

Power, water crises grip Chittagong

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Power generation has come to a minimum level, resulting in serious loadshedding even in the winter here for lack of sufficient gas and fall in water level in the Kaptai Lake.

The repeated disruption in power supply is also hampering production and lifting of water by Chittagong Wasa causing serious water crisis in the port city. The loadshedding caused Chittagong Water

and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) witness a 15 percent fall in its production.

The worst sufferers of the power shortage now are the students who will appear in the upcoming SSC examinations as they hardly get the power at night.

Sources at the Chittagong Power Development Board (PDB) said against the total capacity of 766 Megawatt (MW) in 10 power units under three power plants in Chittagong region comprising Cox's Bazaar,

Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban, only 90MW power is being generated in the day hours while on an average 135MW during the peak hours at night against the demand of around 500MW.

One 210MW capacity unit, out of two, in Raozan Thermal Power Plants now produces 90MW during the day while one 50MW unit, out of five units, in Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Plant adds 40MW to 50MW during peak hours at night.

Beside this, national grid contributes 260MW to 280MW in the daytime while 220MW to 230MW in the nighttime.

Against this situation, the power consumers in Chittagong are to experience on an average 160MW loadshedding. The amount would stand at around 200MW in the upcoming peak season when the total demand would stand at 575MW to 600MW, sources said.

Lack of sufficient water in the Kaptai Lake only one unit, out of five, is functioning while the authorities kept the rest four units closed since November last year for same reason.

Water level in the lake was 83.18msl (mean sea level) on Sunday while it usually stands at 96.02msl in this season. But, the level stands at highest 109.00msl in the rainy season which is standard level for running all the units there.

Besides, one unit, out of two with 210MW capacity each of Raozan Plant, remained shut down for nearly a year for want of gas supply.

Meanwhile, Shikalbaha Power Plant on the other bank of river Karnaphuli has three power units with capacity of 116MW. The productivity of two barge-mounted plants at the plant has already expired. One of them went out of order earlier while the other can produce 10MW at best depending on availability of gas. The rest one also kept closed due to gas shortage.

The Chittagong PDB requires 100 to 102 million-cubic-feet gas for running all the gas-fired plants while the Raozan plant alone needs 90 million-cubic-feet. But, against such a huge demand the PDB is now getting only 20 to 22 million-cubic-feet, the sources said.

PDB Chief Engineer Tulshi Das Saha said shortage in gas supply and dry season have brought the situation to this stage.

"If it rains the units at the Kaptai Hydroelectric Plant can be brought into production that would reduce the crises to a some extent," Tulshi said.

"We are expecting power from the 22MW rental power plant at Barabkunda under Sitakunda upazila and 50MW plant of Shikalbaha in April and June this year," he added.

On the other hand, the city dwellers have been facing tremendous water crisis since December 2008 as the salinity was found in the Wasa water while the authorities were supplying insufficient water.

Dr Fauzul Karim, a building owner in city's Dewanhat area, said the Wasa supplies a little water compared to the earlier quantity and they cannot run the water pump to supply water in the flats due to power crisis.

"The situation is causing suffering to the tenants to a large extent to maintain their household work," he said.

Sources at Chittagong Wasa said now they only can lift 170 million litres per day (mld) instead of regular 200mld due to salinity and power disruption.

"We are trying to reduce the salinity through mixing underground water in the Mohora Water Plant and rationing the available water for proper distribution under Chittagong Wasa," said Wasa Superintendent Engineer Abdul Karim.

He said now they can distribute around 40 percent of water to the city dwellers against the demand of 400mld. The situation might improve after the rainfall in March, he added.

Bakery products still pricey



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Bakery food items.

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

A number of bakeries and eateries in the port city have finally reduced prices of their items because of fall in prices of different raw materials and commodity items.

Such a little fall in prices, however, could not satisfy the consumers as the present prices are still higher compared to the fall in prices on raw materials like wheat, flour, edible oil, sugar and milk powder.

Several eateries like Highway Sweets and Confectionary, Bonoful, Fulkoli, Misti Mukh, Misti Mela and others have reduced prices of their bakery items from seven to 14 percent.

Highway Sweets & Confectionary, a popular sweetmeat shop, has announced reduction in prices of its food items like loaf, biscuits and cakes early this month.

Salam, a salesman at the shop, said they are now selling 400 grams of loaf at Tk 25 and 200gm of bread Tk 13 which were Tk 30 and Tk 15 last month.

Prices of different types of biscuits have also come down, he said, adding that price of 350gm of dry cake has come down to Tk 65 from Tk 60, 350gm of special 'pound biscuit' to Tk 55 from Tk 50, 350gm of normal pound biscuit to Tk 45 from Tk 50, 400gm of butter toast to Tk 45 from Tk 50 and 300gm toast to Tk 30 from Tk 35.

