

# 06 BAN 1 – 06-01-04 Kansat

Laboratoire des frondeurs.org



Distance Kansat - Nawabganj  $\approx$  20 km.

## **Police in Bangladesh kill protesters after riot**

05/01/2006 - 07:39:32

Two people were killed when police fired into thousands of unruly villagers who threw stones and vandalised buildings in protests over frequent power outages in north-western Bangladesh, an official said today.

Some 50 people also were injured in the violence late yesterday in the rural town of Kanshat in Chapainawabganj district, 145 miles north-west of the capital Dhaka, said the area's police chief, Shamsul Alam Khan.

Khan said police opened fire when about 3,000 people attacked a state-run electricity office, threw stones at police and vandalised residential apartments of the power officials.

Among the injured were six police who were admitted to hospital, Khan said.

He said at least a dozen injured villagers were being treated at a local hospital, while others were released after first-aid treatment.

The protesters rallied outside the electricity office complaining that frequent power outages were hampering irrigation and small industries that depend on electricity.

The crowd turned violent and stormed into the office forcing police to open fire, Khan said.

The office sells electricity to more than 50,000 villagers who use the power for home lighting, irrigation and small industries.

Only 35% of Bangladesh's 140 million people have access to electricity, according to the World Bank.

The government says the country produces about 3,600 megawatts of electricity a day, about 400 megawatts short of the demand.

## **BANGLADESH: Two people killed and thirty-five injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district**

URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT APPEALS PROGRAMME

10 January 2006

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UA-013-2006: BANGLADESH: Two people killed and thirty-five injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district

BANGLADESH: Extra-judicial killing; Torture; Threat; Harassment; Deprivation of medical treatment; Rule of law

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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has been informed by Task Force against Torture (TFT) of the Rajshahi district that two persons were killed by police fire in the Chapainawabganj district. The policemen were guarding the office of the rural electrification centre (Palli Biddut Kendra) while around 10,000 consumers were demanding regular uninterrupted electricity supply and a reduction of the consumption rate. Without notice the police fired on the crowd, killing two and causing serious injury to at least 35 others, who are now struggling to survive in hospitals without appropriate medical treatment. The families of the deceased persons have neither received compensation nor been assured that any will be forthcoming.

The AHRC has also learnt that the police and the office staff of the Palli Biddut Kendra tortured bullet-wounded victims, after taking them into the office compound. The perpetrators did not allow the victims to receive medical treatment. The remaining victims are in now fear of harassment by police following two cases having been filed against them with the Shibganj police.

The AHRC is calling upon you to write letters to the relevant authorities in Bangladesh, in particular the Inspector General of Police and the Ministry of Home Affairs, urging them to take immediate disciplinary and legal action against the electricity authority and the errant policemen of Chapainawabganj district. The necessary reparations for the family of the victims must be met.

Urgent Appeals Programme  
Asian Human Rights Commission

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DETAILED INFORMATION:

**Name of the victims (killed):**

1. Nayan Karmokar (24), son of Mr. Bishwanath Karmakar, living in Chawkkirti village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
2. Abul Kashem Kajol (35), son of Mr. Osman Ali, living in Kanshat Abbas Bazar village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district

**Name of the victims (injured):**

1. Alam (35), living in Hazarbigghi village
2. Benozir (25), living in Hazarbigghi village
3. Felu (14), living in Chawkkirti village
4. Moinul (30), living in Kanshat village
5. Shahjahan (20), living in Dhobra village
6. Kazem, living in Dhobra village
7. Babu, living in Laughata Chawkkirti village
8. Monirul, living in Khaserhat village
9. Belal, living in Kanshat Bahalabari village
10. Rony (13), living in Barorashia village
11. Muslim, living in Pukhuria village
12. Razen, living in Pukhuria village
13. Uzzal Sing, living in Pukhuria village
14. Jamaluddin, living in Terorashia village
15. Harun Babu (20), living in Shibganj village
16. Yunus, living in Nakkatitola village
17. Kalam, living in police line area;

All the villages are under the Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district

**Name of the alleged perpetrators:**

1. Khalekuzzaman, General Manager of the Chapainawabganj Rural Electrification Centre, Shibganj police station, Chapainawabganj
2. Nasiruddin, Assistant General Manager of the Chapainawabganj Rural Electrification Centre, Shibganj police station, Chapainawabganj
3. Rafikul Islam, Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Shibganj, Chapainawabganj
4. Policemen attached to the Chapainawabganj district

**Date of incident:** 4 January 2006

**Place of incident:** In front of the Chapainawabganj Rural Electrification Centre, at Kanshat Bazar under Shibganj police station, Chapainawabganj

Case details:

On 4 January 2006, at about 5.00pm, at least 10,000 people from different corners of the Shibganj upazilla under the banner of the Palli Biddut Shangram Parishad (Rural Electricity Movement Association) participated in a pre-declared procession demanding, amongst other things, uninterrupted electricity supply and the withdrawal of electric meter rent, to the Palli Biddut Kendra (Rural Electricity Centre) at Kanshat under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district. The demonstrators were moving toward the office of the Palli Biddut Kendra to observe their 'gherao' (encircle) programme in front of the office. The police, who were called there to guard the office, barricaded the procession on the Chapainawabganj to Sona Masjid highway nearby the Palli Biddut office. The demonstrators became agitated facing the hindrance by the police. They started throwing brickbats at the police. Some policemen, including the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shibganj police station, Mr. Sahabuddin Khalifa, were injured. The police then opened fire on the demonstrators. Several of the demonstrators were shot. Others tried to flee to save their lives. The police and the staff of the Palli Biddut Kendra dragged several of the wounded inside the campus of the Palli Biddut Kendra. There they beat the victims with bamboo sticks and kicked them, denying them any medical treatment for several hours. Due to their detention by the police and staff, Nayan Karmokar and Abul Kashem Kajol succumbed to their injuries.

Observing the brutality of the victims by the police and the staff of the Palli Biddut Kendra from far outside the campus, the demonstrators became agitated once more. By this time the administrative authorities were informed about the incident. They deployed a few platoon armed police, the Bangladesh Rifles' (BDR) and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to take control of the situation. The demonstrators threw brickbats at the law enforcers and demanded medical treatment and hospitalisation for the severely wounded. A rescue team finally came and took the victims to the Shibganj (Health Complex) hospital. The doctors of the hospital referred 35 injured victims to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

To date, two cases have been filed against the demonstrators. The AGM of the Shibganj Palli Biddut Kendra, Mr. S M Nasir Uddin lodged a case with the Shibganj police station against more than 100 people, including the leader of the demonstration, Mr. Golam Rabbani. The Shibganj police have also filed a case against the same people. In neither case has the issue of the police shooting been raised. No separate case has been filed regarding the death of the two persons. The victims and the villagers are now living in fear as a result of the two cases filed by the Palli Biddut official and the police. A one-member 'Executive Probe Committee' has been created by the government headed by the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) of Chapainawabganj district, Mr. Abdur Rahim to investigate the incident and submit a report as early as possible.

Meanwhile, the wounded victims are struggling to obtain medical treatment due to financial hardship. All the victims are unattended to in hospital despite requiring urgent medical treatment.

The families of the deceased persons have not yet received any compensation from the government authority. They alleged that, when the post mortem was done, the police forced both of the families of the deceased persons to conduct the funerals for the dead in the presence of the police on the same night, despite repeated requests from the relatives not to. The relatives were not allowed to view the bodies.

The demonstrators explained that they were bound to protest against the Palli Biddut authority, who are unlawfully receiving Taka 250,00,000 per year from 56,000 consumers as meter rent. They also allege that they could not irrigate properly due to insufficient and irregular electricity supply, which resulted in big losses to their cultivation and businesses, despite paying a high rate of consumption charges for the electricity. They demanded the withdrawal and exemplary punishment of the officials involved with the killing and attacking of unarmed people.

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<http://independent-bangladesh.com/news/jan/24/24012006ts.htm>

## **Seven villagers killed in police firing Day-long clash in Chapainawabganj over arrest of Palli Biddut leaders leaves 100 including 49 cops injured**

### **OUR CORRESPONDENT, CHAPAINAWABGANJ**

Jan 23: Seven villagers were killed and over hundred others including 49 policemen injured in a day-long police-mob clash at Kansat under Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj district today.

The clash ensued as agitated people blocked the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid road following the arrest of three leaders including the convener of Chapainawabganj Palli Biddut Unnayan Sangram Committee, Golam Rabbani, in the early hours of today.

Five police vans and one truck carrying police personnel were set on fire during the clash. Five dead bodies could be identified.

They are: Nasir, son of Ayesh Uddin of Kansat, labourer Mannan, son of Moshak of Shibganj, Garibullah 40, son of Nizamuddin of Kalabari of Shibganj and Chowdhury.

Local sources said, two other dead bodies are under police custody. But police say they have one body at their disposal.

