

Govt did not abandon plan to build deep-sea port in Ctg: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The implementation of the third seaport at Payra in Patuakhali by the government does not mean that it has retreated from its plan to build a deep-sea port in Chittagong, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"There could be a seaport in Payra, but we did not deviate from our plan to build a deep seaport in Chittagong. We will do it."

The minister made the comment while addressing reporters in front of the toll office of the third Karnaphuli bridge.

On August 31, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, president of Awami League's Chittagong unit, criticised the government's plan to implement Payra port instead of advancing the deep-sea port project at Sonadia.

He had also alleged that the proposed Asian Highway was rerouted to Sylhet instead of its pre-declared route through Chittagong.

In response to these allegations, but

without referring his name, Quader said: "With due respect, I can say that somebody may have misinformed him."

"The strategic importance of a deep-sea port in Chittagong is greater than Payra. But Payra is important as well," the minister said. The more these seaports are built, the more the country will prosper economically, he said.

On the Asian Highway, the minister said: "Chittagong would not be detached from it; it could not be."

"Chittagong is our financial capital and commercial hub. Disconnecting Chittagong would mean that there would be no international route in our country, and we cannot even think of that."

A total of eight kilometres of roads would be constructed to and from the third Karnaphuli bridge at a cost of Tk 304 crore, he said.

A tender to his effect will be floated this month and construction of the road will end in 2017, he said.

British business team arrives in Dhaka today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A delegation of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka today for a two-day visit with an aim to further strengthen trade opportunities for UK businesses in Bangladesh.

Simon Moore, international director for the CBI, and Shehla Hasan, CBI India's country head and policy director, will meet policy think-tanks, business leaders and academics, British High Commission in Dhaka said in a statement yesterday.

CBI is the UK's premier business lobbying organisation, and with offices in the UK as well as representation in Brussels, Washington, Beijing and Delhi, it communicates the British business voice around the world. UK Trade and Investment, a UK government department that works with businesses, will host a networking event with the leading British businesses in Bangladesh to share ideas and experiences of operating in the region.

"I am delighted that a delegation from the CBI is visiting Bangladesh. There is a long standing and rich relationship between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom and I hope the CBI's visit will help further strengthen the trade opportunities for UK businesses in Bangladesh," said Mark Clayton, acting British high commissioner to Bangladesh.

The UK is one of the largest investors in Bangladesh and also the third single largest destination for exports from Bangladesh, Clayton said.

Across the UK, CBI speaks on behalf of 190,000 businesses of all sizes and sectors which together employ nearly seven million people, about one third of the private sector-employed workforce. "Ramping up our exports and building trade links around the globe will help boost growth, create jobs and enhance productivity across the UK," said Moore.

G20 charts careful course in turbulent economic waters

AFP, Ankara

Warily watching economic clouds gathering in China and the possibility of an end to zero interest rates in the United States, G20 leaders steered a careful course at their meeting in Turkey at a time of uneven and fragile growth.

The two-day gathering in the Turkish capital Ankara came less than a month after China shocked financial markets with a surprise devaluation of its currency, triggering global jitters about declining growth and slumping stocks in the world's second-largest economy.

Meanwhile, what global recovery there is remains desperately uneven across the G20, with the United States picking up pace while Europe is only now emerging from crisis, and top emerging markets like Russia and Brazil are mired in recession.

"The major challenge facing the global economy is that growth remains moderate and uneven," said International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing director Christine Lagarde.

"The current economic situation is characterised by the word uncertainty," she said.

The final G20 communique unsurprisingly stayed clear of any specific mention of China. But, in a clear nudge to Beijing, it also urged states to avoid competitive currency devaluations that would give an unfair advantage to domestic exporters.

It also did not make any direct reference to the US Federal Reserve, with economists warning a lift-off interest rate rise at its meeting in September could deal a body blow to vulnerable emerging markets.

But the statement appeared to acknowledge a Fed rate rise could be on the cards at some point, saying that "in line with the improving economic outlook, monetary policy tightening is more likely in some advanced economies."

Lagarde said there was an "extremely broad and in-depth discussion" of the Fed's policies. She urged the US central bank to make the move when there was "no uncertainty".

The communique acknowledged the fragility of the recovery, saying "global growth falls short of our expectations".

