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Meter reading & bill collection in Khulna

2 pvt firms lose rights as their bid falls flat

From Quazi Amanullah

KHULNA, Feb 13: All functions relating to meter reading and bill collection have been taken over by the head office of PDB from two private firms "Messrs Consortium of Bangladesh Engineering & Technological Services Ltd (BETS) and Techno Index Ltd (TIL)".

The action was taken following 'total failure' of the two private firms in reducing growing system loss and increasing revenue income through realisation of current and all outstanding bills, said an official source at PDB Khulna zone.

The system loss has increased by at least 30 per cent after the two private firms were given full responsibility to improve the situation by removing all loopholes concerning meter reading and bill collection from areas under Division 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Khulna circle of PDB, the source further said.

BETS and TIL will be awarded punishment if financial irregularities in revenue collection and violation of the terms and conditions of the agreement are detected after auditing the accounts, said a high official of PDB Khulna office.

The source further said PDB has incurred a net loss of nearly Tk 15 crore in Khulna circle during last one year as officials and employees connected with these two private firms miserably failed to reach the revenue target allegedly for massive corruption.

BETS and TIL took up the job in March last year through tender in the face of stiff opposition by officials of the four division offices under Khulna circle of PDB.

Being the lowest bidders, proprietors of the two private firms, one owned by an MP of Awami League elected from Jessore district, had to work under police guard for about two months to avoid extortionists and ruling party goons.

Later, this problem was solved after paying a large amount of money as toll to a group of armed cadres belonging to both factions of the ruling party, said a top official of the BETS.

Another official of the TIL alleged that a section of corrupt officials of all the four division offices under Khulna circle had to be paid a fixed amount as bribe every month to get rid of unnecessary harassment in the work relating to billing and meter reading.

Denying this charge, a top official of the local PDB office directly brought allegation of politicisation of the two private firms by manning with non-technical and unskilled hands.

Instead of ensuring better services to the consumers, officials and employees of BETS and TIL embezzled huge amount of money collected against bills, the PDB official alleged.



BNP activists torched a bus at Kakrail crossing yesterday after their procession was attacked, allegedly by government supporters.

— Star photo

Fresh voters' list by Oct this year

Acting Chief Election Commissioner Mustaque Ahmed Chowdhury has sought cooperation of all concerned, including political leaders, for preparing fresh voters' list, reports UNB.

He said the process of preparing new voters' list at a cost of about Tk 69 crore will start from next month to enable all the genuine voters to exercise their franchise.

Talking to leaders of Awami League and JSD in separate meetings at the Election Commission yesterday, Chowdhury expressed the hope that the work on the voters' list will be completed by October.

A computerised database list of voters with necessary information is being prepared to make free from faults and easily renewable.

Acting CEC said all the elections and by-elections, until the fresh list is published, will be held under the existing list.

Awami League leaders assured the Acting CEC of all-out cooperation in preparing the voters' list.

JSD chairman ASM Abdur Rab urged him to take steps for giving identity card to all the voters. Awami League joint secretary Shamsur Rahman Khan led the party delegation while the JSD by ASM Abdur Rab.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahman and Secretary of Election Commission Abdullahi Harun Pasha and other officials were present at the meeting.

Thousands of youths in traditional dress gathered at Dhaka University yesterday to enjoy the Ekushey Book Fair and the first day of Falgoun, the month of youth.

Many arrived early to sing and dance at the Institute of Fine Arts' Bakul Tola as part of Bashanta Utsab celebrations.

Dhaka University's Joyad-dhani Sangskritik Sangathan and the National Council for Spring Festival Celebrations also held *Pahela Falgoun* events.

Some students used the day to focus on serious issues. Dhaka University students against sexual harassment dressed in black and chanted slogans calling on the government to crack down on sexual abuse.

In addition to unveiling 29 new books, including works by Abdulla Al Muttal Sharfuddin and Shahrier Kabir, the fair featured a discussion on "Bangladesh in the 20th Century: Evolution of Newspaper," which was chaired by Prof. Obaidul Haq.

Renowned journalist A.B.M. Musa presented the keynote paper, while Rahat Khan, Bazur Rahman and Abed Khan took part in the discussion.

