

# Meghalaya CM hails decision to allow use of Ctg, Mongla ports

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India's Meghalaya state Chief Minister Conrad Sangma yesterday welcomed the decision to open the Chittagong port to facilitate trade with India's Northeastern states, saying it will cut transportation cost and expose their goods to international markets.

Sangma said the decision will boost trade in the region and Meghalaya in particular, which shares a 443-km border with Bangladesh.

"This is a big step towards ensuring that we in the Northeast have port connectivity and accessibility," Sangma said while addressing the sixth edition of the 'Young Leaders Connect' in Shillong.

The Chittagong port accessibility will reduce transportation cost for goods and allow exposure for north-eastern states to international markets, he said.

The Bangladesh cabinet had earlier this month approved a draft agreement to allow northeastern states of India to use Chittagong and Mongla ports, primarily aimed at restoring pre-partition logistics for the entire northeast region. An agreement for this was inked by the Shipping

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Crammed with admission seekers, a shuttle train arrives at the Chittagong University Railway Station as CU admission test for the 2018-2019 session began yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## The more

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well aware of the potential of social networks like Instagram, and they're more than willing to give away some sushi, if it means getting some exposure. At their restaurant, people have the classic payment options – cash or card – plus a novel one, paying in Instagram followers. The idea is pretty simple, the more followers you have, the more you can eat without having to spend a cent.

It makes sense that Instagram stars with hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers get the most free food, but even a measly 1,000 followers on the photo-sharing platform will get you a free bit to it. Patrons who have between 1,000 and 5,000 followers will get a free sushi plate. 5,000 to 10,000 followers will get you two free plates, 10,000 to 50,000, four free dishes, 50,000 to 100,000 followers, eight dishes, and people with 100,000 Instagram followers get a free full lunch or dinner.

There is one catch though. Just having a lot of followers isn't enough, patrons also have to publish a post on their Instagram account and tag @thisisnotasushibar and include the hashtag #thisisnotasushibar. They will only receive their free sushi after showing the publish post at the counter.

"Today, advertising on channels such as social networks and, in particular, Instagram, is what works best," the Pittarello brothers said, adding that the objective of their innovative payment method is twofold – by involving Instagrammers both big and small the business will get bigger exposure, and it will also make patrons feel invested in the project.

"This Is Not a Sushibar" introduced the new payment option on October 11, but we'll have to wait and see how long it will be available for. Without a set limit of daily Instagram payments, I think the restaurant may start recording losses pretty soon. After all, 1,000 followers on Instagram are not that hard to get, and people will rarely say no to a free lunch," they added.

# Road transport workers

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strike if their demands are not met within two days.

The demands include making all offences under the Road Transport Act "bailable", cancellation of the provision that allows a worker to be fined Tk 5 lakh for involvement in a road accident, changing the minimum educational qualification required to obtain driving licences from class-VIII to class-V, and ending harassment by police on roads.

However, speaking there, Osman Ali, general secretary of the federation, said, "The door for discussions is still open. We will withdraw our work abstention if our demands are met. We will not drive vehicles with non-bailable sections in the law."

He added that in a country where a person can become a lawmaker without an educational certificate, they would not accept having to meet the educational requirement for getting a licence.

He alleged that the law had been enacted to stir up problems between the federation and its executive president Shajahan Khan, also the shipping minister, as some people in the government disliked him for his involvement with the federation.

Several transport leaders also criticised the media for "holding only drivers accountable" for accidents and "advocating" harsh punishment.

The federation, an umbrella organisation of the country's transport workers, has around 70 lakh members, its leaders said.

Workers of all motorised-vehicles, including buses, trucks, CNG-run auto-rickshaws, and human hauliers,

are members of the federation, Osman told The Daily Star last night.

"So no such vehicle will ply the street for the next two days."

When asked about indefinite the strike, Osman said, "We will go for 96-hour work abstention if our demands are not met even after this 48-hour strike," adding, "However, that will not start immediately after the 48-hour programme. We will inform the media when we do [that]."

If their demands are still not met after the 96-hour work abstention, then they would go for indefinite strike, he said.

The federation, on October 12, had given October 27 as the deadline to meet their demands and threatened the two-day work abstention otherwise.

However, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at a press conference on Tuesday said there was no question of amending the law within the tenure of the government as only a few days were left of the parliament's last session.

Obaidul, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, said the law had been enacted after three years of discussions with transport leaders.

Earlier this month, Bangladesh Goods Transport Owners Workers United Association called an indefinite work abstention in Dhaka division over their seven-point demand, including bringing amendments to the Act.

However, three days into the abstention, the organisation however, postponed their programme until October 31 after the Home Minister Asaduzzaman Kamal assured its leaders of considering their demands.

# Ensure fair polls or face punishment

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face such a punishment that you cannot even imagine."

