

Transformer troubles cause increase in outage hours

PDB workshop limps along for lack of manpower, modern equipment

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

The Chittagong Regional Workshop of Power Development Board (PDB) has been limping along due to lack of manpower and modern equipment, causing immense sufferings to consumers in greater Chittagong division.

It causes delay in repairing electric transformers required for restoring snapped power supply.

The workshop authorities, responsible for repairing the electric transformers damaged in blast or giving troubles in Chittagong, are yet to get any positive reply to the letter they sent to the ministry concerned in September last year, sources said.

Against over 60 posts, a 13-member workforce including engineers, foremen, technicians and electricians, is struggling hard to repair transformers lying there in a heap with the help of some helping hands recruited on temporary basis.

The workshop was set up in the city's Mansurabad area around 40 years ago when the PDB had only some 1,000 transformers in the five districts -- Chittagong, Rangamati, Khagrachhari, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar under Chittagong region. The number of transformers has now stood at 3,200.

Acting Executive Engineer Mohammad Ibrahim Ali at the workshop said on an average two transformers can be repaired a day where sometimes, particularly in the rainy season, four to five transformers arrive there daily.

The engineers and technicians equipped with backdated tools make frantic efforts to cope with the pressure when repair work of a transformer takes several days depending on the condition or extent of damage, he said.

Sources at the workshop said most of the existing transformers of PDB, Chittagong are age-old while lightning and overloading cause transformers get damaged or troubles, he added.

While visiting the workshop on Sunday around 40 transformers that came from different distribution centres were seen lying for repair.

A total of 79 transformers have

been repaired at the workshop in July and August this year while 172 transformers in 2004-2005, 226 in 2005-2006, 367 in 2006-2007 and 526 in 2007-2008, the sources at the workshop said.

As such, delay in repairing the damaged or trouble-giving transformers worsens power supply situation and raises suffering to the power consumers to a large extent.

Zia Hossain of Firingee Bazar area said they had to stay seven days without power as their transformer went out of order last week of August.

"Removal of the troubled transformers had brought untold sufferings to us when we also had to experience shortage of water," he said, adding that they collected water from their relatives living another part of the city.

"Scorching heat of the sun along with water crisis pushed us

into an intolerable situation when many of this area were forced to leave the city and stay at village homes until normalcy in power supply could be restored," he said.

The transformer was re-installed restoring power supply after six days only to go out of order again on September 7 creating resentment among the residents of the area.

The angry residents brought out a procession and put up barricade on the roads at Firingee Bazar demanding immediate restoration of power, he added.

He said check in illegal power connection from the PDB distribution lines can help the transformer to last longer.

Syed Mohammad Muinuddin, a government official of city's Khatiberhat of Bahaddarhat area, said they are to experience power outage frequently as the transformer of the area goes out

of order frequently.

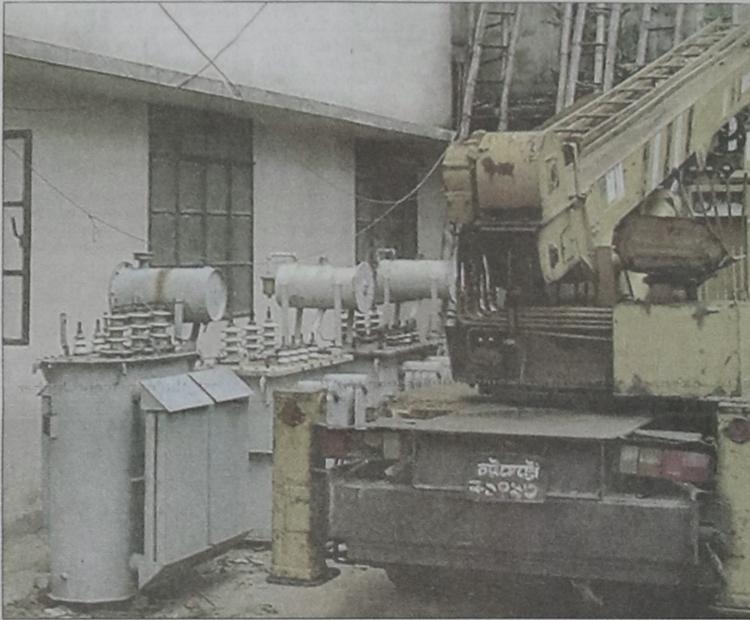
"We are to wait two to three days when the PDB men take the transformer for repair. Sultry weather along with water crisis make the situation unbearable," he said.

He demanded immediate withdrawal of the age-old transformers from the power supply lines and installation of new ones to help them get rid of the power crisis.

In this regard, PDB Chittagong Chief Engineer Joytish Chandra Biswas said it is too tough for 13 people to do a large-scale work.

He said he told the executive engineer at the workshop to make another proposal for additional manpower and equipment.

