

Unpaid power plant's gas line severed over dues

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd (KGDCL) has severed gas connection of a Regent Power plant in Chattogram as the plant owes it Tk 8 crore in bills.

However, the power plant authorities said they have not been paid by Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) since October.

The PDB owes it Tk 19 crore, it said.

Due to the mismanagement of two government agencies, Barabkunda 22MW (megawatts) Power Plant has not been producing electricity for the last 11 days.

KGDCL said they disconnected the gas connection for the power plant on May 18.

"The power plant is one of the biggest bill defaulters among our consumers and we had meetings with them several times. We have instructions to disconnect lines of defaulters," said Aminur Rahman, general manager (operations) at KGDCL.

"It will not be possible to restore the connection before getting the dues," he added.

The Regent Power authorities said that they have two operational plants and the PDB owes them about Tk 140 crore.

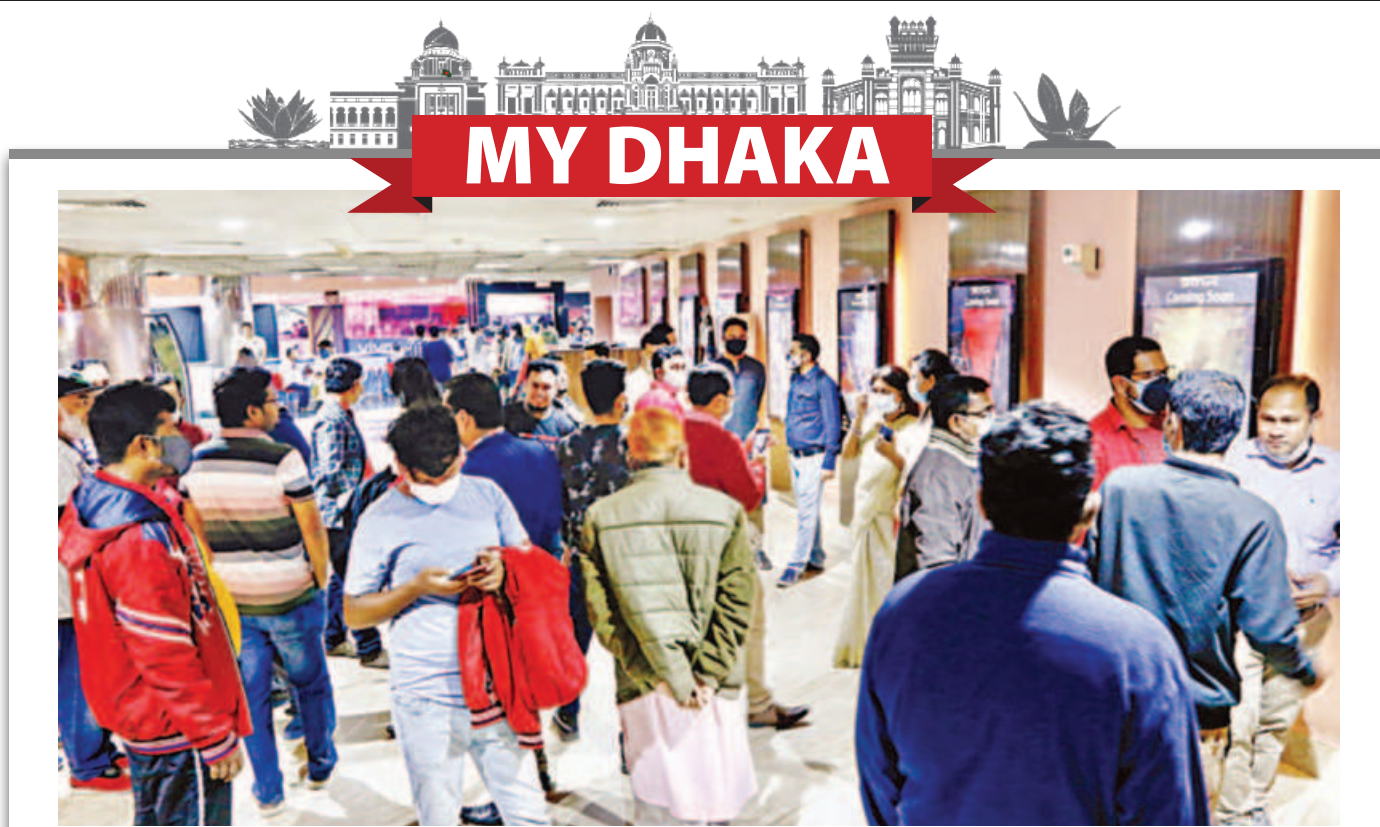
"The disconnected plant has due from the government worth Tk 19 crore. Since we are not getting the bills in time, we are facing problems in paying the employees and loan installments. We had imported some machinery for the power plant, but we could not offload those from the port and thus we will have to pay damages," said Sumit Ranjan Barua, head of finance at Regent Power.

