

Anti-crime drive shows ray of hope for PDB

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Drive against corrupt practices in Power Development Board (PDB), Chittagong region has led to a significant improvement in checking pilferage, bill collection and distribution of power, sources at PDB said.

PDB, Chittagong has realised outstanding bill of Tk 42 crore, system loss has reduced to 16 percent from 23 percent and collection of bill has increased to 98 per cent in the recent months, they said.

It was possible following the drive launched with the help of joint forces against those who indulged in corrupt practices keeping the state-owned enterprise hostage so far," said PBB Chittagong regional Chief Engineer DK Podder.

As a part of its effort for even distribution of power and checking fraud in reading, PDB has installed some 4500 meters under pre-paid metering system at its Agrabad sub-station area in last four months, he said.

Some 10,000 such meters will be installed at Khulshi and Stadium sub-station areas within next eight months and some 13,000 meters at Agrabad, Halishahar and Muradpur sub-stations, he said.

As per the latest three-monthly statistics, the outstanding bills were Tk 178 crore, including Tk 48.50 crore of current month, sources said.

Of them, outstanding bills of Tk

83.21 crore were due from different government organisations while Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) alone owed Tk 42 crore to PDB, they said.

PDB, however, claims Tk 75.79 crore as outstanding bills from CCC that the city corporation refused to accept, terming it inflated ones.

"Besides punitive measures are being taken against the dishonest officials while disciplinary actions against many others are under process," Podder added.

"A task force has been formed and we are reporting to the authorities concerned for necessary action against the corrupt officials and employees," he said.

The daily production of power on an average stood at 400mw as against the daily need of 575mw in PDB Chittagong, sources said. Chittagong region has some 4.40 lakh consumers.

With some 75mw coming from the national grid, loadshedding of some 100mw is to be made here everyday.

The situation will improve further after Shikalbaha 60mw thermal power plant resumes operation by May 15, they said.

In an ongoing drive since January, PDB, Chittagong disconnected 57 illegal connections, including 44 in Chittagong city and district and realised penalty money of Tk 13.15 lakh, said the PDB officials.

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In this regard, Podder said, "It isn't unusual that faulty meters or pilferage by someone else might raise the bill."

PDB, Chittagong considered the matter when a team comprising members of both the sides reached an understanding around seven months ago to fix Tk 42 crore as an

agreed bill due to CCC," he said.

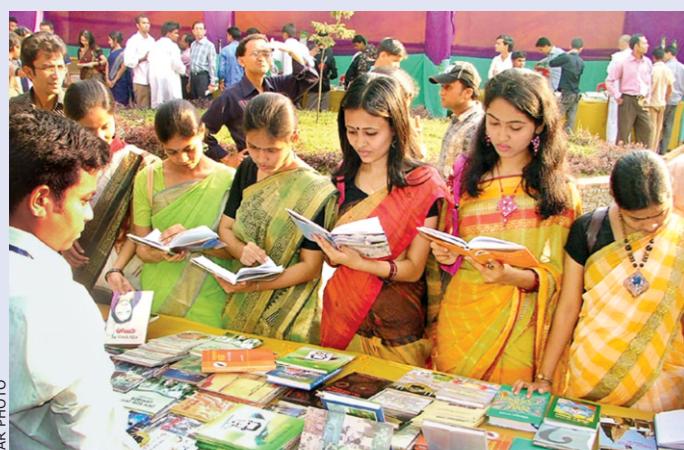
To make the organisation free from corruption, PDB, Chittagong has so far transferred 23 officials and 19 employees and suspended two employees on charge of corruption.



Farmers cultivate salt in huge land at Huaikhong on the bank of the river Naaf under Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar. The farmers in increasing number come forward to cultivate salt with the expansion of its market for their livelihood.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

the week that was



Visitors flip through books at a stall at a book fair at DC Hall organised by Chittagong Academy recently.

Freshers' reception at CU

Speakers at a function said students should concentrate in their academic studies to achieve the quality of honest, capable and dynamic leadership that the country needs most.

They were addressing freshers' reception and farewell ceremony of 2007 batch of the Political Science Department of Chittagong University (CU) on Thursday.

Vice-Chancellor Prof M Badul Alam was the chief guest at the ceremony with department chairman Prof Rashida Khanam in the chair.

