

Agitation for power in Sylhet, northern dists

PDB office besieged in Sylhet, indefinite hartal in Haragach from Friday

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Frequent power outage triggered off protests in several northern districts and in Sylhet yesterday and he day before.

In Sylhet, agitated people laid a siege to the office of Power Development Board Executive Engineer (Sylhet Division-III) in the city's Kodomtali area yesterday and ransacked the office and the executive engineer's room at about noon, our Staff Correspondent reported.

The Sylhet city and Sylhet Palli Bidyut Samity-1 and II, covering 12 upazilas of the district need 150 mw power but only 70 mw is supplied from the national grid, PDB sources said.

They said 180 mw power is produced in power stations in greater Sylhet region.

Sylhet city requires 50 mw but it gets only 30 mw, keeping most of the areas without power for hours a day. At times, the supply declines to 25 mw, a PDB official admitted. Load shedding continues four to five hours a day in the city.

The suburban areas and those under Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) are the worst sufferers.

PDB officials said they supply 38 mw to each PBS against a demand for 45 mw. But sources in Sylhet PBS-1 refuted the claim. We get only 20 to 24 mw against a demand for 45 mw, they said.

Sources in Sylhet PBS-II said they get only around 20 mw against the demand for 45 mw.

In last few days, the supply was around 15 mw, sources in both PBS-I and PBS-II said.

On August 1, a meeting was held at Sylhet PBS-I office to augment the supply at least during peak hours, but the situation remained unchanged, they said.

The meeting, held in presence of PDB chief engineer, Sylhet, decided that each of the five 33 KV feeders in Habiganj, Srimangal, Fenchuganj, Chhatak and Kumargaon will have two hours' load shedding during off-peak hours and half an hour during peak hours.

But, the decision can not be implemented due to influence of some CBA leaders of PDB, sources said.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Frequent power outage has virtually paralysed life in greater Rangpur district and is severely

affecting industries and agriculture.

On an average, people have to face power cut for 12 to 16 hours a day amid the scorching summer heat, triggering protests at several places in last few days.

Students are the worst sufferers as power goes frequently in the first half of the night.

On Monday, Gaibandha district got only 5 mw power against the requirement of 25 mw, local PDB officials said. The 25 mw includes the demand by the Palli Bidyut Samity for supply to rural areas.

"We are undone. We face consumers' protest but can not do anything unless supply from the national grid is increased", said the PDB executive engineer in Gaibandha.

The Bogra grid station got only 61mw power on Monday against the requirement of 100 mw, including the demand from Naogaon and Joypurhat districts. Bogra Palli Bidyut Samity got only 10 mw against a requirement of 35 mw, he said.

Reports from Joypurhat said the Bidyut Grahak Sangram Committee on Monday launched an agitation

programme. They barricaded Joypurhat-Naogaon and Joypurhat-Dinajpur roads, held a protest meeting and brought out a procession demanding smooth power supply.

The protest meeting was held at Joypurhat with Committee leader Principal Khwaja Shamsul Alam in the chair.

The speakers urged the PDB to stop load shedding immediately or to face tougher agitation.

Similar demonstrations for smooth power supply were also held in Bhurungamari upazila in Kurigram district on Monday.

In Haragach in Rangpur district, consumers have planned an indefinite hartal from August 18, if the supply does not improve by August 17.

Kaptai generates only 160 MW as one unit silent

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The Kaptai Hydroelectric Project (KHP) is generating 160 to 170 MW power a day against 230 mw as one of its units is silent.

The Unit-5 tripped on July 30 after about a month of repair at a cost of Tk four crore, sources at KHP said yesterday. Repair work is going on and it will be operational soon, said Project Manager Md. Shafiqul Islam.

The repair work was done by an American company— Worldwide Utility Limited, he said.

Four other units No. 1, 2, 3 and 4—are functioning.

Meanwhile, water level of Kaptai lake has come down to 88.38 MSL (means sea level), which was supposed to be at 90 MSL now, he said. The water level declined due to less rainfall. The MSL was 68 during last summer and 109 in last winter, he said.

Power generation is affected in all the five units if the MSL falls below 66, he said.

BREACH IN DURGABATI EMBANKMENT

20,000 marooned in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least 20,000 people are marooned in 19 villages in Shyamnagar upazila following a breach in Kholpetua river embankment at Durgabati on Friday.

Crisis of drinking water is prevailing in the areas, raising apprehension of outbreak of intestinal diseases.

Over 700 families have taken refuge at a flood shelter at Durgabati as their houses collapsed. Scores more have taken shelter on high lands and embankments. Any government help is yet to reach the flood victims, they said.

Newly transplanted Aman seedlings on 900 acres have been damaged and shrimps worth over Tk two crore washed away as flood water overflowed 600 farms.

More areas are being flooded as water is gushing through the breach, local people and officials said.

Local people are trying to repair collapsed embankment on self-help basis but their efforts turned futile due to strong current of gushing water. The embankment was reconstructed at Durgabati last year.

The worst affected villages are North Durgabati, East Durgabati, South Durgabati, West Durgabati, Bhanja, Porakatia, Arngashia, Burogoalini and Tungipara.

