

DEMO OVER RECRUITMENT ANOMALIES

Milk Vita suffers production loss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State-run dairy farm Milk Vita has incurred a loss of an estimated Tk 50 lakh in the last couple of days due to disruption in production over irregularities in recruitment of workers.

Production at Baghabari milk chilling plant and Dhaka dairy plant was disrupted as workers staged demonstrations there in the last two days, causing a total shortfall of 82,000 litres of pasteurised milk.

The average daily production of the farm is around 1.65 lakh litres.

A seven-member scrutiny committee, led by Milk Vita Vice-chairman Md Shafiqur Rahman, indulged to irregularities and issued 540 appointment letters to workers, many of whom worked as daily casual labourers for less than three years, said factory officials on condition of anonymity.

The committee bypassed the managing director, who is the chief executive of Milk Vita, though his final consent is a prerequisite for

any recruitment.

Managing Director Muhammad Munir Chowdhury said the committee bypassed him and on April 16 issued appointment letters to workers, leaving out many who have worked for seven to eight years.

"The appointment letters have been issued without any entry in the dispatch register, which is a gross violation of administrative rules. I have seized the register for investigation," he added.

The deserving workers staged demonstrations and complained that financial transactions were behind the dubious recruitments, mentioned Munir.

The MD has formed an investigation committee to probe the alleged anomalies in the recruitment of workers and asked the workers to return to work.

Shafiqur Rahman, however, claimed that no irregularities occurred in the recruitment process as the appointment was endorsed by Moshir Rahman Ranga, state minister for LGRD.



Detective Branch of police produces two youths arrested with passport-size photos and 53,100 fake national identity cards at the DMP media centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Phase out quick rental plants

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It also suggested hiking the prices of gas, electricity and petroleum products to cut the huge amount of subsidy, which was 0.1 percent of the GDP in the fiscal year 2009, compared to 1.7 percent in FY 2013.

Bangladesh has made good progress in addressing electricity shortage, said the global development cooperative. "The policy priorities are to boost new base-load supply, promote efficiency across the value chain, diversify fuel mix to enhance energy security, and reduce the fiscal burden through better alignment of retail prices with unit costs," it added.

The government, said the report, went for quick rental solution to the power crunch in the country a few years ago, which had threatened to derail economic growth. To provide electricity on an emergency basis, the government had signed 3-5 year contracts with private suppliers for 2,300 MW of generation capacity in diesel or furnace-oil fired rental plants. While these plants came on-line rapidly, they are less fuel-efficient than large coal or gas fired plants. Moreover, since the contracts signed were quite generous, the power they supply is expensive, according to the WB study.

It found that the change in the generation fuel mix over 2010-2013, with liquid fuel moving up from 5 percent to 28 percent of peak generation, has significantly increased the average cost of electricity.

In FY 2009, the average production cost of electricity was Tk 2.55 per kilo-

watt, which rose to Tk 6.7 in FY 2013.

According to government data, the subsidy on power and fuel was more than Tk 20,000 crore in the last fiscal, which was Tk 2,100 crore in the FY 2010.

Though the subsidy on the rental power plants has been huge, the government has decided to extend their tenures by five more years.

A Power Division official said as per the Power System Master Plan 2010, the country's demand for power in 2021 would be 24,000 MW.

The government will have to wait until 2018 to implement any coal-based base load power plant. For this reason, the government has decided to extend the tenures of the quick rental power plants.

At present, there are around 22 diesel and furnace oil-based rental power plants in the private sector. In the last six months, five of them have got contract extensions from the government for five more years each. The contracts of the other producers are still on.

The terms and conditions in the new contracts have remained unchanged, except for slightly lowering the purchase price of electricity from those plants. Three of the new deals have seen around 8 percent cut in purchase prices on an average.

The Power Division has introduced "no power, no payment" clause in its renewal contract with the British power producer Aggreko, but this clause would not be applicable for all.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist in the Dhaka office of World Bank, said as

the rental power plants do not have any capital cost now, the "no power, no payment" provision should be introduced.

Presently, if any rental power unit remains closed for any reason, the government has to pay the firm for 60 percent power it could have produced during that period.