The IMF has said in its latest world economic outlook that it expects global growth to be 3.3 percent in 2015 and expand to 3.8 percent in 2016 -- forecasts Lagarde said would have to be pruned further.

But the ministers and central bank chiefs said they were confident "the global economic recovery will gain speed", vowing to carefully calibrate economic and monetary policies in the pursuit of this goal.

Deputy Turkish Prime Minister Cevdet Yilmaz, who chaired the meeting, said "we are aware of the risks and challenges ahead of us."

"The world needs better cooperation of the chief players."



Shajahan Khan, shipping minister, looks on as Rear Admiral Mohammad Nizamuddin Ahmed, chairman of Chittagong Port Authority, hands over the five-year lease agreement to Muhammed Aziz Khan, chairman of Summit Group, at a programme in Chittagong last Wednesday. Summit Alliance Port Ltd has received three container vessels from the port authority.

Apple event expected to focus on iPhones, TV

AFP, San Francisco

Apple is expected to unveil updated iPhones Wednesday along with an Apple TV revamp that may signal a push into online television streaming dominated by Netflix.

Apple remained mum even as rumors ran rampant about what is in store at the San Francisco media event. In trademark enigmatic style, invitations provided little more than the time and place of the event, to be held at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium.



Mahmud Hasan, managing director of MedRx Life Science Ltd, and Biswas Shaheen Hassan, chief consultant of MedRx's dermatology division, cut a cake at the company's soft launching programme at the Nirvana Inn in Sylhet on Saturday. Md Abdul Wahab, a renowned dermatologist, was also present.

Business leaders call for better services at land ports

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Pankaj Saran, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, who attended the seminar as the special guest, also acknowledged the poor conditions of the land ports along the border.

"Infrastructure in the land ports has been neglected over the years. We should exchange visits regularly to solve the problems in those areas," he said, adding that the success of mutual trade and benefit between Bangladesh and India is largely dependent on the success of land port operations.

The crossing of immigrants through Benapole and Petrapole, the Indian side of Benapole port, has doubled to 1.2 million in 2014 from 600,000 in 2013, he said.

He urged the Bangladesh government to post customs officials at the different land ports to ensure smooth operations.

Some 22 of the 181 land customs stations along with 4,246 kilometres of Bangladesh's border with India and Myanmar have been declared as land ports, according to land port authorities.

Of the land ports, 21 are along the Indian border, with only one being in the vicinity of Myanmar-Teknaf Land Port in Cox's Bazar.

Ten land ports are in regular operations now but at least 15 are needed to increase business between the two countries, said Farid Uddin, a member of National Board of Revenue. "If we cannot operate the land ports properly, we cannot stop informal trade along the bordering areas."

Tapan Kumar Chakravorty, chairman of Bangladesh Land Port Authority, said the government has been implementing a project worth Tk 143 crore to widen a road up to Benapole port to ease traffic.

Shajahan Khan, shipping minister, said the government will not allow private companies to operate the land ports as their experiences with them are not pleasant. The government will announce the Sheola customs station in Sylhet as a land port soon as the potential of this port is high, he said.

Nakugaon in Sherpur district is another good customs station that might also be announced as a land port, he said.

Abdul Matlub Ahmad, president of FBCCI, moderated the seminar, while Md Nojibur Rahman, chairman of NBR, also spoke.

Automakers, Google take different roads to automated cars

REUTERS, Detroit

From his laboratory at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, automated vehicle pioneer Raj Rajkumar says self-driving cars will evolve step-by-step, with humans staying in charge for a long time to come.

More than 2,500 miles west in Mountain View, California, Chris Urmson, head of Google Inc's self-driving car program since 2009, has a different view: A fully automated vehicle that requires no input or intervention from humans is a safer choice, and one that could be ready for production by 2020.

Partially automating a car can reduce certain accident risks, but can also create new safety challenges not easily solved by current technology. Urmson, one of Rajkumar's former colleagues at Carnegie Mellon, said he worries that drivers could muffle the handoff when an automated system suddenly demands they start making decisions about where to steer.

"The better the technology gets," he said, "the less reliable

the driver is going to get."

Google's all-in approach differs from the auto industry's strategy on autonomous vehicle technology that will manifest itself in vehicles consumers can buy over the next two to three years.

