

ISHWARDI RAILWAY STATION MARKETS

Traders worried about railway’s eviction plan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The railway authorities are planning to expand the junction yard at Ishwardi Railway Station to unload goods brought by carrier trains. To do this, the space needs to be cleared, which will lead to eviction of the shops set up in the yard.

And this eviction is worrying small traders who have been demanding rehabilitation once the shops are evicted.

Meanwhile, the railway authorities have already warned the traders of an eviction drive and marked over 50 structures in the station area last week.

Md Masud Hossain, a clothes trader from Ishwardi municipality area, rented a shop at Ishwardi rail junction six months ago. He invested Tk 4 lakh ahead of the Eid sales by borrowing the money. Now, the threat of eviction looms over his head as his shop has also been marked by the railway authorities.

“Just when the Eid sales started reaching their peak, I got to know that I’ll have to vacate the area. My investment is in danger,” said Masud.

The concern is shared by most traders in the area.

“I’ve been running my business at the junction, taking a lease from railway, for over a decade now. Now, my shop has been marked red,” said another trader Ali

Ahmed.

Notable, while leases were originally taken from railway authorities, in most cases, the lessees are not running the business. Many have taken rent of the spaces from the lessees informally.

“There are around a hundred small shops in the rail station area, locally renowned as the poor people’s market. Most traders have been running their

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MD MASUD HOSSAIN
Clothes trader

businesses here... for over the last five decades,” said Md Abul Kalam, a leading trader in the market.

“Moreover, most are doing business by taking loans from NGOs and other sources. They have no scope of shifting their shops anywhere else. Their livelihoods will be completely ruined,” added Abul Kalam, also a member of Ishwardi Chamber of Commerce.

Traders of the area have urged the

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The railway authorities have decided to expand the yard of the Ishwardi rail junction to make more space for unloading goods. For this, they have red-marked over 50 shops in the area, identifying them as illegal. This has put shopkeepers and traders in distress ahead of Eid. They are now demanding rehabilitation if the eviction is carried out. These photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Woman ‘tortured by husband for dowry’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

A three-month pregnant woman was brutally tortured by her husband allegedly for getting dowry in Narayanganj’s Araihaazar upazila.

Family members of victim Tamanna, 25, said she got married to Didar Hossain, 26, in 2017. They have two daughters – Tanha, 4 and Fahima, 2.

Tamanna told this newspaper that her family gave Tk 1,27,000 in cash and gold jewellery to her in-laws at the time of her marriage as dowry. She used to bring money from her father’s house at various times even after her marriage as per her husband’s demands.

Her husband Didar Hossain, who is a day labourer, was not getting work due to his drug and gambling addiction over the last year. He sold Tamanna’s jewellery – given to her by her mother – for money, said Tamanna.

Meanwhile, Didar was also pressurising her to get more money from her parents.

“I’m currently three months pregnant. Even in this condition, my husband has been brutally beating me for dowry,” said Tamanna. “I fell unconscious after he punched me in my right eye several times.”

Later, her father-in-law Md Kashem called her mother. She came and took Tamanna to a private hospital in Araihaazar upazila. Tamanna was taken to her mother’s house after receiving treatment yesterday.

This correspondent could not reach Didar. Contacted, Tamanna’s father-in-law Kashem admitted to his son torturing his daughter-in-law. “I tried to stop him but failed. I admit that what he did was wrong.”

Tamanna’s family went to Araihaazar Police Station on Wednesday night to file a case regarding her husband’s torture. “However, police sent us to the hospital first,” said Tamanna’s uncle Ahmad Ali.

Officer-in-Charge of Araihaazar Police Station Emdadul Haq Taiyob told this newspaper that an officer has been assigned to investigate the allegation. “Legal action will be taken against the accused after preliminary investigation.”

However, no case has been filed till filing of this report at 4:30pm yesterday.

Ctg residents suffer due to frequent power outage

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Ctg*

With the heat wave blowing all over the country and putting people’s lives in discomfort and misery, frequent load-shedding has doubled down on the sufferings of Chattogram’s residents.

Although the country set a new record of power production on Monday, people in different areas of Chattogram city have been suffering in the scorching heat due to frequent power cuts in the past three days.

According to Power Development Board (PDB), power plants in Bangladesh produced 15,604 megawatts of electricity on Monday, which is a new record.

However, in most areas of the port city, power outages occurred

eight to 10 times a day. Residents cannot even sleep at night due to the heat, as the power goes out even at midnight.

The situation is worse in rural areas. Once the electricity’s gone, there is no news of it coming again for hours.

The highest temperature of

Shuvescha, a graduate of the English Department of Chittagong College, is currently preparing for the BCS examination.

“I have seen on the television that the country has set a record of power production, so I don’t understand why we have to

Contacted, Cab Central Vice President SM Nazer Hossain said before Ramadan, the electricity, water and gas authorities assured consumers that there will be no shortage of supplies during Ramadan. But now, electricity and water shortage are making people’s life miserable in the port city.

“We have heard that production has stopped in some power stations in Chattogram. In that case, the government should generate more power from the national grid to Chattogram,” he added.

Contacted, Shampa Nandi, assistant chief engineer of PDB, Chattogram, declined to make any comments on the matter.

However, Gias Uddin, executive engineer of PDB, Chattogram, admitted to The Daily Star that the production of power in some stations has been hampered due to different reasons. However, he also mentioned that it was not the reason behind frequent load-shedding in Chattogram.

“We always receive power from the national grid. Our power stations generate power to the national grid which distributes power all over the country,” he added.

