

PDB in total disarray

Struggles to coordinate between about a dozen organs formed under donors' prescription; management cost shoots up

SHARIER KHAN

Following a donor-driven policy, the government continues to slice different organs off the Power Development Board (PDB) to create new ones causing lack of coordination, imposing excessive management cost and pushing the sector into a deeper financial mess, officials say.

Excluding the creation of Rural Electrification Board (REB) in the 70's, the government created eight different bodies out of the PDB since the 90's and currently forming two more companies for power distribution.

In addition, the Power Cell--a wing of the power ministry created in the mid 90's for a year to deal with policy issues--handle some power tenders that used to be handled by the PDB.

The role of PDB is increasingly becoming that of a coordinator. But coordination has become very difficult due to problems with technical and financial

resource sharing in the present context of persistent power crisis.

"For an example, some companies do not have technicians or equipment to deal with a certain problem. They would call up the PDB for help. This causes delay in solving a problem. If everything was under

- Three generation companies
- Four distribution companies, two more in the offing
- One transmission company
- Separate entities for rural power

the PDB, such problems could be solved in one go," explained a high official.

There are three state-owned power generation companies now--Ashuganj Power Station Company Ltd, Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh and Northwest Zone Power Generation

Company. All of these companies were formed after June, 2000.

In addition there are four power distribution companies and two more are in the pipeline. The existing distribution companies are Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC), formerly Desa, Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco), West Zone Power Distribution Company (WZPDC) and North West Zone Power Distribution Company.

The two upcoming distribution companies are South Zone Power Distribution Company and North East Power Distribution Company.

Besides, the REB deals with rural power and Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) looks after power transmission. Again, the REB owns another power company Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL).

All of these were created with the goal of improving efficiency in the power

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Jawans to get back arms soon

Says BDR chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Rifles Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam yesterday said BDR members would get back their arms very soon.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said, "We are considering taking back the arms from the civil administration and hand over to soldiers gradually as the situation is normal now."

Our correspondent from Chapainawabganj reports: Addressing the Darbar of Chapainawabganj 39 battalion headquarters in the morning, the border security forces chief praised jawans for doing their jobs perfectly on bordering fronts.

Civil administrations seized firearms from all BDR

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Crime, extortion still rule Karwan Bazar

No impact of increased police vigilance after triple murder a week ago

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Karwan Bazar, the largest wholesale kitchen market in the capital, remains a safe haven for extortionists, who operate with impunity thanks to backing from a section of law enforcers.

After the triple-murder a week ago, police vigilance there has increased, yet extortion is still rampant.

The Daily Star correspondents have talked to traders in Karwan Bazar several times since three including two businessmen were killed on June 26 apparently in reprisal for efforts to stop extortion.

Most of those interviewed said they still had to pay large sums to the crime gangs to stay in business.

Police however claim the situation has improved after they stepped up activities. More intelligence and plainclothes police officers are now working to check crimes in the area.

A wholesaler speaking in return for anonymity said police watch on the market is nothing new. But it hardly works, as many of the law enforcers deployed become a part of the crime syndicate.

For criminals and law enforcers alike, Karwan Bazar is a place to make a quick buck.

Political elements are always at play in organised crime there. A change of government means little difference to the way the market is run.

Criminal groups with strong connections in the new ruling party or alliance replace those backed by influential people in the immediate past government.

Around Tk 5 lakh is extorted from legal and illegal businesses every day, say persons involved in various trade associations.

The entire process is coordinated by local leaders of the ruling party.

A businessman, who sees a big slice off his

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JMB OFFSHOOT Captured cadres taken to Rajshahi for remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Law enforcers yesterday transferred three organisers of "Islam and Muslim", an offshoot of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), to Rajshahi from Dhaka and produced them before a court seeking a seven-day remand for each.

The Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court of Rajshahi sent the three to jail and set tomorrow for holding hearing on the remand prayers after they were implicated in a case filed under the Arms Act and the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

The three are: chief of the outfit Abdur Rahim alias Shahadat of Gomastapur in Chapainawabganj, regional commander Sajedur Rahman alias Hanif of Jhikra of Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi and Jalaluddin of Naogaon.