About the Barabkunda power plant, he said, "We've contacted the PDB authorities regarding it as we need their help to resolve the issue. We've paid the due gas bill upto February."

PDB owes around Tk 17,000 crore to the independent power producers since October, according to the members of Bangladesh Independent Power Producers' Association.

Contacted, PDB member (finance) SK Aktar Hossain said that it will not be possible to talk about specific issues without checking documents.

About the dues to the IPPs, he said, "We will get a subsidy from the government, and will be able to pay the dues soon."



Back to the theatre!

RBR

Thanks to *Aynabaji*, a crime thriller directed by Amitabh Reza Chowdhury, and *Debi*, a supernatural thriller by Anam Biswas based on Humayun Ahmed's novel, I started going back to the cineplex for movie night dates with cousins or friends. Watching a film with a big gang is now a thing; this culture was almost diminished and forgotten from our entertainment radar until recently.

With super hits like *Poran*, *Hawa* and *Damal*, we are eagerly looking forward to good entertaining films so that the pull towards watching a film in the theatres remains a temptation. *Poran* and *Hawa* managed to pull crowds who did not set foot in cinema halls in last 30 to 40 years!

During our parents' teen years or early married life, films like *Sujan Shokhi*, *Sarang Bou*, and *Anonto Prem* stole their hearts and records say that they have been to the theatres for over a dozen times to see that one hit movie, over and over again.

They even went for Roger Moore's Bond movies. Films were their only entertainment in a way but later on, the industry pushed its ardent fans far away with its lacklustre productions.

I remember when I was an adolescent, my uncle took me to my first film in big screen at Modhumita Cinema Hall. It was an English movie, *The Land that Time Forgot*. I loved Modhumita's wide staircase, it had a grand feeling, and the beautiful men and women on the cinema posters adorning the walls stirred my imagination. The dark theatre and a humongous screen, the red velvet



chairs that could be pulled down; I was mesmerised with it all. I felt all these transported me to an unknown grand world.

"So, this is how adults have fun" was my only thought. My major attraction was the only snack bar selling brandless, *deshi* potato chips, orange Mimi chocolate bars, and Igloo's famous Choco bar ice cream.

Well fast forward to my middle years, I never for once wanted to go to the theatre to watch something, except maybe *Titanic*, that too a premiere show in Modhumita. By that time the film industry moved so far away from pulling general masses to the theatres that it was an absolute disappointment. I do not want to delve into that era, rather I want to bring our focus to present times.

The cine complexes are state of art theatres now that gives you the perfect

setting for enjoying a movie. The food stalls sell popcorns of different flavours, caramel, butter, salt and pepper, nachos platters, patties, and tumblers of soft fizzy drinks. You can even lie down and watch a movie for premium tickets. Latest Hollywood blockbusters and now a Bollywood addition and our bold contemporary films are taking us back to the theatres again.

We Dhakiites now make it a point to hop to cineplexes for a movie date and look forward to what's next. I want our talented young directors and producers to bring back that golden time of Bangla movies. And also urge hall owners to keep us abreast on latest international blockbusters.



School principal arrested for attempted rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The principal of Dhamrai Government Technical School and College was arrested for allegedly attempting to rape a seventh grade schoolgirl early yesterday.

Khairul Bashar was produced before a Dhaka court in the morning, which sent him to jail, said Md Harun-or Rashid, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station.

Case Investigation Officer Mahbubur Rahman Hamid, sub-inspector of Dhamrai Police Station, said Khairul was arrested from the Rajapur area around 1:00am.

Quoting the case statement, he said, the principal sexually harassed the schoolgirl and tried to rape her in his office room on Thursday.

