



SM Shahzada, lawmaker from Patuakhali-3 constituency, on Thursday inaugurates the first line of electrification by lighting electric bulbs at a function at Charbishwas K Ali College field in Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Patuakhali remote island finally gets power

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

About 23,000 consumers of Charkajal and Charbiswas in Rangabali upazila, an isolated island in Patuakhali, are elated to have finally gotten electricity in their homes, 50 years after Bangladesh gained independence.

From Char Fashion Upazila of Bhola, 22,006 consumers of 45 villages of the two unions were brought under electrification through submarine cable through the river.

SM Shahzada, lawmaker from Patuakhali-3 constituency, inaugurated the first line of electrification by lighting electric bulbs at the inaugural function held at the grounds of Charbishwas K Ali College field at 11:00am on Thursday while Chairman of Charbiswas Union Parishad Tofazzal Hossain Babul Munshi was in the chair.

Chairman of Galachipa Upazila Parishad Md Sahin, GM of Bhola Palli Bidyut Samiti

in charge of electrification in Charkajal and Charbiswas Unions Abul Basar, Galachipa Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ashish Kumar, Upazila Awami League President Santosh Kumar Dey and General Secretary Golam Mostafa, among others were present at the programme.

GM of Bhola Palli Bidyut Samity Abul Basar, who is in-charge of electrification in Charkajal and Charbiswas Unions, said the power line has been laid at a cost of Tk 165 crore through a submarine cable at the bottom of the river, which is the longest submarine cable line in the country.

A power substation has been set up in Charnujib area and transmission lines have been provided to Charkajal, Charbiswas, Charborhan of Dashmina upazila, Charhadi of Ward 9 of Charmini and Charmontaj of Rangabali upazila in Patuakhali district. There is a 792-km-long transmission line from Bhola via the submarine cable.

Asiya Begum, 65, of Chhotashiba village in Charkajal Union, said, "I used to see electric lights in the city and electric fans. I thought how happy the people of the city were amid bright lights and electric fans when the earthen lamp would light our house. Now, we will also live in luminous house after dusk."

Sabiha Shila, an SSC examinee from Charbishwas Janata Secondary School, said, "We used to study by lighting the earthen lamp. Solar lights were also in place for several years. But it could not meet our need. This time, electricity will revolutionise the ICT, education, agriculture and healthcare sectors in this neglected island area."

"We have computers in our school," said Lamia Akhter, a ninth-grader student at the same school.

"We could not take part in computer training due to lack of electricity. Now we will be able to learn computer," she added.

DIGGING HOLES BY HIGHWAY

Natore court issues suo moto rule

PP says contractor deliberately damaged highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

The Natore Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court of Abu Sayeed has ordered a suo moto action to launch an inquiry into the reports published on print and electronic media regarding a breach of contract in the digging of holes beside the Natore-Bogra highway (N-502).

Advocate Sirajul Islam, public prosecutor (PP) at the Natore Judge's Court, quoted the court as saying that after analysing two news items, it became clear to the court that the contractor was digging holes beside the highway, causing long-term damage to government roads. The offence is punishable under Section 431 of the Penal Code.

Moreover, by violating terms of work order, the contractors have committed criminal breach of trust and fraud with the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and other government institutions including the government itself. The offence is punishable under Sections 406 and 420 of the Penal Code.

The court directed the special superintendent of police (SSP) of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in Natore to

investigate into the case.

The court in its preliminary investigation identified the accused, took statements of witnesses, prepared draft map of the site, seized all the documents related to the project and obtained measurements of the total amount of soil (in cubic feet) removed from the side of the government road and an estimation of the extent of the damage.

In this light, the court ordered the investigation officer to conduct a detailed investigation in this regard and obtain statements from representatives concerned at the daily Prothom Alo and Ekattor Television.

The court also directed the executive engineer of RHD in Natore to provide all-out cooperation in the investigation.

A copy of the order has been sent to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Natore. The court set June 30 for filing of the investigation report with it.

Sharif Uddin, SSP of PBI in Natore, said, he already received the copy of the court order and assigned Inspector Soyeb Khan of PBI's Natore unit to investigate the case.

Natore RHD Executive Engineer Abdur Rahim also confirmed receiving a copy of the court order.