A Special Branch of Police team from Dhaka had arrested Jalaluddin in Rajshahi and seized a single-shot gun from his possession. The other two were arrested in Gazipur.

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Despite the recently whipped-up drive against river encroachers, a section of influential people continue to fill up the water body near Ashulia Bridge in Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Myanmar rejects UN chief's request to meet Suu Kyi

All political prisoners should be freed, Ban tells junta

AP, Naypyitaw

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said yesterday that Myanmar's junta chief rejected his initial request to meet jailed opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi but hoped to meet the 64-year-old Nobel Peace laureate before he leaves the country today.

Ban, who made a rocky start to what he has called "a very tough mission" to win Suu Kyi's freedom, said this after a two-hour meeting with Myanmar's reclusive Senior Gen Than Shwe.

He also urged Than Shwe to "accelerate the process of democratisation" and reiterated calls for the junta to free its estimated 2,100 political prisoners ahead of the elections.

"I told him that I wanted to meet her, but he told me that she is (on) trial," Ban told reporters afterward. "But I told him that this is my proposal, and this is important, and I'm waiting for their reply."

The two met in an ornate reception hall with a colonnaded walkway and an indoor waterfall in Naypyitaw, the junta's remote administrative capital.

If Ban is allowed to meet with Suu Kyi, he will be the first UN secretary-general to do so since her first period of detention started in 1989.

Suu Kyi has been in detention for nearly 14 of the past 20 years, mostly under house arrest.

In May, she was charged with violating the terms of her house arrest when an uninvited American man swam secretly to her lakeside home in May and stayed for two days. She has pleaded

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Drive starts to free encroached Khulna canals

KCC demolishes illegal structures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna City Corporation launched a drive yesterday to recover canals from encroachers and demolish illegal structures that are hampering storm-water drainage through the canals.

Sources said around 20 shops, two houses, a school and a madrasa were torn down during day-1 of the drive.

Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque inaugurated the eviction drive levelling an embankment illegally constructed on the Nirala canal at Sabujbag in the city.

The drive went on along the canal up to Gallamari area in presence of the panel mayor, ward councillors, officials and employees of the Khulna City Corporation and leaders of a number of professional and socio-cultural organisations of the city.

On February 5, Mayor Khaleque presided over a meeting held

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GRAFT IN AUCTION ACC sues 7 Ctg customs officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A case has been filed against Chittagong Customs Commissioner (export) Shahabuddin Nagri and six other officials for their alleged irregularities in auctioning off a vehicle.

Mohammad Hossain filed the case on Thursday with the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Bhabani Prasad Singha under section 5(B) of Anti-Corruption Commission Act.

Other accused officials were Assistant Commissioner Sajidul Hoque, Principal Appraiser Md Shamsuddin,

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BIRTH REGISTRATION

Govt braces for daunting task

55pc registered in 3 years, rest to be done in one year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government faces a mammoth task of completing issuing of birth certificates to 44.3 percent of the total population in less than a year. It took three years to register 55.7 percent citizens after the Birth and Death Registration Act was enforced in 2006.

It will be really tough to complete the birth registration process by June 2010 as only 15.7 percent population could be provided with birth certificates in a year since March 2008, speakers said at the inaugural ceremony of the National Birth Registration Day yesterday.

However, Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque said at yesterday's function, "We will be able to provide all with birth certificates by June 2010." He called for involvement of all sectors to achieve that goal.

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রেস্টুরেন্ট স্পেস ভাড়া দেওয়া হইবে

উত্তরাঞ্চ 'পলওয়েল কারনেশন' মার্কেটের ৮ম তলায় রুফটপে রেস্টুরেন্ট/চাইনিজ রেস্টুরেন্ট/অভিজাত রেস্টুরেন্ট/খাবারের দোকানের জন্য মোট ৬৮৫৫ বর্গফুট স্পেস ভাড়া দেওয়া হইবে। আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে নিম্ন ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

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-Barack Obama

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