

Aziz Stadium set for Test date

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The MA Aziz stadium, country's younger and world's 82nd cricket venue, is almost prepared to raise the curtain on upcoming Bangladesh versus West Indies month-long cricket extravaganza later this month.

West Indies, the two-time title holder of the World Cup and once the cricketing super power, is scheduled to play a brief series comprised with two tests and two one-dayers against Bangladesh, the 'minnows' of the 10-nation Test Family.

The series would start with a limited over match to be played on November 29 at the MA Aziz stadium of the port city.

However, there seems no dearth of enthusiasm among the sports fans here in Chittagong centring the

curtain-raiser battle of the series. They along with the regular afternoon-trotters in and around the stadium locally now frequents the venue everyday, with great deal of curiosity, to have a glimpse of the on-going finishing touches being made by the ground staff of the stadium.

Chattagram Zila Krira Sangstha (CZKS), the local host of the matches here, is apparently putting extra efforts in this regard to ensure no excuse or lacking is there. The members of 21 sub-committees, formed to look after all affairs regarding the one day international (ODI) and the test in Chittagong, also were seen restless these days giving virtually their 'everything.'

Reason? -- Nothing else but to see the gala event a complete success at the expense of their

'sweats-and-blood.' Besides, one wouldn't forget the fact that the people of Chittagong are always known as great 'Mejbaans' (hosts) so far the sincerity or hospitality to its 'Mehmaans' (guests) is concerned.

So, it is quite understandable and appreciable that Nurul Abedin Nobel, former national player and the venue manager for the ODI and Test here, tried not to conceal his satisfaction over the ground-preparations being done so far while talking to this correspondent.

"I have long been supervising and monitoring very closely, since given the responsibility, all the preparatory works to ready the venue for the upcoming matches. And I can tell you for sure that I'm very happy with the ground and wicket. The good works of grounds men Jasim and Matin of Bangladesh

Cricket Board (BCB) deserves special mention," he said.

Nobel said, "It would be a nice batting wicket. The quick outfield of 30,000-capacity stadium will be a bonus for the batsmen. Besides, the behaviour of the pitch might not fluctuate no matter batting first or second."

Nobel, however, brushed aside any possible chances of crowd disturbances that West Indies had experienced in India.

"Our crowd is known for their sporting attitude. Yet, we won't let anybody to go against the wind at any cost. Besides, the whole venue will be well secured," he added.

CZKS sources said that all preparations are almost completed and a few final touches will be done in next two to three days.



Field of MA Aziz Stadium being prepared for the West Indies versus Bangladesh Cricket Test.

PHOTO: STAR

Eid shopping gaining momentum

ATAUL GANI SUMON

The shopping in the port city of Chittagong is gradually gaining momentum as the shoppers crowded the markets for buying dresses of their choice on the occasion of the Eid.

The decorated super markets

opening of the shops as well as the markets.

The Eid dress exhibition and Eid fair give the port city a colourful look. In many shopping malls 'Eid Pannya Mela' began and the markets declared prizes to attract the customers in their respective centres. 'The Shopping Complex', one

Bazar, New Market, Central Plaza, Mimi Super Market, Chittagong Shopping Complex, Lucky Plaza, Kollol Super Market, Singapore Market and newly introduced air-conditioned Amin Centre are in a great difficulties to fulfil the demands and desires of the customers as nothing new came in the

highest price of the three pieces is Tk 5000.

Meanwhile, huge people are also seen in the boutique houses of the different markets of the port city. The non-availability of Indian clothes compelled the customers to come in the boutique shops.

In many areas of the city especially in the residential areas, the boutique shops are opening ahead of Eid. Most of the boutique shops are decorated colourfully. Besides, this colourful decorated boutique shops are inaugurated by the stars of the modeling world.

On the other hand, in different points of the city the boutique houses are going to arrange exhibitions of dresses and fashion shows. They also arranged the exhibition and fashion shows in the community centres including the Chittagong Club, the Institution of Engineers and Ladies Club in the city.

In the every nook and corner of the areas of the city as well as the markets, many punjabi shops were set up. The youths, mostly of them are unemployed, set up the shops.