An arbitration was held after the incident but the matter remained unsettled. Later, the girl's mother filed an attempt to rape case with the police station on Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile, OC Harun told The Daily Star that the police inquired about the principal after the incident and found that he had similar complaints against him in the past.

Tk 14 lakh looted from agri development bank

UNB, Gaibandha

Robbers allegedly broke in and looted Tk 14 lakh from the vault of the Kochashohor branch of Rajshahi Agricultural Development Bank in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha early yesterday.

Jesmينة Akhter, manager of Kochashohor branch of the bank, said some robbers entered the bank after tying up the security guard of the bank at the dead night and looted the money from the vault.

Izar Uddin, officer-in-charge of Gobindaganj Police Station, said there was no sign of breaking and entering but the money went missing.

"However, police are investigating the incident," he said.

The security guard was asleep when the crime was committed, he added.

Two children drown in Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Two minors drowned in a pond near their home at Charpara village in Chatmohar upazila of Pabna district yesterday.

The deceased are Nahid, 7, son of Shah Alam of Charpara village and Ridoy, 8, son of Nayeem Hossain of the same village.

Md Saiful Islam, member of Gunaigacha Union Parishad, said Nahid and Ridoy went to take a bath in the pond next to their house at noon.

The two children might have drowned while taking a bath in the pond, he said.

Later, family members found their bodies floating on the surface of the pond and took them to Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared them dead, UP member Saiful Islam said.

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE Do more, help The Gambia with funds for case at ICJ

OIC secy to members

UNB, Dhaka

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary General Houssein Brahim Taha yesterday urged the member states to do more and help The Gambia with funds to run the case on Rohingya genocide in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

"We call upon all member states to support this fund created by the OIC. This case is a top priority for us," OIC secretary general told reporters after his meeting with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

Momen said, "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the OIC secretary general, and the president of Gambia sent a joint letter to the member states recently seeking support for the fund created by the OIC."

The OIC delegation will visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar today.

"They [OIC] have taken a leading role. Tomorrow [Monday] they will visit the Rohingya camps," Momen said yesterday.

The OIC secretary general said, "The Rohingya crisis is one of the top priority issues for the OIC," he said, adding that, they discussed the issues to maintain peace stability and development within the member states.

"We are here to convey our thanks for the tremendous efforts done by the Bangladesh government. These Rohingya people are suffering. They deserve peace, security, and better lives," said Houssein Brahim.

Later in the evening, the OIC Secretary General paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

As the Chancellor of the Islamic University of Technology (IUT), the OIC Secretary General will join the 35th Convocation of the IUT to be held on May 30, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Reining in inflation top priority

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REVENUE TARGET

Keeping in mind a condition of the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan programme, the government targets a revenue collection of Tk 5 lakh crore, around Tk 67,000 crore more than that in FY23.

According to the IMF condition, the finance ministry has to adopt revenue measures in a way that can "yield an additional 0.5 percent of the GDP in the FY24".

The finance ministry official said the total tax-revenue collection target for FY24 would be the actual revenue generated in FY23 plus the additional 0.5 percent of the FY24 GDP.

The projected GDP for the next fiscal year is Tk 50,06,672 crore, and 0.5 percent of it is Tk 25,034 crore.

To achieve the revenue collection goal, several measures, including recruitment of private agents across the country, have been taken to increase the number of taxpayers, the official said.

Development possible for peaceful environment

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Medal to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Cabinet Division organised the programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) with the PM in the chair.

Hasina said that after getting the people's mandate in 2008 her government has been working for the development of the country in a planned way.

"As a result, we have been able to reduce the poverty rate and maternal mortality, increase literacy and life expectancy," she said.

"So, a peaceful sustainable environment is needed for the people

The agents will go door to door to convince people to come under the tax net, and help people open tax files and submit returns, the official said, adding that the agents would not collect taxes.

People, who have tax identification numbers (TINs) and are below the taxable income ceiling, must submit their returns and pay a minimum tax of Tk 2,000.

The taxable income ceiling will be raised to Tk 3.50 lakh from the current Tk 3 lakh. The minimum tax on taxable income will remain the same, at Tk 5,000.

The official said people with no taxable income will have the option to cancel their TIN.

