

## National

# Pabna Chamber election held amid sharp division among the members

From Ranesh Maitra

PABNA, Apr 12: The elections of Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industries (P.C.C.I) was held as per schedule on April 1. Fifteen members of the Executive Committee have already been declared elected officially.

On the other hand, the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court, passed an order on 30.4.95 restraining the Administrator (Additional District Magistrate) of the P.C.C.I from functioning as the Administrator of Pabna Chambers. But the Administrator, when contacted over telephone, told The Daily Star that he did not receive any copy of the impugned order of the Hon'ble High Court. Before holding the elections or even before making over the charge to the newly elected committee.

The Administrator further stated the results of the elections held on April 1 were already published and hung upon the Notice Board of the P.C.C.I.

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Court, told that none from his group and also from another group working in the P.C.C.I participated in the elections held on April 1. He also claimed only one group led by M A Kafee Sarkar participated and he might have got his own panel elected. M A Kafee Sarkar was later elected president of the P.C.C.I by the newly elected members.

Amidst sharp division among the members, with so many groupings among themselves that led to filling of a number of civil and criminal cases during last several months and all of them remaining pending in different Courts including the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of the bewildered business community of Pabna witnesses the elections to the Pabna Chambers of Commerce and Industries on April 1, 1996. Over 50 per cent of the voters did not turn up.

When contacted, Akhter Hossain, ADM, Pabna and Administrator of the P.C.C.I told The Daily Star over telephone that the allegations regarding genuineness of voters, schedule of election and formation of Appeal Committees were not correct and claimed that he maintained strict neutrality and impartiality and admitted that it would have been better if some compromises could have been earlier arrived at.

He asserted that all his efforts for creating an understanding failed because all the parties were adamant and also said that he found no valid ground for postponing elections schedule to be held on April 1.

Although the elections were held and new office bearers stepped in, many genuine traders were keeping them away from the Chambers as none could be sure how far the committee or the elections would be able to obtain legal validity.

## Proper plan, patronisation needed Bright prospects of setting up industries in Natore

From M A Ali Himu

NATORE, Apr 12: Despite bright prospect industries could not be established in Natore district due to lack of proper plan and patronisation of the authorities concerned, it is reported.

According to local experts, primary feasibility study were made by the government about the possibility of setting up of industries in the areas.

**Drought may affect jute output target in Chandpur**

From Our Correspondent CHANDPUR, Apr 12: Jute cultivation in Chandpur district has been adversely affected due to deteriorating drought situation during the last one month.

Agri Extension Deptt has taken up a target to cultivate jute in 30 thousand acres of land during the current season. Under the jute cultivation plan about 10 thousand acres of land will be brought under local variety and 20 thousand acres of land will be brought under Tosa variety. Jute sowing season has already been started from February and will continue till end of April. But during the period only 20 per cent of the target have been achieved.

According to farmers price hike of fertilisers, scarcity of high yielding variety seed and price spiral of other agri-inputs and draw backs of irrigation are the impediments in the way of achieving the target.

Natore, basically an agricultural region, has only two sugar mills which can not utilise the huge quantity of sugarcane produced in the district. It has a distillery that uses the by-products of the sugarcane.

Sugar mills sources said, another sugar mill, a paper mill and a distillery could be operated in the district having abundant sugarcane produced in the region and it's by-products.

About 12 to 15 lakh metric tons of sugarcane is produced in Natore every year. But only 50 per cent of these crops are used in the two sugar mills, about 20 per cent are used to produce 'gur' or molasses through allegedly illegal power crushers. 15 per cent are used for making sugar-juice and the rest of the 15 per cent of sugarcane dry in the field or are damaged in other natural calamities, an unofficial survey says.

An expert said, the waste materials of the sugar mills could be used in generating bio-gas. Feasibility study of establishing bio-gas plant was also done and several recommendations were made earlier, but those were not implemented as yet.

A proposal, in this regard, was adopted at a seminar on Expansion and Appreciation of Locally Innovated Appropriate Technology held here in December '93. But due to lack of fund, the plan could not be implemented despite the assurance from the then State Minister for Social Welfare.

An expert informed that the prevailing paper crisis in the country could be solved with the establishment of a paper mill here utilizing the sugar

cane by-products and wastes. Besides, there is a bright prospect of establishing leather and edible oil industries, milk, fish, mango and vegetable processing units in the district, as a huge quantity of raw materials for these projects are available in plenty here.

