

Palli Bidyut lights up faces of 21 lakh in Mymensingh

AKBAR HOSSAIN, Back from Mymensingh

Life has changed for some 21 lakh people in Mymensingh district, thanks to Mymensingh Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) that has set up around 3,656 kilometres of electric line over the last few years.

Domestic purposes aside, electrification has also had tremendous positive impact on the district's agriculture and commercial activities.

"Electrification in our area (Muktagacha) has changed lives of thousands of people in domestic as well as commercial arenas," said Kabir Hossain, a shopkeeper of Muktagacha.

Over the last year Mymensingh PBS energised 215 kilometres of electric lines in Mymensingh district and, more significantly, with a bill collection rate at 95 percent.

"Electricity has benefited the rural people, especially by helping irrigation activities," said Wahed Mia, a farmer of Muktagacha. He said that irrigation from November to March totally depends on electricity.

According to the statistics of Mymensingh PBS-1, there are 90,202 connections, of which 69,787 are for domestic, 10,874 for commercial and 6,015 for irrigation purposes.

The Mymensingh PBS has an area of 2,301 sq km with 1,621 villages under

74 unions. But the Mymensingh PBS has so far energised 984 villages.

"Previously we used to irrigate our agricultural land either by traditional means or just depended on rain," said Nur Ahmed, another farmer of Muktagacha.

However, allegations of power failure during the peak hour are also there.

"We hardly get electricity after dusk, specially during the summer, which hampers studies of our children and business activities," said a shopkeeper of Muktagacha.

Since the inception of Mymensingh PBS in 1983, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been extending its technical support to it like other 71 PBS units across the country. The USAID initially granted \$ 210 million when the PBS was first established.

After visiting the Mymensingh PBS, Gene V. George, USAID mission

director in Bangladesh, said the PBS has to be made stronger and more efficient.

"Some PBS units are making loss and some are doing well. If the PBS is financially solvent then it would be able to run like an independent company," George added. He also observed that PBS should be run transparently for developing itself and its services.

Regarding the distribution of power, the USAID mission director said PDB should not be in power distribution rather it should limit itself only to power generation and transmission.

On power failure in the PBS areas during the peak hours, George said, "it is very unfortunate that the PBS customers are not getting power although they are paying bills regularly."

He also said that the government should encourage the private sector more for power generation in order to meet the increasing demand of electricity in Bangladesh.



Hypertension Society executives

The 11th Annual General Meeting of Bangladesh Society of Hypertension was held on its premises in the city recently, says a press release.

Prof Muniruddin Ahmed, Dr ABM Haroon and Dr Abdun Noor Tushar were elected president, vice-president and secretary general at the meeting for 2006-



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil visits injured photojournalist Anisur Rahman of The Daily Star at the Holy Family Hospital in the city yesterday. Anis along with several other lensmen was beaten up by the National Security Intelligence (NSI) men on Thursday.