal is coming, or whether any forbidden goods are entering Bangladesh in the name of coal.

Netrakona Customs, Excise and Vat office shows coal worth Tk 7.33 crore was

imported from India in the last financial year through the LC Station. But local people said that taking advantage of the unmanned border, an unscrupulous quarter is bringing twice the permitted amount of coal, depriving the government of huge revenues.

Swapon Hazong, Vice President of the Bangladesh Hazong Unnayan Sangathan, at the border town of Durgapur said that the unmanned border is also a threat to security in the

area. "Bad guys from both the countries may take this advantage and smuggle arms and drugs. They can also flee country through the unchecked border," he said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Netrakona Anwar Hossen Chowdhury admitted that the border trade is taking place almost without any checking. He, however, said that the government has taken steps to repair the dilapidated road to Bijoy nagar and to provide other facilities.

"All development work will be finished within this year," he added.

Importers said they several times demanded setting up of full-fledged customs facility at the border point to save time and avoid the hassle of, travelling to Netrakona town for paper work.

Rupon Saha, a coal importer of Bijoy nagar, told this correspondent that the bad road communication between Netrakona and the border also poses a big problem for the importers.

Another importer from Durgapur, Ranjit Sen, said that a customs office at Bijoy nagar LC Station would relieve them of a lot of hassle and also secure the border.

"We also need a better road communication to bring down coal prices," he said.

Assistant Commissioner of Netrakona Customs and Excise Marufur Rahman said more people will start using the port once the infrastructural facilities are developed.



PHOTO: STAR

Two buses trying to overtake each other on Magura-Jessore highway, putting passengers' lives at risk. This photo was taken from Katakhal point of the road yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Labourers putting coal imported from India into sacks and loading them onto a rickshaw van at Bijoy nagar import-only Land Customs Station in Netrakona district. The overland import point has remained unmanned and without a customs house or checkpost since its inception in 1997.

Goons of realtors forcibly evict 44 poor families

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An armed gang led by an AL leader on Saturday evening forcibly evicted 44 poor Christian families living in a slum at Baptist Mission Road of the city.

The evicted families, protesting the eviction, locked the Baptist church across the road, and threatened to stop prayers there till their rehabilitation.

The gang during the eviction claimed that they had purchased the land from the Bangladesh Baptist Church Trust Association and was in possession of a court order. Earlier the court had issued an injunction against eviction of the poor families.

Locals and witnesses said, armed cadres and labourers led by Shafikul Alam Gulzar, councilor of BCC ward-11 and former district treasurer of Awami League, evicted the 44 landless families from 2.53 acres of land.

As soon as the eviction was complete, the perpetrators hung a signboard of proposed South Wave Medical College and Children Hospital there.

After the incident, the poor families took shelter in the adjacent Baptist church compound and started ringing the bell. They later locked the church in the evening.

Johnson Merry Guha, assistant secretary of Baptist Church claimed that the grabbed land was donated by British citizen Reverend Gordon Soddy to the Bangladesh Baptist Association, a subsidiary of Baptist Church Trustee in 1969 and it was non-transferable or non-saleable.

The land was ear-

marked for the ultra poor families of the community. A case is pending with the court against the Olympic Properties Limited, who claimed to have purchased it from the Church Trustee, Guha added.

However, Ansar Ali Hawlader, a director of the Olympic Properties Ltd, said that Reverend Asim Kumar Baroi, secretary, Bangladesh Baptist Church Trust Association sold the property for Tk 8.82 crore on February 8, 2012 and they plan to construct a private medical college and child-hospital at the site.

When they came to know about the deal, the Christian slum dwellers, claiming ownership of the land, lodged a case and got a temporary injunction.

But the district judge court vacated that injunction, Howlader claimed.

Contacted, AL leader Shafiqul Islam Gulzar admitted that he was present at the spot but declined to explain his role on the day.