More survey and development is required to find out oil and gas fields in the district to mitigate the growing crisis in the country's every sector. The oil and gas drilling works at Shingra thana of Natore, which started during the early 80's have been stopped later.

However, the local experts said, the prospect of availability of gas in the district is very bright indeed and with the exploration of the gas the entire northern region might be brought under gas network ushering in a new era in economic development.

Ganja trees seized in Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Apr 2: A special squad of Narcotics Control Department, Magura seized 40 'ganja' trees from Dashna village of sadar thana of the district recently.

According to the sources, acting on secret information, the squad members raided the Dashna village and recovered the 'ganja' trees from the house of Shariful and Kaoser.

A case was filed with Magura sadar thana in this connection and the police arrested Shariful.

## Notices of land acquisition for JMB project could not be served

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 12: Notices of land acquisition for the approach road on western side of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project could not be served amid massive resistance from the villagers.

A magistrate and police force went to serve notices of land acquisition in Sabdabad Khidir and Dadda Mouza in Sirajganj side.

But the land owners refused to receive the notices. The land owners alleged that the rate of compensation money was too low and they will not allow acquisition until the rate is enhanced.

They will also observe a token hunger strike in front of Jatiya Press Club today, the release said.

Programmes on 66th anniversary of Ctg Youth Revolt

By Staff Correspondent

The Mastarda Surya Sen Parishad has taken up elaborate programmes to commemorate the 66th anniversaries, on April 18 and 22 respectively, of the Chittagong Youth Revolt and the Battle of Jalalabad under the leadership of Mastarda Surya Sen against British colonial rule, according to press releases.

Tributes will be paid to the great Bengali revolutionary and his fellow freedom-fighters in a ceremony on Jalalabad Hill, Chittagong April 18.

Essay contests will be held for students in four categories on two topics. The topics include: "Mastarda Surya Sen", within 1000 words — for students of classes 6 to 8 (section 'Ka') and classes 9 to 10 (section 'Kha'), and "Role of Mastarda Surya Sen in the anti-British movement", in 1000 to 1500 words — for intermediate students (section 'Ga') and university students (section 'Gha').

Contestants have been requested to submit their entries by April 18 to Prof Mahfuz Khanam at 8/21 Indira Road, Dhaka-1215, Tel: 815963. Entries must be written on one side of white paper only.

A painting competition with the theme "My Dream and Liberty" will be organised for children aged 4 to 15 on the premises of the Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka, at 3 pm on April 19.

When contacted a senior staff of the local telephone department (T&T) said that the question of overbilling could not arise as there was no enmity between the subscribers and the staff. No official of the department can gain individually by charging extra money from a subscriber because the revenue earning is deposited with the government treasury, said In-Charge, Assistant Engineer, Sri Shaha Babu.

He said in view of high demand for new connections we are quite unable to give further telephone connections because higher authority is yet to allocate any materials.

On the other hand, due to negligence by the higher authority of Telegraph and Telephone Department channels of 151,152,161 and 162 are yet to get connection in the district. Due to absence of these channel connections government continued to be deprived of huge revenue.

About five thousand people are live in foreign countries. Their relatives are not getting facility to talk with them even in emergency cases.

At least Tk 4.50 crore can be earned by this source as revenue per year. Besides, few months back six cardphone booths were introduced in two thanas of the district. But the booths most of the time remain out of order. Several time local people of all section demanded the connection of 151,152,161 and 162 but authority could not fulfil the essential channel connection for unknown reasons.

This subscriber is a chief of a private company of the district. He told that telephone men approached him immediately after installation of the set at his residence for a monthly honorarium and in return assured him of a fixed bill per month irrespective of the volume of the calls. They returned disappointed follow-

ing a curt reply from him. "Since then I never got peace with my set. I have meticulously kept the record of calls but could never convince the department that there is over-billing," he commented painfully.

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## Wide allegation of line pilferage

# Majority of telephone subscribers in Sherpur receive ghost bills

From Ratan Chowdhury

SHERPUR, Apr 12: Many months have passed since submitting the written allegation against the local T & T Board but the district's nearly 600 telephone subscribers including government officials in Sherpur are yet to get a smooth and satisfactory service from the concerned department. Of the total number of clients only about 250 subscribers with NWD telephone connections have less complaints. Introduced in March 1988 the NWD telephone facilities are confined in district headquarters only.

Talking to The Daily Star, Md. Habibur Rahman Fanu an executive member of Sherpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry and also a veteran freedom fighter who intends to float an welfare association for the telephone subscribers in the district said, the over-billing still remains a problem for the majority of the subscribers. He alleged that a section of the unscrupulous employees of the local telephone department is responsible for the present sufferings of the general subscribers. These staff maintain a group of dishonest subscribers in various location and localities of the town and get regular commission from them in exchange of offering special treatment.

