

DOWN TO EARTH

Bill payment: A pesky problem

By ASM Nurunnabi

In the city's civic life there are myriad problems besetting its dwellers. One such problem which has proved constantly frustrating is the existing system of payment of bills through specific banks for use of electricity, gas, water, telephone, etc. Specific areas have been allotted to different branches of nationalised banks for collection of such bills. It is, however, no easy job for the bill payers to make their payments through this system. The allotment of specific areas to particular branches of the banks may not have been made on the basis of total number of consumers liable for such payment in each area.

Otherwise, how can we explain long queues of persons at certain branches, and much less congestion at other branches? This may perhaps be due to inequitable distribution of specific areas among the receiving banks. As a result, some bank branches may be dealing with larger number of consumers than others.

A typical example is the branch of the Janata Bank located near the Dhaka College

queue and then the form from another queue to make payment at other relevant counters. The whole exercise is exasperating and exhausting and normally takes 1 1/2 to 2 hours to complete one's business here. Similar position perhaps prevails in other branches also in greater or lesser degree. The tortuous procedure followed tells heavily on one's patience and energy, particularly of elderly people. Moreover, there may be many persons in the long queue who, keeping away from their offices or business establishments, have to acquiesce in the inordinate wastage of their time. This is just one aspect of their tribulations.

There are other aspects. For instance, if your bill books for gas or electricity (in self-billing areas) are exhausted and if you want new ones to make further payments, you are required to go to their zonal offices for that purpose. There are also long spells of tedious wait or advice to come another day may befall you. This may entail, in some cases, expiry of the last date for pay-

sumers, this practice may also be adopted in other areas with a view to obviating the sufferings of the affected persons.

For easy collection of revenues of the various agencies, consumers in general feel that it is incumbent on the concerned banks to devise means of easing the system for payment of bills.

Some are of the opinion that the heavy congestion in some branches may be reduced if additional counters are arranged for receiving payment, particularly of those bills the number of which are comparatively large. They also feel that persons taking position in the waiting queue within banking hours should not be turned away on expiry of the time-limit. Arrangements may be made for receiving their payments also.

There are also some consumers who suggested that it may be helpful if the collecting banks remain open in the afternoon, say, for two hours, for collection of bills only. In their opinion, this may be



gate on the Mirpur Road. This branch seems to carry an unusually heavy load of work. It has been entrusted with collection of the whole gamut of the categories of bills, such as telephones, electricity, gas, municipal tax, Urban Bima premiums, TV licence fee with the only exception of WASA bills which are collected by Agrani Bank branches. This Janata Bank branch has perhaps within its jurisdiction a larger area with a heavier density of consumers than in other areas.

This, combined with the multiple categories of bills collected, contributes to the creation of a nightmarish picture of staggeringly long queues almost every day. The suffering of the waiting persons is compounded by the first requirement to collect the scroll number from one

ment, with the consequent liability for surcharge.

The surcharge liability for the late payment, particularly in the case of electricity bills, has another frustrating aspect. If any surcharge accrues on such bills, the amount on that account has to be endorsed at concerned zonal offices by their competent officers before payments are accepted by the relevant bank branch. This process often requires long wait or multiple visits to the concerned offices on the part of the late payers. The resultant suffering and wastage of time and energy leave a sort of bitter experience to those affected. There are reportedly some branches in self-billing areas which accept surchargeable bills when they include the surcharge at the prescribed rate on the total dues. In the opinion of some con-

greatly appreciated by those who cannot get away from their offices or business establishments during normal banking hours. Another section of consumers thinks that, as a supplementary measure to improve the situation, certain private banks may be entrusted with the work of bill collection on an experimental basis.

since a citizen deserves all facilities to make payments for their various bills in an easy and expeditious manner, it behoves the concerned authorities to give careful consideration to all available remedies in the interest of greater collection of internal revenue. This is all the more desirable in a progressive society where expeditious disposal of business should be the watchword.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina addressing a public meeting yesterday at Bangabandhu Avenue on the occasion of Sheikh Mujib's home-coming anniversary. — Star photo

Anti-independence forces ruling

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and was still on. Chhatra League leader Moniruzzaman Badal was murdered by the government-backed terrorists at a moment when the Opposition defeated the government in Parliament on Thursday, she said.

The present government, following the footsteps of past autocratic regime is continuing the practice of eliminating the opposition activists with a view to clinging to power, Hasina alleged.

"Being the worst victim of terrorism at the state level, I have always stood against the politics of terrorism. But it is my party which is repeatedly falling prey to such politics practised by all post-75 regimes," the AL leader said.

The killers are not being tried for what Hasina said the involvement of the government with such elements.

There is no legal protection to public life and the absence of rule of law is causing deterioration of law and order throughout the country, the opposition leader remarked.