Mainstream automakers General Motors Co and Volkswagen AG and newcomer Tesla Motors Inc are pushing down the road to automation outlined by Rajkumar. They are accelerating plans to bring automated driving to the market in stages, starting as early as this year. A small group of Tesla owners is testing its "Autopilot" system that will allow hands-free highway cruising and automated parking. Tesla said it expects to offer the technology more widely later this year.

Technology that allows a car to park itself is already on the market, and a growing number of vehicles are equipped with systems that automatically apply the brakes, correct the steering or maintain a set distance from a vehicle ahead in the lane.

The automakers' rush to partially automated driving is moving faster than regulators can prescribe new rules of the road. Some experts - Urmson is one - are concerned that drivers may not respond well to cars that let them surrender control for long stretches.

Alerting a driver to retake control during an emergency is one of the biggest safety challenges for manufacturers of partially automated cars, industry officials and scientists said.

Depending on the level of automation and intensity of alert, some drivers took an average of 17 seconds to respond to a take-over request and regain control of the vehicle, in a study just released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and supported by Google and several leading automakers and suppliers. In that time, a car traveling at 60 miles per hour would travel more than a quarter of a mile.

Time to respond and regain control was reduced to just a few seconds when visual and audible warnings were accompanied by non-visual alerts such as a nudge from a mechanism in the seat.



Officials of Labib Group pose at the company's annual get-together. Salahuddin Alamgir, chairman of Labib Group, and Sultana Jahan, vice chairman, attended the event. Excel telecom, a sister concern of Labib Group, is the authorised distributor for Samsung mobile in Bangladesh.



Md Yeasin Ali, chairman of Bangladesh Development Bank Ltd, hands over a certificate to a participant of a foundation training course for the newly recruited officers, at a programme at the bank's training institute in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka. Md Wahiduzzaman Khandaker, deputy managing director, was also present.

Local firms eye global fish fillet market

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It has also created thousands of jobs. Today, Bangladesh is the world's fifth largest producer of fish from inland aquaculture, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Despite increasing production and farming, neither telapia nor pangasius is processed to make fillets, for which there is high demand abroad. And in the absence of industrial processing, farmers do not get fair prices of their farmed fish during supply glut, said stakeholders.

Fillet processing would increase demand and facilitate farmers to get fair prices, said the Earth Agro MD, adding that the company has started negotiating with fish farms to grow pangasius through contract farming.

The global market for fillets stands at around \$200 billion a year and processors from Vietnam dominate the trade, he said. The market for pangasius and telapia is rising due to the declining supply of marine catches and various regulations on sea fishing imposed by the nations, said M Shamsul Kibria, managing director of S&K Associates that plans to invest Tk 164 crore to build a factory.

The firm plans to start construction of the plant in October to process 60 tonnes of fish a day, said Kibria, former joint secretary of the fisheries ministry.

The US and Europe are the main markets for fish fillets, with demand rising in the Middle East and other parts of the world as well, he added. The domestic market prospects are also looking good thanks to the rising number of restaurants and international chain hotels.

A senior official of Virgo Fish said the firm is targeting both the domestic and export markets.

However, there are shortcomings. Currently, the pink-fleshed pangasius sutchi variety is widely cultured, the demand for which is low in the global market.

As buyers prefer the white-fleshed ones, fries of the pangasius hypophthalmus variety are being imported for cultivation here, Chowdhury said. The pangasius hypophthalmus variety has white coloured flesh.

Nittyaranjan Biswas, principal scientific officer of DoF, said fillet-making would open a new avenue for seafood business in Bangladesh. "Until now, we have remained shrimp-based. Fillets will diversify our fish export basket."

But its entry into the world market will depend largely on quality control from farm to processing, he added.

Pop-up tax centre at the secretariat for govt staff

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In light of this, they have been brought under tax bracket, Bhuiyan added. Muhith urged the tax officials to be compassionate when dealing with taxpayers. "While executing the law you must put yourself in your counterpart's shoes."

Many evade paying taxes due to the harassment faced in the hands of the tax officials, he said.

The finance minister also criticised the self-assessment system for paying taxes, terming its conditions to be flawed.

To pay taxes using the self-assessment method, the individual must increase his/her income every year, as per the rules.

But if one's income does not go up in reality, he/she cannot use this system, Muhith added. MA Mannan, state minister for finance and planning, said the NBR will have to leverage the team spirit to boost its receipts.