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DOWN TO EARTH

Loadshedding tells on people

By A S M Nurunnabi



The country is currently in the grip of wide-ranging loadshedding which has been taken recourse to by the Power Development Board (PDB) owing to shortfall in the generation of power compared to its growing demand during summer.

According to the PDB, the demand during the peak hour of the current summer season was 1850 MW as against 1670 MW for the same period last year. The extent of loadshedding was reportedly 515 MW two weeks ago. Lately this has been brought down to 210 MW. The improvement has been reportedly possible owing to rehabilitation of some very old power plants done on an emergency basis. The PDB has assured that a short-term action plan has been taken up to reduce the extent of loadshedding still further within the next five to six weeks.

The current inability to meet the increased demand for power is attributed by the PDB to several factors. A package deal for rehabilitation, overhauling, repair and maintenance of a number of power plants with 644 MW generation capacity could not be implemented due to non-availability of committed foreign aid during the past regime. Besides, the Kaptai Hydro Electric Power Plant is now generating 50 MW against its 230 MW capacity due to fall in the water level in the wake of the current prolonged drought. There has also been a temporary shortage in the supply of gas for the power plants which accounts for a shortfall of 130 MW in power generation.

The PDB source indicated that the proposal for installation of the fifth unit at Ghorashal Power Station for generating additional 210 MW and establishment of a 300 MW capacity Meghnath power station could not be implemented in the absence of proper decision by the previous government. According to

that source, the present crisis in the power sector could have been averted if action on these projects was taken in time.

Thus a serious power shortage is upon us. There are indications that since electricity generation cannot be increased overnight, the problem of loadshedding will persist. However, the situation is expected to improve slightly with the resumption of generation of power at the Sikalaha station in Chittagong. The onset of monsoon may help increase power generation at Kaptai Hydroelectric Project consequent on the rise of water level at Kaptai lake.

It is generally felt that routine loadshedding without other mandatory restrictions on power consumption in other fields cannot be the answer. A matter of greater concern is its adverse effect on industrial and agricultural sectors. In a recent meeting organised by Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the same concern was expressed. Recently the Commerce Minister warned that the country's industrial sector might crumble in the next two years unless some-

thing positive is done to improve the deteriorating situation in power supply.

It is felt by some observers that some scope exists for economising power consumption in city shopping areas in the evening. The latter are seen to indulge in many cases in lavish illumination which unfortunately gives the impression that we have no power shortage problem. Moreover, most shops remain open till late at night. The spectre of system loss still continues to be a drag on efficient power administration.

During the time of the Gulf war, we had seen in operation stringent restrictive measures for saving power. At that time shops were made to close soon after evening and any violation earned stiff penalty. Restrictions for saving power in other fields were similarly enforced. It is, accordingly, felt in many quarters that, since the question of allowing mills, factories and power pumps to function without interruption is of greater priority, the administration should not be hesitant in taking action on similar lines in the present situation.

Nasim

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hopes were dashed to the ground because of what he alleged the Khaleda Zia government's corruption, nepotism, terrorism, plunder, mismanagement and inefficiency as well as its politicising the administration.

The ruling clique is trying to mislead the people in "autocratic style," Nasim said, when people have become united on questions like deteriorating law and order, unabated price-hike of essentials, Rohingya refugee problem, Farakka issue, conspiracy by anti-liberation elements, trial of Goliath Azam, retrenchment of industrial workers and food scarcity.

He said with every passing day, the country is heading towards disaster due to the government's "total failure" to initiate any programme for removing the ills from socio-economic life.

Responding to Salam Talukdar's comment that Awami League tried to capture power by illegal means, Nasim said "this is fictitious and absolutely childish."

He said Awami League had been struggling for last 43 years for the restoration of the people's democratic and economic rights. Under the leadership of this party, the country achieved independence. Awami League never considered any other forces than people as its source of power, he added.

The Awami League leader said people like Salam Talukdar whose political births have taken place in the "cradle of martial law rulers" can only think of grabbing power in the darkness of night.

Besides, their leader Ziaur Rahman had left hated example of capturing power by weapons and muscle violating the constitution and pursuing politics of killing, coup and conspiracy.

Nasim said the government is looking for "conspiracy" and conducting false campaign through some newspapers against the patriotic forces at a time when Begum Zia's reluctance to hold trial of killers-collaborators of 1971 and silence about Pakistani crackdown on March 25, 1971, gave rise to a sense of frustration among the people.

No amount of falsehood can cover up the failure of the government as the people are fully aware of it, he said.

Referring to her foreign tours, Nasim asked why Begum Zia had gone to Sri Lanka with a big entourage despite postponement of the SAARC summit. "What the people noted about that visit was Begum Zia had spent crores of taka and enjoyed dance and music seating beside Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif."

