



Journalists marching streets in Chapainawabganj town in a silent procession (left) and staging sit-in demonstrations in Rajshahi and Chandpur (right) yesterday in protest against the April 16 police action on media men in Chittagong divisional stadium.

PHOTO: STAR

Acute power crisis hits tea industry

3.5 to 3.8 MW supplied against demand for 15 MW in gardens in Moulvibazar and Habiganj

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

Acute power crisis has hit production in tea gardens, besides affecting normal life in Moulvibazar.

Tea gardens under the Moulvibazar Pally Bidduyt Samity (PBS) are the worst sufferers, which is affecting the export earning sector.

Gardens in Moulvibazar and Habiganj have already suffered a blow due to drought. Sprouting and growth of leaves were delayed as there was no rain from October to March.

Plucking started after rains in March, but production is hampered now due to frequent load shedding, industry sources told this correspondent.

The Moulvibazar PBS gets only 9 mw to 10 mw power daily against its demand for 25 mw, sources said.

According to Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) sources here, there are 115 tea gardens in Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts, which account for 88 per cent of tea produced in the country.

Operation of 60 factories in tea gardens are being greatly affected since tea production season began in February, they said.

All the gardens except those owned by James Finlay and Duncan Brothers are dependent on power supply by PBS. The two foreign companies have their own power generation system.

Demand for power in tea gardens in the two districts is 15 mw daily but the supply is between 3.5 and 3.8 mw, sources said.

Before start of tea production season in February, leaders of Bangladesh Cha Sangsad (BCS), an organisation of country's tea garden owners, met Rural Electrification Board authorities and urged them to ensure uninterrupted power supply to gardens. But this produced no result, they said.

Moulvibazar PBS has 3080 kilometer power supply lines covering 912 villages in seven upazilas of the district.

But the power supply is far less than the needs. Srimangal upazila gets 2.5 mw power against its demand for 8.5 mw, Rajnagar 0.80 mw against 3.5 mw, Kamalganj 1.5 mw against 6.5 mw and Baralekha and Juri upazilas together get only one mw against a demand for 3.7 mw, the sources said.

When contacted, the Executive Engineer of Srimangal Power Grid Station said, daily demand for power in Sylhet division during peak hour is 175 mw while the Shiddirganj Load Distribution Centre (LDC) supplies only 90 mw.

This 90 mw power is distributed by Srimangal Power Grid Station among five power sub-stations.

Sylhet sub-station gets 48 per cent of its demand for 90 mw, Srimangal 18 per cent of 30 mw, Habiganj 15 per cent of 25 mw, Chhatak 7 per cent of 12 mw and Fenchiganj sub-station gets 12 per cent of its demand for 18 mw, the official said.

Sources in Moulvibazar Power Development Board (PDB) office said, they get only 16 mw power from the National Grid daily. Of this, 9.5 mw is supplied to Moulvibazar PBS and the rest is supplied to PDB's subscribers through its own transmission lines in the district.

Three power plants in Sylhet division supply 114 mw power to National Grid.



Children, joined by teenagers, formed a three-kilometre human chain on Satkhira-Jessore road yesterday to create awareness about child rights.

PHOTO: STAR

A unique day for Satkhira children

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

It was a unique day for the children in the small town of Satkhira yesterday who took to the streets and joined hands to create awareness to protect and ensure child rights.

Over 3,000 school children, both boys and girls, formed a three-kilometre human chain from Kadamtala to Satkhira town by the side of Satkhira-Jessore road raising their voices to ensure child rights in line with the Child Rights Convention of the United Nations.

A meeting also held in front of the main gate of the Deputy Commissioner's office during the programme.

Chaired by Aparesh Pal, director of Bangladesh Vision, a local NGO, it was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Altaf Hossain as chief guest while Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) SM Ashrafuzzaman, Assistant Commissioner of Land Nayeab Ali and Peter D' Costa were present as special guests.

It was addressed by Madhab Dutta, Farida Akhtar Beauty, Shyamal Kanti, Mili Binaru, Peter Sudip Halder.

Speakers stressed the need for ensuring rights of children in line with the Child Rights Convention of the United Nations.

They said, mere enactment of law cannot protect child rights. Public awareness is a must for attaining the desired goal, they said.

They said, the civil society should take the responsibility for development of children alongside the government.