Only 19 days ago, on January 4, two persons were killed and 50 others injured in police firing when the consumers of Rural Electrification Board (REB) gheraoed REB office at Kansat to press home their five-point demand including withdrawal of minimum metre charge.

Following the incident General Manager of REB SM Nasir Uddin filed a case accusing 3000 persons.

When the news of the arrest of Golam Rabbani spread today thousands of agitated people put up barricades on Kansat-Chapainawabganj, Kansat-Sonamasjid, Kansat Chowdala and Kansat-Bholahat road covering about 55-kilometre-long area.

Police Superintendent of Rezaul Karim and a first class Magistrate Sharif Murshid rushed to the spot.

Huge contingent of police and four platoons of BDR were also deployed immediately. Police tried to disperse the crowd by resorting to lathicharge.

During the clash police entered the houses at Kansat Bazar colony in the afternoon and lathicharged men and women there.

At this the situation deteriorated further. Mob also hurled brickbats at the police. Failing to disperse the mob police opened fire and firing continued till filing of this report at 6-30 pm.

Our Staff Correspondent from Rajshahi reports: Till the writing of this report at 8 pm sporadic violence was continuing.

It is learnt, in connection with the violence of January 4, Kansat thana police arrested three persons including Golam Rabbani, Convener of Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP), Zahir Chowdhury and Moniruzzaman, members of PBUSP on Sunday night. In protest against the arrest, thousands of people from Kansat Bazaar, Hajar Dighi, Chalk Kirti, Khaserhat, Dhobra and adjacent villages put up barricades on various roads to and from Kansat from early morning obstructing traffic movement. Police rushed to the spot trying to disperse the mob by resorting to lathi charge, firing rubber bullets and lobbing tear gas canisters. But agitated mob, divided in hundreds of groups, continued to resist and barricade some 55-kilometre-long roads linking Kansat-Sona Masjid, Kansat-Chowdala, Kansat-Nachole, Kansat-Bholahat and Kansat-Chapainawabganj. At one stage the situation went out of control of the law enforcement members and BDR was called in. But the BDR failed to disperse the agitated mobs who set ablaze at least six police vans including the van of Superintendent of Police of Chapainawabganj Rezaul Karim, burnt several hundred wooden electric poles, damaged the offices of Kansat Palli Bidyut Samity and damaged public vehicles. Till afternoon, police-mob chase and counter chase continued when around 4 pm police entered into the houses of local people at Kansat Hat, Kansat Bazaar Colony and Abbas Bazaar. People turned violent and charged police with brickbats, sharp weapons, sticks and whatever they could find handy. At this time mob gheraoed the police and BDR members and police fired hundreds of rounds of shots, rubber bullets and tear gas canisters killing at least seven people and injuring more than one hundred.

At least 30 people with multiple injuries have so far been admitted to Shibganj thana health complex and Chapainawabganj health complex but many were receiving treatment at local clinics to avoid arrest.

Shibganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rafiqul Islam described the situation 'grave' and admitted killing and injuring of many people but failed to give the exact figure or names and addresses of the deceased.

On January 4, hundreds of common people under the banner of Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad(PBUSP) gheraoed Chapainawabganj-Kansat Palli Bidyut Samity Office demanding realisation of their five-point demand. The demands include: cancellation of monthly meter charge, cancellation of minimum charge of electricity and regular electric supply. Hundreds of people from Kansat Bazaar and adjacent areas gheraoed the office of Palli Bidyut and damaged properties. Police resorted to lathi charge and later opened fire to disperse the mob killing two persons Kajal, and Nayan, and injuring nearly one hundred others. A case was filed accusing the convener of the PBUSP and his arrest last night sparked today violence.

Bacchu Master of village Chak Kirti under Kansat and an eye witness of the incident stated, hundreds of agitated mob around 1 pm thronged Kansat College play ground to hold a protest meeting against the arrest of Golam Rabbani, Convener of Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram

Parishad(PBUSP), Zahir Chowdhury and Moniruzzaman, members of PBUSP last night. During this time the agitated mob put up barricades on roads and rickshaws were not allowed to ply. When police rushed to the spot, the mob chased them at Kansat crossing and many police entered into the houses of people to save themselves from the wrath of the agitated mob. Police started to fire indiscriminately to save themselves from the hands of the agitators when seven people including one woman, one orphan child (13), were killed.

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<http://www.newagebd.com/2006/jan/25/front.html>

## **REB subscribers pay more for less**

AMINUL ISLAM

Tension ran high in Chapainawabganj Tuesday as people continued agitation against the Rural Electrification Board for its sustained failure to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity despite realising high charges from consumers.

Eight persons were killed on Monday when the police opened fire on the agitators at Kansat Bazar to disperse a demonstration for the release of three leaders of the Palli Bidyut Sangram Committee, an organisation of electricity subscribers.

The arrests were made as a sequel to the turbulence in the area on January 4, when the police also opened fire on local people demonstrating for the withdrawal of minimum charge and meter charge. Two persons were killed.

The outburst is not limited to Chapainawabganj, though; consumers attacked a number of power substations and offices across the country over frequent power outages during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan late 2005.

Subscribers of the board in Rajshahi, Manikganj, Sylhet, Noakhali, Jhalakati and some other districts have become increasingly agitated in recent times as they receive less electricity because of frequent outages although they pay higher than subscribers of the Power Development Board.

An REB subscriber pays Tk 3.5 on an average for every unit of power whereas a PDB subscriber pays around Tk 2.82 and a Dhaka Electric Supply Authority subscriber between Tk 2.5 and Tk 3.

Besides, an REB subscriber pays a minimum charge of Tk 100 and a meter charge of Tk 10 every month.

REB officials attribute the frequent outages to supply shortage from the power board; it faces a daily shortfall of 500-600 megawatts against a demand of 1,500-1,600MW.

PDB sources blame the government's failure to enhance overall power generation capacity. The government has so far commissioned an 80MW power plant in its four years in power.

They said the agitation would be widespread when power crisis turned severe next summer. A daily shortfall in the range of 1,200 to 1,400MW is anticipated next summer when the total demand is expected to reach around 4,700MW.

The power board currently generates around 2,900MW a day, as a number of power units are offline for maintenance and overhauling.

Power generation may top 3,500 at best in summer, said a source, 'which means the power crisis will persist'.

Rural consumers look set to bear the brunt, as power officials try to keep power supply to the capital city and Chittagong as uninterrupted as possible during generation shortfalls.

A high official of the division, however, said power generation might actually rise in summer to between 3,800 and 4,000MW, as some units would be back on line.

'We are scrutinising all available data of the past few years to observe the trend of power generation in summer. We would try to increase production based on the data,' he said.

The state minister for power, Iqbal Hasan Mahmood, could not be contacted for his comments.

Meanwhile, agitation in Chapainawabganj looks set to continue, as the Rural Electrification Board is highly unlikely to withdraw the charges.

'REB consumers across the country pay the charges. We cannot withdraw the charges only for Chapainawabganj,' said a source in the Power Division.

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## Agitation continues as death toll rises to 8

OUR CORRESPONDENT . C'nawabganj

Agitation continued Tuesday at Kansat in Chapainawabganj where the police opened fire on a demonstration against the arrest of three persons of the locality on Monday, leaving seven people killed on the spot and over 100 wounded.



One of the injured, Babu, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Tuesday while the condition of 15 others, now under treatment in the hospital, was stated to be critical.

The Awami League and its allies in the opposition have, meanwhile, called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the district for today, in protest against the police action.

The government on Tuesday formed a three-member committee to probe Monday's incident.

An uneasy situation prevailed at Kansat and Shibganj.

Although no fresh violence took place on Tuesday, hundreds of people took to the street and put barricade on the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid highway. There were also demonstrations at different places.

Additional contingents of the police and the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles were deployed.

Rajshahi divisional commissioner Muslehudin, deputy inspector general of police Baharul Alam and high officials of the police visited Kansat in the morning.

The Rajshahi mayor, Mizanur Rahman Minu MP, also the minister for Chapainawabganj, met the families of the deceased Tuesday and also addressed a rally at the upazila nirbahi officer's office in Shibganj.

He promised a judicial enquiry and punishment to those responsible for the incident.

The agitators, meanwhile, disrupted traffic movement by putting barricades on the roads with poles of the Rural Electrification Board.

Hundreds of vehicles, including those loaded with imported goods, were stranded on the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid highway due to the barricades.

The people alleged that the law enforcers had been harassing them during door-to-door search since Monday.

Rafizan, mother of Babu, told New Age that his son was innocent and did not take part in the clash. 'He was watching the clashes through the window. However, the police opened fire and stormed into my house and beat him mercilessly.'

REB consumers have been agitating for several days for withdrawal of meter rents and minimum charge and for uninterrupted supply of electricity.

On January 4, the Shibganj police intervened when thousands of consumers went to lay siege to the REB office.

