

Palli Bidyut no more boon to rural people

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Subscribers of Palli Bidyut Samity (PBS) in Chittagong have been facing loadshedding seriously due to energy crisis and government's irresponsibility, officials said.

The subscribers, most of them are of lower and middle income groups, said they have complained to the authorities concerned in this regard without any result.

There are three PBS units in Chittagong. Unit-1 (Patiya) covers Chandanaish, Satkania, Lohagara, Banskhal, Anwara and Boalkhali upazila and Karnaphuli thana, Unit-2 (Raozan) Rangunia upazila and Unit-3 (Hathazari) covers Mirsarai and Sitakunda upazila.

The purchase rate of electricity is Tk 2.70 per unit but the selling price varies on economic condition of the locality.

The number of subscribers in Patiya is 2.8 lakh while daily demand in peak hour is about 55-60MW. Officials said it almost fulfilled the demand from the middle of August to September 10 and reduced the loadshedding from four to two hours during the peak hour and there is no loadshedding in off peak hour.

Hathazari unit has about 82,000 customers where peak hour demand is 45MW daily while it gets only 23MW. The number of subscribers in Raozan unit is about 1.65 lakh where demand in peak hour is 42MW daily while it gets only 20 to 22MW.

Masuma Akhter, a resident of Paharika Housing Society under Hathazari PBS



Palli Bidyut Samity office at Patiya in Chittagong.

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unit, said they get electricity for 10 to 15 hours a day, causing suffering to the people of this locality. Masuma said due to loadshedding they can not preserve

food items in refrigerators. Residents in Raozan almost have same complaint and alleged that though they pay all the charges, they do not get proper services for a long time.

Tutul Banerjee, owner of a mechanical shop at Fakirhat in Raozan, said they can not repair items in time due to loadshedding.

The PBS officials, on condition of

anonymity, said for lack of proper help from the government they could not meet half of its demand when the other service institutions in energy sector get the minimum electricity to meet their clients' demand.

They said, "The government will be happier if they can close PBS as it is always a losing project."

The officials said though PBS has been in loss for many years but the government did not take any initiative to cover this loss from 2004. They said only five, out of 70 PBSs, are making profit while others have been fighting for existence.

Deputy General Manager of Chittagong PBS-3 Mridul Kanti Chakma said if they had industries as in Dhaka or Chittagong city, they could have covered the loss by giving connections to them on commercial rate.

Raazan PBS General Manager Sakhawat Ullah and Patiya PBS General Manager Md Yousuf said Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission increased price of electricity several times but PBS could not raise the price in sync, incurring losses. Raazan PBS General Manager Sakhawat said Power Development Board (PDB) makes the bill observing the metre of the grid, not the user's affordability. Patiya PBS General Manager Md Yousuf said they purchase electricity on an average at Tk 5.16 while it sells on an average at Tk 4.41, causing net loss of about Tk 0.75.

Yousuf said his PBS incurred a loss of Tk 10 crore last fiscal year.

CU students fall behind ICT facilities

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN

Most of the students of Chittagong University (CU) are not getting proper information and communications technology services for lack of required number of computer labs and internet facilities.

They are lagging behind technologically as internet facilities provided to them are not adequate till now, said Dr Mohammad Hanif Siddique, chairman of the Computer Science and Engineering Department.

If computer labs and internet facilities are provided to all departments and student dormitories, students will be skilled in ICT, which is very important for the competitive job market, he said. If the students become skilled in ICT, they will also contribute greatly to achieving the Vision-2021 of the government.

Dr Hanif said the government as well as the University Grants Commission (UGC) should increase funds in the university ICT sector for boosting up technological facilities.

There is no computer lab for the students in 15 departments -- Bangla, English, History, Philosophy, Arabic, Oriental Languages, Islamic Studies, Dramatics, Zoology, Geography and Environmental Studies, Soil Science, Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Microbiology, Botany and International Relations. Out of 35 departments, only Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and Political Science departments have computer labs without internet connection, sources said.

Institute of Fine Arts has no internet facilities while the students of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences are enjoying scanty lab and internet facilities.

Meanwhile, a computer lab was recently opened for the students of Institute of Marine Science and Fisheries without internet connection. Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department has installed a lab for the students, sources added.

There is no computer lab in seven male dormitories of the university while three female halls have labs without adequate number of computers and without internet connection, sources said.

Many students of Geography and Environmental Studies and International Relations departments are not able to enjoy computer and internet facilities at present although all students need to use internet everyday since course related various materials and topics are there.

It is a matter of great regret that a large number of students are not getting enough

opportunity to use internet due to lack of proper initiatives by the university authority, they said.

The global education curriculum is changing on a regular basis incorporating new innovations, ideas and thoughts, but the CU students still lag behind due to lack of sufficient technological facilities, they added.

Mohammad Faridul Alam, chairman of International Relations Department, admitted the necessity of computer labs and internet facilities for the students as they are to browse various topics. Alam said, "We have a plan of installing a computer lab with internet facilities in our department very soon so that the students get easy access to internet."

He said they are unable to install computer lab now due to fund constraint, he added.

Students of 15 departments including Computer Science and Engineering, Applied

Physics, Economics, Communication and Journalism, Sociology, Anthropology, Public Administration, Statistics, Psychology, Finance, Accounting, Management, Marketing, Law and Islamic History and Culture are now enjoying the facilities of computer labs and internet connection, sources said.

Vice Chancellor Prof Md Anwarul Azim Arif said they have plans to bring the university under the purview of ICT.