The seven-point demand include holding of the election under a non-partisan interim government, dissolution of parliament before the polls, reconstitution of Election Commission with people of good credentials, and deployment of the Army with magistracy power during the polls.

"They [government] have taken the oath to uphold the constitution but they are violating it every day. They will have to be punished for this," he said addressing the rally as the chief guest on Nur Ahmed Road in Kazir Dewri.

"They in 2014 said the polls held then was for an interim period. But they spent five years without holding the next polls, which is a serious offence and they will have to be held accountable for it," he said.

Regarding the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Dr Kamal said, "... the government is liable for every hour of her imprisonment."

"Whenever the people united, they made everything possible ... people would do it this time too," Dr Kamal said.

From different parts of the city, the leaders and activists of the Oikyafront started converging on Nur Ahmed Road in small processions around 10:30am yesterday even though the rally was scheduled for 2:00pm.

By 1:00pm, a huge crowd had gathered as leaders and activists from different upazilas and adjacent districts joined the rally braving alleged obstruction by police and ruling party men.

Police kept one side of Nur Ahmed Road open to traffic. As a result, people were packed in about half a kilometre stretch of the road from the stage.

Large banners and festoons were seen hanging around the venue demanding release of Khaleda, BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman, standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and other leaders.

In the morning, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed and Mirza Abbas, and Vice-Chairman Abdullah Al Noman offered fateha at the shrine of Shah Amanat (RA).

Since morning, the number of private vehicles on city streets was fewer than normal.

Addressing the rally, Fakhrul said no autocratic government could stay in office suppressing the people or survive using muscle power and firearms.

If people could exercise their franchise, the Awami League would face a debacle. "That's why they are so frightened," he said.

"We have sacrificed so much; many of our leaders have been victims of forced disappearances and murders, and many are languishing in jail.

"We will not bow down to injustice any more ... we will only return home after our seven-point demand is met," he added.

Fakhrul also criticised the government for implicating Tarique Rahman, now in London, in false and politically motivated cases. He said all efforts to keep him abroad would go in vain.

About civil servants, BNP central standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said, "You are not the servants of the government, but of the people."

"It is the last time Hasina is in office and the civil servants should ignore

directives of the government and stand beside the people," he said.

BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed said, "The government had enacted Digital Security Act and Broadcast Act with the ill motive of keeping the media mum before the polls."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President ASM Abdur Rab urged the government to hold dialogues with them before declaring the election schedule, otherwise "the government would be liable for the consequences".

"You will have to leave power. Filing cases and persecution will bring no result," he added.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagarik Okiya, said the government has been saying that the election would be held under the Hasina administration, but "we are saying that election would be held after ousting them from power".

He criticised the government for keeping Khaleda in prison.

Zafarullah Chowdhury of Gonoshasthaya Kendra said more intellectuals and politicians, including former president Badruddoza Chowdhury, would join the Oikyafront in 10 days.

Unlike any other leaders on the rally stage, former Ducus VP and former AL leader Sultan Mohammed Mansur wearing a "Mujib Coat". He said BNP founder Ziaur Rahman proclaimed the independence on behalf of Bangabandhu on March 27 and there's no way to distort history.

Like in the Sylhet rally of Oikyafront, he ended his speech saying, "Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu."

BNP standing committee members Mirza Abbas and Abdul Moin Khan, vice-chairmen Abdullah Al Noman,

former AL leader Sultan Mohammed Mansur, Kalyan Party Chairman Syed Mohammad Ibrahim and Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Redwan Ahmed addressed the rally presided over by city BNP president Shahadat Hossain.

**OBSTACLES ON THE WAY**

The leaders and activists of Oikyafront who joined the rally from different upazilas alleged that they faced obstacles and threats from ruling party men and police.

Idris Mia, vice-president of Chattogram district (South) BNP and former upazila chairman of Patiya, said they paid in advance to rent four buses and four microbuses two days ago so that they could join the rally.

The bus owners returned the money on Friday saying there was mounting pressure on them from the administration and the police, Idris alleged. He said eventually they had to use autorickshaws to get to the rally venue.

Anwara upazila Jubo Dal leader Md Salauddin alleged that they had to take detours on sideroads to avoid police harassment.

Humayun Kabir, former general secretary of Chattogram district (south) BNP, told The Daily Star that when they were on their way to the rally, police took away their banner in DCHill area.

Chattogram district (north) BNP Vice-President Afsar Uddin Helal told The Daily Star that police took position at every intersection of Fatikchhari upazila to prevent BNP activists from attending the rally.

Nure Alam Mina, superintendent of police in Chattogram, told The Daily Star that police did not intercept any activists of the BNP. "Their claims are baseless," he said.

# AnonTex riding

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the higher authorities of the relevant department, the Financial Integrity and Customer Services Department (FICSD), top BB officials said.

On the same day, an additional director of the same department sent another letter to Janata, asking it to take necessary steps to recover the previous loans from AnonTex.