Begum Zia squandered huge sums of money from the public exchequer during her recent trip to the United States with a big entourage which, he alleged, included some identified killers and terrorists of the Dhaka University.

Education week begins May 17

The three-day national level programmes of the National Education Week-92 will begin on May 17 under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the Education Week-92 on May 17 at 10.30 am at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy auditorium here.

Saudi Embassy

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the consulate section of the Saudi embassy in Dhaka made the mistake by using a rubber stamp with the spelling of Dhaka as Dacca. The rubber stamp which was used on the visas with Dacca spelling was not registered with the Immigration section at Jeddah airport.

The workers who came back are now finding it difficult to solve their problem. It is impossible on the part of these poor workers to meet the cost of their tickets again. A Dhaka-Jeddah ticket costs Taka 46,080.

Meanwhile, Biman Bangladesh has asked the local recruiting agency to pay Tk 23040 for each passenger as the cost of deportation.

The local recruiting agency has in the meantime approached the Saudi embassy for taking up the matter with authorities concerned and requesting the reimbursement of the cost.

No one from the Saudi embassy, however, was available for comment.



On Shishu Academy stage in the city yesterday a dancer in celebration of Rabindranath Tagore's birthday. —Star photo

Tagore's birthday

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enter, stood outside to witness the ceremony.

Apart from the main function of the birthday celebrations, a book-fair and Baisakhi Mela are also being held.

People aboard buses, trucks and other vehicles are still arriving at the town, 45 kilometres off Sirajganj.

Despite vigorous attempts by the organisers and the police to maintain order, the press box installed in connection with the birthday celebrations collapsed when people crowded from all sides. None was, however, injured.

Police had to intervene several times to control the over-enthusiastic crowd.

Normal life was disrupted in the town today because of the birthday functions. Shops along the main road remained closed and traffic movement came to a standstill.

Hotels, bungalows and guest houses were crammed with visitors and guests from different parts of the country while restaurants and other eating places sold their items long before mealtimes.

The town's ice-cream vendors and sherbet shops made brisk business today because of the sweltering heat.

The Sirajganj district authorities set up a control room here at the upazila headquarters to coordinate the celebrations and large contingents of police have been deployed to ensure safety.

UNB reports: In Shilaidah Kuthibari, where the poet spent a considerable part of his life and composed many of his famous songs and poems, a two-day programme has been organised by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

A large number of prominent personalities from different fields of literature, art and culture assembled at the premises of Shilaidah Kuthibari, situated on the bank of the river Padma.

A book-fair and a village fair have also been organised at Kuthibari to mark the occasion.

Our staff correspondent adds: In Dhaka, the 131st birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore was observed befittingly.

In the capital, different socio-cultural organisations chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the day.

Bangla Academy organised a

seminar on "Modernism and Topicality in Tagore" in the academy seminar room at 5 pm to mark the day.

Santosh Gupta, Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq and Dr Akhter Kamal took part in the discussion at the seminar, presided over by Prof Mohammad Moniruzzaman.

Dr Syed Manjurul Islam of the Dhaka University presented the keynote paper at the seminar.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy arranged a cultural programme on its premises in the evening to celebrate the day.

Nazrul Academy also organised a cultural soiree on the academy premises on the occasion.

JP

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electoral code of ethics by both the BNP and Awami League.

He said that both the Prime Minister Begum Zia and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina violated the code of ethics by squandering money in the elections.

"If their allegations against each other of squandering money beyond the electoral code are proved, the election must be scrapped," he added.

He said that the government had created the Golam Azam issue to bypass the burning national issues.

Criticising BNP's one year rule Shah Moazzem said that at least 41 students were killed in different educational institutions of the country after fall of JP's government.

Narrating harassment on JP workers and attack on JP meetings in different parts of the country he said that the government had blocked the development of democracy.

PDF for national consensus

Leaders of the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) Friday called for a national consensus for the sake of democratic values, political stability and economic development of the country, reports BSS.

They were speaking at a Dhaka city unit of Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (MI) at the Engineers' Institution here.

The Midnight File

Bush pledges new policy to revitalise cities

LOS ANGELES, May 8: President Bush pledged Friday to redouble efforts to win congressional approval of a 'common-sense agenda' that he claimed would revitalise the nation's inner cities. "We've got to try something new," Bush told a group of community leaders and volunteers in a boys and girls club located on a block of burned out buildings in a riot-torn Los Angeles, reports AP.

German public workers' strike over

BERLIN, May 8: During the just-ended strikes, a state leader of Helmut Kohl's own party demanded a "sweat and tears" speech from the chancellor on the true costs of German unification. For older Germans, anyway, the allusion to Winston Churchill's wartime rallying call was clear. There are plenty of struggles yet to come, even though striking public employees in western Germany went back to work on Friday. "It's terrible, just look at this, garbage everywhere," said Kurt Naujoks, a 69-year-old retiree in Berlin. "There are so many people unemployed. They should put them to work," reports AP.