Dean of Social Science Faculty Prof Gazi Saleh Uddin, former Pro-VC Prof Md Shamsuddin, Prof Md Abdul Hakim and Prof Mahfuzul Hoq Chowdhury were the special guests.

Prof Badul Alam in his speech urged the newly admitted students to keep themselves attentive in their studies in order to get better result in future.

UCL branch opens in port city

Tapan Chowdhury, adviser for food, power and energy, assured the business community here of reconsidering their demand for extension of hoarding period of food grain from 90 days to six months for three items rice, wheat and lentil.

"We are quite aware of the grievances of the business community and assure you today that we will look into the demand for time extension regarding hoarding period," he said this while he was speaking as chief guest at the

CCCI recommendations for dev of power sector

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) members at a meeting on Thursday with Energy and Power Adviser Tapan Chowdhury placed 20 short, mid and long-term recommendations for development of power sector for better economic growth.

"Power crisis has strangled the economic growth and it needs to be addressed soon," they said.

In reply the adviser said bureaucratic dilemma and indecision has been a major obstacle to redressing the problem and the present government was trying hard to make the sector viable.

"To this end, the government in consultation with experts and other quarters concerned has formulated an energy policy and proper steps and plans are being taken to solve the problem based on this policy," Tapan said.

Earlier, CCCI President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury placed the recommendations. These include: Permission for genuine private sector entrepreneurs to set up small power plants (SPP) ranging 10 to 50 megawatt, large industrial groups to set up captive power plant (CPP), measures to bring surplus power generated by the existing CPP to the national grid, weekly two-day of closure at shopping malls, prepaid meter to check pilferage, regular overhauling of existing power plants to

These unfortunate things have happened out of over excitement and there definitely has no instruction from our side," he said, adding that the nation has been experiencing a changed scenario after the caretaker government assumed to power.

He urged the company to encourage the good borrowers and discourage the bad borrowers or large defaulters to help accelerate economy.

inauguration of Chittagong Branch of Union Capital Limited (UCL), an investment bank and lease financing firm, at Agrabad in the port city on Thursday.

UCL Chairman Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury, former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), presided over the function. Company Managing Director Dr Mohammad Hafiz Ahmed gave the address of welcome and an overview of the company. PHP Group Chairman Sufi Mizanur Rahman spoke as special guest.

Pointing to the recent drives against hoarding of food grains, Tapan Chowdhury said the business community had suffered a lot and there were some harassment too.

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Evening banking begins

Standard Chartered Bank started evening banking service at the Station Road branch on Wednesday.

Director and Head of Commodity Corporate of Standard Chartered Bank Mahfuzur Rahman inaugurated the service at a ceremony.

Head of Shared Distribution and Service Quality of the Bank and Area Head of Consumer Banking Fazle Niaz Peer were present at the ceremony.

The branch will provide service to its clients from 6:00pm to 8:00pm on working days.



Shuvra Sengupta and her troupe perform dance at the old students' reunion of Chittagong College at the Chittagong Club auditorium in the port city.

increase their life cycle and newer sources of power like biogas, solar, river current and sea wave.

Senior Vice President MA Latif, former presidents Ali Ahmad and Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury, chamber directors Dr Moinul Islam Mahmud, Nasiruddin Ahmed Chowdhury, Amirul Haq and managing director of Bangladesh Steel Re-rolling Mills (BSRM) Ali Hossain also spoke.

Need for proper education policy underscored

Speakers said a proper education policy is a must to improve the quality of education and development of a nation is not possible without improving the education system.

They were addressing the reunion ceremony of former students of 1995 batch of Chittagong College at a local community centre on Friday.

Former president of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) Abu Sufian was the chief guest at the function with reunion committee convener Reazuddin Ahmed in the chair.

Headmaster of Collegiate School Md Aziz Uddin, Assistant Headmaster Manindra Kumar Baidya, senior teacher Ashis Kanti Chowdhury, former teacher Abdul Matin and member secretary of reunion committee Reazul Karim spoke at the function.

Earlier, former students of 1995 batch took out a colourful procession in the city and a tree plantation programme

was held on the school campus on the occasion. The function was followed by a cultural programme.

7.50 crore carrying TB germs'

Speakers emphasised the need for creating public awareness to make the country free from tuberculosis by 2050.

They said around 7.50 crore people in the country are carrying germs of tuberculosis at present.

They were addressing a press conference on the eve of World Tuberculosis Day organised by Chittagong Civil Surgeon Office at Chittagong Press Club on Friday.

