

Frequent power outages hit fish, textile units in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Frequent power outage and voltage fluctuation in Satkhira are causing immense sufferings to the people and affecting production in mills and factories, fish processing units and cold storages.

Load-shedding for up to about four hours a day has become a regular feature since beginning of the summer, residents and factory owners told this correspondent.

Production in Sundarban Textile Mills Ltd, the lone big industry in the district, is also being interrupted frequently due to load shedding, causing heavy loss to it.

Small industries and other business establishments are also being badly affected. The situation deteriorated in recent weeks. Once gone, nobody knows when power will return, they said.

People in different upazilas staged demonstrations demanding smooth power supply, but to no effect.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Satkhira Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Sheikh Azhar Hossain said, frequent load shedding and voltage fluctuation are damaging machinery in at least 39 fish processing plants, four cold storages and over 46 ice factories.

"Satkhira is the largest shrimp producing area in the country which earns a huge amount of foreign currency every year by exporting frozen food. Shrimp export will be hampered this year as the processing plants are suffering due to frequent load shedding", he said.

President of Bangladesh Shrimp Cultivators Association Dr. Aftabuzzaman, a former state minister, said huge quantities of shrimp get rotten due to load shedding, incurring heavy losses to the owners of processing plants.

Director of Satkhira Ice and Cold Storage Ltd., Atiar Rahman said, cold storages now keep generators stand-by as the Power Development Board

(PDB) can not ensure smooth supply of electricity. This doubles the cost.

Explaining, he said a cold storage can run only for five hours with the electricity produced by a generator using one barrel of diesel. This costs around Tk 5000 against Tk 3500 for electricity supplied by PDB.

Managing Director of Sonali Ice and Cold Storage Ltd., MA Jalil said, the cold storage industry is becoming a losing concern due to use of diesel generators. If this situation continues, they will have to increase preservation charge of potato in cold storages. The cold storages till now charge Tk. 180 to 190 per bag of potato, he said.

Sundarban Textile Mills CBA President Abdullah Sardar said, the mill is incurring a loss of about Tk 50,000 a day as production is interrupted due to frequent load shedding.

An official of Satkhira PDB said, peak hour (5pm to 11pm) demand for electricity in the district is 18 megawatt but only one third of it is supplied from the National Grid.

"We have no immediate alternative to load shedding and keep areas in dark for hours alternatively", he said, adding power is distributed by central load dispatch centre and nothing can be done locally.

"We have nothing to do to improve the situation unless supply from the National Grid is increased", he said.

Besides, supply is interrupted at times due to ongoing rehabilitation work in distributing lines at places.

The power crisis is more in rural areas under Palli Bidyut Samity (REB). Abdur Rahim, a grocer at Kalaroa, said "We even do not get satisfactory reply about power outage from REB, which blames PDB for the crisis because it gets electricity supply from PDB.

RU JCD leader expelled for snatching admit card

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Rajshahi University authorities yesterday expelled a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader from Suhrawardi Hall for snatching his admit card for final examinations from the hall office.

Faridul Islam, a member of RU JCD Conveying Committee and a Masters examinee in Political Science and Human Resource department snatched away his admit card from peon Goalm Mustafa when other examinees were collecting their cards in the morning.

Earlier, the hall authorities denied him the admit card as he did not pay seat rent and others charges for 22 months, using political influence. The examinations begin today.

After the incident, the hall authorities following discussions with the higher officials of the university expelled him from the hall and notified all concerned so that he can not appear at the examination.

"His expulsion from the hall will automatically expel him from the university", said RU Assistant Registrar Shafikul Islam.

2 killed as trucks collide in Comilla

A CORRESPONDENT, *Comilla*

Two persons were killed in a head-on collision between two on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Miaerbazar in Chouddagram upazila yesterday.

One of the victims was identified as truck driver Md. Kalil, 35, son of Abdul Kalaque of Shreedharpur in Asashuni upazila in Satkhira. Identity of the other victim could not be known immediately, police said.

The trucks were moving from opposite directions.

Being informed, Comilla Katwali police took the bodies to Comilla Medical College Hospital for autopsy.



About 10 maunds of stale sweets produced at posh sweetmeat shop, Swad, were poured into the Karnaphuli river yesterday during a drive against adulterated food by the Chittagong City Corporation, launched as part of a country-wide programme.

B'BARIA BSCIC ESTATE BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY

Most factories in production, high demand for plots

SHEKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM, *B'baria*

Unlike many others in the country, Brahmanbaria BSCIC Industrial Estate is humming with activity—factories rumbling and trucks moving in and out with raw materials or finished goods.

It also easily draws attention of investors or visitors because of its most suitable location.

