

## Tk 156cr PDB bills remain unpaid

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

The outstanding bills of Tk 156.63 crore of Power Development Board (PDB) remain unpaid in Chittagong region until October this year, said Chittagong PDB Additional Director (Commercial Operation) Mohammad Basharuazzaman Khan.

The bills in arrears continue to increase every year due to shortage of human resources at PDB, Chittagong and it could not hold mobile court drives regularly for lack of magistrate, he added.

PDB could collect Tk 278.78 crore as bill against Tk 296.13 crore due to its over 5,22,800 consumers during the first four months of the current fiscal year in Chittagong region comprising Cox's Bazar and the hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

Tk 17.35 crore remains as arrears during this period while PDB witnessed a system loss of 12.08 percent as well.

The bills of Tk 139.89 crore still remains unpaid for 2006-2007 fiscal year, gradually increasing the bills in arrears at Tk 140.42 crore for 2007-2008 and Tk 141.10 crore for 2008-2009.

The arrears bills made a sharp increase when it stood at Tk 156.63 crore after four months of 2009-2010 fiscal year.

Of the defaulters, private organisations topped the list with arrears bills of Tk 116.73 crore, autonomous organisations Tk 16.80 crore and government organisations Tk 10.14 crore as of April this year.

Sources at the PDB said magistrate was not available for conducting mobile court after the separation of judiciary in November, 2007 and only

an executive magistrate hears the cases.

Taking advantage of the situation, the large organisations did not pay their arrears bills and illegal connections contributed much to the system loss, sources added.

On the other hand, there are only 73 meter readers against 113 posts in 17 divisions, including nine in Chittagong Metropolitan area under the southern zone.

The number of meter readers is quite insufficient against over 5.22 lakh consumers in the region, said the sources.

Due to shortage of human resources, the meter readers were very often make an average bill for those whom they can not visit. The average billing creates complexities and contributes to further increase in the amount of outstanding bills, they said.

The PDB, however, during its regular drives disconnected 26,964 connections defaulting bills amounting to Tk 43.44 crore from January 1 to December 21. It realised Tk 7.73 crore against the arrears bills to restore connection of 6,614 subscribers.

Chittagong PDB Additional Director (Commercial Operation) Mohammad Basharuazzaman Khan admitted the increase of arrears bills due to lack of drives by mobile court and sufficient meter readers.

"The mobile court drive led by a magistrate helps realise arrears bills and collection usually increases in June and December every year since the different organisations pay their arrears during this period," Basharuazzaman said.

He said they carry out regular drive on their own to realise the arrears bills.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

As winter rolled in, hundreds of sea gulls have started arriving on the bank of the river Karnaphuli changing the usually pale scenario of the riverside. Lots of people crowd different riverside spots everyday to enjoy this pleasant scenery. The photo was taken from the Firingi Bazar area on Tuesday.

## Papaya farming gains popularity in CHT

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, back from Kiyamolong, Bandarban

Commercial farming of papaya has been gaining popularity among the indigenous farmers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as it is more profitable than other crops.

Some 1055 hectares of land have been brought under papaya cultivation this year only in Bandarban with a target of 30,000 metric tones, sources at Agriculture Extension Department (AED) of Bandarban said.

The indigenous farmers, who are used to cultivate jhum and dependent on its crops, are now interested in papaya cultivation as it can easily be produced with small investment. Besides, it needs less fertilisers and irrigation compared to jhum crops, sources said.

Papayas are largely grown at Dalupara, Kiyamolong, Golachipa under Sadar upazilas and in

Rowangchhari and Ruma upazilas. Besides, papaya is also being cultivated in other areas of different upazilas in the district, AED sources said.

Two varieties of papaya -- red lady and locals, are being mainly cultivated in Bandarban. But demand of the hybrid variety is very high in the local markets as those are large in size and sweetened with thick flesh. A papaya tree yields fruits in about four years.

A kilogram of green papaya is being sold at Tk 10 to 12 in the local markets. A big size of ripe hybrid papaya is sold at Tk 50 to 70 while such a local variety is only Tk 20 to 30, sources said.

Md Abdul Shukkur, 60, of Kiyamolong, some five kilometers off the Bandarban Sadar, told this correspondent that he has started his papaya farming in May this year. He said he spent Tk 70,000 for making the orchard while he has already sold

papayas of Tk 35,000. He expects that he will earn a minimum of Tk 2 lakh from some 500 papaya trees at his farm. A papaya tree withered after three years of bearing fruits, Shukkur said.

Kalya Chakma, a papaya cultivator at Golachipa, said he earned Tk 40,000 by selling papaya last year and expect more this year from 200 trees.

A total of 18,141 tonnes of papayas were produced in Bandarban last year while the target of this year is 30,000 tonnes and some 8440 farmers are engaged in papaya cultivation in the district, AED sources said. Papaya cultivation on commercial basis started in 20005, sources added.

Nur Mohammed, deputy director of AED, Bandarban, said they only advise the farmers about papaya cultivation and control of pest attack. He said papaya and other agricultural crops can also be grown largely here as soil fertility in the hilly lands is high.