Case against US govt to stop killing of predators

WASHINGTON, May 8: Environmentalists have filed a lawsuit to force the federal government to curtail its century-old practice of killing predatory animals such as coyotes on Western rangeland. The lawsuit, filed Thursday by the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, contends that the programme has led to the unintended deaths of endangered species, including an American bald eagle, reports UNB.

BCI: Lawyer's advice

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Banking Order further strengthens the hands of the central bank and, what's more, underscores a punishable offence that might be committed by a finance company.

The said article provides that "if any non-banking institution receives any deposit in contravention of any direction or instruction given to it under Chapter V, then every director or member of the committee or other body for the time being vested with the management of such institution... shall be punishable to fine... twice the amount of the deposit received." In such a situation, the only defence of an offending director or any other officer of the finance company in question can only be that the alleged contravention took place without his knowledge or that he exercised "due diligence" to prevent it.

What should BB do when it unearths any such irregularity in any finance company, as it surely did in the case of BCI more than two years ago?

The lawyer quotes Article 57 which "provides that such complaint can be made before the Court of Magistrate, First Class by an officer of Bangladesh Bank duly authorised."

According to the lawyer, the central bank did not deal with BCI under Article 57, even after it had issued BCD Circular No 14 dated July 4, 1989 providing certain specific instructions to BCI. These instructions, inter alia, provided that: First, no banking company shall borrow monies aggregating to more than 20 times of its paid up capital and general reserves; secondly, borrowing in each case shall not be less than Tk five lac; and thirdly, each invest-

ment company shall maintain liquid assets in the shape of deposits with a scheduled commercial bank or unencumbered approved securities equivalent at least to ten per cent of its aggregate liabilities.

Having reached the conclusion, probably on the basis of information supplied by BB, that BCI had "contravened or failed to comply with the above instructions," the lawyer advised the central bank in his note of May, 1990 that it could decide whether to file a complaint before the Court of Magistrate or not. "In the alternative," the note from the lawyer said, "without giving any show cause notice, Bangladesh Bank can directly file complaint against BCI before the Court of Magistrate, First Class, for violating the directions."

The same note from the lawyer also referred to the fact that BCI, a public limited company, was guilty of giving loans to the directors in contravention of the Article 52 of the Article of Association. "If this provision is contravened, then such director is liable to be punished under sub-section (2) of section 86D of the Companies Act, 1913.

The note from the lawyer, one of the best in Bangladesh, covered all the legal angles relating to the operation of BCI and the responsibilities and powers of the central bank. The irony of it is the advice of the lawyer, which was in response to a high official of the Bangladesh Bank, two years ago, apparently went unheeded by the authorities concerned.

With no BB officials available over the weekend to offer any explanation for the organisation's position on the lawyer's advice, one can only conclude that the central bank was guilty of negligence for which some 50,000 depositors of BCI, including many public corporations, and the country as a whole have paid a heavy price.

BCI MD

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they raided some other places Friday with Mita Rahman said declined to give any detail.

The BCI depositors Friday demanded refund of their deposits in 21 days and warned of a movement if the money was not refunded within that time.

