



Employees (left) issuing pre-paid cards to power consumers in at the PDB office in Sylhet.



PHOTO: STAR

# Pre-paid meter opens new era in power distribution

Consumers in Sylhet happy: System loss down by 10 pc, PDB's revenue up by 30 pc

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The pre-paid meter system has opened a new era in power distribution system, satisfying both the consumers and the supplier.

The pilot project introduced in Shah Jalal Upashahar in Sylhet city has become overwhelmingly successful. It has reduced system loss and increased PDB's revenue.

Many consumers in the area said they are free from hassles like alleged overbilling, waiting in long queues in banks for payment and fear of line snapping for outstanding bills. Some of them said their power bills are less now as they are more cautious.

The new system also holds a scope for lesser load shedding in the area than before, PDB (Power Development Board) officials said.

The pilot project was introduced in Shah Jalal Upashahar on February 22 this year at a cost of Tk 3.07 crore. Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, also lawmaker from Sylhet Sadar, inaugurated the project while State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud was also present.

This correspondent talked to a number of power consumers in the

area yesterday. Zakaria Sadeque Chowdhury in Block B said it is hassle-free, good for consumers and the PDB.

"Consumption (of power) has also come down a little because of economic use", he added.

Anwarul Haque in Block D said, "Now I do not have to go to bank and stand in long queue for bill payment. It is a great relief as my time and money is saved.

"I just buy a card from the local PDB office. On the other hand, I can keep a limit on use of electricity. I hope this to continue", he added.

Now we buy prepaid cards and install in meters, said some other subscribers.

"I am now free from hassle. It saves time, energy and even money", said Dr. Mahfuzul Islam Chowdhury.

Some subscribers said the authorities should make arrangement for sale of prepaid cards on holidays also.

At PDB's prepaid card sale centre at Shahjalal Upashohor, everything was nice and tidy. The noisy and crowded atmosphere in a typical government office was not seen during this correspondent's visit.

The subscribers just showed the staff their meter numbers and got the token/card on payment. Back home, they will easily punch the numbers on their meters.

A subscriber can also keep additional units on his meter, even before the existing units are exhausted, officials and customers there said.

Pre-Paid System Manager Abdul Quader said, there has been a very good response from subscribers since introduction of the system.

When contacted, Ratan Kumar Shaha, Executive Engineer, Sylhet Division-II said, "We are happy with the positive response from subscribers".

PDB supplied these imported meters under this pilot project free of cost.

Moreover, subscribers are given two per cent rebate on power tariff. On the other hand, there is no system of minimum billing for 'zero' use, he said.

"No use no payment system has been established".

There is no scope to manipulate meter reading and use one token for another meter.

Subscribers control everything and our men do not have move house

to house to prepare bills now.

Duplicate token is issued to a subscriber if his token is lost.

The Vending Counter remains open from 9 am to 3 pm on all working days to sell token.

The Executive Engineer said, PDB had started the pilot project with an initial target to cover 2400 subscribers. At the beginning, 271 subscribers were enrolled in January. The number is 2420 now.

To meet the growing demand, we have requested for supply of another 200 meters immediately. "We need much more", he noted happily.

He said PDB has a plan to extend the facility to adjacent Sobhanighat, Ambarkhana, Station Road and other areas after covering the whole of Shahjalal Upashohor.

The Executive Engineer said PDB is also gainer with introduction of the system. System loss has decreased by 10 percent and revenue earning has increased by 34 per cent in Shahjalal Upashohor area.

Only three women employees and one Sub Assistant Engineer are maintaining the Vending Centre.

## Prisoner dies at Nilphamari jail Torture alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A prisoner of Nilphamari District Jail died at the Sadar Hospital Thursday night, a day after his conviction.

Anwar Hossain, 32, was convicted to six months' imprisonment under the Drug and Narcotics Act on Wednesday and sent to Nilphamari District Jail on the same day.

He was taken to Nilphamari Sadar Hospital at about 11:30 pm on Thursday, where doctors declared him dead.

The jail authorities said Anwar Hossain was taken to hospital with chest pain.

But his family members alleged that Anwar was tortured in jail. Two under-trail prisoners — Abul Hossain and Fazlul Haque—died in the jail last one year, according to sources in the jail.



PHOTO: STAR

Jubo Mohila League brought out a procession in Sylhet city yesterday demanding execution of the verdict of Bangabandhu Murder Case.

## 2 acre land grabbed in Rangpur town 7 of the 14 alleged grabbers are land officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

About two acres of prime government land in Rangpur town valued at about Tk two crore have been grabbed by 14 people, seven of them officials and employees of the Land Settlement Department.

They have taken possession of the 'vested property' in Bhogi area while a case over it is pending with court, sources said.

On April 25, they took possession of the land bearing khatian No: 694 after securing a letter (memo no. VP 173- 186), issued from the Deputy Commissioner's office on April 21.

Sources at the district Land Settlement Office said the land belonged to a Hindu family. After the partition in 1947, the family left the country for India. Since then the land was marked as 'vested property'.

