

SAVE DHAKA

CIVIC AMENITIES: Part-4

95 years of electricity in Dhaka

By Reaz Ahmad



Such connections, from a single electricity pole, always pose a serious risk to life and property in the city. This picture was taken at Shyamoli yesterday. — Star photo

Installation of a private small generator at the Ahsan Manzil, residence of the then nawabs of Dhaka, in 1901, is considered the beginning of power generation in the city.

Electricity distribution system under private ownership was first brought into being by Messrs DEVCO, a subsidiary of Messrs Octavians Steel Company, in the 1930s. Dhanmondi power house was set up in 1933, from which electricity was distributed on a commercial basis.

In 1957, the government of the then East Pakistan took over the privately owned company and power generation and distribution in the city was placed under the Electricity Directorate of the government.

Later, following the foot marks of the East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (EPWAPDA) — established in 1959 and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) established in 1972 — the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) came into being in 1990 to look after power supply in this city of seven million inhabitants.

However, the DESA started formal functioning and commercial operation on October 1, 1991, after taking over the electricity distribution network in the 7437 sq kilometre area of greater Dhaka, which was previously under the jurisdiction of the PDB.

The DESA, which has a manpower strength of 6275, purchases electricity from the National Electric Grid under the PDB through Siddhirganj, Tongi, Ghorasal and Haripur grid sub-stations at a rate of Taka 1.58 per unit and sell it to consumers at a rate of Taka 2.43 per kWh.

According to DESA sources, consumers' demand for power in the city is increasing by 10 per cent every year.

The DESA is the single largest buyer of the PDB, which generate around 2000 MW of power. On an average, it buys 48 per cent of the total power generated by the PDB while the Rural Electrification Board (REB) buys another nine per cent.

"We only distribute, not generate power. Shortage of power production leads us to

demand. This is why in many parts of the metropolis, power distribution is marked by regular disruptions and fluctuation of voltage, they added.

DESA sources said, with the completion of the 3rd phase of network development by the year-end, the situation would considerably improve. Following the completion of the 1st and 2nd phases in fiscal 1984-85 and 1988-89 respectively, the PDB took up the Taka 728-crore 3rd phase of the project, jointly financed by the ODA and the ADB, for implementation in 1988-89. Its implementation was later shifted to the DESA.

So far, under the 3rd phase, some 1180 new transformers were installed, seven 132/33 KV sub-stations were set up and similar seven other stations were expanded. Besides, nine 33/11 KV sub-stations were set up and 21 others upgraded.

"People's sufferings could be lessened to some extent if the consumers became a little more responsive to the load management policy which dealt with the mechanism for more rational use of power from six pm to 10 pm, the peak-hours," said a DESA official.

The load management policy has provisions for keeping the irrigation pumps off during peak hours, keeping all kinds of shops and shopping centres except essential ones closed after 8 pm, limiting the use of power consuming electrical appliances, stopping night time operation of singleshift industries and no illumination except on the government-announced special occasions.

Both the DESA and the Dhaka City Corporation have informed people about the load management policy through repeated announcements but received poor response from the consumers, a source concerned pointed out.

go for power rationing in the capital causing inconvenience to the consumers," said a DESA official.

According to sources in PDB, no master plan has yet been taken up to increase the level of power generation. Scarcity of natural fuel and high costs of oil, which is imported, needed for generating electricity in the western zone of the country are being seen as two impediments to gearing up the production.

The present nationwide production shortage of power is about 450 MW, according to PDB sources.

Besides, inadequate generation of power, delay in the implementation of the 3rd phase of Greater Dhaka Power Distribution Project is a major reason behind frequent power failures in the city, the sources said.

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FBCCI chief opposes ad hoc agri subsidy

A business leader yesterday cautioned against any subsidy to the country's stagnant agriculture sector, if it is provided on an ad-hoc basis in the next national budget, reports UNB.

"We're very cautious of any subsidy to the agriculture sector. If given it has to be a part of an overall plan... it should be targeted subsidy," said Salman F Rahman, the President of the FBCCI.

