

KORAIL SLUM

Goons eating up public resources

At least 20 syndicates make Tk 1.5cr a month by providing gas, power, water illegally to Korail slum dwellers

RASHIDUL HASAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

At least 20 syndicates are making a fortune by providing gas, power and water illegally to people living in the capital's biggest slum, Korail Bosti. They get an estimated Tk 1.5 crore per month from slum dwellers and a major portion of the money is spent to "manage" the local police station and a section of employees of the three utility service providers.

Home to around one lakh people, who include 28,000 voters, Korail Bosti is spread over 90 acres of government land in Mohakhali. People have been living there since 1990, according to government officials.

These correspondents talked to over 50 locals and several syndicate members to get an insight into the slum's complex web of money and power.

The residents reckon that there are at least 10,000 illegal gas connections, and 15,000 water and as many electricity connections at the slum.

Under the arrangements made by the syndicates, each gas connection costs at least Tk 500 for households and Tk 1,500 for hotels and other commercial users.

A family has to pay Tk 170 per month for using a light bulb and Tk 170 for an electric fan, residents say. A

shop owner pays Tk 900 a month for a light bulb and Tk 600 for a refrigerator.

To get tap water for five minutes a day, one has to pay Tk 150 per month, for 10 minutes Tk 300 and for 20 minutes Tk 600.

Every syndicate has its own staff, including lineman, rent collector and manager. The number of staff depends on the number of homes their illegal services cover.

To set up the connections and run the unauthorised services, the syndicates get technical support from some employees of local water, power and gas supply offices in exchange for bribe.

Between 10th and 15th day of every month, the payment must be paid to the rent collectors appointed by the syndicates.

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Korail slum sprawling along the Gulshan-Banani lake.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



People living in the capital's Korail slum get gas, water and electricity through illegal connections set up by different syndicates in league with police and utility service staff. Whatever facilities they get out of the arrangement cost a lot.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: Around 1 lakh

CONNECTIONS: 10,000 gas, 15,000 water, 15,000 electricity

RENT CHART: PAYMENTS MADE MONTHLY

Each gas connection Tk 500 for households, Tk 1,500 for hotels and other commercial users

Family pays Tk 170 for a light bulb, Tk 170 for an electric fan

Shop owner pays Tk 900 for a light bulb, Tk 600 for a refrigerator

Tk 150 for tap water over five minutes a day, Tk 300 for 10 min, Tk 600 for 20 min

STAKEHOLDERS: police, utility service providers



DESIGNED for DISASTER

RASHIDUL HASAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Illegal gas lines, all faulty and risky, pose a grave danger to one lakh people living in Korail Bosti, a slum built on 90 acres of government land in the capital's Mohakhali.

Several deadly fire incidents took place at the slum, thanks to the defective supply lines of gas, said Major

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Mirza Fakhrul indicted for defamation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in a defamation case, ignoring a legal bar on such moves.

According to a provision of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), the court cannot take cognisance of a defamation case unless it is filed by the person who has been allegedly defamed.

In this instance, the person who was allegedly

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VERDICT ON 16TH AMENDMENT

Lawmakers tear into higher courts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seniors ministers and MPs from the treasury and opposition benches yesterday launched a blistering attack on the High Court and the Supreme Court for judgments against the Jatiya Sangsad's power to remove their judges for incapacity or misconduct.

Speaking in the JS on points of order, the ministers and MPs, including Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon, and Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, called upon the government to take a realistic decision on the issue.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was in the House at the time.

The ministers and MPs hoped that the SC

would restore the 16th amendment once the government files a review petition against the apex court verdict.

Following the two-and-a-half-hour unscheduled discussion, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said as the matter was significant and constitution related, further discussions would be held in parliament on a specific day.

Lambasting the top court, the discussants termed the verdict "unexpected" and said the SC has to prove how parliamentarians have "challenged the basic structure" of the constitution by passing the 16th amendment.

The lawmakers came down heavily on the amici curiae, especially Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister M Amirul Islam, for

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Judges must not engage in inappropriate activities: CJ

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in a meeting with the judges of the Supreme Court yesterday cautioned them against getting involved in inappropriate activities.

The image of the judiciary cannot be tarnished by the immoral activities of a few judges, he said while presiding over the full-court meeting where the judges of the appellate and high court divisions of the SC were present.

The meeting was held at the conference lounge of

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EC talks on JS polls to open on July 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is set to open talks with political parties and the civil society on July 31 for opinions on the proposed electoral reforms for holding the next parliamentary elections.

It would inaugurate talks with the civil society members followed by the registered political parties, media personnel, observer organisations and former election commissioners to that end.

The talks are likely to end between August and October, according to an EC roadmap finalised yesterday.

"The roadmap will be formally published as a book form on July 16," Muhammad Abdullah, secretary to the EC, told reporters at a full commission meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda in the chair at the

Nirbachan Bhawan.

He said the commission had put importance on seven-point issues in the roadmap.

The seven-point issues are ensuring a level-playing field by all political parties during polls with reformation of the Representation of People Order (RPO), holding dialogues with the political parties, demarcation of the parliamentary constituencies, preparing the voter list, establishing polling centres for next parliamentary polls, registration of new political parties, and training of EC officials.

On the use of electronic voting machine (EVM), Abdullah said the issue was not included in the roadmap.

He added the commission would also appoint two consultants for reforming the RPO and demarcation of the parliamentary constituencies.

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KL CRACKDOWN

Over 1,100 Bangladeshis held so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Immigration in Malaysia has rounded up 2,832 foreigners, including 1,101 Bangladeshis, following the launch of a nationwide crackdown against undocumented migrants on July 1, says a local newspaper.

Immigration Director General Datuk Seri Mustafar Ali said enforcement officers had inspected 458 premises across the country and screened 8,731 people as of 10:30am yesterday, reports The Star in its online version.

"So far, we have detained a total of 2,832 foreigners, including 509 women and 14 children," Mustafar said.

He added the majority of the migrants rounded up were from Bangladesh (1,101) followed by Indonesia (658), Myanmar (223), Thailand (98), the Philippines (95) and Vietnam (94).

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Rain and sewer overflows have literally turned Narayanganj District Council Road into a water body over the last three and a half months. Rickshaws and boats now ply the road side by side. With nearby canals and sewers choked by solid waste, water continues to accumulate there. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fate of section 57 to be decided next month

Similar provision remains in Digital Security Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid growing demands for the repeal of section 57 of the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Act, the government yesterday said it would decide about the section next month and finalise the draft of a Digital Security Act.

Law Minister Law Minister Anisul Huq said this as criticisms by human rights activists and journalists for the section's misuse are becoming ever louder.

"We have discussed on the proposed Digital Security Act. We will incorporate a synopsis of the meeting into the draft and will sit in a meeting in August. We will take the final decision in that meeting. You will get to know our decision on section 57 then too," the minister said yesterday.

He told reporters about the decisions after a views exchange meeting on the proposed act at the secretariat attended by ministers and officials of different ministries and government agencies. Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT Division and Tarana Halim, state minister for Post and Telecommunications Division, were present there.

The cabinet approved a draft of the law last August. The prime minister then directed the law ministry to scrutinise the draft to avoid any repetition, contradicting provision or inadequacy.

The draft proposed punishment with up to life in prison

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