One Shishuma Rani claiming herself a descendant, had claimed the property. But government denied her claim and leased the property to one Rabea Begum.

Shishuma Rani lodged a case against the government, which is yet to be disposed of, the sources said.

When contacted, Rangpur Sadar Upazila Land Settlement Officer said that on behalf of the Assistant Commissioner (Land) he handed over the land to the 14 people who applied for lease in perpetuity.

Eleven of the lessees occupied .09 acre each and the rest three took possession of .05 acre each, the sources said.

The sources said a section of corrupt officials at the Land Settlement Office were involved in the lease process.

The Assistant Commissioner (Land) however contradicted the statement of the Land Officer. He said he did not issue any order in this regard. The Deputy Commissioner's office is the sole authority to lease any vested property, he said.

The sources said the land was leased as per an order from the office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner (ADC Land). But as

per rule, the DC's office is the sole authority to lease lands.

ADC Land Abu Taleb when contacted said the government leased the land as per rule. He said the 14 people got the land as per a 'will' by Rabea Begum. Law was not violated in the process, the ADC said.

To this, the sources said Rabea Begum has no authority to 'will' the land as she only leased it but did not own it. The DC's office is the sole authority in this regard, they said.

When contacted, Shishuma Rani claimed that her three brothers willed their land in her favour before leaving the country. "Since then I possessed the land".

She said, she lodged a case with Rangpur Judge Court in 1985 when the government leased the land to Rabea Begum. After 24 days, the court declared the lease invalid.

The government made an appeal to the Judge Court.

From 1985 to 2003, Shishuma Rani got the verdict in her favour twice and the government also own the case twice, she said.

As the latest verdict went in favour of the government, she appealed to the High Court. The case is yet to be disposed, Shishuma said.

## A different day for B'baria youths

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Youths had a different day at Brahmanbaria town yesterday.

They enjoyed a day-long programme including 'parliamentary debate' in English on 'Leader-

ship is Action not Position', group discussion on youth leadership and career development and tree plantation.

Brahmanbaria unit of the National Foundation of Youth Organization (NFYOB) organised

the programme, held at the North South School of Primary Graduate (NSSPG) marking the International Youth Day.

The programme began in the morning with a colourful procession in the town, joined by hundreds of cheerful and animated youths sporting stickers and carrying banners and fastoons with attractive slogans like 'We're youths, we're smart, 'We are nation builders and "we must lead our life lawfully."

As the procession passed, townspeople on roadsides clapped and cheered them while others threw flower petals from rooftops.

The processionists then converged at NSSPG auditorium, where the 'parliamentary debate' was held. It was moderated by Md. Matin Ahmed, Ashoka Fellow, USA. About half the debaters aged 17 to 19 were female students.

This was followed by group discussions, joined by IT professionals from local SS IT Foundation and a general discussion with Md. Matin Ahmed in the chair.

Brahmanbaria Police Superintendent ATM Tareque, NSSPG Principal Md Fazle Karim Khan and The Daily Star Correspondent and Brahmanbaria Press Club Vice-president Sheikh Shahidul Islam were present, among others.

The youths then went out in groups and planted on roadsides saplings bought by them. About 250 boys and 120 girls joined the tree plantation programme.



PHOTO: STAR

Youths at the debate on 'Leadership is Action not Position', held yesterday at the North South School of Primary Graduate in Brahmanbaria.

### BANSHKHALI CARNAGE

## UP chairman's arrest demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad on Wednesday formed a human chain demanding immediate arrest of Banshkhali Union Parishad (UP) chairman terming him a mastermind of a barbaric carnage at village Shilpara in Sadhanpur union of Banshkhali on November 19, 2003. Eleven members of a Hindu family were burnt alive in the carnage.

Hundreds of people from all strata joined the hour-long human chain formed in front of Chittagong Press Club.

It was followed by a meeting. Veteran revolutionary Binod Bihary Chowdhury presided over the meeting.

Speakers have demanded arrest and exemplary punishment of the UP Chairman, Aminur Rahman Chowdhury, a cousin of State Minister for Environment and Forests Jafrul Islam Chowdhury.

Parishad leaders also protested the 'ongoing' oppression on its members across the country. They urged the prime minister to take an initiative to stop repression on the fishermen community of Salimpur coastal area in Sitakunda upazila.

### SHAMSUR RAHMAN MURDER

## Showcause on govt for charge against Mizanur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The High Court on Wednesday issued a 'show cause' notice on the government asking why the charge framed against Jessore Bureau Chief of Dainik Inqilab Mizanur Rahman should not be rejected in Janakantha Journalist Shamsur Rahman Murder Case.

The High Court also issued a stay order for postponement of hearing of Mizanur Rahman's part from the trial. The Division Bench of High Court comprising Justice Shaikh Rezwan Ali and Justice Md Raisuddin issued both the rule and stay order.

The charge against the accused was framed in the Court of Additional District and Sessions Judge-1, Jessore on June 15.



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the reunion of beneficiaries of Islami Bank's micro credit programme in Nilphamari, held yesterday.