On hiking energy prices, Zahid said as there is energy crunch in the country, the prices should be raised to ensure its optimum use. The loss to economy caused by this can be recovered through ensuring a better macro-economic management, he added.

Two meetings of the fiscal coordination and resource committees in last month decided in principle to bring down subsidies on power and fuel gradually, said a finance ministry official.

In the current FY, the allocation for subsidy on power and energy was more than Tk 13,000 crore. However, it will be slashed to Tk 11,900 crore in the revised budget.

The government plans to bring it down to Tk 10,800 crore in the next FY.

The subsidy on petroleum will come down this fiscal year due to political unrest in the country, which seriously disrupted transportation leading to low use of petroleum.

The ministry official said no decision has been made yet about how the prices of power and fuel would be adjusted to cut the subsidy. Other than price adjustment, the government will take several measures to cut back on subsidy.

Hot summer brings

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However, the country had 66 percent less than average rain last month, according to the Met office.

Dhaka had just around 61 millimetres of rain in the last 18 days when the average rainfall in April is 147mm.

The Met office believes that there might be one or two lows in the Bay of Bengal this month with the possibility of one cyclone and there may be rain next week.

The highest temperature in Dhaka recorded in April 2013 was 37 degrees Celsius but yesterday's temperature was 37.7 degrees Celsius, the highest this month.

The sultry weather was taking a toll on the power supply. Although the Power Development Board (PDB) says it had enough power to meet all demands, different areas of the country were getting power outages.

A PDB official said several local power distribution systems were frequently overheating by the high demand and they were shutting down to cool off.

A PDB director said, "Even a month ago, the electricity demand during non-peak day time hovered around 4,500 megawatts and it would shoot up to 7,000MW during the peak hours in the evening. We have been supplying that amount of power all along."

"But for the last few days, the demand during the day was hovering around 6,500MW, a 2,000MW jump from that of a month ago. This happened because everyone is running their fans and ACs," he explained. Continuous high consumption of

electricity was putting pressure on substations not properly equipped to deliver this kind of power. This was why operators of many substations under the Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Descos), PDB and the Rural Electrification Boards (REB) were shutting down their equipment temporarily to avoid malfunction, which was leading to power supply disruptions.

The PDB has been supplying over 7,000MW of power since March, thanks to various stop-gap initiatives of the government, including diverting natural gas from fertiliser plants to gas-based power plants, and import of 500MW electricity from India.

In July last year, the PDB achieved zero load-shedding by supplying 6,675MW power.

"Until Ramadan, we will keep this optimised power generation by diverting gas from fertiliser factories," said the PDB director.

According to the Met office, a mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions and the regions of Rangamati, Sylhet, Barisal and Patuakhali and it may continue for the next few days.

There might be rain in Mymensingh, Sylhet, Comilla tonight or tomorrow.

The highest temperature of April 2013 was 41.5 degrees Celsius in Chuadanga while yesterday's highest temperature was 40.5 degrees Celsius in Rangamati, also the highest in 2014.

The high temperature and poor rainfall were taking a toll on agriculture with almost a drought-like situation in many areas of the country.

Fake nat'l ID cards

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Tongi and arrested Tawfique Islam. We recovered the rest of the dump from this house," Krishna said.

The fake cards were produced using two printers, a desktop computer and 20 printer cartridges.

The national ID card can be forged with any basic office equipment, said Mohsin Ali, director of operations of the National Identification Card project.

This type of forgery will no longer happen once smart cards are introduced, he added.

The NID card is the only document for identifying voters at polling stations as well as being access points to the personal details of a citizen.

The forgery also poses a threat to financial institutions as they have no system in place to verify whether a client has submitted the photocopy of a real NID card, according to top bank officials.

"The national ID card is the primary identification document we require from our clients. However, we don't have a database of citizens to verify whether or not the cards are fake," said Shafiqul Alam, managing director of Jamuna Bank.

Deputy Commissioner of DMP (media) Masudur Rahman said, "These forged ID cards can be used by small extortionists and up to top-notch criminals. That is why sometimes it becomes so difficult to bust crime."

Gold looted

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committed sometime between 8:00pm on Friday and 10:00am yesterday.