Sheikh Hasina made a frontal attack on the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia saying that she (Khaleda) herself was sheltering the terrorists in her party and protecting the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu.

"Khaleda Zia, you must repeal the Indemnity Act to prove that your husband late General Zia was not involved with the killing of Bangabandhu", the AL chief threw the challenge. "Otherwise, General Zia would be deemed as a killer", Hasina warned.

It would be an act of betrayal on the part of the ruling party if it does not pass the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill in Parliament, Hasina said adding the ruling party had

promised to do so earlier.

Hasina also demanded trial of all the killers to protect the hard-earned democracy. She also called upon her party workers to find out and punish the killer of Badal if the government did not take any action in this regard.

The opposition leader also appealed to all concerned to unitedly resist the 'undemocratic' steps by the government, its 'patronisation' to the anti-Liberation forces and to foil the conspiracy against the values and spirit of the Liberation War.

"The BNP government should resign after the Thursday's defeat in Parliament", Hasina said.

The AL leader also called upon the people to be alert against what she said, the present government's intrigues to push the nation towards destruction through corruption, nepotism, and collaboration with the anti-Liberation forces.

Presided over by Sheikh Hasina, the meeting was also addressed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and AL presidium Member Abdus Samad Azad, Presidium Member Abdul Mannan, General Secretary Begum Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Organising Secretary Tofael Ahmed MP, Publicity Secretary and Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim and city unit chief Mozaffar Hossain Paltu.

Abdus Samad Azad, narrating Bangabandhu's leadership role in the country's struggle for independence, said the independence was fulfilled with Bangabandhu's return to Bangladesh.

Azad blamed Begum Zia of instigating the terrorists keeping herself safe in the cantonment. He also condemned the removal of the Vice-Chancellor of the Chittagong University and ac-

quiesced it of sheltering the Jamaat-backed Islamist Chhatra Shibir terrorists at the CU to please the Jamaat-e-Islami.

You (Khaleda Zia) would not be exempted for aiding the anti-Liberation party Jamaat, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition cautioned.

Begum Sajeda Chowdhury said the murder of Badal clearly proved that conspiracy against AL continued.

Sajeda also criticised the Treasury Bench members including the Prime Minister and the ministers for not regularly attending the Parliament session. "It is because of the present government has no respect for the parliamentary form of government and it wants to make the Parliament ineffective and avoid its accountability to the people's representatives; Sajeda viewed.

Tofael Ahmed said that the way Begum Zia was running the country was not democracy. "She (Khaleda Zia) is acting purely as an autocrat", he commented.

The government leaders are staying away from the JS sessions to avoid Opposition queries about the Golam Azam issue and the Myanmar episode, Mohammad Nasim said.

In observance of Bangabandhu's home-coming day, the Awami League leaders garlanded the portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his Dhanmondi residence in the morning. Party chief Sheikh Hasina first garlanded the portrait of her late father at 8.30 am. She was accompanied by the senior party leaders including Mohiuddin Ahmed MP, Salahuddin Ahmed MP, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Tofael Ahmed MP and Abdul Mannan.

The national flag and the party flag were hoisted atop the Bangabandhu Bhaban at 6.30 am.



Namaj-e-janaza of the murdered student leader Moniruzzaman Badal at Dhaka University yesterday. — Star photo

Badal's body sent home: Case against 7

By DU Correspondent

The body of Chhatra League (S-A) leader Moniruzzaman Badal was sent to his village home in Bagerhat district yesterday (Friday).

Badal was shot dead by unidentified miscreants Thursday evening on the Dhaka University campus.

The BCL (S-A) has called a county-wide student strike and a half-day hartal in the city Sunday protesting the killing of Badal.

Earlier, on Thursday night, Moutajuddin Mehdi, Joint Secretary of BCL (S-A) filed a case against seven persons namely Newaj, Babu, Kuddus, Shamim, Chhoto Anis, Patu and Kakon accusing them of their involvement in Badal murder. The accused persons are reportedly activists of the JCD.

Bangladesh Awami League President and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina went to see the dead body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue yesterday morning and laid wreaths.

The dead body was brought to the 'Aparajeyo Bangla' at Dhaka University from DMCH

after autopsy.

Later, namaj-e-janaza of late Badal was held at 'Battala', in front of the Arts Building of Dhaka University.

The janaza over, a group of BCL workers were seen chasing another group with weapons near the Aparajeyo Bangla in the Arts Faculty premises.

Leaders of different student bodies attended the janaza. Awami League leaders were conspicuously absent at the janaza.

After the janaza, a BCL mourning procession took the body to the National Press Club.

A BCL rally at the National Press Club, addressed by President Shahe Alam, demanded immediate trial of the killers of Badal and called all student organisations to back the demand.