As part of the plans, a process of expanding internet connection on the campus is going on, he said, adding that to provide high-speed broadband services, strong internet backbone will also be installed very soon.

Prof Arif expressed hope that after the installation of strong internet backbone on the campus the university family will be able to enjoy quality ICT facilities.

theweekthatwas

IMF team meets CSE officials

A six-member International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation visited the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) office in the port city on Thursday.

The team led by IMF mission chief David Cowen held a view exchange meeting with the CSE board members at its conference room.

Emerging from the meeting Cowen told journalists that they discussed on how Bangladesh could create better environment for private investment, including foreign investment.

Termining the meeting 'a very good and frank exchange of views' Cowen said they learned a lot about how to continue the strong growth performance that Bangladesh has enjoyed in recent years.

He said they got some good views on local capital market from the meeting.

CSE President Fakhur Uddin Ali Ahmed said they discussed on different issues regarding the local capital market and on the overall economic condition of the Bangladesh.

IMF Senior Economists Gerard Almekinders, Seng Guan Toh and Jules Leichter, Resident Representative Eteri Kvintradze and Economist Abul Quasem were present at the meeting.

CSWE Vice President Tareq Kamal, Directors Mirza Salman Ispahani, MKM Mohiuddin and Nasiruddin Ahmed Chowdhury were also present at the meeting.

Stop move to shift tea centre: CCCI

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce Industry (CCCI) President Murshed Murad Ibrahim on Sunday urged the commerce ministry not to shift the Tea Auction Centre from Chittagong to Srimongal, says a press release.

CCCI president said in a faxed message to commerce minister that tea auction programme has been held in Chittagong since British period where Tea Traders Association of Bangladesh in Chittagong conducting the auction programme of tea produced



Artistes of Tirjak stage musical drama titled 'Chattralnama' at Theatre Institute, Chittagong (TIC) on September 13.

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in 163 gardens by six brokerage houses.

He said a huge economic infrastructure including auction house, testing centre, godown and brokerage house has been set up depending this international auction programme and a large number of employment has been generated. Besides, the government earns approximately Tk160 crore per year as revenue, he added.

Ibrahim said it will need minimum Tk 4000 crore in shifting the centre from Chittagong to Srimongal. He said a section of anti-Chittagong people are involved in such kind of conspiracy of shifting tea auction centre, as a result the relevant revenue earning source and the economic activities of Chittagong will fall, he added.

Unipay-2U investors seek PM's help

Investors of the multi-level marketing (MLM) company Unipay-2 U on Saturday in the port city sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's help to get back

their investments and urged the premier to take necessary steps so that they get back their investments worth Tk 3,000 crore.

They made the call at a press conference following a human chain arranged by Unipay-2 U Divisional Investors Unity Council (UUDIUC) held at Chittagong Press Club (CPC).

The investors said chief executive officer (CEO) of the company Major (Major) Mukit assured them of paying their investments through banks before Eid-ul-Fitr many meetings and teleconferences. Now the CEO could not be reached, they added.

People from middle class and various professions invested their money and savings and now the company is plotting to misappropriate the money, they alleged.

Demanding return of their money, they also announced to hold a grand rally at Muslim Hall in the port city in September 25.

UUDIUC President Ajit Das, Vice-Presidents Md Alamgir, Prof Osman Faruque, Secretary Salil Chowdhury and Organising Secretary Saiful Islam

spoke at the conference.

City Awami League President ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and city BNP President Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury expressed solidarity at the human chain.

MoU signed for building six ships

Ship building company Western Marine Shipyard Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding with Nurjahan Logistics Ltd for building six cargo ships in the port city on Sunday.

Western Marine Managing Director Md Sakhawat Hossain and Zahir Ahammed, managing director of Nurjahan Group signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

The two cargoes each worth Tk 12 crore will be used to transport imported wheat from the outer anchorage to flour mill, owned by the company.

Sakhawat said the agreement has brought an opportunity to contribute to national economy

through rapid transportation of imported wheat across the country.

Seminar on physiotherapy held

Speakers at a seminar in the port city on Saturday stressed the need for raising awareness among the people about physiotherapy.

They said like the first world countries the importance of physiotherapy is increasing in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Physiotherapy Society organised the seminar at Hotel Agrabad, marking the World Physiotherapy Day.

Speakers said most of the disease related with back pain or injuries physiotherapy is used instead of medicine as it has no side effect.

Premier University Vice-Chancellor Prof Anupam Sen spoke at the seminar as the chief guest with Dr Kamruzzaman in the chair.

Dr Mahbulul Haque, Dr Nur Hosain Bhuyian, Dr Shaibal Das and Dr Mahbulul Alam Khandakar also spoke at the seminar as the special guests.

11 restaurants fined

A mobile court of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) on Monday fined 11 restaurants and shops Tk1.15 lakh on charge of food adulteration and making food in unhygienic environment, says a press release.

CCC Executive Magistrate Kazi Md Abdur Rahman led the drive at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and Probortok intersection with the assistance of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

The mobile court fined CMCH Doctors Canteen Tk 10,000, Radhuni Hotel Tk 20,000, CMCH Staff Canteen Tk 10,000, Spice Ground Mini Chinese Tk 40,000, Bhandari Hotel at CMCH gate Tk 5,000, Snoopy Restaurant under the Premier University Tk 10,000, Sizzle Tk 5,000 and Kabir Hotel of Prabortok intersection Tk 15,000 for food adulteration, keeping date expired food items and dirty environment.