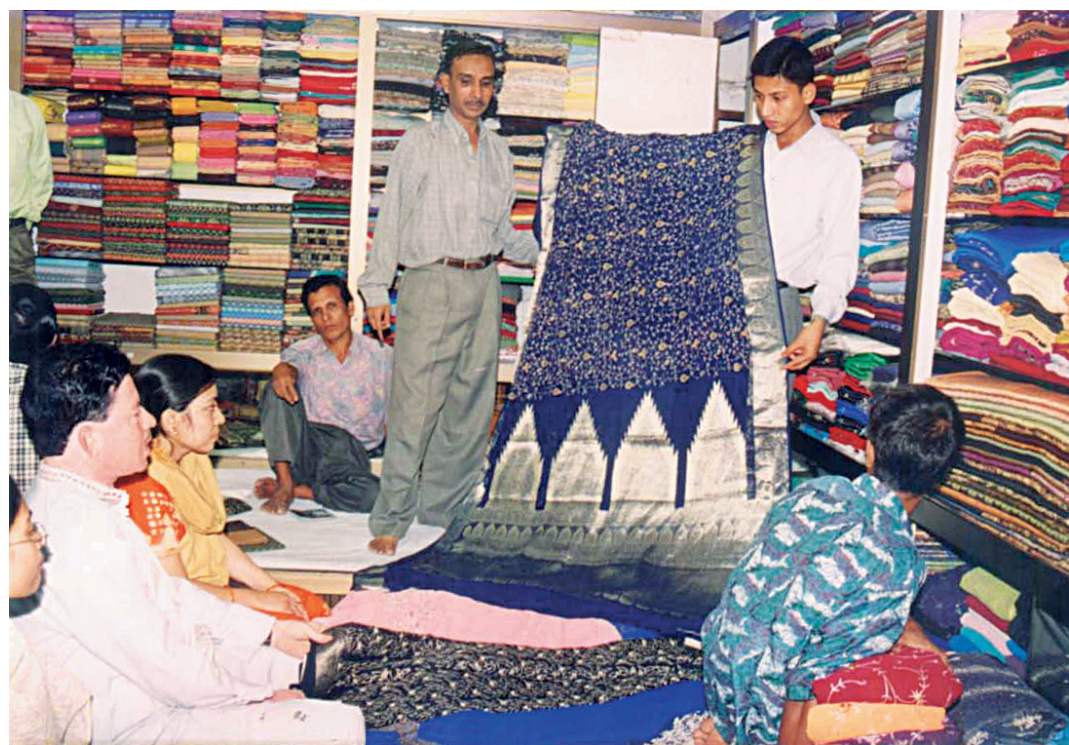
In the luxuries community centre 'King of Chittagong', the 'Executors' are going to arrange an Eid fair from November 21. A total of 141 stalls of different types of cloths will exhibit their collections to attract the customers.

The two new shopping malls named 'One Stop Shopping Centre' and 'Agrabad City Shopping Centre' were introduced at the Station Road in the city on November 17 and November 18 with the target of Eid sales.

The authorities concerned already tightened the security in and around the markets to check extortion, snatching, mugging and pick pocketing, sources said. The security measures also will be tightened in the banks and on the busy markets, sources added.

Sale remains sluggish in some city markets. But the businessmen and the shopkeepers hope that the markets will pick up within a few days.

One of the shopkeepers of the Chittagong Shopping Complex said with despair that the market was yet to gain momentum while transaction in the Eid market was very high during the same period in the previous years.



A clothes shop at New Market.

PHOTO: STAR

blaze with colour lights in the evening and it continues till mid night. The shopkeepers are busy to increase and enrich their collections as per demand and desire of the buyers.

They are in trouble as they could not meet the demand of buyers of Indian sarees and three pieces. The smuggled Indian sarees and three pieces could not reach the markets of the port city through the borders due to ongoing army crackdown down.

For shortage of the Indian sarees, a sort of crisis of sarees is prevailing in most of the markets of the port city.

Though the markets of the port city were yet to gain momentum, the inauguration of different shops continued, just ahead of the Eid. Everyday the city witnesses the

of the big markets in the port city, declared a Maruti car as first prize for the winner, fridge second prize and a colour TV third prize. The winners will be selected through a raffle draw of the coupons of the customers who purchased goods of at least Tk 100.

The "Eid Pannya Mela" first of its kind in the port city under private initiative began at "King of Chittagong". The selling is increasing day by day as the Eid approaches.

Some businessmen said they are bringing cloths by air to meet the demands and the desires of the customers. But the prices of the cloths including sarees, three pieces would be very high for its carrying cost.

The shopkeepers of Reazuddin

markets.

As they could not meet demands of Indian cloths they are now trying to convince the customers to buy local sarees and three pieces.

The local sarees are selling between Tk 400 and 2000 in the Chittagong Central Plaza. The 'Jardashi Saree' is selling here at Tk 4000, the highest price in the market.

'Devdas', a new brand of saree, has the huge sale. Devdas is being sold between Tk 1500 and 2800. The three pieces are being sold between Tk 450 and 1500 in the Central Plaza.