Golam Rahman, sub inspector of Barisal, Kotwali police station, said police visited the spot and asked both sides to maintain law and order and follow the instruction of the court.

"We have asked the developer to stay away from the place," he said.

Meanwhile, the Christian community has announced that they would protest the matter and form a human chain in front of the town hall today.

DEATH OF TWO STUDENTS

Roadblock for arrest of culprits, compensation

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Students of Jessore Science and Technology University blocked Jessore-Jhenidah highway in Sadar upazila yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the driver of a bus that ran over two of their fellows.

They also demanded Tk 10 lakh compensation for each victim, setting up a bus stoppage in front of the university and a monument at the accident spot.

Two students were killed as the Jessore-bound bus of Garai paribahan rammied their motorbike on the highway at Shantola on Wednesday morning.

The victims are Mohammad Ali Rana, a third year student of Environmental Science and Health Management department and Asrafun Siddiqua Shoshi, a second year student of the same department.

The bus crushed the motorbike on its way to the university at around 9:40am, leaving Shoshi dead on the spot.

Rana was rushed to Jessore Medical College and Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

The agitating students yesterday staged sit-in on the highway, halting vehicular movement for about one and a half hours.

They also brought out a procession wielding sticks and torched a bus during

Follow-up

the protest.

Ratul Robi Das, a student of Environmental Science and Health Management department, told this correspondent that they would continue their protest

programme until the demands are met.

Later, the aggrieved students withdrew the barricade at about 1:30pm following an assurance by the local lawmaker Khalidur Rahman Tito of taking steps to meet the demands within tomorrow.



PHOTO: STAR/ BANGLAR CHOKH

Stick-wielding students of Jessore Science and Technology University (JSTU) block Jessore-Jhenidah highway at Shantola in Sadar upazila yesterday to press their five-point demand, including immediate arrest of the driver of a bus that killed two of their fellow students at Shantola point on Wednesday, above, the agitating students later set a Kushtia-bound bus afire on the road.

GUNFIGHT IN KOIRA OF KHULNA

Six dens of forest robbers destroyed

UNB, Bagerhat

A joint force of the law enforcers recovered four firearms and destroyed six dens and three watch towers of the forest robbers after a gunfight with notorious Shahidul Bahini at Geoakhali in Koira upazila in Khulna district yesterday morning.

Commander M Saidur Rahman of Coastguard, Mongla west zone, said a joint team of Rab-6, police, coast-guard and forest department launched a drive in the area at about 5am acting on a secret

information that the gang members of Shahidul were preparing to commit robbery.

He said the gang members fired on the law enforcers when the joint force reached Gayowakhali area at about 9am, forcing them to retaliate. The law enforcers and the robbers exchanged gunfire for over an hour.

At one stage, the robbers fled away. None was injured or arrested during the gunfight.

Later, the joint force raided the area recovered destroyed three towers and six dens of the robbers.

8 injured as villagers attack BGB camp

UNB, Naogaon

ABGB camp came under attack by villagers, leaving eight people, including six BGB members, injured in frontier Sapahar upazila yesterday.

Local sources said Abdul Jabbar Mondal of Gopalpur village and Abdul Haque of Shitaldanga village of the upazila were taking four of their cows to Sapahar Bazar by a human hauler for selling those at 2pm on Saturday.

A team of BGB held them suspecting that the cows were brought from India.

As the owners failed to show any valid document, the BGB members took the cows to their camp.

Union parishad chairman Maulana Abdul Baki and others went to the BGB's Khanjanpur camp to get back the cattle, but their request was turned down, which angered locals.

Later, over 100 men and women attacked the camp in the morning and took away the cows.

Camp commander subedar Azmal Hossain, nayek subedar Riaz Uddin, nayek

Mofiz Uddin, havilder Dilip Biswas, two sepoy-Shohag and Habibur Rahman, and two journalists-Taslim Uddin and Nayan Babu-were injured in the attack.

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