Set up on the western side of Brahmanbaria-Dhaka highway at Nandanpur, 6 kilometres off the district town, the estate has good road, railway and waterway links

with rest of the country.

The main attraction to investors is the Bhairab and Ahsugan river ports just a few kilometres away, which allow them to transport raw materials and products to distant places at nominal cost.

"The ideal location draws investors but we can not accommodate any more as all the 137 plots have been allotted", said Abdul Wahab Biswas, Assistant Director General of the BSCIC Estate while talking to this correspondent during a recent visit there.

"We have 48 applications pend-

ing now", he said.

He said he sent a plan to high authorities to acquire more land for expansion of its area to give more plots to investors. But nothing has been done.

Because of good communication with the capital and Chittagong port, prospective investors are often visiting the site for plots, he said.

The BSCIC Estate was set up on 22 acres of land in 1985 at a cost of Tk 3.25 crore.

The 137 plots were allocated for setting up 67 industrial units. Fifty of the units are now in operation and

the rest 17 will start production soon, it was gathered by this correspondent.

Out of the 17, three units will start operation within 15 days. Machinery are being installed in seven units and the rest seven, installed earlier are being renovated.

The 50 units now produce goods worth over Tk 94.15 crore a year. These employ 1678 people, BSCIC sources said.

These are producing small machinery, aluminium goods, fabrics and garments, cosmetics and soap, chemicals, plastic products, medicine, iron and PVC pipe, leather goods, pen, electric wire, food items and other goods. The small textile units employ the highest number of about 70 workers, who produce fabric and exportable towels.

The units coming up soon include a carpet factory, two chemical industries, and two food processing factories, the sources said.

The 17 units, when operational, will employ 1200 more people.

Besides good communication, the investors here enjoy smooth power supply and a congenial employer-worker relation, they said.

All the units are clustered on banks of lake dug in the middle, which creates a good atmosphere, they said.

Leaders of Brahmanbaria Chambers and Commerce were also found all praise for the BSCIC industrial estate. Talking to this correspondent, its President Md Farid Uddin Ahmed said they submitted prayers to the Prime Minister, minister concerned and high authorities for expansion of the estate by acquiring lands to allocate more plots to prospective entrepreneurs.



A truck loaded with finished goods going out of the Brahmanbaria BSCIC Industrial Estate.

PHOTO: STAR

Demonstration for power in Haragachh

Tuesday's police action protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Several thousand people in Haragachh yesterday staged demonstrations in front of the municipal office protesting Tuesday's police action on 'innocent people' for demanding smooth power supply in the area.

During yesterday's demonstrations, leaders of Haragachh Biddut Grahak Sangram Somiti declared that people would lay a siege to the Deputy Commissioner's office if the administration does not take action against the policemen who took action against the innocent people "without any provocation".

At least 50 people including four policemen were injured in Tuesday's clash between police and people who were demonstrating at

Shahebganj area for power supply.

Police said, a large number of people gathered at Shahebganj on Tuesday to press for restoration of power supply lines snapped for non-payment of bills. Police rushed the spot and tried to disperse the dwellers first.

Rangpur Polli Biddut Somiti-2 had snapped power supply lines to Haragachh as some people allegedly assaulted the REB General Manager on Monday when he went to visit the area. They also damaged his jeep, police further alleged.

Mentionably, trouble over power supply began in Haragachh as the locals resisted bringing the area under REB supply from PDB. The people are demanding power supply under PDB.

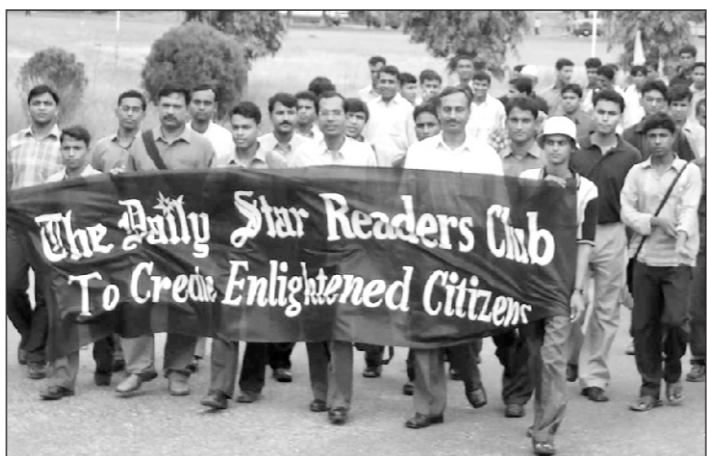


PHOTO: STAR

Teachers and students joined a procession brought out on the campus after formation of The Daily Star Readers Club at Kushtia Islamic University yesterday.

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