

Eight years without payment for power!

26 Barisal ice factories 'defy' HC order: Over Tk 2 cr bills unpaid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Taking the advantage of a High Court stay order, 26 ice factories in Barisal city are not paying electricity bills for eight years, depriving the Power Development Board (PDB) of over Tk two crore in arrears.

Besides the arrears, around Tk six lakh monthly power bills remain unpaid now.

Owners of the ice factories had filed a case with the High Court in November 1996, alleging 'ghost billing' by the PDB. Twenty-six cases were filed on a day. The arrears power bills till November 1996 was around Tk 1.77 crore.

The High Court in an order stayed realisation of arrears bills and asked the ice factory owners to pay monthly current bills.

But no one of them paid any monthly bill since then, according to sources in West Zone Power

Distribution Company (WZPDC), a company created by PDB which owns all its (PDB) installations now.

Sources among the ice factory owners also admitted non-payment of bills.

The alleged defaulters are National, Murad, Meghna, Rakib, Progoti, Jamuna, Faruk, Rupali, Shahbazpur, Barisal, Bakerganj, Rupali (2), Super, Sonali, Janata, Janata (2), Tripti, Bhola, Humayun, Humaun (2), Madhumati, Bhuiya, M Alam, M Alam (2), Rezaul Alam and Humayun (3) ice factories.

Mysteriously, since the stay order, authorities of neither the erstwhile PDB nor the present WZPDC took any move to vacate the order or disposal of the case, sources claimed.

Chief Engineer AM Shamsul Hoq of WZPDC, when contacted, said that after the HC order, several reminders were given to the factory

owners for payment of monthly current bills but they did not pay any heed to those.

On the other hand, the owners said they are not paying bills as the power supply authorities continued to give 'ghost bills' which are much more than actual consumption.

Advocate Abdul Mannan Talukder, an attorney of WZPDC, said the factory owners are defying the HC order. "We will move court soon in this regard".

Some sources claimed that the stalemate in the legal process is continuing because of an alleged nexus between the factory owners and a section of WZPDC officials and employees.

Sources in the WZPDC said they are preparing bills regularly and sending those to the factory owners.

The sources said the dispute arose as a section of the factory

owners allegedly tempered power meters to show reduced consumption to pay less than actual consumption. The dispute turned serious when such tempering was detected at some of the factories and people there caught.

All the factories were then brought under one electric supply feeder by the PDB in 1996.

Sources in the Ice Factory Owner's Association denied any wrongdoing or violation of the High Court order. They claimed that power supply through a single feeder created difficulties in load sharing and that bills thus prepared are "not correct" as per PDB rules.

"They (WZPDC) are still giving ghost bills and we have given legal notice against this", said factory owner Hafizur Rahman. "We are ready to pay bills if prepared correctly", he added.

GRENADATE ATTACK

AL obstructing neutral probe, Nasir tells Ctg rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government is determined to track down the culprits involved in the August 21 grenade attack in Dhaka through independent probe but the opposition Awami League (AL) is not cooperating in it, speakers at a BNP rally in the port city said on Monday.

The AL has formed a probe committee with "partisan lawyers", which will create confusion among people and ultimately help the perpetrators to escape, they claimed.

Chittagong City unit of BNP and its front organisations organised the rally at Laldighi Maidan as a part of its countrywide protest against the grenade attack on Awami League rally.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Md Nasir Uddin, who is also president of the city BNP, told the rally that the attackers are enemies of the country and democracy. They must be brought to book as they want to destabilise the democratic government, obstruct flow of foreign investment thwart the country's progress.

The government has taken all possible steps for an independent probe by engaging all agencies and

the Interpol.

Mir Nasir said the investigation commission formed in the name of Supreme Court Bar Council comprised partisan lawyers. It has no legal or constitutional base. It will rather hinder the judicial probe and create confusion among people, he said.

As many as 15 incidents of bomb explosion took place in the country between 1999 and 2001 when Awami League was in power but the Bar Council had kept mum then, the minister said.

"People of the country ponder whether the grenade attack was a trump card after the deadline announced by Awami League General Secretary expired on April 30", one of the speakers said.

BNP central leader Begum Rozi Kabir, Chittagong city BNP General Secretary Alhaj Dostagir Chowdhury, Vice President Shamsul Alam, Mohammad Mia Bhola, Joint Secretary Alhaj Ershad Ullah, Organizing Secretary Alhaj FH Khan Faju and BNP leaders Abdus Satter, Abdul Kader Milton, Niaz Mohammad Khan also addressed the rally.

