

No SUPPLIES TO ATRA INDUSTRIAL BELT IN KHULNA SINCE APRIL 17

Agitation for power, water from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Workers, employees and locals in Atra industrial belt in Khulna city are preparing for agitation for supply of power and water, stopped since April 17.

They have formed a committee styled 'Action Committee to Realise Legitimate Rights' to launch an agitation programme from tomorrow. The programme will be finalised at its meeting today, sources in the committee told this correspondent yesterday.

A grave situation is prevailing in the industrial belt as over 10,000 people in the area are not getting water and electricity, they said, adding, there is no alternative to coming onto streets now.

There are four jute mills in the industrial belt. These are Alif Jute Mill, Eastern Jute Mill, Ejax Jute Mill and Mohsin Jute Mill. The former two mills are closed since April 17 for want of power supply and the latter two are shut down for long due to

financial crisis.

The government's Infectious Diseases Hospital in the area is also deprived of power as it is also under the same supply network.

Among about 10,000 people living in the industrial belt, 6000 are mill workers and employees, the sources said.

Leaders of the newly formed committee said they will go for agitation from tomorrow if power is not supplied today.

Lack of power keeps the mills inoperative and the whole area in darkness after dusk, creating an unbearable situation, they said. Suspension of power supply also stopped water supply.

Power supply is suspended due to 'mechanical fault' in the feeder line of the power sub-station that supplies power to the industrial belt, sources at the sub-station claimed.

The sub-station is under the Western Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd (WZPCL).

But talking to this corres-

pondent, some leaders of the committee and local people alleged that power supply has been stopped intentionally on the plea of mechanical fault.

They alleged that WZPCL authorities so far turned a deaf ear to their sufferings despite requests by Khulna city Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and Whip Ashraf Hossain.

They accused local Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Mia Golam Parwar of creating the problem in connivance with a section of officials of the power supply crisis.

They alleged that the Jamaat leader has done this to take revenge against the new owner of Alif Jute Mill, Shaikh Akram Hossain, who left Jatiya Party and joined Awami League last month.

The Jamaat lawmaker's younger brother Shibir leader Mian Golam Kuddus kept the privately owned Alif jute mill under his grip with the help of a large number of party cadres

from July 1, 2002 till June 30, 2004.

As the mill was limping allegedly due to misappropriation of funds, it was handed over to Shaikh Akram Hossain. It was running well under Akram Hossain, they said.

"Parwar has a hand in suspension of power supply", said a prominent leader of Alif Jute mill CBA, Mohammad Nashi Mia. "He did this to take revenge against Akram Hossain by keeping the mill closed", he alleged.

When asked, Parwar denied the allegation of his involvement in any way in creating the power and water crisis.

"I am committed to serve the people honestly instead of putting them to trouble", Parwar.

Officials of WZPCL said feeder of the sub-station has gone out of order. But they could not say when it would be repaired.

They said the government earlier promised to supply pipeline gas to Rajshahi but it failed.

Rajshahi city dwellers are suffering for power and water but the authorities have turned a deaf ear to the problems, they alleged and threatened to launch a tougher agitation to ensure the basic rights.

Rajshahi City Corporation has failed to supply water though it collects revenue from citizens.

The people are suffering though the authorities are bound to meet their basic needs. But their oblivious of their responsibilities. If necessary, the people will stop paying taxes, they said.

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