He said 16 new transformers have been procured for this region last month and he have distributed them on the basis of



Due to transformer crisis, city areas remain in the dark for hours. A number of transformers are waiting to be repaired at the Power Development Board (PDB) office at Muradpur.

Eid shopping yet to gain momentum

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

There are huge display of various types of dresses in over 100 markets, including several posh shopping malls, but Eid shopping in the port city is yet to gain momentum for lack of buyers.

Shopkeepers are not happy with the poor sale even though two weeks of Ramadan have already passed.

Buyers and sellers expressed mixed reaction blaming costly price of dresses and clothing, unprecedented price hike of different commodity items over the previous months and financial crisis for the poor sale.

Due to financial constraint, people from the middle or lower middle class families still remain as window shoppers while the affluent section is looking for the latest vogue.

People of well off section who are in search of latest fashion in design and colour usually throng the posh shopping malls like New Market (Bipani Bitan), Amin Centre, Sanmar Ocean City, Central Plaza, Mimi Super Market, Chittagong Shopping Complex as well as some popular outlets like Nabarupa, Pride, Aarong, Anjan's, Mia Bibi, K-crafts, Westecs, Revlon, Cat's Eye, Matra, Nari and Menz Club.

Middle class customers like to shop at Reazuddin Bazar, Terri Bazar, Tamakumandi Lane Bazar, Lucky Plaza, Chawk View Market, Shopping Complex, Singapore-Bangkok Market and other markets for availability of necessary items at reasonable price.

Zahur Hawker Market and a number of city points where hawkers set up makeshift shops, however, remains the most popular outlet for the lower middle class and the poor.

But a similar picture of poor sale at all types of markets was seen while visiting these markets last week.

Abdur Rahim, staff of a renowned saree shop of New Market Odud Fashion, said a good number of their regular customers from well off families who used to buy uncommon



Two girls admire bangles at a shop of Central Plaza in the port city.

sarees at high price on the occasion of Eid are unwilling to spend for pricey items this year.

People who bought a saree of Tk 10,000 or more last years are now looking for cheaper ones, said Rahim, adding that buying capacity of people has been reduced.

Odud Fashion has collected Indian sarees of boutiques with brand names as Sonia and Aditya having decoration of antiques over chiffon silk with prices varying between Tk 5,000 and Tk 8,000.

Jacks Fashion, another saree shop in this market popular for local products, offers Tangail Silk from Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,500.

Customers look for Jacks Aplic decorated with stone, glass that cost Tk 1000 to Tk 2050.

Mayabee, a saree shop on the second floor of Amin Centre, has brought collections of variety of silk like silk chinon with prices varying between Tk 7,000 to Tk 15,000, mokhon silk decorated with Bombay boutiques and karchupi with prices from Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000.

Married women are craving

for Indian katan that costs Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000, said Osman Gani, proprietor of Mayabee, on Sunday. The shop charges Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000 for a lehri katan saree.

Traders have collected many foreign pricey varieties since both the Eid and Durga Puja (main religious festival of Hindu community) will coincide this year.

"We hoped that the sale would get an extra stroke due to Eid and Puja going to happen almost at the same time but the spree is yet to get momentum, said Osman.

Though thousands are crowding city malls and it is increasing every day, but customers are looking for cheaper items.

Abdullah, working in a private firm, managed to satisfy every member of his family last year with a handsome budget of Tk 20,000. He said this year he needs Tk 5,000 more to meet the same demand due to increased price of garment.

Some posh outlets such as Revlon, Cat's Eye, Menz Klub, Ruby Red, Handi Bazar and

Khakki also have nice collections of shirts and pants for gents. Shirt, formal or casual, are being sold in these outlets at Tk 700 to Tk 1500.

Salwar kameez, decorated with different artistic patterns with brand names like Anarkali or named after the Indian stars Katrina Kaif and Sania Mirza, have become the craze among the young girls.

Sat Rang, a shop exclusively for three-piece at Amin Centre, has arrayed with a good collection of three-pieces of multi-designs. Anarkali on tissue clothes are being sold at Tk 6,000 to Tk 22,000 while Katrina Kaif at Tk 8,000 to Tk 4,000.

Sabrina, student of a private university, said the price was higher than the previous year when a brand three-piece could easily be bought within Tk 2,500 to 4,000.

Traders blamed higher customs charge and increased production cost due to variety in design for the higher price.

They, however, hopes that the sale will rise in a day or two with start of the spree of buying.

theweekthatwas

Launch disasters kill 5000 in 18 years

Over 5000 people lost their lives in launch disasters in the rivers of Bangladesh during the last 18 years.

A large number of passengers would have been saved had it been made mandatory for the ship owners to provide with life jacket to every passenger according to the Inland Shipping Ordinance 1976.

Speakers told a seminar titled "Life jacket Saves Lives" organised by the Nautical Institute (UK) Bangladesh unit at its office recently.

"A person can survive for more than three days even at deep sea if he wears a life jacket," they said.