Colleges vie for students

740 pass SSC in Moulvibazar: 7,500 seats in 20 colleges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Many colleges in Moulvibazar district are facing acute shortage of students as the number of admission seekers is decreasing day by day due to less pass percentage in SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination.

Some colleges in rural areas may be closed down for lack of students, it is apprehended.

August 30 was the last date of admission to HSC classes in Colleges under the Sylhet Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board. But according to reports available, 98 percent colleges in the district failed to fulfil their seats.

A total of 1700 students appeared at the SSC examinations in Moulvibazar under Sylhet board this year. Only 740 came out successful. The pass percentage in the district was 42. Forty-one students got GPA-

5.

There are 20 colleges in Moulvibazar district. Eight of these, including three government colleges, are reputed and well established. The rest were set up at times when SSC pass percentage was much higher than now due to scope for scope for cheating in examinations. But that scope is gone now because of government's strict measures during examinations.

In last ten years or so, some high schools in this district introduced eleven and twelve classes and accommodated the increasing number of successful SSC candidates.

Of the total 20 colleges, four are in the Sadar upazila, two in Rajnagar, five in Kulaura and three each in Baralekha, Kamalgonj and Srimongal upazilas. Two of the government colleges are in Moulvibazar town and another is at Srimongal town.

The 20 colleges together have 6000 seats in class eleven, with 1500 in the three government colleges. Against this, only 740 students passed the SSC examination this year.

Prof Jilal Uddin, Vice Principal of Rajnagar Degree College told The Daily Star that HSC seats will remain unfulfilled in large numbers in most of the colleges in the district.

Moreover, most of the students who got GPA-5 and 4 went to Dhaka or Sylhet for admission.

If the three government colleges enroll students getting GPA-2, 17 other colleges will get admission seekers far below their capacities, said a teacher at Syed Shah Mustafa (RA) College at Moulvibazar town.

Some well established non-government degree colleges will also suffer for lack of students, he said.

Convict in Aref murder case held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A convict in JSD (Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal) leader

Kazi Aref Ahmed murder case was arrested from Chuadanga four hours after delivery of the verdict on Monday.

Fugitive Oliar Rahman alias Oli is a close associate of notorious killer Nuruzzaman Lattu. He was given life term in the murder case.

Police said they arrested Oli from Rafizaganj village in Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga at about 5 pm as he was fleeing after hearing the verdict.

Oli was absconding after getting bail from a Kushtia court. He abstained from appearance in the court in the case.

Killer gets life term in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT Netrakona

A court in Kishoreganj on Monday awarded one person to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) for killing his wife.

The convict is Jalal Mia of Borkharchor village in Kuliarchor upazila, Kishoreganj.

District and Sessions Judge Court, Kishoreganj also fined him 5,000 taka, in default, to suffer five months more imprisonment.

Jalal used to torture his wife Beauty Akter of Bepari Para village in the same upazila for dowry since their marriage a few years back. On September 19 in 2000 he killed her with a lethal weapon.

Beauty's father filed a case with Kuliarahor police station accusing three persons. But two other accused persons were acquitted of charge as they were found innocent.

District and Sessions Judge Bhabani Proshad Singh pronounced the verdict.

Meagre house building grants in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The government has disbursed Tk two lakh as house building grant among flood affected people in Dhanut and Sahriakandi upazilas out of Tk three lakh allocated for them.

The rest one lakh will be disbursed after preparation of more lists of affected people, sources in the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office (DRRO) said.

The government was requested to allocate Tk 20 lakh taka for flood victims in seven upazilas in the district.

The recent floods destroyed at least 60,000 houses completely and another one lakh 46 thousand partially, they said.

Most of the flood affected families are rebuilding their houses on their own as the government help is meager compared to the need.

In Sirajganj, the worst affected district, many flood-displaced families are still living on embankments and dykes in Kazipur, Shahzadpur and Belkuchi as their houses have been washed away.



PHOTO: STAR

Polythene bags on sale by tiny tots at Bijoypur Bazaar in Sadar upazila, Comilla. Official ban on polythene bags is being defied here openly. But who cares?

CUTA STRIKE

Pro BNP teachers planning requisition meeting

CU CORRESPONDENT

Amid an indefinite teachers' strike called by the Chittagong University Teachers Association (CUTA), some teachers aligned with ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami are likely call a requisition meeting of the CUTA soon to declare a counter-programme.

