



In this recent photo taken in Putadaha village of Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila, villagers show the un-insulated single-phase live electrical wire dangling right above their heads.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Where lives don't matter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

In a display of downright disregard for safety of citizens, the Power Development Board (PDB) in Barlekha upazila is yet to rectify a risky and un-insulated powerline that was installed about a decade and half ago, using trees and bamboo poles through different villages.

The powerline was installed to serve more than five hundred subscribers of Kashemnagar, Putadaha, Dohalia and Gajbhag villages in the upazila. But aside from being victims of electrocution every now and then, the subscribers had long been suffering from low voltage, dubious bills and extortion by PDB staffers.

Finally, in their desperate bid to a resolution to the longstanding problems, the subscribers of the four villages recently filed a written petition with the executive engineer concerned at PDB office in Kulaura.

Copies of the petition were also sent to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, among other offices concerned.

Except for a few authorised concrete electric poles, the PDB mostly used trees and bamboo poles in installation of the single-phase powerline, without protective insulation, about 15 to 16 years ago.

Over time, when the concrete poles broke down, those were also replaced by more bamboo poles or tree branches. At some places,

the live electric wire is hanging only five to six feet above the ground, according to the petition.

Though many villagers oftentimes get electrocuted after touching the wire inadvertently, the authorities over the years took no step for their protection, alleged locals.

Besides, students cannot study in their homes at night time and their essential household appliances including refrigerators, water pumps and fans get damaged frequently due to low voltage of power supplied through the line, they also said.

Kashemnagar village resident Jasim Mia said incidents of people getting electric shocks from the exposed wire and electrical appliances getting damaged due to low voltage are quite common in the area.

Badrul Islam, another resident of the same village, said although they had been risking their lives while going to places or working in crop fields near the makeshift powerline and at the same time enduring sufferings for the overbilling, nothing had been done so far to end their sufferings.

The voltage is so low that they have to turn off all lights and equipment in all rooms of a house to be able to get a fan rotate fast enough in a hot summer night, said Azir Uddin, chairman of Dakshinbhag Dakshin Union Parishad.

Electrical accidents are rampant and the PDB workers do not fix any fault in the risky

line without underhand cash payment, he said, alleging that the villagers even had to pay for the cost when a transformer needed to be replaced.

Despite the fact, electricity connections to new households are being given all the time and people are resorting to paying unscrupulous PDB employees to resolve problems with their electrical connections, said locals.

Taking advantage of the situation, one Rabiul Alam, introducing himself as a PDB lineman, assured the villagers of solving all their problems and collected Tk 45,000 from them about a couple of years ago, claimed Gajbhag village resident Sayed Mia.

Rebutting the claim, Rabiul said, "I am not a PDB employee. Customers made the payment to a local electrician as part of payment to the contractor responsible for repairing the line. I was just present there at the time."

Contacted, PDB Executive Engineer in Kulaura Usman Gani confirmed receipt of the petition from four villages in Barlekha upazila.

Refusing to accept responsibility for installing a powerline using trees or bamboo poles, he said the problems would be resolved soon as a new development project was being undertaken in the area.

Regarding the payment of Tk 45,000, made to Rabiul Alam, he said, "We don't have any worker named Rabiul. What can we do if someone extorts money in the name of PDB?"

Not required debate on

FROM PAGE 12

One year down the line, things have changed drastically.

Not one or two, but more than half a dozen Covid-19 vaccines are now available in the world and more are in the pipeline. The vaccine scenario has transformed and so has the challenge.

The challenge now is to ensure equal rights to vaccine for all global citizens. Rich and powerful countries have not only ensured more than enough vaccines for their people, they are also using jabs to expand their global influence.

A sharp contrast to this scenario is the situation prevailing in Bangladesh.

We started early and, despite a hiccup, have been doing well, considering we are one of the handful of countries in the world to embark on mass Covid-19 inoculation programmes without domestic vaccine production.

We have four different types of Covid-19 vaccines rolling in Bangladesh. And as goes with us in any case, many have become experts having different opinions for vaccines, claiming one is superior to the other.

The fact remains that none of these vaccines have undergone head-to-head clinical trial and therefore it is never possible to judge which is superior, and more importantly it is least required.