The police swung into action, clubbed the demonstrators and opened fire on them at one stage. Two persons, Nayan and Kajal, were killed and over 100 wounded in the incident.

The REB general manager later filed a case against 3,000 people.

On January 23, the police arrested Golam Rabbani, Zahir Chowdhury and Maniul Islam, sparking widespread resentment.

Relatives of the deceased took away most of the bodies without post mortem and buried those on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the probe committee, headed by additional secretary to the home ministry Mohammad Mohsin, will enquire into why the police opened fire on the mob. Other members of the



committee are the Rajshahi divisional commissioner and the additional inspector general of police attached to the police headquarters.

It will also identify the persons responsible for Monday's incident. It will recommend steps to avoid such incidents in future.

The committee has been asked to submit its report within a week, said a home ministry press note.

Different socio-political organisations have, meanwhile, staged protest rallies in Chapainawabganj condemning the police action.

The Bikalpadhara Bangladesh president, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal president, Hasanul Haque Inu, strongly condemned the killing of innocent people and demanded of the government to form a probe committee to investigate the incident.

The Sylhet Bibhag Unnayan Sangram Parishad observed a sit-in hoisting black flags at Muktangan in the capital city. It demanded punishment for those responsible.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh also demonstrated in front of its office at Purana Paltan.

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## **Killings slated**

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of political parties and organisations on Tuesday condemned the police fire on villagers at Kansat under Shibganj upazila in Chapaibawabganj.

The police opened fire on villagers on Monday and killed seven to bring their unruly procession under control. The villagers were demonstrating against the local Rural Electrification Board.

Leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh at a protest rally in the capital demanded immediate arrest of the killers and their punishment.

The BNP-Jamaat alliance government failed to fulfil people's aspirations and took a hard line to curb their movements, said party general secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim at the rally. The rally was followed by a protest procession.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal leaders at a protest rally at Muktangan demanded sufficient compensation for family members of the victims.

The party's leader, Bazlur Rashed Firoj said the BNP-Jamaat alliance has lost its balance losing popularity. The rally followed by a protest procession.

The 11-Party Alliance, a combine of the left and democratic political parties, condemned the police attack and demanded exemplary punishment of the killers immediately.

The combine has supported the movement programmes of the Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Committee and sent a team led by Abdus Samad and Rafiqul Islam to the spot.

The Left Democratic Front, a combine of the left political parties, will hold a rally at Muktangan in the capital protesting against the Kansat killings.

The central steering committee of the combine, at a meeting, also decided to support a hartal today in Chapaibawabganj.

Panch Bam Dal, a combine of five left political parties, said the alliance government was trying to control the people's movements with its might.

The Workers Party of Bangladesh demanded judiciary enquiry into the incident and punishment of the killers.

Bikalpadhara Bangladesh president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said the alliance government is killing people to hide its failures.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal president Hasanul Haq Inu and general secretary Syed Zafar Sajjad expressed solidarity with family members of the victims.

Samyabadi Dal general secretary Dilip Barua demanded stopping corruption of the Rural Electrification Board.

Bangladesh Krishok Samity and Sylhet Division Development Council also condemned the killings.

<http://www.ahrchk.net/ua/mainfile.php/2006/1492/>

## **BANGLADESH: Eight people killed and at least one hundred injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district**

URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION URGENT ACTION

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT APPEALS PROGRAMME

27 January 2006

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UA-041-2006: BANGLADESH: Eight people killed and at least one hundred injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district

BANGLADESH: Extra-judicial killing; Torture; Molestation; Threat; Harassment; Deprivation of medical treatment; Rule of law  
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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) wrote to you on 10 January 2006 (UA-013-2006) detailing the killings of two people and injuries to at least 35 others following the police opening fire on a group of demonstrators in Chapainawabganj district, Bangladesh. The demonstrators had been protesting outside of the rural electrification Centre demanding regular uninterrupted electricity supply and a reduction of the consumption rate, when the police opened fire.

The AHRC has now learned that in a further demonstration outside of the rural electrification office on January 23 a further eight persons were killed by police fire. The police had gone to remove the road blockade at Kansat Bazar, where the demonstrators, all consumers of the Palli Biddut (Rural Electrification) were demanding the release of three leaders of the Palli Biddut Subscribers' Development Association. Without notice the police fired on the crowd, killing six people on the spot and causing serious injuries to many others, who are now struggling to survive in hospitals without appropriate medical treatment. Two victims have since succumbed to their injuries in the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

The AHRC has also learned that the police tortured women, children and elderly people. They also molested many girls and women during police raids in the villages. The police have not allowed the victims to seek medical treatment. The remaining victims are now living in fear of harassment by the police following these incidents.

The AHRC is calling upon you to write letters to the relevant authorities in Bangladesh, in particular the Inspector General of Police and the Ministry of Home Affairs, urging them to take immediate disciplinary and legal action against the errant policemen of Chapainawabganj district. The necessary reparations for the families of the victims must be met.

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DETAILED INFORMATION:

**Name of the victims (killed):**

1. Nasir Uddin (35), son of Mr. Ayes Uddin, living in Kharokpur village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
2. Anwarul (30), son of Mr. Fakasu Mondol, living in Kanshat colony under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
3. Mannan (40), son of Mr. Mosahak Mondol, living in Shibnagar Ghontola village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
4. Garibullah (35), son of Mr. Nizam Uddin, living in Kolabari village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
5. Manirul Islam Chowdhury (26), son of Patan Ali, living in Trimohini village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
6. Anwar Hossain Babu (12), son of Mr. Abdul Kuddus Ali, living in Shibnarayanpur village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
7. Daud Ali (27), son of Mr. Jarjis, living in Baluchar village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district
8. Ahab Ali (28), living in Kharokpur village under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district

**Name of the victims (bullet injured):**

1. Durul (18), son of Rabiul Islam, living in Shivnarayanpur village
  2. Mainul (32), son of Barkatullah, living in Shivnarayanpur village
  3. Tarikul Islam (18), son of Shariful Islam, living in Haripur village
  4. Fateh Mohammad (45), living in Chatra village
  5. Mizanur Rahman (30), son of Hatkur, living in Bagbaria village
  6. Kalu (45), son of Mesru Khalifa, living in Shivnarayanpur village
  7. Rabiul (18), son of Sadek Hossain, living in Shivnarayanpur village
  8. Mamun (13), son of Serajul Islam, living in Shivnarayanpur village
  9. Moniruzzaman (45), son of Nazim Uddin, living in Shibganj village
  10. Almas (25), son of Saidur Rahman, living in Shibganj village
  11. Samsul (12), son of Late Gazilur Rahman, living in Shibganj village
  12. Sahela, wife of Kutub Ali, living in Biswanathpur Mollatola village
- All the villages are under the Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district*
13. Samsul Islam, son of Saheb Uddin, living in Dehopara village under Bagmara police station in Rajshahi district
  14. Jasim (35), son of Suchit Ali, living in Basantakedar village under Mohonpur police station in Rajshahi district

**Name of the victims (beaten by police):**

1. Jahanara (35), living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
2. Nawshad (75), living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
3. Hasnara (30), living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
4. Sanuara (65), living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
5. Arju Begum (70), living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
6. Afzal, living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
7. Riaz Uddin, living in Kansat Bus Stop colony
8. Sakhina Begum, living in Kansat Bahalibari village
9. Aju (23), living in Shibnarayanpur village
10. Moyna (23), living in Shibnarayanpur village
11. Sakina (12), living in Shibnarayanpur village

12. Rawshan Ara (36), living in Shibnarayanpur village
13. Arju Begum (33), living in Shibnarayanpur village
14. Rahela (22), living in Shibnarayanpur village
15. Monwara (24), living in Shibnarayanpur village
16. Monowara (23), living in Bianbazar village
17. Arju (22), living in Bianbazar village
18. Momina (16), living in Bianbazar village
19. Aram Bewa (52), living in Bianbazar village
20. Gudhi (23), living in Bianbazar village
21. Sabina, living in Bianbazar village
22. Monowara, living in Bianbazar village
23. Rahela (12), living in Bianbazar village
24. Aankhi, living in Bianbazar village
25. Benia, living in Bianbazar village
26. Modhu, living in Bianbazar village
27. Sakib, living in Bianbazar village
28. Raja, living in Bianbazar village
29. Ramjan, living in Bianbazar village
30. Osman, living in Bianbazar village

*All the villages are under the Shibganj police station in Chapainwabganj district*

**Name of the alleged perpetrators:**

Police, including the Superintendent of Police (SP) and a class one Magistrate of Chapainawabganj district

**Date of incident:** 23 January 2006

**Place of incident:** Kanshat Bazar, nearby Chapainawabganj Rural Electrification Centre, under Shibganj police station, Chapainawabganj

Case details:

On 4 January 2006, two persons were killed and at least 35 others were wounded by the firing of police during a demonstration calling for uninterrupted electricity supply in the villages under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district. The police and the Palli Biddut Samity authorities filed two separate cases against hundreds of villagers, including the leaders of the Palli Biddut Shamiti Subscribers' Association, with the local police station regarding the incident.