The dead body was then taken to the residence of Badal at Lalmitia and later sent to his village home in Sharan-khola of Bagerhat district.

Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Tofael Ahmed MP, Mohiuddin Ahmed MP, Mohammad Nasim MP, Ivy Rahman, Moutaj Hossain Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and former student leaders Abdul Mannan, Sultan Mohammed Mansur Ahmed, Abdur Rahman, Nurul Fazal Bulbul accompanied the AL chief.

Various organisations condemned the killing of Moniruzzaman Badal, central committee Organising Secretary of Chhatra League (S-A).

Chhatra Oikya Forum (COF), Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF), Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO), Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF), Bangladesh Chhatra Parishad (BCP), Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Samaj, Bangladesh Krishak Samik Mukti Andolon, demanded trial of the killers of Badal immediately.

JKLF chief

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(free) Kashmir today for a reconciliation meeting with a group that broke away from the JKLF 18 months ago.

The Midnight File

Bush returns home with high hopes

WASHINGTON, Jan 10: President George Bush proclaimed today that his controversial 12-day-trip to Asia and Australia will pay off in a strengthened US economy and more American jobs, despite widespread scepticism evident as he returned home, reports Reuters.

They resign to protest Yeltsin's decree

MOSCOW, Jan 10: The leadership of Ulyanovsk, birthplace of Lenin, has resigned en masse after Russian President Boris Yeltsin appointed Yuri Goriachev as head of regional administration there, Tass news agency said today. Oleg Kuzarov, chairman of the regional committee, and his entire staff stepped down after Yeltsin, who visited the town Thursday, issued a decree naming Goriachev to the position, equivalent to a prefect or administrator, reports AFP.

Ghali's first visit abroad

PARIS, Jan 10: Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Somalia were the topics here today as Egyptian Butros Butros Ghali made his first visit abroad after being named United Nations Secretary General. Butros Ghali met with French secretary of state for humanitarian action Bernard Kouchner. He is to meet later today with President Francois Mitterrand and on Saturday with Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, reports AFP.

France for N-weapons under EC control

PARIS, Jan 10: France for the first time Friday raised the possibility of placing its nuclear arsenal under European Community control. France, which is not a member of NATO's joint military command, always has been fiercely independent in matters of defense and proud of its nuclear capabilities, reports AP.

Education proves

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oped in primary education, 60.59 per cent of the total of primary aged group population. This total declined to 17.61 per cent in the Secondary level, 2.53 per cent in Higher Secondary and 2.74 per cent at third level; (higher education) in 1989.

According to the 1974 census, while 80 per cent of males participated in the labour force, only four per cent of females did so and in the 1980 BBS manpower survey, these figures were 62 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively.

The disrupted political and economic situation plus the effects of Muslim fundamentalism have cut even further the very small employment opportunities that had been available for women," the study added.

It also showed that in 1985 the developing countries had only 10 per cent of their female populations aged 18-23 years enrolled in some kind of education (as against 17 per cent of males) while a third were enrolled in the devel-

oped countries. In Asia and Africa the proportions of women fell to 8.3 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively which had grown from a very low base of 5.3 per cent and 2.2 per cent in the two continents in 1975.

"However when the economic pie grows, irrespective of cultural factors, the participation of women in education and employment also increases," the study added.

It also mentioned that "the conjunction of favourable economic conditions and a multicultural society can allow a fairly rapid advancement of women in higher education and employment (at least to the level of European countries) whereas the conjunction of economic depression and a restrictive monoculture has resulted in a greater decline in the already poor situation of women than was experienced by men in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Zambia.

It is particularly in these countries that good career orientation for women is crucial—the intelligent, career-minded women have to be aware from an early age where the needs are and that their academic results must be better than their made counterparts if they are to have any chance of an employment where they may use their capabilities to the fullest.

JU classes will resume today

JU Correspondent

Classes of Jahangirnagar University will resume today (Saturday) after a 16-day winter vacation. Students have already begun arriving at the seven residential halls of the university.

Gunmen

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and Montu groups. The Montu group is popularly known on the campus as the "third world group."

Leaders and activists of the "third world group" were ousted from the campus on Thursday immediately after Badal was killed.

Party insiders confided to UNB that the killing was the outcome of a leadership conflict. Badal made it known that he will be a candidate for the post of General Secretary in the coming central conference of Chhatra League (S-A), they said.

But Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and the Chhatra League leaders called it "a pre-planned murder by identified terrorists backed by the government."

A female student claimed she had seen the Thursday's killing from the 4th floor of Shamsunnahar Hall. "I have never seen such brutality," she said on condition of anonymity. "I was then combing my hair and saw two gunmen taking Badal to the spot putting their guns on his back while some others accompanied kept him encircled... one of them shoot him and my comb clattered to the ground from my trembling hands," said the girl in a shaky voice recalling her nightmarish experience.