Police arrested four people, including two security guards of the market, in this connection, said Biplob Kumar Sarkar, deputy commissioner (Tejgaon Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

"One Milon rented the adjacent shop early this month, but the shop was yet to open for business," said Madhab.

Milon used to come to the shop, Madhab added.

He also alleged that Milon might be involved in the robbery.

Milon had gone into his shop around 8:30pm on Friday, the arrested security guards said.

PROTEST AGAINST ASSAULT

Birdem docs stage sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physicians of Birdem General Hospital observed one-hour work abstention yesterday demanding punishment to those who assaulted some of their colleagues after the death of a diabetes patient a week ago.

The doctors also announced that they would continue to protest until their demand was met.

Several hundred doctors staged a sit-in at the hospital's auditorium at 12:00noon.

Doctors of the second unit of Birdem General Hospital in the capital's Segunbagicha and several doctors of Dhaka Medical College and Salimullah Medical College also joined the protest, said Tanjina Hossain, a specialist of the endocrinology department.

It all began with the death of Sirajul Islam, 57, who had long been suffering from diabetes, on April 13 at the

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Hamid Mir injured

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when his car came under attack, senior police official Peer Muhammad Shah told AFP.

"Four gunmen riding on motorbikes started firing at the car near Karsaz (around six kilometres from Jinnah International Airport) when Mir's car was passing through, he received three bullets in the lower parts of his body," Shah said.

Mir has long been a critic of the country's powerful intelligence agencies and military for their alleged role in the disappearance of thousands of people in the restive southwestern province of Baluchistan.

Last year, he survived a bomb attack in Islamabad when a bomb planted under his car was defused before it could go off.

Mir is now reported to have regained consciousness and hospital admin say his condition is out of danger.

Geo's Islamabad bureau chief Rana Jawad said he had talked briefly to Mir on his mobile phone as he was under attack.

"I spoke to him briefly when he was escaping, he said they have shot him and now they were following him," Jawad told AFP.

"He has been shot thrice, in the pelvis, abdomen and thighs," he added.

Friends and colleagues said Mir had previously told them that if he is attacked, Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), "and its chief Lt General Zaheerul Islam will be responsible", reported

Dawn.

Speaking to Geo News, his brother Amir Mir said the senior anchorperson had visited him and informed him of what he called a plan hatched by Lt-Gen Islam to assassinate him.

Mir, who hosts the longest running talk-show on Geo News, had complained of receiving death threats from the country's powerful intelligence agency.

Geo News reported that he had also sent a recorded video to Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) implicating the ISI in any attempt on his life.

In a message, Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain condemned the attack and expressed sorrow at the incident.

Social media also exploded with messages of condemnation.

Only Bible sold

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sold more than 50 million copies in more than 25 languages.

His stories made him literature's best-known practitioner of magical realism, the fictional blending of the everyday with fantastical elements such as a boy born with a pig's tail and a man trailed by a swarm of yellow butterflies.

"One Hundred Years of Solitude" was "the first novel in which Latin Americans recognized themselves, that defined them, celebrated their passion, their intensity, their spirituality and superstition, their grand propensity for failure," biographer Gerald Martin said.

When he accepted the Nobel prize in 1982, Garcia Marquez described Latin America as a "source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of

which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and scoundrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable."

With writers including Norman Mailer and Tom Wolfe, Garcia Marquez was also an early practitioner of the literary nonfiction that would become known as New Journalism. He became an elder statesman of Latin American journalism, with magisterial works of narrative non-fiction that included the 'Story of A Shipwrecked Sailor', the tale of a seaman lost on a life raft for 10 days.

Other pieces profiled Venezuela's

larger-than-life president, Hugo Chavez, and vividly portrayed how cocaine traffickers led by Pablo Escobar had shred the social and moral fabric of his native Colombia, kidnapping members of its elite, in "News of a Kidnapping". In 1994, Garcia Marquez founded the Iberoamerican Foundation for New Journalism, which offers training and competitions to raise the standard of narrative and investigative journalism across Latin America.

Like many Latin American writers, Garcia Marquez transcended the world of letters. The man widely known as "Gabo" became a hero to the Latin American left as an early ally of Cuba's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and a critic of Washington's violent interventions from Vietnam to Chile.