SHANTIMOY CHAKMA RANGAMATI

Papaya trees with large size of fruits at a farm at Kiyamolong under Sadar upazila in Bandarban.

### theweekthatwas

## Friendly ties with neighbours stressed

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said the government will take decision on different issues like Asian Highway and others upholding the independence and sovereignty of the country.

She said the present government believes in friendship to all and wants to maintain brotherly relations with the neighbouring countries as well as with the international community.

She was addressing as the chief guest a seminar on "Regional cooperation:

Development of Bangladesh" held at the Bijoy Mancha of the on occasion of Bijoy Mela (Victory Fair) on Sunday.

Vice Chancellor of Premier University Dr Anupam presided over the seminar where Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Prof Dr Jyotiprakash Dutta and Prof Helal Uddin Nizami were the panel speakers.

Major (Retd) Emdadul Islam presented the key-note paper at the seminar.

The FM blamed the poor foreign policy

of the previous BNP-led four-party government for tarnishing image of the country before the international community.

She blamed BNP for the communal politics in the name of anti-India stance. She said the anti-India politics is no more popular among the young generation.

Speakers at the seminar emphasised solving the unsettled issues through maintaining a good relation with all the neighbouring countries.

## 'No mockery of trial of war criminals acceptable'

Renowned writer and Shaheed Jaya (wife of a martyred) Begum Mushtari Shafi warned the government that people would not tolerate any mockery in the name of trial of war criminals and collaborators of the War of Liberation in 1971.

She demanded identifying the war criminals and collaborators, including the top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, bringing them to book.

She was speaking as the chief guest at a rally on the occasion of Victory Day celebration at Fateyabad Pally Sangathan Samity Ground in Hathazari upazila on Friday.

Prof Dr Touhid Hossain was the main speaker at the rally while Hathazari Press Club President Keshob Kumar Barua, Shimul Mohajan, Kalyan Pal, Hasanuzzaman Bachchu and Bikash Nandi spoke.

Mustari Shafi said Awami League has come to power this time with a pledge of trying war criminals but has not taken any initiative in this regard during its previous term from 1996 to 2001.

She also demanded measures to preserve all the mass graves across the country. Later, Tajak Nattya Gosthy staged a drama and Proma Abrity Sangathan performed recitation at a cultural programme.

## Massive afforestation emphasised

A daylong workshop on technologies of Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI) was held at Patiya Upazila Parishad auditorium on Sunday.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Abul Hossain was



STAR PHOTO

Visitors look at the little magazines displayed at an exhibition arranged at the National Little Magazine Festival 2009 organised by Chittagong Little Magazine Library and Research Centre at Theatre Institute Chittagong (TIC) on Friday.

the chief guest at the workshop while Upazila Agriculture Officer Mohammad Enayet-E-Rabbi was the special guest.

Abul in his speech emphasised the need for massive afforestation to combat natural disasters and save the environment. He hoped that BFRI-invented technologies would play a vital role in saving the environment.

BFRI Chief Research Officer Dr Mohammad Wahed Box in his presidential speech said the institute is carrying out research for proper use and protection of the forest. It invented around 40 environment-friendly and cheap technologies and 20 of them are being used at field level, Wahed said.

BFRI Divisional Officer Dr Daisy Biswas, Rafiqul Islam and Senior Research Officer Mohammad Jahangir Alam put up different aspects of forest and forest resources related technologies.

Officials of upazila administration, agriculture extension department, forest department, NGO representatives, nursery owners and teachers participated in the workshop.

## Fair for people with disabilities

The 'Third Chittagong Divisional Disables' Fair'09' was held in the port city on Saturday.

Chittagong Disables' Society and the Fair Observance Committee jointly organised the fair at Chittagong District Shilpakala Academy auditorium.

Lawmaker Chemon Ara Tayab was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony with fair committee convener Saroj Kanti Das in the chair.

Chemon Ara in her speech said the fair would accelerate the process for attaching the people with disabilities with the mainstream of national development.

Chittagong City Corporation Councillor Gias Uddin, USA Volunteer Dr Michel Jones and National Disabled Sports Association Chittagong Chapter President Mahfuzul Haque Chowdhury were present as the special guests in the function.

Different products made by the people with disabilities were displayed at 15 stalls in the fair where over 500 people with

disabilities, their relatives, NGO representatives and government officials took part.

## 'Inspire children in cultural activities'

Speakers emphasised inspiring the children to participate in the cultural activities more for their sound psychological and intellectual development.

Harmonious development of the children could be hampered if they do not pass their childhood amid enjoyment, they observed.

They were addressing the inaugural ceremony of a two-day 12th fine arts exhibition and drawing competition on Thursday.

Principal of Enayet Bazar Women's College Mahmuda Khanam was the chief guest at the ceremony organised by the Sangeet Parishad on its premises.

Former Principal of Chittagong Government Fine Arts College Prof Rita Dutta, Parishad Secretary Taposh Hore also spoke.