They lamented observing non-implementation of laws enacted to protect child rights. They called for implementation of laws to safeguard child rights in the society.

They called upon the government to formulate an action plan to eliminate all kinds of exploitation including child labour. They also urged the government and NGOs to work unitedly for welfare of children.

More protests against Ctg police excesses

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists' protests across the country against the April 16 police attack on media men in Chittagong entered the third day yesterday.

They brought out processions, held rallies and staged sit-in demonstrations in several districts demanding judicial probe into the incident and punishment to the culprits.

Our RU Correspondent reports: Rajshahi Union of Journalist, Rajshahi Press Club, Metropolitan Press Club, Rajshahi Photo Journalists Association and civil society members jointly staged a sit-in in front of Rajshahi Press Club, protesting the police excesses.

At a rally held there prior to the sit-in, speakers threatened of tougher agitation if a proper inquiry into the incident is not done and culprits punished.

Repression on media men increase after the four-party alliance government came to power because it did not take action against such act of brutality, they said.

Such "repression" on journalists not only gags the media at home but also tarnishes image of the country abroad, they said. President of Rajshahi Union of journalist (RUJ)

Hassan Millat presided over the rally.

The speakers who included civil society members alleged that police officials behaved like cadres of ruling parties in Chittagong on April 16.

They attacked on-duty journalists without any provocation. They held the government responsible for this. If this continues, democratic process and development will be shattered, they said.

Journalists in Rajshahi will continue demonstrations till the culprits are punished, they said.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club General Secretary Anisuzzaman, former RUJ president Mostafizur Rahman Khan, former Rajshahi Press Club president Kurshid-bin-Alam, SM Shaju, Sharif Sumon, Shahadat Hossain Badsha and Rashied Ripon.

Many civil society members, political leaders and activists and professionals joined the one-hour sit-in.

The Progressive Teachers Association at Rajshahi University, journalist and leaders of Progotishil Chhatra Jote (PCJ) at the university in separate statements yesterday condemned the police attacked and

demanded punishment to the culprits.

Our Kishoreganj Correspondent reports: Journalists in Kishoreganj yesterday brought out a procession and paraded streets of the town protesting the Chittagong incident.

Before the procession, journalists held a rally on Kishoreganj Press Club premises, where speakers demanded appropriate punishment to persons responsible for attacking on-duty journalists.

They said the attack in Chittagong was not the first such incident in the country. Such incidents continue as culprits are not punished, they said and vowed to launch tougher agitation if proper action against the perpetrators are not taken.

A senior police official is supposed to cool down a situation, but the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police himself led the attack, they alleged.

Among others, press club president Ruhul Quddus Selim, secretary ATM Nizam, M Rahman Liton, Shah Azizur Rahman and Kamrul Anam spoke at the rally.

Similar protests were also held in Chandpur, Chapainawabganj, Jessore and other district towns.

DIESEL CRISIS IN 7 NORTHERN DISTRICTS

Boro farming bears the brunt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Farmers in the northern region are facing a crisis of diesel at the fog end of IRRRI-Boro cultivation season.

This has resulted in hampering irrigation in IRRRI-Boro fields which will keep an adverse effect on paddy production, farmers said.

There are seven fuel depots in the northern region. In two fuel depots situated in Parbatipur and Rangpur, reserve of diesel exhausted completely since Monday. In other depots, the reserve went down alarmingly, dealer sources said.

But officials of some fuel companies said the temporary situation arose due to transport problem. Padma, Meghna and Jamuna companies of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) are entrusted to supply fuel in the region.

Drought has been persisting in

some districts of the region. Ground water is used at random for irrigation in fields. Diesel is being used excessively for this purpose.

A source in North Bengal Fuel Dealers and Oil Tanker Owners Association said, the demand for diesel in the region in the ongoing month is 60,000 metric tons (MT). As such the daily demand is 2,000 MT, the source said.

Baghabari, the largest fuel depot, has a capacity of 32,174 MT of diesel. At present, its reserve is less than 7,000 MT, dealer sources said. In the rest four depots the reserve is altogether less than 7,000 MT, they said.

Dealers in seven districts of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Kurigram Lalmonirhat, Rangpur (partly) and Gaibandha (partly) procured diesel from Parbatipur depot through rationing during the last couple of weeks. But reserve in the depot was exhausted since

Monday.