Confused about which instruction to follow, Janata sent a letter to the BB, requesting clarifications.

Ahmed Jamal, deputy governor of the BB who heads the FICSD, said he did not know that the central bank accepted the plan placed by AnonTex.

"We are examining how two letters with different directives were sent on the same day," he told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

The top management has demanded an explanation from the FICSD about the matter.

"We are preparing the explanation," said Jamal Mollah, general manager of the department.

The matter came to light recently after Janata Bank discussed the two conflicting directives in its 542nd board meeting. A BB official was also present in the meeting as an observer.

Sources said the BB official informed the top management about the matter.

Subsequently, Mizanur was transferred to another department on October 22.

Mizanur had led the January investigation into Janata's loan to AnonTex. The probe found, among other things, that AnonTex's loans are posing a serious threat to Janata Bank's existence.

Contacted last night by phone, he said he sent the letter with approval from the higher authorities, but would not say who gave him the go-ahead.

AnonTex has long been enjoying

various favour from Janata and the BB.

In its January investigation, the BB found Janata Bank gave a staggering loan of Tk 5,508 crore to AnonTex through various irregularities. Of the sum, Tk 2,643 crore were bad loans.

The probe team recommended classifying the amount.

"If this huge amount of loan is not classified, the existence of the state-owned bank will be under threat," the probe report said, asking Janata Bank board to make a plan to recover the loan.

In response, Janata wrote to the FICSD that AnonTex would be able to pay the loan and that there was no need for it to classify the amount. The department accepted it.

But the company failed to pay back and became a defaulter in June, creating a capital shortfall in Janata Bank.

**That jailer**

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Station around 1:30pm. They recovered 12 bottles of Phensedyl from Soheli's bag, said Md Abdul Mazid, officer-in-charge of Government Railway Police (GRP) in Bhairab.

Police also recovered Tk 44.43 lakh in cash, FDRs of around Tk 2.50 crore deposited with different banks and bank cheques issued in favour of him totaling around Tk 1.30 crore from the bag, the OC said.

Additional Superintendent of Railway Police Md Mohibul Islam and Additional Superintendent of police Faruq Ahmed, both from Dhaka interrogated Soheli at Bhairab Railway Police Station, the OC added.

Two cases were filed against Soheli with the police station under the Money Laundering Act and the Narcotics Control Act.

# People suffer as Shahbagh blocked

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No vehicle could pass through the area during the protest, causing suffering to people. Many were stuck in long tailbacks on adjacent roads. People were seen walking to their destinations.

Ehsan Sheikh, a resident student of Dhaka University, said, "I left Sir F Rahman Hall for Farmgate around 4:00pm, but could not reach there in two hours as my bus was stuck in a long tailback."

Meshkat Hassan came to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University for treatment of his mother. He said it took him two hours to reach the hospital at Shahbagh from Gulistan, a distance that usually takes around half an hour.

The two took a bus, but got off the

vehicle halfway through and walked to the hospital.

The Chhatra Parishad was scheduled to hold a rally in front of the National Museum at 11:30am yesterday, but the programme started an hour later as the Chinese minister for public security was visiting the museum at that time.

After the rally ended, the demonstrators marched in a procession to the Shahbagh intersection.

In a statement yesterday, the Chhatra Parishad said they have been staging demonstrations since 2012 to press home the demand. Several lawmakers extended their support to the demand, but it was yet to be met.

In June this year, a parliamentary committee on the public administration

ministry had recommended extending the age limit to 35 for entering civil service.

It again made the same recommendation on September 10.

**PM'S INTERVENTION SOUGHT**

Demonstrators yesterday sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention in the issue to implement the recommendation.

"A parliamentary committee on public administration had thrice recommended increasing the age limit, but it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears," Intiaz Ali, president of the Chhatra Parishad, told The Daily Star.

He said they were told by the authorities concerned that a gazette notification on increasing the age limit

would be issued before the publication of 40th BCS circular. But that didn't happen for some unknown reasons.

"We had taken to the streets demanding publication of the gazette. If necessary, we will submit to mass arrest, but won't leave the streets until our demand is met."

Chhatra League General Secretary Golam Rabbani visited the demonstrators around 1:30pm and assured them of conveying their demand to the PM.

"Make sure that no anti-government element enters this peaceful programme," the BCL leader cautioned the demonstrators.

Currently, the age limit for entering public service is 30 and the retirement age 59.

smaller amounts of the drug.

According to the Department of Narcotics Control, about 50 methamphetamine pills weigh five grams, meaning roughly 2,000 pills would result in the highest punishment under the bill.

Additionally, for carrying less than 25gms of heroin or cocaine, the penalty will be a two to ten year jail sentence.

The maximum punishment for any individual or organisation financing or patronising drug dealing will be the death penalty.

Shisha and khat are also mentioned in the draft bill, while there is a part on incorporating dope tests, as the existing law does not address these.