

FOUR YEARS OF OPENING OF GUBRAKURA, KAROITALI LAND PORTS Yet to see full operation

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Over four years after the inauguration, Gubrakura and Karoitali land ports in Haluaghat under the district are yet to start full-fledged functioning.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan formally inaugurated the land ports, first of its kind in Mymensingh region, on September 15 in 2012.

But the land ports, some 174 kilometres from Dhaka and 57 kilometres from Mymensingh town, are used mainly for a limited scale import of coal.

Traders have urged development of sufficient infrastructure including wide roads, warehouse, yards, weighbridge, administrative building at the land ports to boost export

and import through them.

Check post with immigration facilities should be introduced immediately to make the ports fully functional, said M Suruj Miah, president of Karoitali Coal and Coke Importers Welfare Association.

"Border market and corridor at the land ports should open soon to boost economic growth in this area and the country as well.

"We want a four-lane road from the land ports to Mymensingh for easy transport of the import and export items. This year 5000 tonnes of stone was imported through the ports," he said.

If the land port starts full functioning, the government and the people, especially of this area, would be benefited as financial activities will

see a boost and more job opportunities will be created, said traders.

Ismail Hossain Mondol, secretary of Karoitali Coal and Coke Importers Welfare Association, said some 1000 importers are engaged in coal import at Karoitali and Gubrakura Land Customs (LC) stations now but the import and export will increase manifold when the port becomes fully functional.

"If the land port starts functioning in full swing, we will be able to import coal, stone, bamboo, raw materials of cement, chemicals, fruits, spices, paper, motorcycle, light and heavy vehicles, spare parts and so on," said Ali Asgar, secretary of Haluaghat Exporters and Importers Group.

It will ease export of readymade garments, cement, melamine, ceram-

ics, cosmetics, juice, frozen and dry fishes and packaged food items to India and Bhutan, he added.

Fully functional land ports with immigration and export facilities will bring added revenue for the government round the year, traders said, adding that it will also help easy visit to many Indian states including Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Arunachal and West Bengal.

Md Lutfur Rahman, revenue officer of Gubrakura and Karoitali LC stations, said the government earned around Tk 70 crore as revenue in two years till October last year from the two land ports.

If immigration and export facilities are available through the ports, the revenue earning would be doubled, he hoped.