The ruling party backed held a meeting at the Vice Chancellor's office on Sunday night and discussed calling a requisition meeting to give a 'befitting reply' to the pro-Awami League teachers who dominate the CUTA.

The teachers urged VC Prof AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury to ensure smooth plying of the university shuttle train and teachers' buses and presence of students so that they can take classes and do other academic activities, defying the strike call, meeting sources said.

The VC chaired the meeting, also attended by, among others, Pro VC Prof M Shamsuddin, former Pro VC Prof M Badiul Alam, Prof Dr. Abul Kalam Azad and Prof Abdun Nur.

When contacted CUTA President Prof Dr. Nurul Anwar told this correspondent that they would continue their strike till their demands are met.

CUTA began the indefinite strike on August 23 as the Syndicate allegedly ignored its two-point demand. The demands are cancellation of appointment of 57 teachers allegedly made by defying the Planning Committee recommendations and of the "illegal process" for promotion of Dr. Abu Tyeab Chowdhury, a Jamaat-backed associate professor of geography department.

Runner editor's death anniversary observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The 6th death anniversary of R M Saiful Alam Mukul, editor of local Bangla daily Runner, was observed here on Monday.

Journalists arranged a Quran Khwani, Milad Mahfil and a discussion meeting at Jessore Press Club and brought out a mourning procession in the town protesting violence.

Some goats were distributed among some destitute women for poverty alleviation.

Some socio-cultural bodies also arranged Milad Mahfil and discussion meetings. Mukul Friends' Forum also formed a human chain.

Six killed, 20 hurt in road mishaps

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Six persons were killed and at least 20 injured in road accidents in Netrakona and Jessore on Monday.

A Correspondent reports from Jessore: One person was killed and at least 20 others were injured, one critically, when a Khulna bound night coach and a truck collided head on at Chentugita on the Jessore-Khulna highway Monday night.

Police and injured passengers said the driver of the night coach, Matiar Rahman, was killed on the spot and the helper was critically injured. He was sent to Dhaka for

treatment.

The injured passengers were admitted to Jessore Hospital.

Our Netrakona Correspondent reports: Three motorcycle riders, critically injured in a collision with a bus at Digarkanda Monday evening, died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. They are Nazrul Islam, 35, Akramuzzaman, 40 and Yusuf, 32.

Two other motorcycle riders were killed when their vehicles hit a truck at Digar Kanda on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. Police could not identify them.

Showcause notice on UNO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A case has been filed against six persons including Sadullapur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) in connection with selection of a chairman-in-charge of Bongram Union Parishad due to long absence of the elected chairman. The case was filed with the court of Gaibandha Joint Session Judge on August 29.

The court, A a short hearing, issued a show cause on the chairman-in-charge, Shahidur Rahman.

On August 25, UNO Paritosh Chandra Das at a meeting at the Union Parishad office selected Shahidur Rahman chairman in-

charge in presence of only five out of 12 of its members to run day to day functions in view of long absence of elected chairman Fazlul Kaiyum Huda. Huda is absconding to avoid arrest in an alleged corruption case.

The seven other members who were absent from the meeting termed the selection illegal and filed a case against the five UP members and the UNO.

The court issued a show cause on Shahidur Rahman asking him to reply within 10 days why the selection would not be declared illegal.

When asked yesterday, the UNO declined to make any comment, saying the matter is now in the court.

20.5X2

SNAPS

Two prisoners die at Rangpur jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Two prisoners died at Rangpur Central Jail on Monday.

Solaiman, 87, of Joaner Char under Pirgachha upazila in Rangpur district, serving life term, died of age-old complications.

Solaiman was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital at about 11 AM on Sunday when he became seriously ill.

He died at 1 PM, apparently due to congestion from asthma, according to Senior Superintendent Jailer Azizul Hoque.

Ofil Uddin, 63, of Dinajpur Sader upazila, also serving life term, was taken to RMCH Monday morning as he became sick. Doctors there declared him dead.

The bodies were sent to their village homes after autopsy.

Threat to Iqbal Sobhan protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal Reporters Unity, Barisal Press Club, Barisal Journalists Union and Barisal units of Jatio Sangbadik Samity and Bangladesh Sangbadik Samity in separate statements on Monday condemned threat against Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Editor of Bangladesh Observer and president of BFUJ (Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists).

They also demanded of the government to nup the culprits and security of journalists.