

Customs office runs in rented building

Importers need to travel 50 kilometres to get done with paying duties in Patuakhali town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Since inception in 2016, the Payra port authorities have been running their custom house at a rented house in Patuakhali town, some 50 kilometres off the port, much to the inconvenience of importers and exporters.

The land ministry is yet to take step on an application seeking land for construction of a custom house that the port authorities had submitted almost four years ago, said Md Habibur Rahman, assistant commissioner of the custom house.

"In a letter sent in February 2016, we sought 40 acres of land to build a custom house that would accommodate not only the office but also residential facilities, warehouse and laboratory. But it was never approved.

"To make the port more dynamic, a permanent office needs to be set up in vicinity of the port. That will spare the businessmen from unnecessary hassle," Habibur added.

The port these days remain busy with

loading and unloading of coal as a coal power plant is currently under construction nearby. A 660-megawatt unit of the plant is scheduled to be inaugurated in January 2020.

Coal importers have expressed annoyance as they need to travel 50 kilometres to Patuakhali town to get done with paying duties through banks.

"Custom house and banking facilities should be arranged in vicinity of the port to serve the interest of businessmen and port users," said Mohiuddin Ahmed, president, Patuakhali Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The Chattogram and Mongla port have already launched online duty paying systems," he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid foundation of the Payra sea port in November 2013 at Tiakhali in Kalapara upazila. Its operation kick-started in August 2016.

Until November this year, 43 foreign ships have been loaded and unloaded at the port and the custom house have collected over Tk133.28 crore as revenues.



Patuakhali customs office runs its activities in this rented building in the town.

PHOTO: STAR



A delegation team from Bapa visits a water body in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila yesterday. Its water has been badly polluted by toxic waste of a nearby factory.

PHOTO: STAR

Risking 600 lives, school continues in unsafe building for 4 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The L-shaped two-storey building of the school, in the heart of Kotchandpur upazila town, appears to have been maintained well, with fairly new paintjob on the outside and lush green trees in the front.

But Education Engineering Department (EED) in Jhenidah declared this older building, built in 1960 on the northern corner of Kotchandpur Secondary Girls' School, unsafe in 2015 for its deplorable condition.

Iron rods are exposed in almost all its twelve rooms as plasters keep falling off from the ceilings and cracks continue to be visible on walls of many of its rooms and the outer hallway.

Nearly 600 students of eighth, ninth and tenth grades still attend classes in the building risking their

lives as the authorities, till date, were unable to arrange any substitute classrooms for them.

About 500 other students of the renowned school, established in 1953, attend their classes in a newer building on the southern side of the school compound, situated on 2.09 acres of land that was donated by local philanthropists.

Jannatul Ferdous, a ninth grader at the school, said attending classes in the north building is a nightmare as both students and teachers, 35 in total, cannot keep their eyes off the ceilings of the classrooms, worrying about possible fatalities due to falling plasters.