Woman gang-raped in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A case was filed yesterday with Sakhipur Police Station against three men over raping of a 40-year-old woman from Koch community.

The accused -- Dina Sarkar, 33, Montu Sarkar, 30, and Sobdul Miah, 28 -- all from Hatibandha union in Sakhipur upazila, raped the woman around 12:30am on Friday, according to the case statement.

The three accused forcibly took the woman at a deserted place near her house and physically attacked her while raping.

The criminals fled the scene when locals came to her rescue after hearing her scream for help, said a relative of the woman.

She was given primary treatment after she was taken to Sakhipur Upazila Health Complex. She was later admitted to 'One Stop Crisis Centre' at Tangail General Hospital the same day.

Contacted, Mohammad Saiful Islam, inspector (investigation) of Sakhipur Police Station, told The Daily Star that they already launched an investigation into the case and were conducting raids at different locations to arrest the three accused.

Singair UNO

FROM PAGE 12 number, which was launched for providing humanitarian assistance and food to the needy during the nationwide shutdown amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The relief materials were bought by Tk 1,00,000 allocated by the government for Singair upazila on May 3. Each packet contains 10kg of rice, two kg of lentils, five kg of potato, two kg of onion, one kg of salt, one kg of sugar and two packets of semai (vermicelli).

Only 10 packets were distributed among the people before Eid-ul-Fitr.

Contacted, UNO Runa Laila said she was yet to receive the notice. She has distributed the relief materials as per the administration's instruction. She has no negligence in this connection, she claimed.

DC Ferdaus said action would be taken after getting the UNO's response.

Humpback

FROM PAGE 12 this huge bump, and everything went dark," Packard told CNN affiliate WBZ. "And I could sense that I was moving, and I was like, 'Oh, my God, I just get bit by a shark?'"

"Then I felt around, and I realized there was no teeth and I had felt, really, no great pain," Packard said. "And then I realized, 'Oh, my God, I'm in a whale's mouth. I'm in a whale's mouth, and he's trying to swallow me.'"

Packard, an experienced diver, told WBZ that he still had his breathing apparatus on in the whale's mouth.

G7 vows

FROM PAGE 12 At a G7 news conference before he headed on to a Nato summit and showdown talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Biden said his fellow leaders agreed "America is back at the table and fully engaged."

Nato's mutual defence was a "sacred obligation" for the United States, he added, arguing that democracies were in a "contest with autocracies" while insisting that Washington was not seeking "conflict" with Beijing or Moscow.

HC asks for documents

FROM PAGE 12 malign and undermine the solemnity of the National Mourning Day of August 15 should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries to the ministries of home affairs and health and family planning, inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station are respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir came up with the order and rule after hearing a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Md Mamun-or-Rashid challenging the legality of celebrating birthday by Khaleda Zia on August 15.

In the petition, the SC lawyer said it is a matter of great distress for the nation that Khaleda Zia has mentioned her date of birth as being August 15, 1946 in her present passport with the ulterior motive and mala fide intention of maligning the National Mourning Day when Father of

the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were brutally killed in 1975.

The petitioner said Khaleda Zia's birthday is recorded as: September 5, 1946 in her SSC certificate; August 4, 1944 in her marriage registration; August 5, 1946 in her machine readable passport issued in 2001; and May 8, 1946 in her Covid-19 test report released on May 8, 2021.

Lawyer Nahid Sultana Juthi appeared for the writ petitioner while Deputy Attorney Generals Arobinda Kumar Roy and Bipul Bagmar supported the writ petition.

BNP Joint Secretary General and former Supreme Court Bar Association Secretary AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon opposed the writ petition saying the writ petitioner has filed the petition in order to achieve a political gain.

Thousands of people, including Khaleda Zia, were born on August 15, he said, adding it is not for the HC to deal with matters like birthdays.

Two pro-AL contractors

FROM PAGE 12 In the footage, a group of contractors carrying firearms was seen arriving at the facility. Among them were Hazi Faruk, science and technology affairs secretary of Pabna Sadar AL; AR Khan Mamun, organising secretary of Pabna Municipality AL; and local Jubo League leader Sheikh Lalu.

"Mamun and Lalu submitted two shotguns to Pabna Police Station. Both guns have proper licenses but no one can brandish firearms to create panic among the people," Masud Alom, additional superintendent of police in Pabna, told the Daily Star.