The Shopping Complex also has the same prices. Local sarees have huge demand. In the Mimi Super Market, the highest price of a saree was declared Tk 80,000 and the

Power sector needs reforms

Speakers tell Diploma Engineers Association meeting

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Speakers at a meeting in the port city said massive reforms in power sector of the country are needed on an urgent basis since the system loss still is far above the acceptable limit.

They termed the reforms in power sector as a need of the time and called for immediate steps to this end.

The Diploma Engineers' Association (DEA), Chittagong organised the meeting at the local press club auditorium recently.

However, they opposed the government initiative for privatisation of the Power Development Board (PDB) and rather recommended a separate power management system to be introduced and run by private sector.

Differing with the official statistics about system loss they said actual system loss was above 40 per cent that never exceeded 10 per cent in the developed countries. According to official statistics system loss is 25 per cent.

Yet, this system loss in power sector was very negligible compared with the technical loss due to faulty policy, they said.

They held unplanned setting up and expansion of power lines and installation of power generating stations at the advice of different donor agencies responsible for this technical loss.

The socio-economic condition of the country was ignored when the power generating projects were set up and larger single-unit generators with higher capacity installed at a very few places instead of smaller generators at a good number of places covering greater area, they said.

As such, innumerable installations had to be set up to take the power from these powerhouses to the national grid. The power generated in these powerhouses has to be carried through hundreds of miles before they reach different

remote areas of the country via national grid, they said.

As a result, line loss and machine loss cause loss beyond imagination and about half of the power generated in the power stations is lost in the distribution lines, they added.

The maintenance of these installations cost the nation huge money, they said. At the same time tripping of a single-unit disrupts supply of power over a wide range of area, they added.

The meeting was told that at present the installations of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) with a total generation capacity of 3265 MW of power produce around 70 per cent of the power generated in the country.

On the other hand, some 785 MWs are generated in the five Independent Power Plants (IPPs) with a capacity of 810 MWs.

The IPPs include Rural Electrification Board (REB) run 140 MW capacity plant of Rural Power Company Ltd at Mymensingh, 110MW plant of Khulna Power Company Ltd (imported furnace oil is used as fuel), 110 MW plant of National Electric Power Company at Haripur (Burge Mounted Power Plant), AES Haripur 340MW plant (Gas is used as fuel) and 90 MW-plant of Westmont Power Company at Baghabari.

Of the produced power, PDB distributes and sales 30 per cent directly to the consumers while 50 per cent is distributed and sold through DESA and DESCO. The rest 20 per cent through Rural Electrification Board (REB), the meeting was told.

The DEA leaders said under the reforms programmes and according to the suggestion of donors, REB was formed in 1977, DESA in 1991 and the DESCO recently. But no significant improvement was seen, they said.

They said REB inclined to go on with electrification work in the municipal and suburban areas instead of rural areas ignoring its objective and violating rules. Thus it

failed to serve the rural people.

PDB has to purchase power on an average at Tk.4.80 per unit from the IPPs including REB to sell the same at Tk.2.30 per unit to the consumers.

As such PDB incurs an annual loss of around Tk. 200 crore in this way, they said.

Criticising performance of DESA, they said it owes an outstanding bills of around Tk. 5000 crore to PDB and even after that DESA incurs a system loss of around 35 per cent.

Besides, they said according to the prescription of donors, the government formed PGCB and about half of the supply sector of the power structure in the east zone was given to it for taking care of the supply system.

Previously, the management of the supply zone would cost PDB 10 paisa per unit while after the charge was handed over to PGCB now PDB has to pay it 18 paisa for supply of each unit of power as wheeling charge.

Considering all these, the DEA leaders in the meeting, demanded continuation of PDB as an undivided body.

They said with an additional need of another 3000MW of power in the country there was huge scope for the private sector to come up with a separate power management system through setting up newer installations by itself. The private sector could set up powerhouses, transmission lines and build up a power distribution system creating a strong competition between the PDB and private sector, they added.

At the meeting on "Power Sector Reformation: Bangladesh Perspective" the speakers also underscored the need for establishing accountability at every level of the sector to check mismanagement, irregularities, corruption and theft of power.

Politicians, academics, professionals, lawyers, experts and labour leaders participated in the meeting with PDB Diploma Engineers

Association, Ctg president Subhod Mitra in the chair.

The political leaders held a section of bureaucrats and officials of the concerned department responsible for prompting the policy makers and the government to take up the projects that eventually forced the sector incur loss.