The one by AstraZeneca -- produced at

Serum Institute of India -- is a modified adenovirus vector-based vaccine. This virus infects chimpanzees and produces flu like illness, but are harmless to humans.

It is modified in a way that when encountered, our immune system considers it as SARS-CoV-2 and produces antibody.

The Chinese Sinopharm vaccine uses a technology where actual SARS-CoV-2 viruses are inactivated and inside humans, though they are incapable of producing Covid-19, they produce protective antibodies.

The ones by Pfizer and Moderna use the newest and most advanced mRNA technology, where there is no virus at all. These are chemical substances, which when injected into humans instruct our immune system to produce protective antibodies against SARS-CoV-2.

All the above vaccines are proven to be safe for human use and the benefits they confer outweigh the minimal adverse events that these may induce by thousands of kilometres.

Therefore, we should not waste our time choosing between vaccines and rather opt for the one that is on offer, because all vaccines protect.

The writer is Head of Interventional Hepatology Division, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and member of Strategic and Technical Advisory Group, WHO-SEAR.

'Flying Dragons' roamed

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Details of the discovery, the first linking such creatures to the Southern Hemisphere, were published in the journal *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica*.

"This shows the distribution of the animals in this group was wider than what was known up to now," said Jhonatan Alarcon, a University of Chile scientist who led the investigation.

The discovery points to close ties and possible migration between the northern

and southern hemispheres at a time when most of the globe's southerly land masses were believed to be linked in a supercontinent called Gondwana.

"There are pterosaurs of this group also in Cuba, which apparently were coastal animals, so most likely they have migrated between the North and the South or maybe they came once and stayed, we don't know," Alarcon said.

Chile's vast Atacama Desert, once largely submerged beneath the Pacific Ocean, is now a moonscape of sand and stone.

Shah of Persia may mediate

FROM PAGE 12

Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops in the Guthuma River area killing two soldiers and injuring two. In this sector a large number of Razakars surrendered with their arms to Mukti Bahini.

\$100,000 FOR BANGLADESH INTELLECTUALS

The Ford Foundation announced grants totalling \$100,000 today to aid temporary placement of Bangladeshi intellectuals.

The foundation's statement said that an estimated 140 university faculty members had fled East Pakistan, about 100 of them to India. Most of the others were in Britain and North America. Another 1,000 college teachers had also fled to India.

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

Sent to Iraq with

FROM PAGE 12

a press briefing at its media centre in Karwan Bazar yesterday.

The arrestees are: alleged kingpin Liton Mia alias Dr Liton, 44, and his associate Azad Rahman Khan, 65, who owns a manpower agency.

Rab said this racket has 15-20 members in several parts of the country.

Even though he is not a doctor, Liton claimed to be one. He also told his victims that he works in Baghdad.

Actually Liton was a medical assistant and was fired from his job.

"Liton used several techniques to traffic women. He married six, of whom five were trafficked," said the Rab official. Two of the women were present at the Rab briefing

yesterday.

Sahana Begum, 30, (not her real name) said she received a call in early 2019 from a travel agent who asked whether she was interested in going to Iraq as a medical assistant.

When she gave her CV, Liton called her back and introduced himself as a doctor working in Iraq.

"Liton first wanted to know whether I was married, then he wanted a picture of mine, after which he made me a marriage proposal.

"After talking to family members, we got married. We reached his home in Iraq in February 2019. I found three more girls and then I suspected something fishy was going on. When he took me to his office, I saw 50-60 men and 10-15 women locked there," Sahana said.

She added that she fled Liton's house and went to a hospital in Iraq and showed her passport and CV where she got a job. In May 2019, she was able to return to Bangladesh.

"Liton was dismissed from his job in 2010 after indulging in immoral activities. In 2013, he went to Iraq and formed a racket. In 2016, he got acquainted to Azad, who owns a manpower agency in Bangladesh. Azad helped Liton traffic skilled workers to Iraq," Commander Khandaker said.

Liton was arrested twice in Iraq on human trafficking charges and was deported to Bangladesh, Rab said, adding that he was working as a contractor and supplier in Mohakhali.

Youth held

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to Satoria Upazila Health Complex. Later, she was shifted to Manikganj 250-Bed General Hospital for better treatment, the RMO said.

The victim's mother filed a case with the police station in this regard.

