

Irrigation pump users besiege PDB office

Demand correction of 'ghost' power bills

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Lalmonirhat

The irrigation pump owners besieged the Power Development Board (PDB) office in Kaliganj upazila under the district yesterday demanding immediate steps to correct the 'ghost' bills they received for the last boro season.

"Bills ranging from Tk 20,000 to Tk 90,000 had been added to the actual bills for the last boro season. Irrigation pump owners got the bills in May last year. We made written complaint against the 'ghost bills' to the local PDB office in June, then again in August and October but to no effect," said Wahed Ali, president of Kaliganj upazila pump owners association.

"Lastly we have besieged the PDB office to get our logical demand met," he said.

Many irrigation pump owners are hesitant to run their machines during the current boro season in fear of getting 'ghost bills' again, much to the worry of farmers.

According to pump owners of the upazila, the Chamta feeder line at Kaliganj upazila covers areas under Kaliganj and Hatibandha upazilas and the number of pump users under the feeder line is 1500. Pump owner Mofizar

Rahman at Sree Khata village of Kaliganj upazila said he did not pay his power bills for the last boro season as he received an additional bill of Tk 32,000.

"Now I am facing uncertainty about use of irrigation pump in the current boro season as I can't run my machine without paying bills for the last season."

Monsur Ali, another pump owner at Dakkhin Ghonosham village of the upazila said, "I used power worth Tk 21,000 according to the unit charge in the last

boro season, but I received bills of Tk 1,12,500."

"If I can't run my machine boro cultivation on 70 acres of land in the village will face setback due to lack of irrigation. Like me, all the pump owners in this area have received ghost bills," he said.

Seeking anonymity, an official Kaliganj PDB office, said the additional power bills, termed as 'adjusted', had been imposed on the power pump users to cover their system loss.

A reliable source in the PDB, however, said such

adjustment of the bills is 'contrary to the law'.

December 25 last was fixed as the last date for payment of power bills for the last boro season but 90 percent of the consumers could not pay the bills as much higher than actual bills had been imposed, said Yakub Ali, general secretary of Kaliganj upazila power pump owners association.

Kaliganj upazila agriculture officer Shamsuddin Miah said, 50 percent of the targeted 12,390 hectares of land for boro farming in the upazila this season is yet to be cultivated due to lack of irrigation water.

Contacted, Probir Kumar Rudro, Kaliganj PDB resident engineer, said, "I have given permission to all the irrigation pump owners to run their machines and 80 percent of them have already started running their machines for irrigation in boro fields. Rest 20 percent will get power connection by a week to run their machines."

"I am unaware about the reason of additional bills as I joined the office only 20 days ago. I have been collecting all the ghost bills from the pump owners and sending them to Rangpur PDB office for correction. The pump owners will get result by a month," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Local power pump owners gather in front of the office of Power Development Board in Kaliganj upazila under Lalmonirhat district yesterday demanding immediate step to correct the 'ghost' bills for power consumption for irrigation in the last boro season.

Bird flu: 2,000 fowls culled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustia

Over 2000 fowls have been culled following detection of bird flu virus at a poultry farm in Islampara area of Chuadanga district town.

The chickens were culled at Munshi Poultry Farm on Tuesday night due to the outbreak of avian influenza at the farm, said district livestock officer Kohinur Islam.

The farm owner Hafizur Rahman said he found some chickens dead a few days ago and informed it to the officer who prescribed some medicines for their treatment.

On Monday, the livestock officer sent

samples from the farm to Dhaka for tests. The laboratory confirmed the detection of bird flu the following morning.

After the report, Deputy Commissioner Delwar Hossain at an urgent meeting asked a team led by the livestock officer to cull the chickens.

A preventative measure was also taken to avert further spread of the virus at the meeting.

The chance of contamination in adjoining farms is very low as all precautionary measures have been taken in this regard, said the officer.



PHOTO: STAR

PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: This badly damaged Shaheed Minar near Nasar Market in Kurigram town hardly gives the impression of a memorial to the Language Movement martyrs, thanks to the utter callousness of the authorities concerned.

Two shaheed minars in utter neglect in Kurigram town

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

The first and second Shaheed Minars in the district town have remained in utter neglect, even in February, the month commemorating the Language Movement of 1952.

In 1964, a Shaheed Minar (memorial for Language Movement martyrs) was built at a corner of Gahor Park in Kurigram town.

"After the Shaheed Minar, the first in the town, was set up at Gahor Park on February 19 in 1964, police damaged it at night. Then the local students collected

bricks, sand and cement and reconstructed the memorial the next day. They guarded it during the night and observed the 21st February through placing flowers on the memorial," said Samiul Haque Nantu, who was a high school student in Kurigram during the 1952 Language Movement.

"But Pakistani army demolished it during the Liberation War in 1971.