Elaborating special privileges extended to the particular group of subscribers, Fanu said that a 'favoured client' is allowed to make unlimited number of calls, both local or long distance, under Nation Wide Dialling (NWD) system at a more or less fixed monthly rate or per call at the rate of between Taka 15 and 20. Ten to 15 calls are recorded each minute depending on the measure of distance. But this type of client gets monthly bill which does not exceed the

negotiated rate. But all his excess calls are evenly distributed in the telephone connection of other subscribers, Fanu stated. He even offered this correspondent to accompany him to visit one such 'favoured' client at Nayanbaran of the pourashava from where telephone calls can be made to any district under direct dialing. There will be no charge, the subscriber has to pay telephone bill at a fixed rate. Whether he makes any call or not the subscriber must pay the amount. So he remains always ready to entertain any friend wishing to make calls within the town or to other districts directly. Habibur Rahman Fanu added.

Another subscriber, Bijoy Karmakar who has been keenly following the performance of over all telephone system in the town. He told The Daily Star that it is a common phenomenon when one hears a mild stroke in one's set and immediately on picking up the receiver, finds the connection dead. Often this happens early morning and by evening the dead set returns to life with a similar stroke although no complaint is lodged with the telephone office. The whole day, this line was diverted for use by others, of course at the cost of the subscribers hard earned money. The subscriber will invariably get an inflated bill after the month is over.

The local telephone department office reportedly refuses to listen to the subscribers' complaint that the calls were wrongly recorded.

He also said that there are innumerable cases in which subscribers get regular monthly bills showing large number of calls although their sets remained totally dead for long time. In case of written com-

plaints to the concerned authority often a subscriber gets a printed questionnaire by post. The complainants are asked to submit the proforma after filling in. Some of the questions relate to the location of the set whether in bed room or in the drawing room, whether there was any function during the period of complaint or whether the subscriber maintains a log book for registering the calls. Sri Bijoy Karmakar told The Daily Star.

Another subscriber, Dr Abdul Wahed informed that very often a complainant is served with a set reply that bill has been found to be correct or examined. The subscriber is asked to pay the bill to avoid disconnection. On rare occasions a complainant gets a revised bill made on the basis of review of calls during the last six months from the period of complaint. This revision is not done more than twice in a year. Dr Wahed said. A disgruntled subscriber said that the revision is nothing but an eye-wash in case of a revision, the bill for the next month is again inflated, the subscriber complained.

Another aggrieved subscriber told this correspondent that during the last five years he has paid not less than Tk 40,000 for his domestic set as additional amount by way of over-billing. Now he wants no telephone connection at his house.

This subscriber is a chief of a private company of the district. He told that telephone men approached him immediately after installation of the set at his residence for a monthly honorarium and in return assured him of a fixed bill per month irrespective of the volume of the calls. They returned disappointed follow-

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## National

# Metropolitan

## BIT student's unique feat

By Staff Correspondent

The first British Council Inter-school science competition was held at the council auditorium in the city yesterday.

Organised by the British Council, Dhaka, the competition was aimed at selecting a participant for the 38th London International Youth Science Conference to be held in London in July. The topic for the event was "environment".

Zayd Almer Khan, an A-level student of Bangladesh International Tutorial was adjudged the winner for his speech titled "Looking beyond the horizon". Almer also works for the sports desk at The Daily Star.

## Chief Adviser attends qul of Prof Halim

Chief Adviser Muhammad

Habibur Rahman yesterday attended the qulkhana of late Prof Fazlul Halim Chowdhury at the deceased's Gulshan residence. Former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Chowdhury died of heart attack on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Hunger strike from today

## Call to reopen textile mills

Workers of Kushtia Textile Mills at a rally in the city yesterday demanded reopening of the mills and realise their outstanding salaries immediately, reports UNB.

Organised by Sramik Karmachari Union of the mills, the rally held in front of the Jatiya Press Club was addressed by Trade Union Sangha President Khalilur Rahman. Abdur Razzaque, Abdul Bari and Walizaman, Walli Hossain presided.

Meanwhile, the workers of the mills observed a two-hour road blockade programme on Kushtia-Jhenidah road from 6 am today urging realisation of their demands, said a press release.

They will also observe a token hunger strike in front of Jatiya Press Club today, the release said.

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