Consultant of Chittagong TB Hospital Dr Ahmed Hossain said one person becomes affected with the disease in every two minutes in the country.

People living in congested slum areas and working in garments in big cities like Dhaka and Chittagong might easily be affected with the disease than those who are living in rural areas, he said.

Divisional consultant of World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Sanjukta Kumar Das, technical officer of Brac tuberculosis control programme Dr Luna Chakma and Chittagong Urban TB supervisor Dr SM Hanif were present at the conference.

OMS brings down prices of essentials

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The prices of essential commodities have decreased to some extent in the port city as some importers and government agencies started selling at a fair price from this month.

To rein in the soaring price, nine private business groups have opened up 30 makeshift sale centres adjacent to different retail markets in the port city to sell food items at a fair price.

Abul Khair Group was the pioneer of such a sale centre at Sagarika intersection that opened on March 15 with four items, including sugar, pulse, husked pea seed and wheat.

It also opened five other outlets at Agrabad, Badamtali, Aturar Dipot, Bahadherhat, Chawkbazar and Bandartilla the following day.

Seven other importers followed suit in couple of days.

Of them, TK Group opened stalls at Karnaphuli Complex at Sholashahar No. 2 Gate, Karnaphuli Market at Choumuhan, Kazir Dewry Bazar and Bahadherhat while Masud & Brothers started its sale at two stalls at Nimgtala and Rubi Gate near Polytechnic Institute.

PHP Group opened up seven outlets at Sagarika Road, Rubi Gate opposite to PHP office, Shitalpur, Bara Kumira, Barabkunda, Hathazari Bazar and Mohorjgoni of Feni.

Bismillah Stores launched the sale at Colonel Hat, Siraj Ud Doula Road and Jhautala Rail Crossing while S Alami Group of Companies at Sholashahar and Sagarika.

Imam Group of Industries has opened the stalls at Anderkilla General Hospital and on the north side of Karnaphuli Bridge and M/s Alami & Brothers at GPO.

Md Ilias Brothers started selling the commodities at a fair price at three stalls since March 26.

These makeshift sale centres are selling a kilogram of pulse at Tk 44, husked pea seed at Tk 24, sugar at Tk 32, flour at 25, coarse flour (atta) at Tk 20, wheat at Tk 18, gram (chick pea) at Tk 44, onion at Tk 19, garlic at Tk 52 and super refined palm oil at Tk 55.

The government agencies of Ansar and VDP (Village Defence

Party) are also selling essential food items in a fair price under Operation Commodity Items - 2007 in the port city that began on March 25.

They have set up three makeshift stalls at Bahadherhat Bazar, Jhautala Bazar and Rubi Gate areas.

The sale at fair price is drawing huge consumers especially from lower and lower middle class.



People crowd a stall under Open Market Sale (OMS) run by TK Group in cooperation with joint forces at Sholashahar No-2 Gate in the port city.

They throng the outlets to buy their daily commodities.

The Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice that started under the supervision of Department of Food on March 18 should be intensified, the consumers said.

Fatema, a garment worker, expressed her satisfaction over the sale saying it would help her feed the five-member family.

The sale had a direct impact on the retail markets, bringing down the prices of food items like sugar, onion and oil in last few days.

Sugar, which was selling at Tk 35 to Tk 36 per kg, is now available at Tk 33 per kg at city markets since Friday.

The price of onion also comes down to Tk 19 from Tk 22 per kg while price of palm oil remains steady at Tk 55 per litre.

Price of edible oil also shows fall, selling at Tk 67 as against the previous price of Tk 69 per litre.

Bashir, a seller of Khwaza Garibe Newaj Store at Karnaphuli Market, said decrease in wholesale market rate helped prices of essentials come down at the retail

managing director of Masud & Brothers, said several business groups are preparing to import rice from India or any other countries to sell them at a fair price within a month.

Meanwhile, Food Department started to sell boiled rice at Tk 15.25 per kg at three points in the port city on March 18 under a month-long Open Market Sale (OMS) programme.

But many of the customers are to go back home empty-handed due to insufficient supply at these stores against huge demand.

The department started the OMS through only three selected dealers allowing each of them to sell a maximum of 510 kg of rice a day.

It will start sale of rice at 41 wards in the port city through 82 dealers under OMS programme soon, sources at District Food Control office said.