

helodhaka

weather forecast for the city

Cloudy, then

A full day of

Wednesday

Thursday Friday High 35C Brilliant sunshine

Saturday High 35C Low **24C**

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A glimner of light after a month of darkness

Shopkeepers at Baitul Mukarram market count loss because of burnt-out transformer and cables that have caused power failure from February 2

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Shopkeepers at the Baitul Mukarram market saw a glimmer of light after a month of darkness, as the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh will replace the burnt-out transformer and cables that caused an electricity failure from February 2.

"An ultimatum declared at a press conference got the foundation moving and efforts to replace the 630KVA transformer with a 1250KVA one and 1,400 metres of cable are underway," said Gulzar Ahmed, president of the Baitul Mukarram business group.

The association of shop owners, Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) and the foundation made a tripartite contract on

June 25, 1998 and agreed that the shop owners would directly pay Desa the utility bills. The foundation on its part agreed to install a new transformer and draw a new

line of cables.

"The shop owners cleared all bills in keeping with the contract, but the foundation did not install any transformer nor did it increase its capacity," claimed Enamul Haq, general secretary of the business group.

The foundation in a press release blamed the transformer and cable damage on illegal connections and excessive use of power by shop owners.

"Desa supplied 904 kilowatts of electricity to the market when the capacity of the transformer was 1064 kilowatts. The electricity consump-

tion sometimes rose to 1394 kilowatts," the press release said.

The shop owners said the contract was signed to bolster the transformer's capacity as the electricity demand was increasing.

The businesspeople complained that sales went slack, as people do not walk into shops without electricity.

"We are losing customers as modern shopping malls have come up. The electricity failure has made things worse," Enamul said. "No measures have

been taken to improve the situation since the market management came under the Islamic Foundation in 1975. The management tends to increase the rent by the year," he said.

Although the founda-

tion increased the rents from Tk 7 to Tk 9 per square feet, 295 shop owners did not agree on the hiked rent.

"The foundation can't increase rent without developing facilities for us. They are showing dues according to their new rent which we did not agree on," Enamul said.

"We are paying about Tk 80 lakh in rent a month to the foundation for the premises. We don't know what they do with the money. The transformer will cost them only Tk 1 crore which is less than two months' rent," a shop owner said.

The business leaders also said the foundation wanted two more days to install the transformer but are sceptical about



Shops at Baitul Mukarram now depend on generators.

Wasa bill books for consumers now March 11

MIZANUR KHAN

The Dhaka Water Supply Authority (Wasa) has once again postponed the date set to issue bill books to consumers because of the countrywide strike called yesterday by four opposi-tion parties in protest of the attack on writer Humayun Azad.

Wasa authorities earlier an-

nounced that bill books would Wasa will issue ID cards to its this month. be issued on March 6. "We will now start the distribution in a programme on March 11 at Lalmatia," said A N H Akhter Hossain, Wasa's Managing Director (MD).

Abdul Mannan Bhuyian, Minister of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperation (LGRD) will inaugurate the will inaugurate the programme. Simultaneously

meter readers to ensure a harassment free service.

"The meter readers and officials will be provided with identity cards embedded with a photograph of the individual concerned," said Hossain.

Wasa MD said meter readers will visit holdings every month and prepare bill 'in the pres-ence of the consumers' starting

Every consumer will retain the 5-year bill book, which will be provided to him. The meter reader, on his monthly rounds will check the meter, prepare the bill and sign it, Wasa sources

The water supply authorities currently have about 2.15 lakh consumers under eight zones in

Among the eight, three have been leased out to Dhaka Wasa Consumer Goods Suppliers' As-

Under the present system, meter readers of the leased out zones issue computerised bills every month. On the other hand, manual bills are distrib-uted in four zones and computerised bills in another zone

once in two months.

troduced to stop consumer ha rassment and false billing. This will also help reduce system loss with a steady increase in revenue earnings," said a top Wasa official.

According to the new system, Wasa revenue officials will visit holdings in different areas every month to see for themselves whether or not the meter read-

will also certify the bill books are in order.

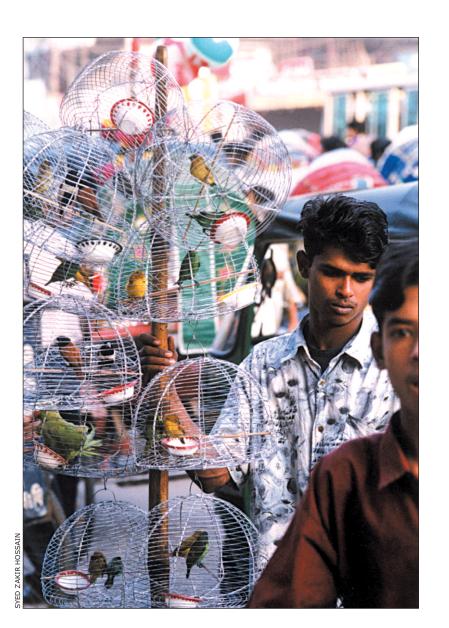
The chief and deputy chief revenue officers of the Wasa will also join the monthly drive, sources said, adding that all these steps are aimed at "ensuring correct meter reading and preventing consumer harass-

He said that over 60,000 hold-

"The new system is being in- ers have done their duties. They ings, most of them in old Dhaka

They will get bill books immediately after installation of me-ters. The agency has already pro-cured 12,000 meters and they will be installed within the next three months, he assured.

All consumers in the city will have meters by the end of this year, informed Wasa sources informed.



SHEER **IGNORANCE**

A seller hawks local birds including babui and munia at Kakrail crossing in Dhaka yesterday, having no idea that he runs afoul of environmental laws that ban poaching of birds.

Acute water shortfall at Kuril Badda

TAWFIQUE ALI

An acute water crisis has gripped the city's Kuril Badda area once again with residents suffering from scanty supply through the Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) pipelines for nearly a

There has been a drastic shortfall in water supply at Kuril from the Wasa's Kuratali and Kuril pumps. It's a very lean flow and often there is no supply at all. This has been happening for the last twenty days or so, said local people.

"We are often forced to postpone either our bath or dish washing or the laundry on alternate days and sometimes for several days even," said Saleha Begum who lives near the Kuril Primary School.

Sanjeeda Akhtar, a vocational trainer at a shelter home for sex workers and their children said that the severe water crisis over the past three weeks has made it very difficult to maintain 39 resident children.

"We have to pay Tk 200 to 240 everyday to procure six to seven hundred litres of water through a rickshaw van. The van driver brings it from some construction sites but that, too, is not always available.

morning before going to school, nor can we bathe and drink properly because of the unavailability of water. It's very dirty here," complained 9-year old Liza, a resident at the shelter

Another girl Rahima said that her mother was considering taking her away from the home as she might become prone to disease living there in the unhygienic environment.

"We have managed to drill a new pipe near the Kazi Bari petrol pump on the Biswa Road, which will start pumping at least 2000 litres of additional water soon," informed local ward (no-17) commissioner Kazi Hazrat

Ali said that the two pumps at Kuratali and Kuril had a joint capacity of generating 24,000 litres of water. But at present, they have fallen to about 7,000 litres because as both are very old

The new pipe has been drilled much deeper than the existing two, informed Ali.

A similar water crisis gripped Kuril area a couple of months ago creating severe suffering. The authorities redressed the situation by ensuring normal supply for some time following a report in The Daily Star.



Many used motor, connected tubewells with Wasa line but failed to pump out adequate water in Badda.