On January 22, late in the night, the Sibganj police arrested three leaders of the Palli Biddut Shamiti Subscribers' Development Association. The following morning (January 23), when the villagers learned of the arrest of the three leaders, they blocked the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid, Kanshat-Gomstapur, Kansat-Gopalpur roads demanding the release of the three arrested people. Around 40 kilometres of road was blocked by the agitated demonstrators. The police, led by the Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district, Mr. Rezaul Karim, and Class One Magistrate, Mr. Sarwar Murshed, failed to control the situation and remove the blockades from the road. They then entered into the houses beside the roads and beat women and children. When news of the police atrocities inside the houses reached the demonstrators they became violent towards the police. The demonstrators torched the wooden pillars of the Palli Biddut Shamiti. At around 3.00pm the demonstrators encircled the police on the street. Failing to control the situation the police opened fire upon the people. Six people were killed on the spot while two others, including one juvenile, succumbed to their injuries at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on January 24 early in the morning.

The firing of the police wounded more than one hundred people. Fourteen of those seriously wounded are receiving medical treatment in the RMCH. Among the victims was Sahela Khatun, who did not take part in the demonstration but received severe injuries to her head as she stood in

front of her house beside the road. Her legs, hands and abdomen were severely wounded due to police bullets.

More than fifty people, including old aged men and women, and children, who stayed at home during the demonstration, were also severely wounded due to the indiscriminate beatings by the unruly police. The villagers also allege that the policemen molested girls after entering into their houses. Among the victims of the police beatings was Jahanara Begum (35), who was beaten by the police while she was feeding her child at home. Her left hand was broken due to excessive brutality. Afzal and Riaz Uddin lost their teeth when hit by police riffle butts. The victims of 41 villages adjacent to the Kansat Bazar alleged that police entered into each and every house of the area and beat women, old men and children. The victims also allege that the police inside the mosques beat many of the Muslims while they were offering their prayer. Huge numbers of victims, including women and children, have since been deprived medical treatment. They are passing time in fear of further harassment by the police. The agitated people set fire to six police vehicles to protest against the killings and beatings.

The police, meanwhile, claim that more than 50 policemen were injured in the incident. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shibganj police station, Mr. Sahabuddin Khalifa, said that they were going to file a number of cases regarding the incident. The SP of Chapainawabganj, Mr. Rezaul Karim, claimed that they had no alternative but to fire at the demonstrators. On the other hand, the victims allege that there was no reason for attacking the women and children or trespassing into houses that were three to five kilometres away from the place of demonstration. The victims also allege that the police were violent toward the people from the very beginning. They also criticised the ineffective action taken by the government in response to the killings of two people in Kansat on January 4. This, they believe, only encouraged the perpetrators to commit further crimes.

The district administration deployed a few platoon armed police, the Bangladesh Rifles' (BDR) and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to take control of the situation. A three-member 'Probe Committee' was created on January 24 by the government headed by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Mohammad Mohsin as Convener. The Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi, Mr. Musleh Uddin and the Additional Deputy Inspector General of Police of Rajshahi Renge are members of the committee. The committee has been asked to submit its report within seven days investigating the reasons for this incident, determining the responsible perpetrators, followed by recommendations of possible lawful action against them. A positive outcome by the Committee and its report might end this senseless violence and further loss of life.

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<http://www.ahrchk.net/ua/mainfile.php/2006/1499/>

## **UPDATE (Bangladesh): Three persons tortured by the Chapainawabganj police**

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UPDATE ON URGENT APPEAL UPDATE ON URGENT APPEAL UPDATE ON URGENT APPEAL

ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - URGENT APPEALS PROGRAMME

Update on Urgent Appeal

31 January 2006

[RE:UA-041-2006: BANGLADESH: Eight people killed and at least one hundred injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district; UA-013-2006: BANGLADESH: Two people killed and thirty-five injured by police fire in Chapainawabganj district]

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UP-013-2006: BANGLADESH: Three persons tortured by the Chapainawabganj police

BANGLADESH: Arbitrary arrest; Torture; Harassment; Deprivation of medical treatment; Rule of law

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Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) wrote to you on 10 (UA-013-2006) and 27 January 2006 (UA-041-2006) detailing the killing of ten people and injuries to approximately 200 others following the police opening fire on a group of demonstrators on two different occasions in Chapainawabganj district, Bangladesh. The demonstrators had initially been demonstrating outside of the rural electrification centre demanding regular, uninterrupted electricity supply and a reduction of the consumption rate. During that demonstrating eight people were killed. In a subsequent demonstration, where the protestors were demanding for the release of three leaders of the Palli Biddut Subscribers' Development Association, who were detained following the first demonstration, a further two people were killed.

The AHRC has now learned that the arrested three leaders were tortured by the police while in the custody of the Shibganj police station and in the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP). Consequently, the victims sustained considerable injuries. They were then detained in prison. The police have not allowed the victims to seek proper medical treatment outside the prison.

The AHRC has also learned that a Member of Parliament (MP) of the local constituency influenced the magistrate not to grant bail to the victims.

The AHRC is calling upon you to write letters to the relevant authorities in Bangladesh, in particular the Inspector General of Police and the Ministry of Home Affairs, urging them to take immediate legal action against those police responsible for the torture of the three men.

Urgent Appeals Programme  
Asian Human Rights Commission

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DETAILED INFORMATION:

**Name of the victims:**

1. Golam Rabbani, Convener of the Palli Biddut Subscribers' Development Association, son of the late Belayet Ali Mridha, living in Pukuria village
2. Zahir Chowdhury, Joint Convener of the Palli Biddut Subscribers' Development Association, living in Kansat village
3. Monirul Islam Manna, President of the Kanahat Union Committee of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, living in Kansat village

*All the villages are under the Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district*

**Name of the alleged perpetrators:**

1. Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district and policemen of Shibganj police station of Chapainawabganj district
2. Mr. Shahjahan Mian, Member of Parliament (MP), Shibganj Contituency, Chapainawabganj

**Date of incident:** 23-28 January 2006

**Place of incident:** Office of the Superintendent of Police (SP) and Shibganj police station, Chapainawabganj district

Case details:

On 4 January 2006, two persons were killed and at least 35 others were wounded by the firing of police during a demonstration calling for uninterrupted electricity supply in the villages under Shibganj police station in Chapainawabganj district. The police and the Palli Biddut Samity authorities filed two separate cases against hundreds of villagers, including the leaders of the Palli Biddut Shamity Subscribers' Association, with the local police station regarding the incident. On January 22, late in the night, the Sibganj police arrested three leaders of the Palli Biddut Shamiti Subscribers' Development Association regarding those two cases.

According to the statement of Golam Rabbani's wife, Mrs. Shamima Akter Parul, the police blind folded the three leaders and tied their hands behind their back with rope and handcuffs. They were then taken to the Shibganj police station and beaten by the police. The police accused them of mobilising the people against the government authorities. They were then taken to the office of the Superintendent of Police (SP). The police put their heads underneath a table and forced them to kneel down. They then beat them with stick over different parts of the body.

A panel of lawyers, visiting the victims in the Chapainawabganj jail, stated that the three were unable to walk properly due to obvious injuries sustained. The victims were admitted to the medical ward of the Chapainawabganj district jail owing to their leg injuries. The victims' families allege that the victims were deprived of proper medical treatment while in prison.

Meanwhile, the villagers have been continuing their demonstrations on the street protesting at the arrest and torture of the three leaders. During one of these demonstrations, on January 23, the police fired on the crowd killing eight people and causing injuries to more than 100. More than fifty people, including old aged men and women, and children, who stayed at home during the demonstration, were also severely injured due to the indiscriminate beatings by the unruly police. The villagers also allege that the police molested girls after entering into their houses. Huge numbers of victims, including women and children, have since been deprived medical treatment. They are passing time in fear of further harassment by the police.

The villagers further allege that the Member of Parliament (MP) of the Shibganj constituency, Mr. Shahjahan Mian influenced the local Administration as well as the Magistrates not to grant bail to the three persons. They also allege that the government has completely failed in responding to the actions of the police regarding these incidents.

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<http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/04/11/d6041101011.htm>

## **Violence flares up in tense Kansat**

**Cops break into houses, beat up residents, fire rubber bullets; protesters attack police, damage vehicles**

Staff Correspondent, Rajshahi

The Daily Star, Bangladesh - Apr 10, 2006

Tension in and around Kansat continues to rise as protesting local people in groups carried out fresh attacks on the law enforcers and vandalised their vehicles amid chase and counter-chase on the fourth day of their indefinite hartal yesterday.

The police forced shopkeepers to keep their shutters down, entered houses and beat up 10 people including two women. They arrested nine people.