The memorial was reconstructed in 1972 and locals used to observe 21st February there. Later a Shaheed Minar was constructed at Ghoshpara of

Kurigram in 1988 and it got the status as the central Shaheed Minar in the town.

"In 1968, a local political leader constructed the second Shaheed Minar in the town, beside a road near Nasar Uddin Market. Left uncared for years, it has got damaged," Nantu said.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found firewood kept for drying on the premises of the Shaheed Minar at Gahor Park while the memorial near Nasar Uddin market gives a pitiable look as four of its columns were badly damaged.

LAUNCH CAPSIZE

Four more bodies found

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Munshiganj

Four more bodies were recovered from the Meghna yesterday, five days after a launch capsized in the river under Gazaria upazila.

Of the bodies, two were found floating on the river while the rest in Shatnol area of Chandpur district.

The deceased were identified as Abul Hashem, 38, Najma Begum, 30, Shahnaj Akhter, 18, and Shilpi Akhter, 25, of Matlab in Chandpur.

With the recovery of the bodies, the death toll now stands at 18, said Tariqul Islam, assistant superintendent of police, Munshiganj.

At least 12 people were killed and many went missing as a Chandpur-bound launch MV Saros capsized in the river after being hit by a sand-laden cargo on February 8.



PHOTO: STAR

This silk cotton tree at Keutan village in Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon district serves as a safe haven for a good number of local as well as migratory birds, making the area buzz with chirping and fluttering of the graceful creation of nature.

Tree that serves as sweet abode of birds

Locals protect them from hunters

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT,
Thakurgaon

A silk cotton tree at Keutan village under Ranishankoil upazila in the district has become a paradise for birds where hundreds of them twitter round the day.

The place is attracting a large number of visitors including bird watchers and bird lovers from far off places of the country.

As hunting of birds is 'completely forbidden' there, the number of native and migratory birds are increasing every year, said a villager.

Locals said they are determined to protect the birds. They alert the newcomers and visitors, prohibiting them from hunting.

During a recent visit to the spot, over 50 kilometres off the district headquarters, this correspondent saw three to four hundred birds busking in sun the gaily while a few of them flying in and out without any fear.

Several visitors were also seen there. Some of them were taking snaps of the birds while others trying to identify them.

Sajjadur Rahman, 38, of Islambag in Panchagarh municipality area who came with his eight-year-old son Nirvik, told this correspondent that it was really amazing to see hundreds of birds on a tree. "I brought my son to have a glimpse of this unique sight," he said.

Another visitor, Ferdous Ara of Hallpara in Thakurgaon municipality area, said, "I never had the idea that so many birds could stay on a tree. It is really astonishing".

Jadab Roy, 45, owner of the tree, said that four years ago, eight to ten birds locally known as pankouri started to stay on the tree in mid October.

"Initially we tried to drive the birds away as they used to excrete here and there and disturb workers on the crop fields. As the

birds did not leave the place after repeated attempts, the villagers started to feel sympathy for them".

Since then the number of birds increased every year. The migratory birds join the flock in the beginning of Bangla month of Kartik (mid-October) and leave the place in Falgun (mid-March), he said.

The rest of the time local birds usually stay there, Jadab added.

Md. Rabbani, 25, son of farmer Faizul Haque of the village said that the villagers now try to look after the birds as they have added to the fame and beauty of the village.

"It is a matter of pride for us that people from far-flung areas come here to see the birds," he said.

The chirping of birds in evenings makes the surroundings fascinating. During the day time, the birds leave the tree in groups and again come

back gradually.

Around eight hundred to one thousand birds of different varieties, including those locally known as pankouri, samkel, bok and other varieties live on the tree.

"There is a tea stall near the tree. The owner of the stall raises alarm about the possible danger and local youths rush to the scene," Rabbani said.

Upazila Livestock Officer of Ranishankoil Dr. Md. Sirazul Haque said that he visited the area several times and talked with local people for ensuring security of the birds.

Contacted, officer-in-charge (OC) at Ranishankoil police station Firoz Khan said they were also aware of the birds.

We have given cellphone numbers to the villagers asking them to inform the police instantly in case of poaching and hunting, he said.

A Cambridge Board affiliated school with state of the art infrastructure



Vacancy

For new sections being added, we require

■ **Pre Primary Teachers** ■ **Teachers for IGCSE & AS/A Level**

DPS STS SCHOOL DHAKA

Plot # 4, Road # 13, Sector # 6, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh

E-mail: info@dpsstsddhaka.org, Telephone: +88-02-8922963, 8922941 Fax: (88 02) 8922941

sts group

DPS STS SCHOOL
DHAKA
an educational initiative of sts group



ADMISSIONS OPEN

Play Group to Grade 9
2013-14 Session
[LIMITED SEATS AVAILABLE]



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Outstanding Board Exam Results of First IGCSE Batch

The new senior section of DPS-STS School shall be transferred to the School's new building with multiple facilities being constructed in sector 15, Uttara in 2014 - 2015