Gias also said the daily electricity demand of Chattogram is 1,300mw. However, it only gets around 700mw from the national grid.

Contacted, Rezaul Karim, chief engineer of PDB, Chattogram, said Chattogram receives around 300mw less power than its daily demand from the national grid, which he claimed is the reason behind such frequent power outages.

“ **On Monday, electricity went out at 8:00am and came back at 8:40am. Then it went out again at 10:00am and came back at 10:30am. The cycle repeated itself when power went out again at 11:45am and came back at 12:20pm. It continued the cycle till 3:00am the next day.**

SHUVESCHA GHOSH, Resident

the city was recorded at 33.7 degrees centigrade on Monday, said Harun-ur-Rashid, forecast officer of Chattogram Met Office.

The official said humidity was recorded at 80 percent on Monday, while it was 78 percent on Tuesday.

“When there is more humidity in the air, people feel more heat in their bodies,” he said.

Shuvescha Ghosh, a resident in the city’s Askar Dighir Par area, said, “I cannot sit to study due to the heat. I cannot even sleep properly at night due to frequent load-shedding.”

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suffer due to the frequent power outage,” he said.

Like Shuvescha, many people in different areas of the city, including Halishahar, Bahaddarhat, Oxygen, Agrabad, Chawkbazar, Battery Goli, Askar Dighir Par, Anderkilla, Shulakbahar, Panchlaish, Muradpur and Bibirhat areas, have been suffering in the past three days due to frequent power cuts.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab) in a statement sent to the media on Tuesday demanded that the government put an end to load-shedding in Chattogram by generating more power from the national grid.

In the statement, the Cab leaders said public life is already being severely disrupted due to extreme heat, and power outages have added more to this suffering.

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CTG-8 BY-ELECTION

AL confident for victory, rivals worried over transparency

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Chattogram*

With the by-polls for Chattogram-8 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon-Panchlaish-Bayezid) coming closer, the candidates are busy campaigning from afternoon to midnight.

According to locals, as BNP, one of the biggest political parties, is not participating in the by-polls and no BNP leader is vying as an independent candidate, the Awami League candidate is feeling comfortable.

Five candidates – Noman Al Mahmud from AL, Sehab Uddin Mohammad Abdus Samad from Bangladesh Islamic Front, Kamal Pasha from National People’s Party, SM Farid Uddin from Islamic Front Bangladesh, and independent candidate Ramzan Ali – are going to contest the by-election to be held on April 27.

“ **We proposed to the EC for setting up CC cameras in every polling booths but the EC rejected it saying that it is very expensive and they did not have the budget for it,**

SEHAB UDDIN MOHAMMAD ABDUS SAMAD
AL rebel candidate

A total of 5,17,652 people are supposed to cast their votes, said Election Commission sources.

The constituency remained vacant after the death of AL lawmaker Moslem Uddin Ahmed on February 5.

The candidates are campaigning in every vicinity under the jurisdiction of the constituency, offering the voters a bunch of pledges regarding development if elected.

AL candidate Noman conducted campaigns in eight unions under Boalkhali upazila along with five wards in the city recently.

Contacted, Noman, also organising secretary of Chattogram city unit AL, said it is for the first time he was vying as a candidate in polls. “I have been in politics since my student life in 1970s and

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Rising costs drive ‘tal-pakha’ artisans out of profession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

The heatwave and frequent power outages have increased the demand for “tal-pakha (hand-made palm leaf fans)” made by rural artisans.

Artisans of Chandshi village of Barishal’s Gournadi upazila are now spending busy days making these fans to meet the demand, selling them to people and traders from different parts of the country including the capital.

Chandshi is located about four kilometres away from Gournadi upazila headquarters; it is now known as “Pakhapalli” or the village for preparing palm-leaf hand fans.

Many of these families have been in this profession more than 30 years.

However recently, many artisans have started to shift to a different profession due to the shortage of raw materials and increasing production cost of these fans.

Those who are still involved in this business have sought help of government departments and took out interest-free loans.

After visiting different areas of the village, families were seen busy making these fans in an orderly fashion, and all members were



participating in the process.

Female members make the fans and tie them with yarn, while male members of the house are responsible for collecting and trimming the palm leaves and selling the fans.

As soon as one enters the village, one can see fan artisans Simul Akhtar, Kajal Banu, Ayesha Begum busy making fans – a skill passed down by their parents.

Starting from cutting and trimming the palm leaves, the fan-making process ends in a few steps. The last step in making the fan is tying everything with yarn.

Simul said she can earn Tk 100 by binding 100 fans every day.

Rashid Khalifa, 65, of the same village said he has been making fans for the past 25 years, but is now facing a crisis in this profession due

to the scarcity of palm leaves, the main material for making fans.

They have to visit different areas of nearby upazilas for collecting palm leaves.

Meanwhile, seven members of Hashem’s family are involved in collection, but most times, they are forced to resort to buying palm leaves and bamboo at higher prices.

His family together makes 200 to 300 fans per day. It costs them Tk 3-5 to make each fan, and they are selling it wholesale for Tk 5-7.

Halim Khalifa, another craftsman of that village, said that once a week, a wholesaler comes and buys hand fans from the house.

Local social worker Premananda Gharami said due to financial hardship, artisans of Pakhapalli are deprived of their profits from summer season, since many artisans have to take money from lenders in winter to meet the production cost of the fans in summer.

Chairman of Chandshi Union Parishad Krishna Kant Dey said due to the increase in the price of materials, around 50 families involved in this profession have been forced to change their profession. Even when artisans do receive a profit, part of it goes to the money-lenders.