Bonoful, another sweetmeat and confectionary shop, has also announced cut in prices of its different types of biscuits by Tk 5. A salesman at Bonoful said they have reduced around 11 percent to 16 percent in prices of different types of loaves.

He said 650gm of loaf is now sold at Tk 40 against the previous price of Tk 45, 450gm of loaf is sold at Tk 25 against Tk 35 while the price of 200gm of loaf has come down to Tk 16.

Ahmed Munir, a schoolteacher, said prices of bakery products should reduce more since prices of edible oil, flour and sugar have fallen to a greater extent during the last few months.

Prices of both the normal and finer quality wheat have dropped by 130 US dollar and 270 dollar per tonnes in the international market during the last four months.

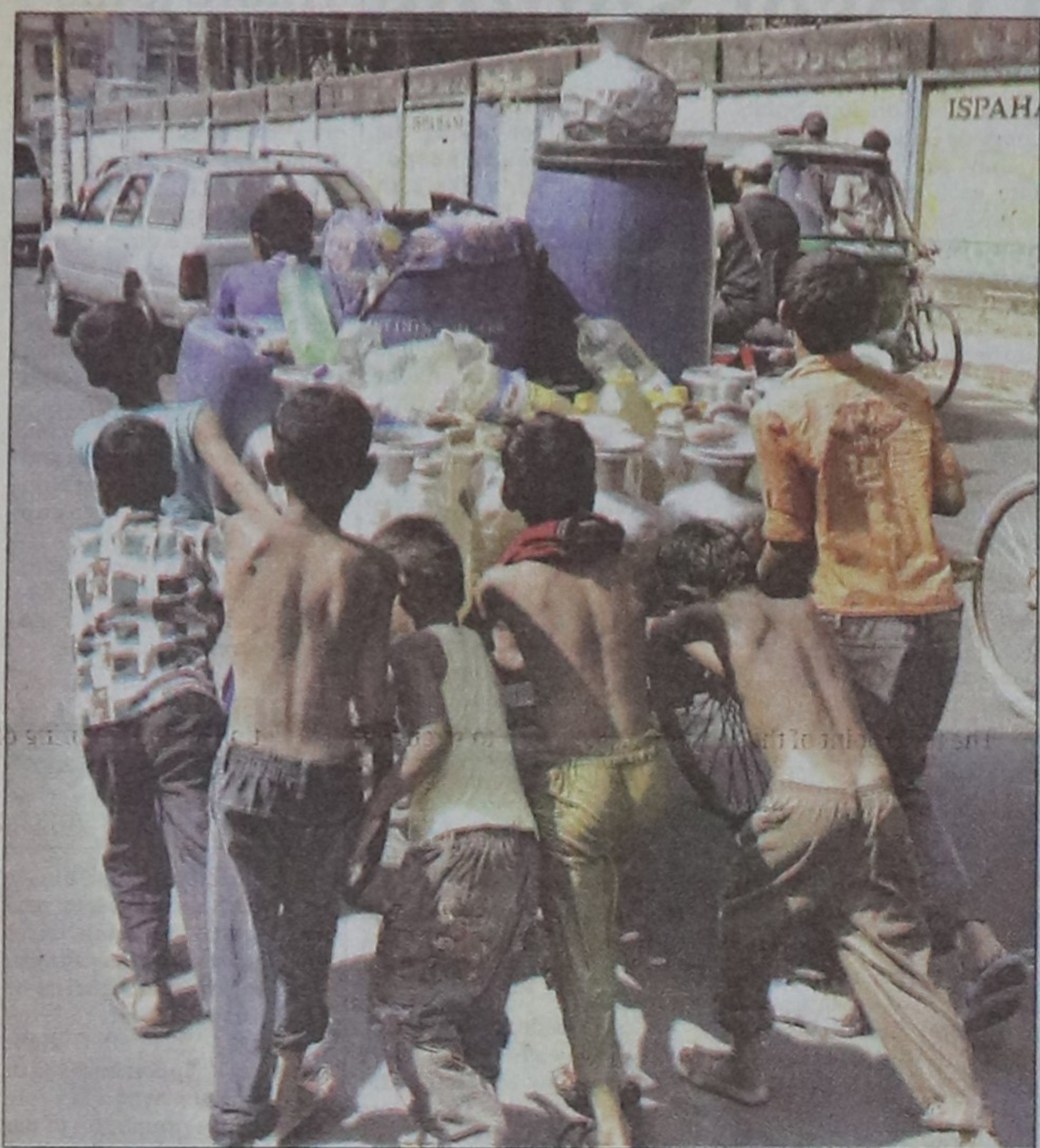
Price of flour has dropped by Tk 400 to Tk 450 per mound, edible oil by Tk 1200 to Tk 1400 per mound during the last four months.