He added that police were investigating the incident.

Contacted, Anwarul Azim, executive engineer at Pabna PWD, said, "They [the armed contractors] might have done it by mistake. They did not harm anybody or

damage anything in the office. So, we didn't file any case."

AL leader Hazi Faruk told The Daily Star that the contractors had "no bad intentions and it was nothing but a mistake."

Meanwhile, the arms showdown at the government office sparked widespread criticism in the district.

Talking to this correspondent, acting president of Pabna AL Rejaur Rahim Lal said, "We don't support such unruly activities. This was not a political incident."

TIB in a statement said this was another example of how the ruling party men have been ruining the competitive tender procedure in development works.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said corruption in the procurement process could cause a loss of 8.5 to 27 percent of the total procurement funds. He demanded exemplary punishment of those involved.

RMG workers take to street

FROM PAGE 12 Lenny Apparels Ltd blocked the Nabinagar-Chandra highway in front of the EPZ around 7:30am and started demanding their arrears.

The protestors alleged that the two factories announced the closure of their businesses in January without paying dues to their workers. Amid repeated demonstrations, the authorities paid no heed to it.

According to police, they had to use tear gas and water cannon against the demonstrators as they caused over an 8km-long tailback on both sides of the highway.

SP Asaduzzaman said they repeatedly tried to talk to the protestors and free the busy highway but the demonstrators did not listen to them.

At one stage, after around 45 minutes of road blockade, police fired tear gas and water cannon and brought the situation under control, he added.

At least 10 readymade garment workers were injured during the police attack, said

protestors.

Contacted, Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station, said the body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Contacted, DEPZ's General Manager Abdus Sobhan told The Daily Star that there were about 6,000 workers in the two factories.

Authorities closed the factories last January. The workers of the two factories have already been paid arrears of Tk 45 crore, he said.

Attempts are being made to pay the remaining arrears by selling the two factories. Factories owner and BEPZA are trying together to sell the factories, he added.

There was no due payment date yesterday. Workers gathered in front of the DEPZ this morning by posting on Facebook. They blocked the road, he further added.

"I went in front of them and tried to convince them but the workers continued to protest. Police later removed the workers from the road," he added.

Yahya

FROM PAGE 12 front in Bangladesh as the Pakistani troops continued their atrocities on unarmed civilians. In Chaudhagram, Comilla, a group of freedom fighters under the command of Khaled Mosharraf ambushed Pakistani forces. Pakistan army suffered heavy losses and had to retreat. There were also incidents of encounters between the two forces in various parts of Bangladesh, including Kasba, Fakirhat and Khulna.

On the night of June 14, guerrillas of the Hemayat Bahini attacked a Pakistan army base at Kotlipara. The number of casualties on the Pakistan side was 50. Freedom fighter Ibrahim embraced martyrdom in this operation.

YAHYA ADMITS 'HARSH, SWIFT' ARMY ACTION

Jill Knight, a British Conservative member of parliament said that Pakistan President Yahya had admitted to her that his army had acted "harshly and swiftly" in East Pakistan, reported Reuters. Knight in a dispatch to the British Conservative newspaper The Daily Telegraph said she and two other MPs -- James Kilfedder and James Tinn -- had talked with the president for one and a half hours on June 12 night. She further informed that Yahya had stated that he did not want to become known as the man who destroyed Pakistan.

CHINA WILL GIVE PAKISTAN AID WORTH \$70M

China agreed to extend \$70 million worth of commodity assistance immediately to help Pakistan meet some of her urgent import requirements.

SADAT SUPPORTS PAK INTEGRITY

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat today reiterated his country's support to the integrity of Pakistan. Recalling his two earlier meetings with Yahya Khan, Sadat said he looked forward to continued cooperation between the two countries.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Snare of Bigo Live runs deep

FROM PAGE 12 group, administered by Bigo Live officials in Bangladesh.

CID said Saif was the Bangladeshi admin of Bigo Live, Arif used to recruit young girls and have them join in the live streaming, and Nazmul is one of the top agents who sold "Bigo Live Diamonds", a virtual currency, to users. Asma served as the head of admins.