There are around 88 lakh TIN-holders but only around 30 lakh submit their returns. Many of those who submit returns don't pay tax as their incomes are not taxable.

Another finance ministry official said they will install more electronic fiscal devices (EFDs) to ramp up revenue collection.

Over the next three years, three

lakh EFDs will be set up. At present, 9,000 EFDs are in operation.

Regarding the IMF recommendation for reducing tax exemptions, the official said it would be implemented gradually in the next budget.

An IMF technical mission is due in July to see how revenue collection could be improved.

BUDGET DEFICIT
The overall deficit in the next budget will be Tk 2,61,785 crore, which is 5.2 percent of the GDP.

To meet the deficit, the government plans to borrow Tk 1,50,785 crore from domestic sources, including banks, and Tk 1,11,000 crore from foreign sources.

But an IMF loan condition limits the primary deficit to 3 percent of the GDP.

The official said the deficit is actually close to the IMF-set limit since the primary deficit excludes interest payments and foreign grants, from the overall deficit.

The primary deficit target for FY24 is 3.1 percent of the GDP.

to attain economic emancipation, and all have to remember that," she said.

Denouncing the global arms race, she put emphasis on settling all disputes through dialogue as Bangladesh did with India and Myanmar.

"Why this arms race now, why will the money that is being used for arms race not be used for hungry children and humans? For this arms race, thousands of children and women are leading inhuman lives around the globe," she said.

In this connection, she mentioned that Bangladesh has given shelter to more than one million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals, Rohingyas, who faced oppression. In this regard, she

recalled the genocide Bangladeshis suffered in 1971.

"We want that peace returned to the world. There shall be no types of unrest (in the world)," she said.

The prime minister firmly said Bangladesh does not want any unrest and confrontation in the world.

"We want development in people's lives, and we always want that for everyone," she said.

She also announced the introduction of "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Peace Prize" to recognise those who are working for establishing peace at home and abroad.

"Because we want peace we will surely advance towards the path of peace," she said.

Erdogan gets another 5 yrs

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54.47 percent support, with 54.6 percent of ballot boxes logged.

Erdogan, head of the Islamist-rooted AK Party, appealed to voters with nationalist and conservative rhetoric during a divisive campaign that deflected attention from deep economic troubles.

The defeat of Kilicdaroglu, who promised to set the country on a more democratic and collaborative path, would likely be cheered in Moscow but mourned in Western capitals and much of the Middle East after Turkey took a more confrontational and independent stance in foreign affairs.

Erdogan supporters who were gathered outside his Istanbul residence chanted Allahu Akbar, or God is Greatest.

"I expect everything to become better," said Nisa, 28, a headscarved woman wearing a headband with Erdogan's name.

Another Erdogan supporter said Turkey would get stronger with him in office for five more years.

"There are issues, problems in every country around the world, in European countries as well... With strong leadership we will overcome Turkey's problems as well," said Mert, 39, who had come to celebrate with his son.

Bugra Oztug, 24, who voted for Kilicdaroglu, said she was not surprised at the result, blaming the opposition for failing to change.

"I feel sad and disappointed but I am not hopeless. I still think there are people who can see the realities and truth," Oztug said.

Erdogan's performance has wrong-footed opponents who also thought voters would punish him over the state's initially slow response to devastating earthquakes in February, in which more than 50,000 people died.

But in the first round of voting on May 14, which included parliamentary elections, his AK Party emerged top in 10 of the 11 provinces hit by the earthquakes, helping it secure a parliamentary majority along with its allies.

Shaken, AL plans to rejig Gazipur units

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The meeting was held at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

At the meeting, the AL leaders said they would continue to hold the peace rallies and prepare for the national election, slated for January next year.

"BNP men are giving the wrong message. But I will ask the AL leaders and activists to deal with the situation calmly. We will not do anything first. But if an attack on AL men takes place, they will not be spared," AL

General Secretary Obaidul Quader told reporters after the meeting.

He also alleged that the BNP was conspiring to disrupt the election. He also wondered what the US would do about those who obstruct the AL from holding a free and fair election.

No sanction will stop the election and the government has no worries about sanctions, he said. "Foreigners are our friends, not masters. The BNP is involved in bad politics. If the ruling Awami League remains united, the BNP will be defeated."