Rahman made the suggestions in a pre-budget discussion arranged by the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) at the discussion held at the Jatiya Press Club. FBCCI vice-president Rashiduzzaman Duda was present.

Commenting on the next budget expected to be placed before Parliament within a fortnight, the FBCCI president said the budget should contain a strategy to achieve a double-digit growth needed to alleviate poverty successfully.

The government must give us a clear-cut strategy, not rhetoric," he said, adding that the private sector would consider the budget as the economic manifesto of the *de facto* government.

While speaking of a double-digit growth, Rahman observed that an export-led growth strategy and an enabling environment based on consensus of social forces to attain a sus-

tainable growth.

"But, unfortunately this broad consensus is completely yet to be reached," he said, insisting that an enabling environment should be provided to the private sector which is a cornerstone of the liberalised economy.

When his attention was drawn to the half-empty Parliament where the budget will be placed, the FBCCI chief said it will be much more difficult to attain a consensus on the budget which, he observed, in the economic policy of the government.

He also raised question about budgetary allocation for the loss-making public units while the private sector is regarded as the driving force of the free market economy. "The loss-making public sector should be ceased," Rahman remarked.

Asked to comment on resource drainage to the defence sector, he said: "I still feel, as percentage of the GDP, our defence expenditure is high. But as a sovereign country, you can't ignore the expenditure."

The FBCCI leader felt that legal system, development of infrastructure, contradiction between policy and implementation and exploitation of new market opportunities are the important things to be addressed immediately.

He also suggested that the energy, communication and education sectors, and rationalisation of corporate tax should get priority in the next national budget.

The Midnight File

UP state govt sacked

LUCKNOW, June 3: The Uttar Pradesh Governor Motilal Vora today dismissed the 18-month old Mulayam Singh Yadav ministry and invited the BSP legislature party leader, Ms Mayawati, to form an alternate government tonight. The swearing-in of Ms Mayawati is scheduled at 2230 hours tonight. Yadav, who called on the Governor this evening, was asked by Vora to resign since he has lost his majority. The BJP has extended support to Ms Mayawati from outside the state assembly, reports PTI.

30 Tamil rebels killed

COLOMBO, June 3: At least 34 people, including 30 Tamil Tiger rebels were killed in a battle in the eastern jungles where troops have been hunting for guerrillas for four days, the military said Saturday. "Ground troops confirm a minimum of 30 Tigers killed and more than 20 wounded in the Kumburupiddi jungle in Trincomalee district," said spokesman Lt. Col S Handapangoda, reports AP.

Maudud's new book

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Ershad as a lesser evil than the BNP."

Maudud said the public suspicion that Ershad, and the Awami League were cooperating was fuelled by the regime's soft attitude towards India.

This allowed Ershad to survive in power without any definite politics of his own, and allowed the AL to contain the politics of the BNP and consolidate its position in national politics.

The book, published by the University Press Limited in Dhaka, has been released simultaneously by the Oxford University Press in Islamabad and Karachi, and Vikas Publishing House Ltd in New Delhi and Calcutta.

Former chief justice Kemaluddin Hossain chaired the function organised at the National Museum auditorium in the afternoon.

Prof Talukdar Maniruzzaman, Prof KM Mohsin and Dr Muntasir Mamun of the Dhaka University, Holiday Editor AZM Enayetullah Khan and Morning Sun Editor Atiqul Alam took part in the review.

The book, in 12 chapters, deals with the fall of Mujib, Zia and Ershad, coups and mutinies, comparative studies on Zia and Ershad as military rulers, and crisis of democracy.

Some reviewers mentioned the author's active role under the two military regimes of Zia and Ershad that caused damage to democracy and judi-

ciary.

The author had served the Zia and Ershad regimes as Deputy Prime Minister, Prime Minister and Vice-President.

Justice Kemaluddin Hossain said it would have been better if the author had elaborated on issues such as the declaration of independence, nationalism and secularism.

Prof Mohsin said the book is well-documented but there is no classified information in it.

Enayetullah Khan said there is a difference between a mutiny and a coup, and Gen Zia should not be described as a usurper of power. There are a lot of myths in the book about the killing of Zia and General Manzoor, he added.