Local administration yesterday slapped a fresh ban on all kinds of gatherings in 17-kilometre area for an indefinite period after Sunday's ban in 5-kilometre area ended at 8:00am yesterday.

Defying the section 144, the protesters brought out a procession carrying sticks and damaged a culvert at Takshaldighi on Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid road as Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP) agitated through the whole day to realise its 14-point charter of demands.

The police and Bangladesh Rifles deployed there on Sunday tried to quell the violent protests. They fired rubber bullets and lobbed tear gas canisters to disperse the mob when it attacked the police with brickbats protesting Thursday's skirmishes that claimed four lives. The protesters said they will continue the hartal until their demands are met.

A curfew-like situation prevails in the area.

### **HOURS OF TENSION**

As the Sangram Parishad activists were gathering at different points around Kansat in the morning yesterday, the police forced shopkeepers at Kansat to close their shops around 9:30am.

They beat up a man named Mofiz of Shukur's shop and another man Nasurul who works at Anu's shop, for delaying to pull down their shutters.

The local administration declared a fresh imposition of section 144 around 10:00am banning any gathering in 17-kilometre area from Bekipara intersection to Sonamasjid Land Port.

Earlier, the administration had imposed section 144 on Sunday on 5-kilometre area from Bekipara intersection to Kansat.

As the declaration of the ban was being made on loudspeakers the policemen in riot gears started marching slowly towards Sonamasjid. Reaching Dhobrabazar, where the pickets put up a barricade with large logs as part of their hartal, the police removed the barricade.

Few hundred of Sangram Parishad men armed with spears, sticks, spades, axes and large knives chased the police defying the section 144.

As the police retreated, the pickets lied down on the road and put up barricades there again.

A group of protesters, meanwhile, damaged a culvert at Takshaldighi on Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid Land Port road to obstruct movement of police vehicles.

While the policemen were marching towards Sonamasjid, the protesters made announcements through bullhorns from different mosques and rickshaws, asking the local residents to join a stick procession at 3:00pm and to defy the 'unjust section 144'.

A few thousand protesters including women and children brought out a stick procession from Mahilabazar and went to Kansatbazar at 5:00pm.

Reaching within 500 yards of the policemen deployed there, the protesters demanded withdrawal of the police.



"We don't want any police here", "we don't want to see police rule here", "no curfew here" and "we are citizens of this country, we don't need police" were the most chanted slogans in the procession led by Joynul Abedin, PBUSP joint convener.

After the procession, about 500 police and BDR personnel attempted to go to Dhobrabazar removing the barricades at Dhobpukur. They, however, retreated when several hundred protesters armed with sticks chased them.

The police this time entered the houses next to the road and threatened people not to come out of their houses. As the police and BDR men were going back to Kansat, the protesters followed them, chanting slogans accusing local lawmaker Shahjahan Mia for the killings and attacks on the local residents since January 4.

When a bicyclist was passing by the police, they charged batons on him, sparking a protest.

The protesters hurled brickbats at the policemen, prompting the police to retaliate.

The police lobbed 20 tear gas canisters and fired at least 50 rubber bullets to disperse them.

Different groups of protesters made guerrilla style attacks on the deployed policemen at different points.

When the policemen were returning to Kansat, the protesters vandalised two trucks, as many pick-ups and a microbus near a filling station at Kansatbazar.

The police entered different houses at Kansatbazar around 7:00pm and charged batons on the residents, injuring at least 10 including two women.

The protesters kept bringing out small processions at different parts in the area since the morning. The chase and counter-chase continued till 5:30pm.

"All the attacks on the locals are being made based on the tips from the local MP," Sangram Parishad convener Golam Rabbani told The Daily Star, reiterating his vow to continue the hartal until their demands are met.

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<http://www.mukto-mona.com/Articles/jaffor/Kansat150406.htm>

## **Kansat Uprising: The first peasant revolution in Bangladesh in a long time**

A.H. Jaffor Ullah

Published on April 15, 2006

A quiet peasant revolution against the authority was in the making in the first four months of 2006 in northwestern part of Bangladesh, which hardly drew the attention of national media. Now don't get me wrong! The national newspapers covered the news but only when police fired at the rebellious peasants. This happened once in January and twice in April. Up until now (April 12, 2006), a total of 20 peasants had died in the bloody conflict. Just think for a moment, twenty people had to give their life before the conflict made a splash in the major newspapers of Bangladesh. On April 13 quite a few write-ups graced the pages of daily newspapers and few editorials criticizing the sanity of Khaleda Zia Administration also were published on the same day. Do you think

Bangladesh's PM who is euphoric about her just completed foreign trips would pay much attention to the news? Nay!

I browsed the Internet forums where expatriate Bangalees visit to get information about their homeland. I was disappointed seeing no mention of Kansat killings anywhere. The deshi Internetters had no idea where Kansat is located. By the sound of it, many of us had erroneously thought that the place is located in the West. Fortunately, some international news agency had published in full color the picture of the conflict. One could clearly see that the peasants "armed" with bamboo sticks that looked like our folks.

Why the peasants from Kansat (located near Chapai Nawabganj) took to the streets to voice their anguish? Do they have a real gripe? Or, was it that they were bored to death and they wanted to have some excitement in the advent of spring and Bengali New Year. It turns out that the peasants from this remote area of Bangladesh that is located about 250 kilometers from Dhaka have a legitimate complaint against the electric supply department of Bangladesh. They say that they receive very little electricity per day; hardly 1-2 hours with which they cannot do any agricultural operations. Each month they pay a fixed amount of money no matter how much electricity comes to their doorsteps. And to make the matter worse, some men from the electricity department is charging Taka 10 every month as meter rental fees, which the peasants say are not in the contract. So, they formed a protest body calling it 'Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Committee' (PBUSC) or 'Action Committee for Rural Power Development.' through which they started making complaints. When they first took to the streets in January this year, the government decided to crush the movement by following a scorched-earth policy.

The peasants told the newsmen that like everyone else in the nation they also need electricity to do their farm chores. In one sense their livelihood is linked with the availability of electricity. The movement had grown by leaps and bounds. An estimated 12,000 strong local peasants from few scattered villages have joined the movement and it seems like they are ready to go to the bitter end to bring a closure to this problem of receiving a smidgen of electricity. The peasants' complaint is legitimate but the government of Khaleda Zia is turning a deaf ear to their plea. Instead of sending a troubleshooter or a local member of the parliament the government, which is out of touch with reality, had labeled these innocent peasants as terrorists. It has become a second nature to Khaleda Zia, the PM of Bangladesh, to crush any dissension by bullets. Many civil rights organizations in Bangladesh have raised the issue that the police and sharpshooters (RAB) have killed many people whoever they thought are criminals. The government is so much used to deal with mass demonstration with force that it sent police and BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) to quell the uprising. This insane approach had resulted in the death of 20 peasants some are only 15-16 years old.

The Kansat uprising is a unique case of civil disobedience in this nascent democracy. The peasants are apolitical but have elected the ruling party candidate in the parliamentary election, which might change according to disgruntled villagers. The peasants have no leader or spokesperson but they follow the decisions made by the committee. Until recently, no political parties were interested listening to their grievances. On April 13, 2006 the 14-party opposition group had meetings with the villagers and promised to apply political pressure to the government so that they receive electricity for irrigation in the leaner months. The government now realizes that things have gone too far and they might lose a valuable seat in the next parliamentary election. Therefore, a spokesperson from the government had promised to bring a closure to the problem. The rebel peasants are so incensed by the apathy of the government that they may not trust the authorities at anytime soon.

To bring a perspective to peasant rebellion in Bengal let me delve into history of our motherland. Bengal is famous for peasant revolution dating back to Mughal time. In Jessore, a local Hindu Raja by the name Pratapaditya gave leadership to a rebellion against the mighty Mughal, which nearly

cost him his life during 1610-1612. The heroic tales of Raja Pratapaditya engendered many legends and folklore in Bengal. Novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in late nineteenth century wrote novels based on peasant rebellion including one by the ascetic sanyasis. The novella Anandamoth describes in details how sanyasis fought the invading force. Bankim's another novella 'Sitaram' also gave graphic description of another peasant uprising in Bengal.

In the middle of twentieth century right before Bengal was partitioned based on M.A. Jinnah's dubious Two-nation theory, an uprising by the name Tebhaga Andolon (sharecroppers' movement) had exemplified the supreme sacrifice and tenacity of rural folks. The Nachole uprising near Kansat, Chapai Nawabganj in 1950 by Santal tribe was patterned after Tebhaga Andolon. In the next fifty-six year we have not seen any such organized peasant movement. Is it possible that the young generation in Kansat may have heard about the heroic tale of Tebhaga and Nachole Andolon? I have no clue but as per oral tradition, which is very common in Bengal, the villagers may have heard the tales of the past uprisings.