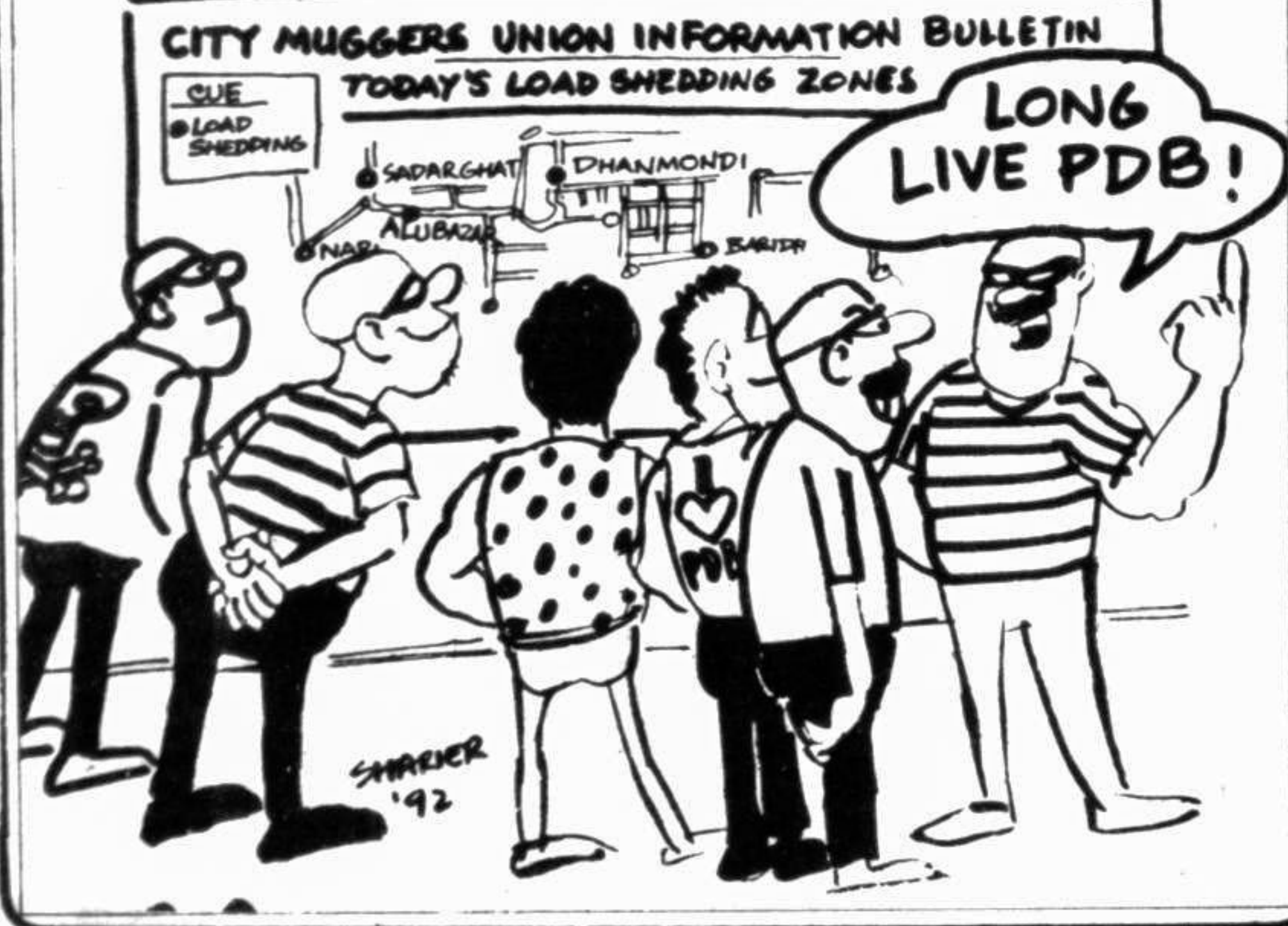
According to a press release, the committee urged the Prime Minister to look into the interests of the BCI depositors and hoped the government would take measures to solve their problems soon.

Demanding stern actions against the corrupt BCI authorities the committee urged the government to publish a white paper on their corruption soon.

They also demanded expulsion of BCI Chairman Mustafizur Rahman from Awami League and cancellation of his membership from Parliament as well.

Kabul orders women to cover head

KABUL, May 8: The ceasefire in Afghanistan entered its third day today, as Radio Kabul announced new Islamic laws beginning the sale of alcohol and narcotics and ordering women to cover their hair, reports AFP.



No need to import salt this year

COX'S BAZAR, May 8: The country will not need to import salt in the current year as it has produced about five-and-a-half-lakh tons of salt so far this season, the Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan has said here, reports BSS.

He was addressing yesterday a joint meeting of the members of the parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Industries, salt growers and the representatives of the BSCIC, district administration and banks.

The Minister said the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Industries had taken up specific policy for helping the salt growers.

Betel nut triggers asthma

LONDON, May 8: A nut savoured by 200 million people worldwide for its euphoric effects can provoke severe asthma attacks, a scientist says, reports AP.

Dr. Rowena Taylor, an investigator at the London Chest Hospital detected a substance in the betel nut that narrows air tubes.

"We would like asthma patients to be aware if they do chew betel nuts, this may be one of the substances that provokes attacks," said Taylor.

The results of her study were published in Saturday's Lancet, a British medical journal.

Make May 18 hartal a success: Nirmul Committee

By Staff Correspondent

"Ekattarer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee" has chalked out elaborate programmes to make their call for hartal on May 18 a success.

The programmes include rallies and processions by different city units of the committee at different places of the city from May 10 to 17.

These decisions were taken at an organisational meeting of the committee Friday with city convener Sadek Ahmed Khan on the chair and Lt Col (Retd) Kazi Nuruzzaman as the chief guest.

The committee will hold a rally on May 17 at Press Club in the evening.

Kazi Nuruzzaman in his speech urged the people to place the strike call above all differences between political thinking if they all really wanted to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War. He also said, if the people failed to establish the Liberation War spirit, they would be held responsible to the freedom fighters and the future generation.

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