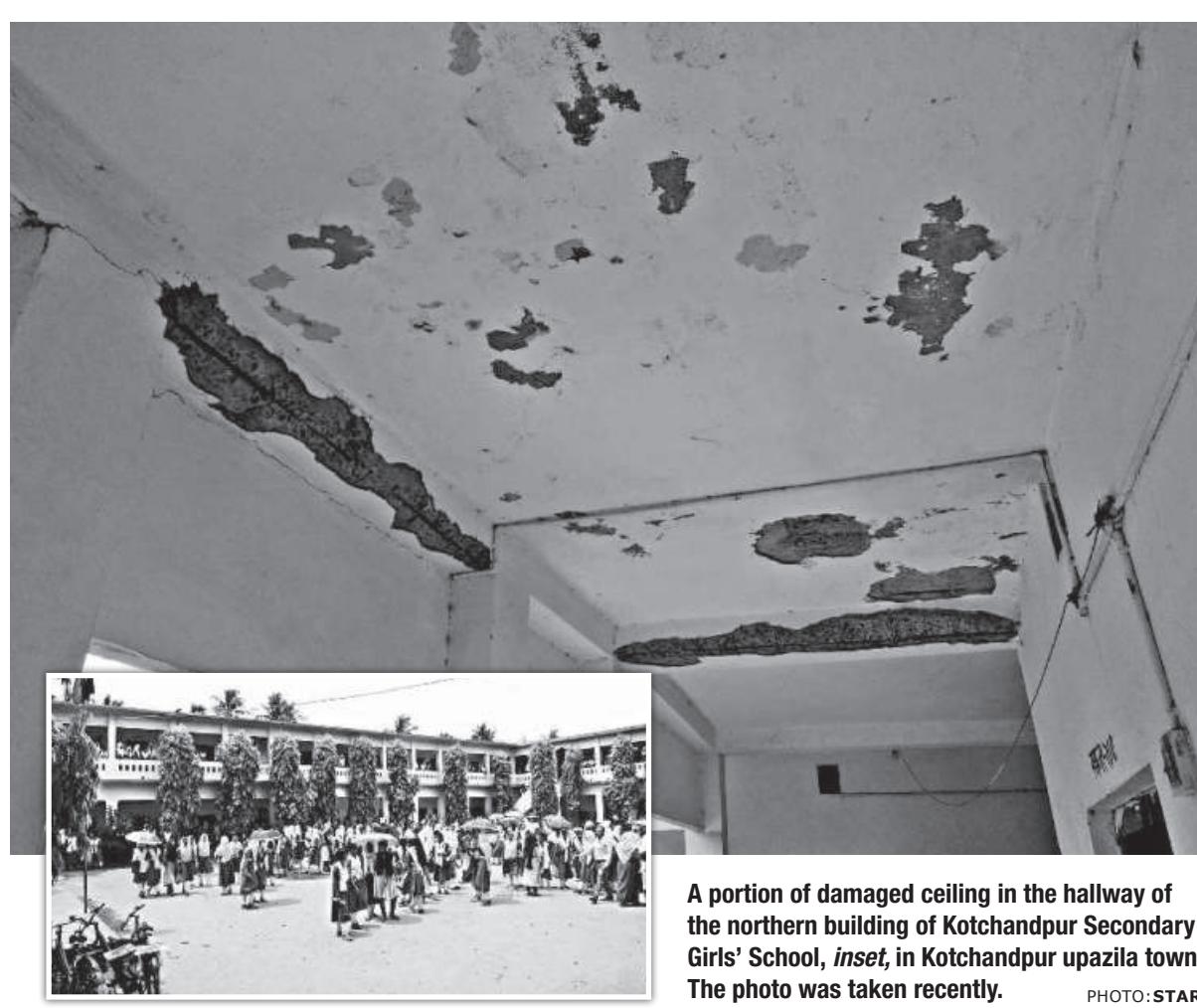
Ishaque Ali, the school's headteacher, said following a visit by an assistant engineer of EED in Jhenidah, the north building of the school was declared risky and unfit for use by the department on

February 3, 2015.

The building was damaged further in an earthquake in 2017 and the upazila administration in a letter urged the higher authorities to take necessary steps in this regard on November 13 the same year. With the higher authorities paying no heed to the matter, classes continued in the building.

On July 24, 2018, five of his students were admitted to a local hospital after they sustained injuries from falling plasters, the teacher said adding that he cannot stop worrying about the worst when classes are taken in the building.

Upazila Secondary Education Officer Ratan Mia said while awaiting response from the authorities, they were continuing their efforts in getting necessary funds for the repair of the building.



A portion of damaged ceiling in the hallway of the northern building of Kotchandpur Secondary Girls' School, inset, in Kotchandpur upazila town. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Stop dumping of industrial waste in Habiganj water bodies

Bapa urges authorities concerned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) demanded to stop dumping of industrial waste in water bodies, canals and rivers.

A delegation team from Bapa led by its central committee general secretary Sharif Jamil made the demand on a visit to Bangaduba area in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila yesterday.

The other members of the team were Khowai River Water Keeper Tofazzal Sohel, Prof Nasreen Haque and Dr Ali Ahsan Chowdhury.