In his LinkedIn profile, Jie Yao introduced himself as the country manager of Bigo Live in Bangladesh. Saif and Asma also introduced themselves as Bigo employees.

Bigo Live is a live streaming platform and Likee is a short video-making and sharing app. Both the apps are owned by Singapore-based BIGO Technology, which was founded in 2014 by David Li and Jason Hu.

CID officials said that young Bangladeshis and expats are targeted by these agents. To gain more followers and subsequently, more cash, a lot of broadcasters get a little raunchy. The Bangladeshi agents recruit five to seven young girls to "go live and lure men" during live streaming.

To join the live streams, its users have to top up "Bigo Live Diamonds" from their Bangladesh based agents. These "diamonds" are digital currency that local agents buy from foreign admins through banks, MFS or hundi, they added.

The broadcaster can earn money after encashing the virtual gifts. If someone is

a popular streamer, the followers send her virtual gifts. The streamers, in turn, can stock up these gifts, which can be transformed into "beans".

The more popular the streamer, the more beans they earn. These beans can be encashed for real money, which the app deposits in the streamers' accounts. The current "bean" exchange rate is 210 beans for US \$1.

Besides, someone can work on Bigo Live as an official host or recruiter and earn a decent commission on top of the virtual currency.

During the drive, law enforcers seized eight mobile phones, four laptops, seven credit cards, six cheque books, and Tk 50,460 in cash.

The CID official said a case was filed against the arrestees and 50-60 unnamed others under the Digital Security Act and Pornography Act with Paltan Police Station. After investigation, another case may be filed under the Money Laundering Act.

Meanwhile in a statement yesterday, BIGO Technology, which has operations in 20 countries, including Bangladesh, said that they are conducting a thorough review on this case and will work with relevant law enforcement agencies in this regard.

They further said that they will cooperate closely with the law enforcement agencies and the government for upholding regional and national laws and values.

Govt finally moves to set limits

FROM PAGE 12 Mazumder told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We may have to hold one more meeting to finalise it [fixing service life of commercial vehicles]," he said.

In March 2019, a committee, led by transport sector leader Shajahan Khan, gave 111 recommendations to curb road accidents and bring discipline in the sector.

Later, the government formed a taskforce headed by the home minister to implement the recommendations.

In its report, the committee that also included transport experts, called for setting economic service life of buses, trucks, covered vans and human haulers and stop operation of buses used for over 20 years and trucks used for over 25 years.

Identifying old vehicles as a key reason for road accidents, it said on one hand, such vehicles, specially outdated buses and trucks, go out of order on road, leading to traffic congestion. And on the other hand, those cause accidents and loss of lives.

The report also pointed out that neighbouring India already fixed the service life of commercial vehicles.

Seeking anonymity, a BRTA official said the government in 2010 issued a circular banning over 20-year-old buses and over 25-year-old trucks in the capital.

Following the decision, most of such vehicles were removed from the city roads and put into service on district and inter-district roads, the official pointed out.

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, claimed that no over 20-year-old bus runs in the capital.

"But I am not sure whether trucks [used for more than 25 years] operates or not [in the capital]," he told this newspaper

yesterday. "A meeting has been called and I hope the service life of commercial vehicles will be fixed."

Replying to a query, he said, "I think there should be a fixed service life for vehicles. There was no opposition from transport owners in setting service life of vehicles... This issue did not come to the fore in the past."

Prof Md Hadiuzzaman, director of Accident Research Institute at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), said upon expiry of service life, chassis, brake system and axle of such vehicles weaken and pose risk of road accident.

Besides, such vehicles cause environmental pollution as those emit harmful gases, including carbon dioxide.

Referring to a recent report, he said emission of harmful gases from outdated vehicles is responsible for 15 percent air pollution in the capital.

Hadiuzzaman further said the authorities should not fix the economic service life of vehicles only on the basis of years of service because the service life of vehicles varies depending on their manufacturers. Besides, mileage of a vehicle should be considered.

He also opposed setting the service life of buses at 20 years as the service life of buses manufactured by renowned companies usually remains between 10 and 12 years given that those are operated on good roads.

A total of 46.49 lakh vehicles were registered with the BRTA across the country till February this year. Of those, 16.52 lakh were registered in the capital.

However, many unregistered vehicles are in operation all over the country, said people involved in transport sector.