The body was found in a bush near the house tutors' quarters of Jagannath Hall.

Jute mills

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disbursement was partly due to the reservations of the World Bank on subsidy to the loss-making public sector jute mills. Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry sources indicated that the government may tighten the rules on subsidy. Those mills which will fail to cover national average cost in production of jute goods may not get any subsidy in the future, they further said. At present, the mills failing to meet the national average cost fixed by the government face a 50 per cent cut in their subsidies.

Myanmar

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tered Bangladesh to escape repression by the Myanmar security forces.

BSS reports. More than 8,000 Rohingya Muslims have crossed into Bangladesh through different border points since December 21 incident when Lunthi killed one BDR jawan, injured seven others and looted arms and ammunition from Rezapara camp.

According to Rohingya refugees, Myanmar army and police were continuing atrocities on the Arakan Muslims while a famine condition was prevailing in Buechdong and Maungdaw areas. The refugees said that Arakan Muslims were dying of hunger and malnutrition as there was no supply of daily necessities in the whole Arakan because of continued curfew there. Sick people are not getting medicines, they said.

The Rohingya Muslims entering into Bangladesh through Maungdaw and Buechdong through Naikongchhari, Ukha and Teknaf also said that a serious unfavourable condition had been created in Muslim inhabited areas so that they left their ancestral homes.

The Rohingya refugees in different camps including Marichha in Ukha are also passing their days in extreme misery as they have no food to eat and clothes to wear. Children, women and old ones are worst sufferers because of want of winter cloths, an official sources said.

Meanwhile, preparation of lists of Rohingya Muslims is going on in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts. 25,000 refugees have been enlisted in Cox's Bazar district alone till date, district administration sources said. The member of Rohingya refugees may be more at Naikongchhari of Bandarban district. Enlisting of refugees will continue till January 15, the sources said. Cox's Bazar and Bandarban district administrations have called upon voluntary organisations to help Rohingya refugees with clothes, foodstuff and medicines.

Ukraine halts

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trucks guarded by a huge troop force could be seen guarding wooded areas near nuclear sites and was blocking public access to the areas, it said.

A Ukrinform journalist, however, was allowed into one tactical missile unit in the region of Kiev to watch nuclear warheads being loaded onto trucks for transport to railroad lines, though the base hangars were kept off limits.

The reporter quoted the unit commander as saying the arms had a range of 70 to 300 kilometers (45 to 190 miles), though he did not state where they were being taken.

Another report says: CIS foreign ministers began laying plans today for carving up the political and military assets of the former Soviet Union as a dispute between Russia and Ukraine over the powerful Black Sea Fleet simmered.

Going into the talks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Antony Zenko voiced dismay over Russian President Boris Yeltsin's assertion that the Black Sea Fleet would remain Russian but predicted the dispute would be settled peacefully.

The statements by Boris Yeltsin surprised me to say the least," Zenko told reporters. "I think he made these state-

ments without thinking and under the influence of the situation he was in."

On Thursday Yeltsin asserted that the Black Sea Fleet was, is and will remain Russian and called on sailors and commanders of the Fleet to ignore the Ukrainian government's call for them to swear an oath of allegiance.

"I believe that on this question we can certainly find a solution acceptable to all," Zenko added.

Although Friday's talks were being attended by the foreign ministers from 10 former Soviet republics, the character of the meeting appeared to shift from discussion of purely diplomatic matters to further debate on military questions.

Moldova was represented at the talks by its permanent representative in Moscow but military officers — notably Colonel Vitaly Lazorkin, a senior Ukrainian Defense Ministry official — were also thought to be involved in the talks.

The independent news agency Interfax reported that the ministers were meeting to discuss a series of diplomatic, political and military questions in preparation for the next meeting of the heads of state of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

In particular, they were to discuss plans for ratifying the start and CFE treaties on strategic and conventional disarmament as well as ways to divide the assets — notably foreign embassies — of the former Soviet foreign ministry, Interfax said.

The talks were being held behind closed doors but Russian radio reported that the meeting had been set up "without complications" and added that the preparations "testify to the constructive mood of its participants."

JCD demands trial of Badal's killers

Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) in a press conference Friday urged students to protect the education life as well as the country's independence and sovereignty by making political resistance against evil forces, reports BSS.

JCD at the press conference held at the National Press Club in Dhaka also demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for the attack on the Press Club, assault on the Secretary General of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and trial of the killers of Maniruzzaman Badal, Organising Secretary of BCL (S-A) who was allegedly gunned down Thursday.

In a written statement JCD said BCL (S-A) organised a discussion at TSC of Dhaka University on the occasion of its 44th founding anniversary and at a stage chase and counter chase started between the two groups of BCL (S-A) and gun shots were heard while the discussion was in progress.

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