Kalurghat

FROM PAGE 12

Mentionable, State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murad Hassan on Monday said the Zia museum would be removed and the device used in making the declaration of the country's independence would be reinstalled at its previous location.

He made the comment while visiting Kalurghat radio station in Chattogram.

PM

FROM PAGE 12

According to the power ministry, successive Awami League governments have successfully constructed 119 power plants with electricity production capacity of 20,293MW since 2009.

It said the government had a target to generate 24,000MW by 2021 but the target has already been exceeded.

Speaking to BSS, State Minister Nasrul said the country's electricity generation capacity has now reached to 25,235MW, including captive power, up from 4,942MW in 2009.

"We have brought around 99.5 percent of the population under electricity coverage due to the bold and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," he said.

Nasrul said successive AL-led governments have achieved tremendous successes in the power sector in the last 12 years and have given top priority to the development of the sector considering its importance in the overall development of the country.

"System loss has been brought down to 8.49 percent from 14.33 percent," he added.

Covid vaccines

FROM PAGE 12

The first study examined hundreds of thousands of cases in 13 US jurisdictions from April 4 - June 19, the period before Delta was dominant, and compared them to June 20 - July 17.

Between these periods, a vaccinated person's risk of Covid infection rose slightly: from being 11 times less likely to be infected compared to an unvaccinated person, to five times less likely.

Protection against hospitalization and death remained more stable, but fell more among people aged 65 and above than for younger age groups.

Afghans mark

FROM PAGE 12

rally at a Kabul university to profess support for the Taliban, just days after public protests against their rule were banned.

Unconfirmed reports had circulated all week that the Taliban may use the September 11 anniversary to swear in their new government, but the day unfolded without formal recognition.

"This is a day for America, not for Afghanistan," said Muhammad Alzoad, a bank clerk.

"This was nothing to do with Afghanistan, but it made us suffer." The attacks against the United States were planned by al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, who had taken refuge in Afghanistan after the Taliban took power in 1996.

When the Taliban refused to hand him over, the US led a massive invasion and installed a new government that became utterly dependent on Western aid and support for survival.

400 schools still flood

FROM PAGE 1

Mohammad Ali Ahsan, assistant primary education officer in the district, said, "We will open all the schools tomorrow [today]. Considering the circumstances further decisions will be taken."

Students, however, expressed their concerns over the resumption of their in-person classes amid the flood.

Saiful Islam, student of Aynapur Government Primary School in Tangail Sadar upazila, said, "Our school and its surrounding areas are submerged. I do not know how we will go to the school."

The school's head teacher Selina Akter said, "We are concerned about how we will resume class tomorrow. I will talk to our higher authorities about this matter."

In Sirajganj, some 105 primary schools as well as 20 secondary schools and madrasas remain waterlogged, said officials.

Emran Khandakar, assistant primary education officer in the district, said if any primary school was found unfit for holding classes, teachers would hold classes at suitable places elsewhere.

However, classes in high schools are expected to be held in classrooms as floodwater continued receding, said the district education officer Mohammad Shafiullah.

In Manikganj, classes in at least 29 primary schools and a high school in three upazilas would not start today due to waterlogging, according to government officials and locals.

Of these, a primary school in

Harirampur upazila has already been devoured by the river, said, locals.

"Floodwater is receding. So, we hope to resume classes in these schools shortly," said the District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) Tapash Kumar Adhikari.

In Kurigram, at least seven primary schools have been eroded by rivers during the recent flood, though water has receded from all the schools.

"Our school have gone into the river. We do not know how our classes will be held," said Sumon Islam, a fifth-grader of Gatiashyam Government Primary School in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila.

Kurigram's DPEO Shahidul Islam said they were trying to arrange classes for these students somewhere else.

"Except these seven, all other schools in our district will be reopened on Sunday," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In Lalmonirhat, three primary schools have been devoured by the flood. Authorities are trying to shift the classes elsewhere.

In Bogura, two primary schools have been devoured by rivers at Sariakandi upazila.

Of these, the class of one school will start today at the school managing committee's president's house. However, classes of another school is still uncertain, said Tahmina Khatun, DPEO of Bougura.

Educational institutions were closed across the country on March 17 last year to curb the spread of Covid-19.

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