They urged the authorities concerned to identify those who misled the policy and decision-makers in different occasions for their narrow interests.

The political leaders expressed solidarity in initiatives to improve the power sector as they observed that none suffers less when there is a power crisis.

Engineer and renowned technology researcher Shafi Uddin Sarker, former CPA Chairman Engineer Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury, City BNP general secretary Dostogir Chowdhury, Awami League Chittagong (South) district General Secretary Moslem Uddin Ahmed, JP leader Ibrahim bin Khalil, former MP Noori Ara Safa, Prof Dr. Mahub Ullah of Chittagong University, Journalist Helal Uddin Chowdhury, Honorary Secretary of IEB, Chittagong Engr Nurul Karim, Diploma Engineers Association (DPA) central president Ashfaq Ahmed addressed the meeting.

DPA general secretary Prodeep Kumar Ghoshal presented key-note paper in the meeting where DPA, Ctg General Secretary Md. Ruhul Amin made the address of welcome.

The key-note paper made a 11-point recommendation to save and develop the power sector of the country. The recommendations included developing a separate and competitive private power sector keeping the present state-run PDB in its place, setting up smaller generator-based power stations in different areas, realisation of outstanding bills from different DESA and other organisations and firms, investment of the realised bills for development of the power sector.

Coastal people insecure

1841 cyclone shelters for 70 lakh people

NURUL ALAM

About 70 lakh of over one crore people are still at high risk in the coastal areas of Chittagong and its surrounding areas as adequate infrastructural facilities were yet to be developed there to face the natural calamities, sources said.

As a result, the coastal people usually get panicked with the announcement of formation of cyclonic storm in the Bay as the cyclone-shelters built in the coastal areas, are not enough to accommodate them, sources added. Only 1841 cyclone shelters were so far built in the coastal areas covering 720 km.

But the need for 3,500 cyclone shelters was felt after the 1991 catastrophic cyclone that claimed the lives of 1,50,000 people here. Before the 1991 cyclone, only few hundred cyclone shelters existed in the vulnerable coastal areas.

Later, government with the help of Red Crescent Society and other donor agencies erected rest of the cyclone shelters, sources said.

With the increase of population, these cyclone shelters are not enough to accommodate the coastal people after evacuation ahead of being hit by the cyclone.

Red Crescent sources said in Sandwip island the existing cyclone shelters might accommodate only one lakh people of over three lakh. As a result, other two lakh in this island are at high risk in case of any catastrophic disaster, Red Crescent sources said. Other vulnerable areas in the coast here are yet to be provided with required facilities including cyclone shelters and dykes, sources said.

Protection embankments washed away earlier by the tidal surge are yet to be repaired completely at the coastal areas that posed a threat to coastal life.

Tidal water frequently enters the Sandwip islands through the breaches of embankment inundating vast tracts of cropland and other low-lying areas.

The protection embankment along the Anwara and Bansalki coast also is yet to be rebuilt. Lack of

protection embankment threatened the existence of some important installations including the Shah Amanat International Airport at Patenga.

A move was taken after 1991 cyclone to build the embankment at Patenga to protect the airport, but later it was shelved due to reasons unknown, sources said.

For lack of such embankment at Patenga, the authorities were forced to shift the aircraft and logistics from the airport here with hoisting of danger signals of cyclone and tidal surge.

In 1991 cyclone, some aircraft at Chittagong Airport were damaged as those were not shifted before the cyclone and tidal surge.

From this experience, later whenever danger signal was hoisted here the aircraft and logistics were shifted to safer places.

Even during the last week's cyclonic storm with the hoisting of signal No.6 the aircraft and other logistics were shifted to elsewhere. Fortunately, Chittagong escaped the cyclone as it crossed over

Sundarbans and Raimonghal river and hit West Bengal of India. As a result, coastal people in Chittagong heaved a sigh of relief.

The control rooms opened here as a part of preparedness programme were packed up immediately and life returned to normal.

Usually the authorities begin the evacuation of people from coastal areas with the hoisting of signal No. 8. The announcements are also made through megaphones at the coastal belts asking the people to leave their houses and take shelter at cyclone shelters or any safer places. It was found during such occasions earlier that many people were forced to take shelter over the embankments and some school buildings as the existing cyclone shelters fell crowded, sources said.

To tackle the post cyclonic situation in 1991 US Task Force arrived here and helped restore the normal life and to carry out relief operation. In another catastrophic cyclone that hit the coastal areas, over three lakh people were killed.



A portion of the wall on the road at Pologround area near Tigerpass intersection collapsed, threatening vehicular movement.

PHOTO: STAR