During the visit, the delegation found that the toxic waste of factories was being dumped in the surrounding canals and rivers. The industrial pollution has plagued the area for years but it seems there is none to see this as no effective measures have been taken to control the pollution.

Actually, it is imperative for the government to carry out more stringent and competent anti-pollution actions to control industrial pollution in the area.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of



Bapa in Habiganj unit, said they are extremely concerned over the ongoing industrial pollution.

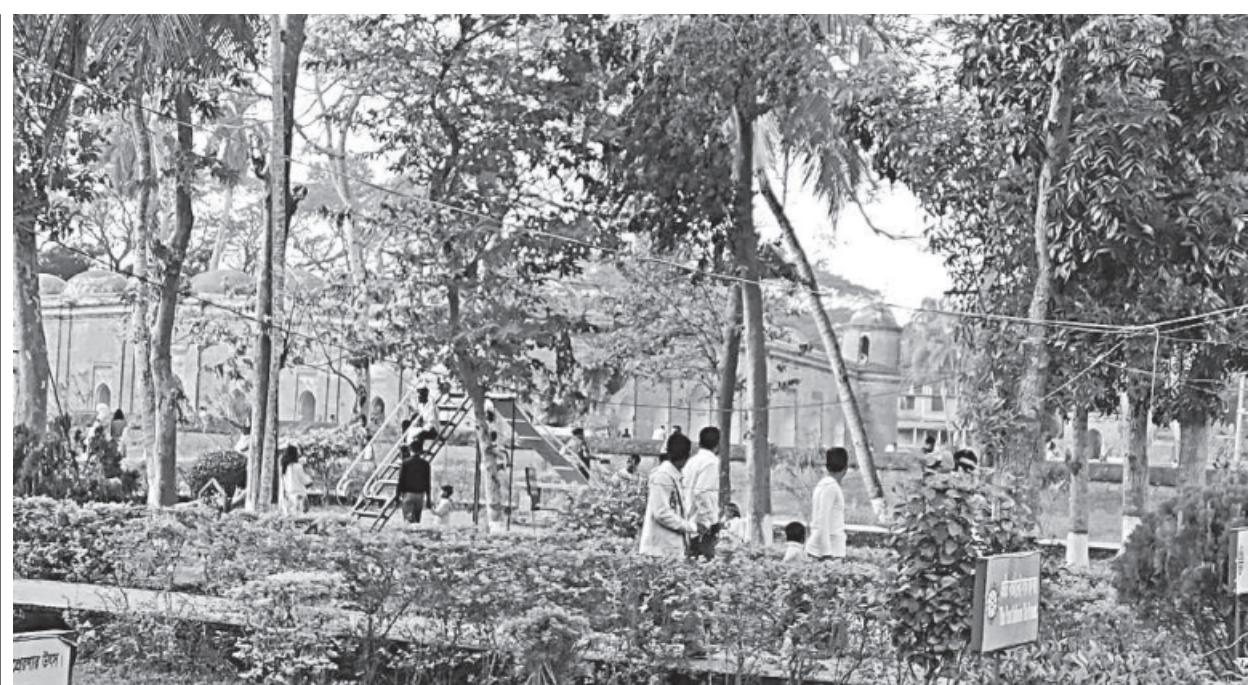
"We urge the administration and other responsible institutions and officials to take effective steps to control industrial pollution immediately," he said.

Manwar Ali, 70, a resident of Bangaduba village, said the water of Bangaduba canal has been badly polluted by toxic waste of factory. But none take any initiative to save

this canal.

Sharif Jamil said he is so shocked to see the disposal of ongoing industrial waste in the water bodies of Madhabpur. They are repeatedly urging the government to pay attention to this issue.

The entire industrialization around Habiganj should be brought under a comprehensive plan and monitoring system in a credible, transparent and inclusive manner immediately, he added.



Visitors from home and abroad crowd at the historic Shat Gombuj Mosque premises in Bagerhat Sadar upazila. The 650-year-old mosque, also known as the Sixty Dome Mosque, usually buzz with visitors in the winter season. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PARTHACHAKRABORTTY

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