Bappi Bhoumik, an influential fuel dealer in the district town, told this correspondent his two tank lorries returned from Parbatipur depot without diesel on Monday. The situation did not change till yesterday, he said.

Administration sources said the demand for diesel for operating irrigation pumps in the entire district is 1.12 lakh litres per day. But the actual demand for diesel is 56,000 litres per day as farmers do not operate all the pumps at a time.

Meanwhile, farmers of different villages alleged that the fuel pumps sell diesel to them in a small scale.

Abdus Sobahan, manager of Raja Filling Station in the town told the daily consumers demand is 1500 litres of diesel but they can supply only 1,000 litres.



Nine year-old Rahima was suppose to go to school. But she now scales tomato from dawn to dusk on roadsides in Chittagong as her poor father pushes the four-wheeler van. The photo was taken from Tiger Pass area.

PHOTO: STAR

Wife killed for dowry

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A housewife was killed for dowry at Bhariachara village in Muradnagar upazila in Comilla.

Lutfi Akhter, 25, daughter of late Sazed Munshi of Dighirpar village in the same upazila was killed by husband, Abu Musa Matior Rahman, for failure to bring Tk 50,000 as dowry from her parents' house Thursday night.

Police arrested the killer husband after the incident and sent him to jail hajjat.

Matior, son of late Abdul Ahad of Bhariachara village married to Lutfi in 2003. Since their marriage, he used to torture Lutfi for dowry although her family members handed over Tk 20,000 as dowry to him. But Matior demanded Tk 50,000 more as dowry. As Lutfi failed to bring it, Matior killed her in a pre-planned way.

A case was filed with Muradnagar Police Station and two complaints were lodged with Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Ainjibi Samity and Bangladesh Legal Association and Trust Services in this connection.

Bomb hoax creates panic in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT Barisal

A bomb hoax yesterday created panic among family members of in-laws of Jagannath Pandey, one of two judges killed in a JMB suicide bombing in Jhalakathi last year.

The in-laws live in a house in Kashipur area in Barisal city.

Police said the family members saw a bomb like substance in front of a Bidi factory near 'Mukherjee Bari', the house of Jagannath Pandey's father-in-law.

The green and red colored packet was tied with electric wire, an 'electric circuit' fitted to it.

On information, police rushed to the spot at about 9-30 in the morning, cordoned the area and evacuated inmates from nearby houses.

Sub-inspector Borhan Reza of bomb disposal unit of Barisal police, recovered and found it filled with red colored potash.

Pallabi Pandey Rita, widow of slain judge Jagannath Pandey stays at the Mukherjee Bari along with their son Shreshtha and her parents.

Mentionably, trial of the judges murder case began in Jhalakathi on Tuesday.

DEATH OF DELIVERY PATIENT IN MOULVIBAZAR

Relatives rampage hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Agitated relatives and attendants rampaged Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital Tuesday night following the death of a delivery patient allegedly due to neglect by doctors.

Sana Begum, 25, wife of Kabir Mian of Durlavpur village in Kanakpur union under Moulvibazar sadar upazila, was admitted to the hospital Tuesday noon for delivery.

After admission, she was taken to the labor ward at about 1.15 pm.

The patient's husband alleged that no doctor visited her despite requests after she was taken there.

A few hours later, a nurse asked Kabir Mian to buy an injection and he did it at once.

But no doctor or technician was available to push the injection.

As condition of his wife deteriorated, Kabir Mian sought help from nurses and doctors but none responded, they alleged.

Sana Begum died at about 8 pm yesterday.

As the news spread, her relatives

and others went on the rampage, breaking doors, windows and glasses.

They brought out a procession on the hospital premises and chanted slogans demanding punishment to doctors and nurses for alleged neglect to duty.

Later some local political leaders went to the spot and cooled them down.

Civil Surgeon Dr Afaz Uddin Ahmed, when contacted, did not refute the allegation. A committee has been formed to probe the matter, he said. Besides, Seba Committee (Patient Welfare Committee), a local voluntary committee working in the health sector, has also formed another prove committee.

Guyana consultant at the hospital, Dr. Hadi Hussain, who was blamed for the neglect, however refuted the allegation.

Proper treatment was done with available facilities and her relatives were advised to take her to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, but they did not listen to it, he said.