Md Ali, managing director of a leading importing firm Imam Group, said the bakery owners can reduce prices of their items up to 25 percent since prices of flour came down to Tk 800 per mound in the wholesale markets now while it was Tk 1200 in October. MA Motaleb, managing director of Bonoful, said they can't reduce the price of bread and biscuits more since prices of finer quality flour are still costly.

Super quality flour is being traded at Tk 1230 per mound, he added.

But the wholesalers at Khatunganj Wholesale market said prices of finer quality flour have also dropped by Tk 450 per mound and come down to Tk 1230 from Tk 1680.

When asked about the price of different sweetmeat, Bonoful owner Motaleb said they are yet to decide on reducing prices of sweetmeats since price of liquid milk is still higher.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Children push a rickshaw van with containers of water at Lalkhan Bazar to meet their family demand. They carry water from Jamal Khan Road to Lalkhan Bazar area, around two kilometres away from their residences very often.

the week that was

Call to ensure children's rights

A daylong children's fair was held here on Friday with a call for creating congenial atmosphere in the educational institutions ensuring their rights.

Mass-Line Media Centre (MMC) and Plan Bangladesh organised the fair with a slogan titled "Safe school for nice future" at Municipal Model High School Ground. Chittagong University Social Science Faculty Dean Prof Dr Gazi Saleh Uddin, also president of Chittagong city unit of Khelaghor, inaugurated the festival.

The speakers at a view exchange meeting at the first session of the festival said there is a mushrooming growth of schools in the port city with

commercial attitude. They cared a little about imparting knowledge following any principle or rules.

They said Bangladesh is yet to ensure rights of the children through the country has signed Children's Right Charter. They urged all including guardians, teachers, law enforcers to ensure proper education and rights of children.

Prof Saleh Uddin, Chittagong Press Club former general secretary Ejaz Eusoffi, Programme Communication Specialist Saidul Haq Milky of Unicef Education department spoke at the discussion.

Upama Dasgupta, project coordinator of non-government organisation Agami, presented the keynote paper with Menka Tripura of Khagrachari children communication centre in the chair. Students from 15 schools of Chittagong and Sylhet divisions partici-

pated in the drawing and debate competitions.

Chinese envoy visits COSCO, Bangladesh office

Chinese Ambassador Zheng Qingdian visited the Chittagong office of COSCO, Bangladesh Shipping Lines Limited -- a joint venture of China and HRC Group of Bangladesh -- at Agrabad on Friday.

The Chinese envoy at a reception accorded to him assured all out support for COSCO, Bangladesh and wished its success.

COSCO, Bangladesh Managing Director Captain Lin, Deputy Managing Director Khandakar Sirajuddin Ahmed

and General Manager ASM Salahuddin welcomed Zheng at their office. China Embassy officials and commercial counsellors accompanied the envoy.

Debate workshop ends

A two-day debate workshop of Panthajon, a debate and recitation organisation, ended at Regional Public Administration Training Centre here on Friday.

A total of 170 students from 16 schools of the city participated in the two-day workshop.

Chittagong chamber president and newly elected lawmaker MA Latif distributed certificates among the participants at the closing ceremony of the workshop with Panthajon Chief Executive Brizet Daes in the chair.

Udichi conference concludes

The two-day 13th district conference of Udichi Shilpa Goshthi, Chittagong concluded on Friday with a call for ending commercialisation of culture.

Udichi central Vice President Prof Badur Rahman was the chief guest at the conference at Maulana Maniruzzaman Islambadi Memorial Hall.

Speakers at the conference placed several demands including saving culture from the commercialisation, trial of war criminals and removal of control over different medium of culture like jatra.

They said it is a matter of regret that a bad practice of using sms (short message service) through cellphone has begun in different cultural competitions.

It is a form of earning money and culture is now being commercialised in this way, they said.



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Swadhin Bangla Football Team player and FIFA Referee Bimal Kar distributes prizes among the winners of annual sports of Fulki at Police Line Playground on Friday.



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Two brothers -- Nafis Uddin and Anis Uddin -- of Indian Dagar Ghorana, perform classical song at a programme organised by Assistant Indian High Commission at Muslim Institute Hall in the port city on Sunday.



Shipping Minister Dr Afsarul Amin inaugurates a 15-day 'Ekush Mela' at DC Hill Park in the port city on Saturday.

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Speakers urged the government media, Bangla Academy and Shilpakala Academy to play leading role to stop such a malpractice of Bengali culture.

Later a 39-member district committee was formed with Prof Abul Mansur of Chittagong University as president, Prof Badal Baran Barua,

Robin Dey, Dr Chandan Das, Golum Kibria, Pradip Barua and Probal Dey as vice presidents and Sunil Dhar as general secretary.