Atiqul Alam said the book is a bombshell for the Jatiya Party as it exposes Ershad as a corrupt ruler and a womanizer.

Dr Muntasir Mamun said the author, who has a fascination for power and has no political ideology, does not mention whether Zia had any consent behind the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In his harsh criticism, Dr Mamun said the book cannot be dedicated to the cause of democracy in Bangladesh since Maudud, as an associate of the two military rulers, had himself caused immense harm to democracy.

Welcoming the criticisms, the author said he had tried his best to write the book as objectively as possible. "I admit that I have not been able to write the whole truth... I will write more about it in future," he promised.

Maudud said the views expressed in his book were exclusively his own and have no connection with the party he now belongs to.

Docs continue strike

By Staff Correspondent

The doctors at the Suhrawardy Hospital have continued their strike. Only emergency services are being provided by a skeleton staff.

The Director of the Hospital, Dr Akhteruzzaman, told The Daily Star yesterday that efforts are on to bring an end to the strike and he was hopeful the hospital would be able to restore normal activities within a day or two.

The strike began on May 29 following the death of a patient at the hospital after which angry relatives reportedly assaulted two doctors on duty. In a protest against the incident and demanding security, doctors, nurses and employees called for the indefinite strike.

JP MPs join BNP

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MP. I observed the politics of development introduced by the BNP."

Advocate Abdul Majid said he decided to join the BNP being imbued with the ideals of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and the welfare-oriented activities of Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

He also said that he joined the BNP to take part in the nation-building activities.

Presided over by Doara Bazar thana BNP president Nuruzzaman Chowdhury, the meeting was also addressed by Ebadur Rahman MP, Nazir Hossain MP, former MP Kallimuddin Milon and BNP leaders Gulzar Ahmed, Syed Mohammed Faisal and Fazul Haq Ashila.

Child labour

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At the first meeting on Wednesday last, the BGMEA proposed involving the ILO to independently monitor compliance with an accord to end the use of child labour in the garment sector.

The BGMEA president had proposed that the ILO, as an independent UN organisation dealing specifically with labour issues, should take up the monitoring role and hoped that that would be acceptable to all parties concerned.

In rejecting the earlier MOU, the BGMEA had objected to allowing outside non-governmental organisations to pay surprise visits to garment factories to monitor compliance with the MOU. At the time the BGMEA said that it would have no objections if the monitoring was done by the US embassy, the Unicef or any other international organisation. But both the US embassy and Unicef later declined to be involved in a monitoring role.

NATO

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He said it was uncertain if Belgium would contribute troops. But a British defence official said on condition of anonymity that Holland, Canada and New Zealand have offered troops.

"We're not going in with the question of is this a good idea to do, but how do we go about doing it," US Defence Secretary William Perry told reporters before the meeting.

Border talks

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Bangladesh over farming in the disputed Fenichhara river catchment.

A status quo is now being maintained in the disputed area after India pulled back some 200 border guards in line with the decision reached at the 25th flag meeting between the BDR and the BSF at Battalion Command level in Jalia, a village in Tripura.

The BDR and the BSF had another flag meeting on May 8 at Ramgarh border town under Khagrachhari district, over the disputed Fenichhara lands 1500 acres.

PM: Opposition

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Begum Zia said.

She said the government has undertaken a massive education programme to free the nation from the curse of illiteracy. She particularly mentioned the Food for Education Programme, free primary education, free education upto Class Ten and stipend for the girl students.

Begum Zia said if opposition parties are voted to power they would stop all the people-oriented programmes initiated by the BNP government because they wanted to do politics keeping the people poor and illiterate.

Referring to the Jamuna Bridge she said, "We have started the construction work of the bridge and expect to complete the work by 1997." The bridge will facilitate rapid development in North Bengal.

Outgoing navy, air chiefs meet

President, PM

The outgoing Navy and Air Force chiefs, Rear Admiral M Mohaiminul Islam and Air Vice Marshal Altaf Hossain Chowdhury yesterday made separate farewell calls on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, reports BSS.

The President, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, appreciated their long services and their contributions towards the development of the Bangladesh Navy, and the Air Force.