In summary, the peasants from villages near Kansat, Chapai Nawabganj had organized a movement to demand their fair share of electricity during January to April 2006. The government instead of settling issue peacefully turned the conflict into a bloody one. So far 20 people have died and the affected villagers are fleeing their home in droves for safety. The uprising had surprised many people in Bangladesh. The Amnesty International also had made an appeal and so did Mukto-Mona forum in the Internet for government's restraint and to bring the matter to a peaceful closure. In democracy people have every right to demonstrate peacefully. The government of Khaleda Zia had mistakenly labeled the peasants as "terrorists" and applied her scorched-earth policy to bend the back of the peasants. It had made the matter worse. Now that opposition parties in Bangladesh and outsiders have heard the plights of Kansat people we could only hope that the peasants' meager demand will be met. The Kansat people had indeed paid the price of electricity with their blood. In democracy, no government should be as tyrannical as Khaleda Zia government. Perhaps, the legacy of cantonment politics runs through her vein. If I am not wrong, her party was engendered in Kurmitola cantonment. What more could you expect!

Dr. A.H. Jaffor Ullah, a researcher and columnist, writes from Ithaca, NY

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<http://www.politicalaffairs.net/article/view/3380/1/167/>

## **Bangladesh: Victory of Kansat Peasants' Struggle**

By CP of Bangladesh  
5-08-06, 9:11 am

The peasants of Kansat have proved that if people unite to struggle for a just cause and struggle undaunting for the cause, they are ultimately crowned with victory.

The peasants of Kansat under Chapai Nawabganj district started their struggle almost a year ago against the irregularities and corruption of REB (Rural Electrification Board) and its undemocratic and coercive activities. It was a peasant movement that eventually involved all other section of the people of the entire region.

The people of Kansat came out into the streets and highways to fight for their demands. Police fired on them on two occasions on January and 14 people were killed. The third attack occurred on April 6 and this time police firing extinguished the precious lives of 6 Kansat peasants. In the name of door-to-door search, the police broke all previous records of brutality. Local residents were stunned

to experience brutal attacks which were according to the most people, more terrible than Pakistani military oppression in 1971.

The struggle started in August of 2005 with a 6-point charter of demand, which eventually became 14-point demand.

The struggle turned into a mass revolt when 13 peasants were killed in police firing in January. The struggle sparked the nation to unite the rural people to ignite the struggle against REB and for adequate supply of electricity in their respective areas. Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) were at the side of struggling peasants of Kansat from the very beginning. Bangladesh Krishak Samity also played a significant role in uniting the people of the whole region around Kansat. CPB has also called for a nationwide Hartal on March 2 and April 20 in support of the just struggle of Kansat people. Both programs were successful. CPB called upon the people to start struggles following the Kansat-model and mighty struggles flared up all over the country. CPB units brought out processions and organized public meetings all over the country. The Party also sent several teams to visit Kansat and to meet the people and the leaders and to express CPB's solidarity with their on-going struggle.

On April 16, CPB has organized 'Kansat Solidarity Day' all over the country, where leading intellectuals and politicians have expressed their solidarity with struggling Kansat peasants. Bangladesh Students Union organized a successful a daylong strike in Dhaka University on April 15 in protest against brutal killings of Kansat peasants.

Ultimately, the government had to surrender to peasants'-power and the glorious struggle of the peasants of Kansat. On April 17, they declared that it has accepted the demands and will implement them. It of course remains to be seen whether the government goes by its assurance and fully implements all the demands. Call has been given to remain vigilant. The people of Kansat have nevertheless, already added another glorious milestone in history of the heroic struggles of the people of Bangladesh.

### **Nation Observes Hartal On April 20**

The people have shown their wholehearted support for the dawn-to-dusk nationwide hartal on April 20, which was called by CPB and other political parties. The hartal was called in protest against Kansat peasant killings, price spirals of essentials and in demands for ensuring adequate supply of electricity-diesel-fertilizer-seeds and all essential agricultural inputs. Other demands of the hartal included immediate trial of all Kansat killings, fulfill 14-point and 5-point charter of demands of the struggling peasants of Kansat, resolve nationwide electricity crisis, reduce prices of essentials, overthrow misrule-communalism-imperialism.

CPB and other left political activists brought out several processions through out the day in the streets of Dhaka raising slogans in support of the demands by ignoring most of the obstruction of the undemocratic security force.

Most of the shops, markets, malls, offices and courts were closed during the hartal hours. Only a few transports were on the streets. There were no regular activities in the offices. No inter-district transportations left any terminals of Dhaka.

The security personnel were very aggressive on the pro-hartal activists. The police attacked picketers in several places of the country. The police baton charged and arrested at least 25 progressive activists. The security personnel kept CPB central office under seize all day long. The police obstructed CPB processions several times in the day.

The hartal was also observed successfully all over the country, including Gaibandha, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Moulavibazar and Jessore, and all other big and small cities and upazillas.

From the News Bulletin of the Communist Party of Bangladesh

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<http://libcom.org/news/more-energy-riots-electrickery-in-bangladesh-28092006>

## More energy riots - electrickery in Bangladesh

Submitted by Ret Marut on Thu, 28/09/2006 - 22:49.



### **Two hundred people, including police, were injured in Bangladesh as more riots and demonstrations have erupted in protest against regular interruptions to electricity supplies.**

The nineteen hours of violent clashes began yesterday evening (Wednesday 27th).

*"...We had been experiencing an unusual on-again, off-again electricity supply that we had not seen ever before, causing immense sufferings ... throughout the night in abnormally hot and humid weather. We had been constantly sweating inside our houses amid sweltering heat,"* said a resident of Senpara area in Mirpur.

Some Dhaka residents are presently only receiving 2 hours supply per day.

The rioting broke out in Dhaka's northern Mirpur district, where nearly 1,000 stone-throwing demonstrators took to the streets, and it soon spread to other parts of the city including the Shanir Akhra and Keraniganj areas. A main road through Mirpur was barricaded for several hours and at least two buses were torched. Government offices were attacked and power plants damaged.

The violent protests began after the breaking of the Ramadan fast on Wednesday evening. It was reported that the observance of evening prayers had apparently been hampered during Ramadan by a lack of electrical light in mosques. After this break-fast hundreds of youths poured into the streets from their houses in Senpara and adjoining areas and attacked local power offices, barricaded roads, and damaged or set afire scores of motor vehicles, including police and RAB (Rapid Action Battalion - paramilitary police) vans during the protests. In the Keraniganj area about 20,000 people came out into the dark to protest power cuts and set fire to police vehicles, throwing some proletarian light on the situation.

But religious concerns were not the real issue; the present events are a continuation of a long-running struggle in the country over unreliable energy supplies. Power cuts affect daily life in various important ways. Life in city slums becomes even more unbearable when denied basic air conditioning of domestic fans during sweltering, humid weather. Workers lose earnings when production stops in the factories. Domestic water supplies are affected as the reservoirs and distribution system are dependent on electricity. Consumers are charged a regular meter rental fee

whether or not supply is maintained. (In effect, you pay for the mere possibility of receiving electricity.)

*"Farmers report not receiving electricity for days, and then when they do get a supply it is only for a maximum of four to five hours. Farmers are demanding that electricity supplies be continuous, and that they should pay only for the electricity that they actually receive."*

Farmers' crop irrigation systems are also usually dependent on electrical pumps to draw the water from deep wells and bore holes. The effect of water shortages on rice crops have led to fears of food shortages later in the year. Farmers fear economic ruin if the crops are lost.

On 4th January 2006 up to 12,000 people, many farmers, took to the streets under the banner of the Palli Biddut Shangram Parishad (Rural Electricity Movement Association) in the northern town of Kansat to protest against failures in power supply. Police fired live ammunition with AK47s, rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the crowd, who responded with sticks and machetes. Local news reported around 300 people were injured, including nearly 20 cops. At least 2 men were killed and 50 suffered bullet wounds. The repression did not stop the protests; on 23rd January at least 7 more were killed with over 100 injured by cops. A young boy later died from his injuries. (Later estimates put the number dead from these 2 protests as at least 18.) On 5th April 2006 at least four people were killed when local members of the ruling Bangladeshi Nationalist Party mounted bomb attacks on another farmers' rally.

The government claims that increased industrial demand is to blame for the power cuts and, as a token gesture, has announced its intention to turn off illuminated billboards and to restrict supplies to shopping malls. The national electricity system is suffering multiple breakdowns and maintenance problems and is working at less than two thirds capacity at present - it is inadequate for modern growing demands and is in a poor state of disrepair. It is not expected to return to its normal (inadequate, unreliable) capacity for several weeks.

Further unrest is also expected next month in the Bangladeshi garment industry now that talks between employers, government and workers representatives have failed to reach any agreement about setting a minimum wage or implementing other concessions promised after the major workers revolt in the industry in May-June.