The fair should also be busy today, since couples around the world celebrate Valentine's Day, or *Bhalobashar Dibash*.

"I am not in a position to influence DB men. I used to know one person but I've forgotten his name by now."

"The scene of the crime is located in Ward No. 83, which is far away from my constituency in Ward No. 90," said Shahid.

The ward commissioner, who claims to be a businessman and not a police source, said someone was trying to implicate him in the murder to divert attention from the real killers.

"My name was mentioned in the press two days after the killing," said Shahid. "There is no justification for connecting me with the DB men involved in Sumon's killing."

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PM opens Cub Camporee

GAZIPUR, Feb 13: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced today the National Scout Training Centre at Mouchak would be developed into an international level Adventure Centre so other youth organisations could utilise it for their purposes, reports BSS.

She was inaugurating the fifth National Cub Camporee at Mouchak in Gazipur. Nearly six thousand cubs and leaders from across the country are participating in the event.

She asked the scouts to submit a project so the government could make the necessary arrangements.

Hasina said children from primary schools and ebtedai madrasahs would be integrated into the scout movement by expanding Cub projects.

"If needed, we will also extend the duration of the project," said Hasina. "More funds will be spent for primary education."

Sheikh Hasina said the country needed efficient, strong and dynamic leadership for the future. The younger generation would be able to provide that leadership by utilising their talents and perseverance, she said.

The Prime Minister lauded the role the scouts played during the devastating floods in 1998. She said people from all walks of life provided invaluable services during that period. She said her government was going to introduce prize for the best scout at the national level.

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Crackdown on illegal immigrants Bangladeshis detained in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 13: Malaysia has detained 295 people in intensified measures to seek out illegal immigrants following violent clashes between foreign workers last weekend, media reports said today, according to Reuters.

Mostly Indonesians and Bangladeshis, they were detained yesterday at locations around the capital Kuala Lumpur in this year's biggest sweep against illegal immigrants.

On Friday, five Sri Lankans and a Malaysian in northern Penang state were detained on suspicion of forging local identity cards and passports, while three Thais without documents were seized on a train bound for Kuala Lumpur from the north-eastern state of Kelantan.

Officials said the moves were spurred by clashes among ethnic Indonesian groups just over a week ago near Malaysia's new administrative capital of Putrajaya, which resulted in the arrest of 156 illegal immigrants.

The fight, between Indonesians originating from the Madura and strife-torn Aceh regions, had erupted after an argument over a stolen mobile telephone.

Police said one person was injured and makeshift housing for 200 workers in the nearby Cyberjaya high-tech zone was torched.

Cyberjaya is at the core of the so-called Multimedia Super Corridor, a 15 km by 50 km (9

mile by 31 mile) zone located 30 km (20 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur and promoted by the government as a magnet for world-class technology companies.

The high-tech zone is adjacent to Putrajaya, home to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's official residence, his office and other government buildings.

Officials said on Saturday nearly 100 illegal immigrants had been detained in a seven-hour sweep of the area around Cyberjaya.

Recent media reports have said that some 6,000 Indonesians had set up colonies near Cyberjaya, many illegal.

Official figures show some 700,000 foreigners were working legally in Malaysia in 1999, but that there were hundreds of thousands of others in the country illegally, most from Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Malaysia began to repatriate many of its Indonesian workers after the Asian financial crisis began in mid-1997, but officials now fear its recovering economy coupled with continuing difficulties in Indonesia could lure back illegal immigrants.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was quoted as saying last week that Malaysia might tighten employment rules to check an influx of foreign workers.

Employers guilty of hiring illegal workers now face stiff penalties, including jail.

Undesired interference

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for three months.

Thus, the meeting on January 23 focused on the central bank's delays, and not the case of a particular borrower.

"The finance minister's press statement on this issue is also not correct," stated the release. "The committee feels that Bangladesh Bank has committed irregularities by not approving Sonali Bank's decision, even after 74 days."

The release also said the Speaker rules when contradictions arise in the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure.

There was no contradiction under discussion, since articles 75 and 76 of the Constitution and rules 246 and 248 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament gives the committee ample power to review, examine and enforce laws, stated the release.

The committee claimed Kibria didn't bother to inform it that he would not attend, despite a personal invitation from Ashraf.