Ershad acted out of compassion, court told

Government lawyers and defence counsels for deposed president H M Ershad yesterday argued for more than two hours for and against the indictment of the former general in a corruption case, reports BSS.

While special public prosecutor Ashrafuddin Ahmed stated that there was enough material to frame indict the deposed ruler for having illegally reinstated a government official after a decade of his dismissal, Ershad's counsels claimed that their client had merely made a recommendation so that a petty government official could back his job. That recommendation was

Taslima's trial adjourned again

By Court Correspondent

The Assistant Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) yesterday adjourned the trial of Taslima Nasrin on blasphemy charges until June 13 following a petition by the writer's lawyer seeking leave to appeal before a higher court.

Diplomats

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of various on-going development activities in the district. Ambassador of Belgium Xavier Van Migem while thanking the chairman of Local Government Council said that they were highly impressed by the development process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). He expressed optimism that the current development initiatives would have favourable impact on peace and socio-economic condition of the people.

Migem was of the view that all development plans should be carried out in harmony with nature and ecology.

Later, the envoys were flown to Kaptai where GOC of the 24th Division Major General Azizur Rahman briefed the envoys about the present situation in the area and the role of the army to ensure the safety and security of the commonman of CHT.

purely on humanitarian grounds, the counsels argued.

Divisional Sessions and Special Judge, Dhaka Anwaruddin Sikder, after hearing both sides, adjourned the proceedings till June 21, when he will give his ruling.

The FIR of the Special Case No 33 of 1993 was lodged with Tejgaon thana on 2.1.1992. The chargesheet was submitted by the police on 5.8.1993. Initially, Ershad was the sole accused, but a supplementary charge-sheet, submitted on 13.2.1995 made one Sultan Alam Mulla, the person who was reinstated on Ershad's orders, a co-accused.

The prosecution alleges that Mulla, once the office superintendent of the Suhrawardy Hospital, was reinstated on the instructions of Ershad after more than ten years of his dismissal on disciplinary grounds.

BUET student

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assailants left the scene immediately.

A tense situation was prevailing on the campus last night.

Huge police contingents were deployed on the campus.

The SCF activists brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday afternoon and held a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League, BUET unit, the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, the Samajtantrik Sramik Front and the Charan Sangskritik Kendra have demanded immediate arrest and trial of the persons responsible for the killing.

Meanwhile, the authorities of the Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET) yesterday urged all to help keep peaceful atmosphere on the campus.

The university authorities demanded exemplary punishment of the persons involved in the killing of a student Ahmed Ullah at the campus yesterday morning.

The Deans, department heads and provosts of different halls of the university in an emergency meeting at the residence of the Vice Chancellor yesterday evening discussed the overall situation on the campus.

Lanka to examine India's request to extradite Prabhakaran

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, June 3: The government will examine India's request for the extradition of Tamil Tiger rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran for his alleged involvement in the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, officials said today, reports AP.

But the extradition request can't be implemented immediately because Prabhakaran lives in the rebel-controlled northern Jaffna Peninsula and the Sri Lankan government does not know where he is.

The foreign ministry will have to approve the request and petition the high court, said Shibly Aziz, the attorney-general.

The high court would then issue an order for the rebel leader's arrest, Aziz said.

India also asked for the extradition of two other members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the rebel group which has been fighting the Sri Lankan army since 1983 to win an independent Tamil homeland in the north and east.

A special messenger carried the extradition requests to Colombo on Saturday. India's Commerce Minister P Chidambaram told Parliament in New Delhi during a debate about the assassination probe.

RU admission

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The Vice Chancellor's announcement postponing the admission test regretted "inconvenience to the examinees" and said, "the decision was taken to avert possible violence and contain the deteriorating law and order situation on the campus."

The postponement came after allegations, made by some student organisations on May 31, over the leakage of question papers for admission to the first year honours classes in six faculties.

On that day, the university authorities had formed a committee to investigate the allegation. The committee urged the students, to appear before the committee. But as none appeared the committee dismissed the allegation as "false and baseless."

In protest, the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and the Chhatra Sangram Parishad have called a strike on the campus till June 8.

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