Talking to this correspondent, Gobinda Raptan, Jabbar Gazi, Asim Mondal and others of Durgabati village said when cracks developed at some points of the

embankment at Durgabati the local Water Development Board (WDB) did not take any timely step to repair those.

Burigoalini Union Parishad Chairman Asim Joarder said, at least 30 feet area of the embankment has collapsed and the breach is widening. All the 19 villages in the union will be flooded in 2-3 days if the water flow continues.

Shafiu Azam Lenin, chairman of nearby Gabura Union Parishad, said several cracks have developed in the Kobadak river embankment in Jelekhali and Kholshobunia areas in the union. Local people are trying to repair those, he said.

When contacted, WDB Executive Engineer in Satkhira Zulfikar Ali said, they have started work to repair the collapsed

embankment at Durgabati.

The cracks at Jelekhali and Kholshobunia points can not be repaired due to lack of funds. He urged the local public representatives and people to help repair the cracks.



An inundated homestead in North Durgabati village in Shyamnagar upazila in Satkhira district.

PHOTO: STAR

10 injured as Magura AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

At least 10 people were injured, two of them seriously, in Sreepur upazila as rival activists of Awami League (AL) clashed yesterday ahead of observance of national mourning day marking the 31st death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Seriously injured Jubo League activist Manju, and Shechhhabak League activist Rajib were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital. The rest were treated at local clinics.

Police and witnesses said, a faction of Sreepur AL led by its upazila unit president Akbar Hossain Mian attacked their rivals while they were preparing to hold a separate rally under the leadership of Sreepur Sadar union AL general secretary Moshir Rahman at the upazila headquarters. They also damaged chairs, tables and mikes at the meeting venue.

On information, police from Sreepur police station rushed to the spot and quelled the violence.



An official at PDB executive engineer's office in Sylhet facing wrath from angry demonstrators yesterday protesting frequent power outage.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP foils AL programmes in Mehendiganj, Agoiljhara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

BNP activists attacked and foiled Awami League's mourning day programmes in Mehendiganj and Agoiljhara in Barisal district yesterday.

At least 20 AL activists were injured in the incidents. Eleven of them have been admitted to local hospitals.

BNP activists bought out a procession at Agoiljhara upazila town in the morning to observe the 62nd birthday of their party chairman Khaleida Zia.

AL activists organised a programme at Fakirbari just outside the upazila town. AL activists from Vascor village in Goila area were coming to the upazila town in a procession to join a party programme. As they approached the upazila headquarters at about 10 am, BNP men attacked the AL procession at Fakirbari.

At least eight AL activists were

injured there. Four of them— Kamol Biswas, Narayan Biswas, Samir Mukharji and Subroto Baroi were admitted to the upazila health complex.

Police swung into action and prevented the AL activists from entering the upazila town venue.

Later AL activists staged a sit-in for about half an hour protesting the attack and held a Milad Mahfil and other programmes at the Goila AL office.

In Mehendiganj upazila headquarters, BNP activists staged a show down Monday night, allegedly to resist AL programmes.

To avoid clash, AL shifted the programme venue to the Helipad area, about two kilometers from the town.

BNP activists attacked and foiled the AL programme there at about 11 am.

At least six AL activists were injured. Three of them including Jubo League leader Nazim

Mahmud Talukdar, upazila Chhatra League convener Habibur Rahman Khokon and activist Khairul Bashar were admitted to local health complex.

At about 12-30 pm, Shahabuddin, Jubo League leader and son of former lawmaker and district AL president late Mohiuddin Ahmed reached Mehendiganj from Barisal in speed boat.

BNP cadres attacked Shihab and his associates, leaving six of them injured. Four of them — Samrat, Julhas, Monir and Hanif were admitted to the local hospital.

Tension prevailed in those areas when the report was filed yesterday evening.

However, programmes including hoisting of black flags, mourning processions, discussion meetings, quran-khwani, Milad Mahfil and feeding the destitute were observed peacefully in Barisal city and elsewhere in the district.

YOUTH MURDER IN RAJSHAHI

2 killer-suspects, 6 others held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police last night arrested two killer-suspects and picked up six others from posh Upashahar area after getting the identity of the youth whose decomposed body dumped in a jute sack was recovered on August 1.

The recovered body was of Priti Ranjan Sarker Sumon, 22, son of Kartik Chandra Sarkar of Patchpakha village in Naldanga thana of Natore district.

In a raid on a house in the Upashahar area last night, police arrested Kamol Kumar, an HSC student of Rajshahi New Degree College and Abdul Hamid, a Fine Arts student of Rajshahi University and recovered Sumon's identity card, his clothing and blood stained bed sheets from the house.

Police also picked up the house owner's son Mintu and five other students of Rajshahi Government College from different houses in the Upashahar area for interrogation.

Sumon's body with its hands and legs tied behind and cut mark on throat was recovered earlier from in front of Yunus Ali Memorial School.

Police were yet to find any clue to the murder. Aslam Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Boalia police station, however said the inquest report suggested that the youth was strangled following torture.

He said the arrested persons were being interrogated and there may be more arrests. A vigorous investigation into the sensational murder is going on, he said but declined to give details.

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PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous people paying homage to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after placing wreaths at his portrait in Khagrachhari (left) and a mourning procession by Jubo League and Chhatra League in Chittagong city marking his 31 death anniversary yesterday.