They said, "Over the last 10 years at least two ship captains and four sailors

died at the Chittagong anchorage due to marine accidents. During the period 54 tourists lost their lives in the sea beach at Cox's Bazar. These lives would have been saved had these people made use of life jackets, they added.

Capt MA Razzak presented the keynote paper. Officials of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC), Marine Academy and representatives of shipping companies and shipping agents were present at the seminar.

Capt Razzak in his paper said as per IMO (International Maritime Organisation) regulations, it is mandatory for every crew and passenger of ships to be provided with a life jacket. Though Bangladesh strictly follow this provision for ocean going ships, coastal ships and fishing trawlers according to Merchant Shipping Ordinance 1983 but ignored Inland Shipping Ordinance 1976.

Access TEL Network in Ctg

Access Telecom (BD) Ltd or Access TEL, one of the leading internet service providers in Bangladesh, extended its broadband network in the port city on Saturday.

Zain Omar, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Access TEL, declared the company's extension at a ceremony at Chittagong Club auditorium on Saturday.

He said established in 1997 the company launched its commercial internet services in 2000 in Dhaka and started informally its operation in the port city on July 1.

"The objective of Access TEL is to spread the growth of Information Technology (IT) sector in Bangladesh,

and today, the company is an Internet infrastructure and solutions provider, delivering end-to-end value-added solutions to businesses and consumers," Zain said, adding that it currently supports more than 700 corporate connections in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Highlighting state-of-the-art Xstream services and Fibre Optic Network (FON) connectivity services in Chittagong, he said the Xstream service provides reliable, always on, broadband services using a small self-installable wireless modem that does not require users to download software or to configure their laptop or desktop computers.

Company Chief Technical Officer (CTO) Zari Omar, Chief Operation Officer (COO) Salahuddin Chowdhury, Assistant Manager (sales & marketing) and Assistant Manager (customer support) Zillur Rahman were present at the function.

Food for poor families

Around 200 poor families of city's Pathantuli area received different food items and essentials on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Chatgaon Sangstha, a voluntary humanitarian organisation, distributed the food and other items at a simple ceremony on Saturday at its office at Nazir Bhandar Lane in Pathantuli.

Each family received 10kg rice, 2kg lentil, 2kg potato, 2kg sugar, 2kg gram (chhola), 1kg salt, 1 litre soya bean oil, 1 packet vermicelli and puffed rice.

Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Md Habibur Rahman and Assistant Commissioner Md Iluttmish were present as the chief and special guests at the function chaired by Sangstha President SM Jamal Uddin. Organisation's advisers Nazir Ahmad, Md Amir Hossain, Mesbaul Hoque Tanim and Joint Secretary Nurul Absar Cyclone spoke at the function.



Artists of Academy of Performing Arts, a cultural institution, perform at a technical show of their new drama titled 'Godhulir Alo' at Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) on Friday.

No qualitative change in local body polls

Expected qualitative change in recent elections to the city corporations and municipalities has not been noticed, speakers told a view exchange meeting here on Saturday.

They underscored the need for a long-term strategy to bring about qualitative change in the leadership and establish good governance.

Citizens for Good Governance (CGG) organised the meeting titled "Establishing Good Governance and our obligation in the next election" at the Engineer Abdul Khalek auditorium of Chittagong Press Club.

CGG Secretary Dr Badiul Alam

Majumder said around 80 percent of the councillors elected in the polls are from business community.

Public representation in local body is going under the capture of businessmen that happened in the parliament election, he said.

It indicates that the voters elected those from whom they could get mere but instant benefits.

However, many things positive could be achieved in the election and sustaining these achievements would be the main task to help establish good governance in the society and country, he said.

Prof Muhammad Sikander Khan in his presidential speech said, "The election at least would help us realise pledges committed during the election by the elected representatives and it is

time to see how much of the commitments they made in the election manifesto is implemented and how much of the public rights are protected."

Abul Momen, resident editor of the Prothom Alo in Chittagong, said a long-term strategy has to be followed to achieve qualitative change in the leadership.

Engineer Ali Ashraf, chairman of Institution of Engineers Bangladesh, Chittagong, said the election put a dent on the people's faith and expectation when some accused in corruption cases also came out with flying colours and had floral reception.

Prof Hossain Kabir, Engineer Baset, former chairman of Sitakunda municipality Abul Kalam Azad, journalists Asif Siraj, Ali Haider, Abul

Khayer and Aleya Chowdhury also spoke at the meeting.

Tribute to Zia Haider

Speakers at a condolence meeting here on Friday paid rich tribute to noted drama personality and poet Zia Haider and said his death is an irreparable loss to the drama arena.

Theatre Club, Chittagong organised the meeting with its Member Secretary Suchant Chowdhury Tinku in the chair.

President Member of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation M Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Convener of Path Natak Parishad Dipak Chowdhury and Dramatist Tapash Shekhar spoke at the meeting.



Leaders of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) offer prayers at a milad and Iftar mahfil at a local community centre in the port city on Monday.