All of the above shows the diversity and depth of struggles the working class continues to fight and the crisis the ruling class faces in Bangladesh.  
(See also our earlier report)

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<http://kansat.wordpress.com/what-happened/>

## **Kansat – The wind will lead us**

The Backdrop

TimeLine

Human Rights Violation

Unlike many unanswered questions in Bangladesh, one question has a straightforward answer – why is there so much scarcity of power supply? Plain and simple reason is, because the demand far exceeds the supply. According to the 1995 Energy System Master Plan, the projected demand of electricity was around 4,600 megawatt (mw) in 2005. Now it is believed to be around 5,000 mw. Government claims that the country has capacity to generate around 4,790 mw of power. But the actual production is not believed never to exceed 3200 -3400 mw. No matter how conservative the

estimates are, there is always a shortage of 1200-1500 mw across the country.

As far as power supply is concerned, Bangladesh is divided into 2 zones – East and West. Dhaka, Sylhet, and Chittagong division, which are on the east bank of the rivers Jamuna and Meghna, comprise the East zone; while Barisal, Khulna, Rajshahi, and greater Faridpur division fall under the West zone. According to the 2004 National Energy Policy, established power plants in the East Zone generate around 82% of the total power and the rest is in the West Zone. Dhaka division alone consumes 50% of the nation's total power with approximately 78% used by the East zone. The West Zone is subject to less power supply by design of distribution of energy across the country. The present government has pledged power supply for everybody by the year 2020 in their vision statement. Although existing subscribers are not getting enough power supply, the government has continued to draw power lines in rural areas for political reasons. The government declared that 32% population had become power-privileged in 2003. A 12% increase from 2001 with almost no increase in power production!

System loss has been blamed many times over the past decades as being the major culprit in the energy sector. It has been estimated that energy sector incurs system loss of around 40% annually. 20% is due to technical losses but the other 20-22% is due to theft and corruption, which translates to around 4,500 crore taka. Around 1,000 million dollars have been invested in this sector in the last 10 years yielding negligible results. On the other hand, REB system loss fluctuates between 8-10%. They are more successful in collecting bills from their subscribers than any other agencies in this sector. It only means that people in the rural areas pay their bills regularly despite the discriminatory supply of power.

Rural Electrification Board (REB) is responsible for power supply to the rural areas. Power in these areas is distributed by Palli Bidyut Shamiti (PBS). There are 70 PBSs under REB jurisdictions at present. According to REB, they have so far drawn around 1,99,116 km line but can only supply 1,95,332 km. 3,784 km line is just laying there without power. Around 13,000 to 14,000 km power lines has been drawn in the last 4 years and another 15-16,000 km is scheduled for 2005-06 fiscal year. Most of the times, lines are drawn due to influence by ministers, MPs, or other leaders. REB areas have a demand of 1,600 mw power but they usually receive around 500 mw less than that. PBS clients are subject to monthly meter charge and minimum usage fees regardless of the supply. By regulations, minimum fees should be waived if there is more than 45 hours of pick hour load shedding per month. But this is rarely enforced. Moreover, per unit cost of electricity in the REB areas is higher than that of PDB, DESA, or DESCO.

Agriculture is the livelihood of 64% of the population and almost 20% of our national GDP comes from agriculture, but only 5% of total power is used for irrigation and 14% of the rural population are fortunate enough to have power supply. The West zone climatically is more prone to have draught and prolonged dry seasons. Lack of rain and water supply during the dry seasons have caused many deaths and famines in that region over the years. The dearth of power supply only adds to the misery of the people.

### **Ground zero: Kansat**

Kansat is a village, under Shibganj Upazilla in Chapainawabganj district, 27 km from the district township. An agrarian community relies primarily on agriculture and farming for sustenance. Like all other rural areas in Bangladesh, the demand for electricity is way beyond the supply. The Chapainawabganj PBS only gets 2 mw of power supply against a pick hour demand of 8 mw. Corruption and exploitation on top of acute need of power have agitated the people over time as the situation gradually deteriorated.

For many years, they have endured hardship due to lack of power supply; their lives were hindered, their crops destroyed. They had to bribe the PBS employees to get a meter, they had to pay more money per unit power than most of the country, they were subjected to a meter charge of 10 taka per month for an indefinite period, they were subjected to minimum fees and late fees without getting almost any power, they were compelled to reimburse for stolen transformers and electrical cables, and still they did not get minimum power for irrigation at the height of Boro season. When

exploitation reached its limit, the patience of the peaceful agrarian community of Kansat was tried one time too many.

**Timeline:**

Emergence of Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP):

Golam Rabbani, who would be at the forefront of all movement and discussions, himself ran for office of director of Chapainawabganj PBS area -2 on March 2, 2003. According to the demands of the local people, included in his election manifesto were pledges to lower meter charge, waiving minimum fees, and reduction of late fees. He was later elected the chairman of C'nawabganj PBS by votes from other directors on March 13, 2003. During his incumbency, he repeatedly tried to pursue, in vain, the demands of the people and was censured on occasions by the higher authority for his efforts. In the later half of 2005, Golam Rabbani was relieved of his responsibilities and on August 8, 2005 formed the PBUSP with support and cooperation from the people.

Villagers complained that the local Palli Bidyut Samity was collecting additional bills of Tk 10 as rent of electric meter and forced the subscribers to pay Tk 105 to Tk 121 a month as service charge for poor or no service at all. They also had to reimburse for stolen transformer and cables once and were asked to do the same when they were stolen the second time.

As the movement started, some villagers stopped paying their bills on protest from around September, 2005. PBUSP submitted a five-point memorandum to the local MP Shahjahan Mia, which he claims not to have received, demanding withdrawal of meter charge and minimum fees, and reduction of late fees. At the end of December, PBUSP declared PBS office siege program on January 4, 2006.

January 4, 2006:

Few thousand police and 1 platoon BDR were deployed around the PBS office to control the situation. As the PBUSP led procession neared the PBS office, police resisted them from advancing further. According to police sources, during the heated arguments and processions, the villagers pelted brickbats and stones at the police and police opened fire. Six rounds of three-naught-three, 12 rounds of Chinese rifle bullets, 37 canisters of tear gas, and more than 100 rounds of shot gun bullets were fired.

Nayan Karmakar (24), s/o Biswanath Karmakar of village Chakkirti of Shibganj Upazilla and Abul Kashem Kajol (35), rickshaw van puller, s/o day laborer Osman Ali of Kansat Abbas Bazaar died on the spot. More than 50 people were injured. Most of the injured received bullet wounds. Of the injured, Babu of Chakriti Laoghatta village, Monirul and another unidentified man of Khasherhaat, were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) in critical condition. Thirty people, who were injured by bullets, were admitted to Shibganj Upazila Health Complex.

January 5, 2006:

PBS AGM(General Service) SM Nasiruddin filed a case against more than 2000 anonymous individuals with GR as the leader for damage of property worth more than Tk. 50 lakh. Police filed a separate case against the protesters. No case was filed for the murders yet.

Local MP Shahjahan Mia, along with local Jamayat leaders, visited the morgue and then Pukuria village in the evening amid resentment from the people. He claimed Golam Rabbani to be an Awami partisan and later threatened him over the phone.

January 7, 2006:

One member enquiry committee headed by Additional District Magistrate was formed.



*January 9, 2006 – January 21, 2006:*

Golam Rabbani was threatened to stop protest or to face arrest and was offered Tk. 10 lakh as bribe.  
January 22, 2006:

Three PBUSP leaders, along with 6 others, arrested. The leaders are 1) Convenor of PBUSP, Golam Rabbani, 2) Joint convenor, Zahir Chowdhury, and 3) Monirul Islam Manna  
January 23, 2006:

Hundreds of people barricaded C'nawabganj-Sonamasjid highway from early morning. They tore down wooden and cement PBS poles, cut down trees, set fire to them, and barricaded the highway. They had barricaded 55 km of highway stretching from Kansat to Bholahat. Fire service had to put fire under control.

Around 11a.m., first class magistrate Sarwar Morshed and PS Rezaul Karim asked the protester to calm down or to face severe consequences.

Police removed all the barricades from PBS headquarter to Kansat Bazaar. They met with resistance from the people there and started charging batons to disperse them. They even intruded households and continued the brutal charge. They had beaten up many innocent people, including women and children. They have allegedly beaten up people inside a mosque during prayer. This fuelled people's anger and situation deteriorated. The police were surrounded by protesters coming from the other side near Chakkirti road. Protesters were carrying sticks and threw brickbats at the police. Around 3 p.m., near Kansat Bazaar, police started firing indiscriminately killing 6 people on the spot. Protesters set ablaze six police vehicles including a truck during the clash. A tense situation prevailed in the area and people replaced the removed barricades at the end of the day.