However, The Daily Star has come to know the finance minister's personal secretary informed Ashraf's personal secretary that he would not attend.

It concluded the matter discussed on January 23, 2000 was appropriate and was not in violation to Constitution or Rules of Procedure of the Parliament.

The committee also decided to discuss the issue at its next meeting on February 23.

The committee also criticised Kibria for his absence.

"By not attending the meeting the finance minister has neglected parliamentary business, which is a big threat to parliamentary democracy," stated the committee in its release.

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OBITUARY

Our beloved Managing Director- **Mr. Murad Abdullah** son of Dr. Mohammad Abdullah breathed his last early in the morning of February 13, 2000 at a clinic in Calcutta. (Innallilahi Razeun).

His Namaz-e-Janaza will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque on February 14, 2000 after Asar prayer and thereafter be buried at Banani Graveyard.

Your attendance and prayers are solicited.

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Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board Special Notice for Call Barring in Digital Telephones

This is for kind information of the valued Digital subscribers that, to avoid trouble of misuse and excess bill the facilities of call barring and cancellation process are available without any charge in digital telephones. Using this call barring process, subscribers can lock all type of calls from their telephone sets such as (a) All call, (b) Both NWD and ISD call, (c) Only NWD call, (d) Only ISD call and (f) Only local call. Subscribers can also make necessary call using the cancellation process whenever they like.

This process is being published every month on the overleaf of the telephone bill for information of the valued subscribers. Some subscribers may not have noticed this matter and come to the BT&T Board with the complaint of excess bill without executing call barring process. The BT&T Board does not accept the complain of excess bill of digital telephone because the subscriber can control any type of call from his telephone at his house and office.

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Call barring process: Lift the handset and press the buttons accordingly

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Password: Any four digits selected by the subscriber (For example-2233). It should be secret and must be kept in memory.

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All Call-01 NWD and ISD Call-02 NWD Call-03

ISD Call-04 Local Call-05

Cancellation process: Lift the handset and press the buttons accordingly

3 4 * Pass word

Valued subscribers are requested to use call barring process from their telephone sets. For further information or for any problem, the subscribers are requested to contact the concerned Divisional Engineer or Sub-Divisional Engineer.

DFP-3225/10/2 We are at your service

G-261 Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board

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President urged

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leaders and activists before the next general elections, looting people's wealth and allowing transit facility to India.

But, the BNP chief said, the people would not allow this government to realise its evil designs and would prevent the present ruling party from coming to power in future.

She said passage of the black Bill at the end of the AL rule is aimed at giving a corridor facility to India so that it can carry arms and ammunition through Bangladesh to suppress the movement in the seven north-eastern Indian states.

In this context, she referred to the recent TV interview of the Chief Minister of Tripura, who reportedly admitted that arms and weapons would be carried through Bangladesh if transit is given.

She alleged that the AL government in a pre-planned way is trying to turn Bangladesh into a province of India.

She said students, workers, teachers, businessmen and everybody will be affected as soon as the 'new black law' is implemented.

Khaleda Zia asked the police and those in the civil administration to refrain from "appeasing" the government and carrying out its 'illegal orders'.

The BNP Chairperson in her 25-minute speech gave an elaborate description of A.L.'s misrule, misdeeds, corruption, looting of public wealth, politicisation, nepotism, signing of the anti-state Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, CHT peace accord, pur-

chase of MIG 29s, frigate and Ashoke Leyland vehicles".

She warned of tougher and non-stop action programme if the government fails to meet the Opposition demands immediately.

Addressing the meeting, JP Chairman HM Ershad said this "repressive and anti-people" government would be forced to quit through mass upsurge and action programmes one after another.

He said the four parties have united and succeeded in addressing people from a single dais, despite the government's conspiracy, for having a nationalist government in future.

Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam said the AL government has continued to sign one after another "anti-people and anti-state treaties" with India and is conspiring to provide corridor facility to it and export gas resources.

IOJ chief Azizul Haque called upon the people to join the current oust-government movement to protect the country's independence and sovereignty. Islam and to achieve peace, progress and prosperity.

Democratic League President and elderly politician Oli Ahad termed yesterday's joint meeting a revolt against this "subservient" government and urged the BNP chief to lead the movement till the ouster of this government.

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