Of the dead, six were identified as Anwar, a rickshawpuller and son of Anij Uddin, Nasir, son of Ayej Uddin, Mannan, a day labourer and son of Mosahak, Garibullah, son of Nizam Uddin of Kansat, Chowdhury of Chatra Krishnachandrapur and Rashid. Another unidentified juvenile injured in the incident died at Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital. Over 100 people were injured in this incident.

Mizanur Rahman Minu, Mayor of Rajshahi, visited the spot in the evening. He visited victim Anwarul's house, facing of anger and agitation from the people. He assured people of justice and formed a 9-member committee (2 UP chairman, 2 Imam, and 2 teachers, headed by Kansat UP chairman) of prominent members of the community and promised to take the issue to the energy minister.

*January 24, 2006:*

People continued barricade on C'nawabganj – Sonamasjid road. They brought out procession in Abbas Bazaar with corpse of a Kansat victim. They demanded release of their leaders. Trucks with goods stranded on both sides of barricades and the Sonamasjid land port activities came to a halt. Meanwhile, another victim, Anwar Hossain babu, 12, s/o day laborer Abdul Kuddus ali succumbed to his bullet wounds at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Five of the Kansat victims were buried without autopsy.

A three member government probe committee was formed. This committee was headed by Mohammad Mohsin, additional secretary of the home ministry, with Rajshahi divisional commissioner, and an AIG of police as members. SP Rezaul Karim denied police atrocities and claimed that 46 policemen were injured and blamed jubo league leaders for the incident. 14-party called for hartal in C'nawabganj on the 25th of January.

*January 25, 2006:*

Spontaneous peaceful hartal observed in C'nawabganj. People barricaded 5 km in C'nawabganj-Sonamasjid Highway, 9 km from Bekir Mor to Dhoppukur, 35 km from Kansat to Bholahat Jambaria laying trees on the street. The ferry service in the Gomostapur route was halted upon protest by people. Rallies, street meetings, and gayebana janajas were held all day long across the Kansat region.

People blamed Shahjahan Mia, MP for instructing DIG Baharul Alam of Rajshahi range to arrest the PBUSP leaders. Local people said the Chapainawabganj superintendent of police (SP), instructed by the Rajshahi Range DIG, visited Kansat Bazar a day before the violence and asked Rabbani and others to shun the movement to avoid arrests. Both the DIG and SP denied such allegations.

*January 26, 2006:*

Protesters broke a culvert and put fresh barricades on highway to snap communication with Sonamasjid land port. The agitated people assaulted Shahbazpur union chairman and BNP adherent Tozammel Haque when he tried to prevent them from breaking the culvert. Several hundred men, women and children in a procession paraded the area chanting slogans against local lawmaker and for release of the arrested leaders. No measures were taken to quell the protest. The government probe committee was yet to visit area.

Rural markets in Abbas Bazar and Trimohini areas remained closed for the fourth consecutive day. Several hundred trucks were stranded at Sonamasjid land port.

AL GS Abdul Jalil visited Kansat. He condemned attack, demanded compensations for affected families, and demanded judicial probe. He assured that AL will bear education expenses of children of the affected families. Other leaders from AL (Matia Chowdhury), JSD, and Workers' Party also visited the area and rickshaw puller Anwarul's house.

Shimina Akhter Parul, wife of Golam Rabbani, called for indefinite strike at Shibganj upazilla from January 27, 2006 onwards.

*January 27, 2006:*

First day of indefinite strike observed. Shibganj upazilla and Sonamasjid port paralysed for the 5th day. Markets were open in Shibganj sadar area and road communication with C'nawabganj was open. 18-20 km from Bekir Mor to Sonamasjid port was traffic less. 9 km road from Kansat Kalabari to Sonamasjid was barricaded again after police removed trees the previous night. People dug up the highway near Shahbajpur Degree College.

Special prayers were held in different mosques during Jum'a prayer in support of the movement and demanding release of PBUSP leaders. Protest rallies were held in different places.

Govt. probe committee was yet to visit the area.

Ruling BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Mia, widely blamed for the arrest of three leaders and subsequent police atrocities, went to Shibganj yesterday but did not visit the troubled areas.

*January 28, 2006:*

Second day of indefinite strike was marked with meetings and processions. PBUSP gave an ultimatum to the government for release of their leaders by February 5.

Shibganj thana OC Shahabuddin Khalifa stand-released and closed to Rajshahi range of police.

Shahjahan Mia claims that the people never approached him with their problem. He informed the journalists that the withdrawal of UNO Rafiqul Islam was also under process. Assured that affected families will be compensated.

Meanwhile, Kansat movement gained support from people from adjacent area. A huge procession of thousands of people circled the area and ended with speech from joint convenor of PBUSP, freedom fighter Aref Ali Tisu.

Bail prayer hearing for the PBUSP leaders were scheduled at a magistrate court in C'nawabganj.

On behalf of the district administration, a four-member lawyers' team visited the troubled area yesterday and talked to local people about their demands. The team included Chapainawabganj Bar Association President Ahmadullah Chowdhury, Secretary Enamul Haque, and members Osman Gani and Sohrab Ali. The team also visited Golam Rabbani at Chapainawabganj jail before going to Kansat. The lawyers' team declared court boycott program in support of the movement of the people.

It was found out that the arrested leaders were tortured by police. Leaders, hand tied and blind-folded, were taken to the office of SP. Golam Rabbani was tortured and beaten there. They were admitted to the medical ward of C'nawabganj jail. The bar association team confirmed the news of torture.

*January 29, 2006:*

At least five people were injured in a clash between BNP activists and demonstrators in Kansat.

Villagers put fresh barricades put on the road. Processions and rallies continue.

The bar association retreated from their boycotting the court program and claimed that the declaration came under pressure from the people. This act was termed as 'betrayel' and 'treachery' by the people.

Meanwhile, magistrate Sarwar Murshid refused bails to PBUSP leaders. "The administration has not become too weak to release an accused in the face of movement," ADC (General) of Chapainawab-ganj Ferdous Alam told The Daily Star.

Thousands of people including a good number of women led by Rabbani's wife Shamima Akhter Parul marched seven kilometres in a protest procession to Shibganj upazila nirbahi officer's office. They also held a rally in Kansat.

*January 30, 2006:*

Indefinite strike continued with processions, barricades, and meetings. Police refrained from removing barricades and kept their activities limited.

Meanwhile, a meeting at the deputy commissioner's officer on Sunday night ended without any result as the local administration allegedly influenced by a BNP lawmaker denied the release of three Kansat leaders. Leaders of different political parties present at the meeting demanded release of the three leaders.

Committee formed by Mayor Minu visited the PBUSP leaders in jail. Bar association once again announced court boycott program on February 1, 2006. Meanwhile, there was no sign of functionality of the government probe committee.

Different social and political organizations protested the killing and police atrocities in Kansat and demanded punishment of the leaders.

*January 31, 2006:*

First Class Magistrate Sayeed Kutub granted the bail prayers of the arrestees after more than 10 lawyers led by local BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Mia's brother-in-law advocate Abu Hasib submitted a special bail petition on behalf of the PBUSP leaders. All 9 arrested PBUSP leaders including Golam Rabbani were granted bail. Four along with Golam Rabbani were freed, the rest were to be freed the next day. The leaders are Golam Rabbani, Zahir Chowdhury, Monirul Islam Manna, Moslem Uddin, Shyamol Singh, Md Badsha, Md Belal, Abul Kalam Azad and Sanwar Hossain.

Almost 10,000 people brought out a victory procession and gathered near Kansat bazaar around 5 p.m. Golam Rabbani was greeted by thousands of people. He claimed that they were brutally tortured by police while in custody. He restated his intentions to carry on with the movement until the demands are met. People started to remove barricades from the highways.

Earlier Mayor Minu held an ad lib press conference to indicate the release of the PBUSP leaders. In the press conference held at C'nawabganj circuit house, Shahjahan Mia, MP promised compensation and rehabilitation of the affected families, release of PBUSP leaders, and meeting people's demands regarding electricity issues. He urged people of remove barricades from the highways. Minu visited Kansat, accompanied by local Jamat leaders and declared release of the PBUSP leaders. People barricaded his car and refused to let him leave until the freed leaders arrive.

Meanwhile, AL-led 14 party staged demonstration in Rajshahi protesting police atrocities.

14-party also took to the street of Dhaka to protest Kansat killings.

*February 1, 2006:*

Road communication was restored between Sonamasjid land port and rest of the country. C'nawabganj bar association boycotted court in support of the people's movement.

*February 2, 2006:*

Shibganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Rafiqul Islam has been withdrawn for mishandling the situation that led to the killing of nine people in police firing at Kansat.

*February 3, 2006:*

The Forum for Energy Reporters' Bangladesh (FERB) decided to observe January 23 as "electricity day" every year commemorating the recent Kansat killings.

CPB demanded punishment of leaders behind Kansat atrocities

*February 12, 2006:*

Dr. Kamal Hossain, of Gono Forum, visited Kansat and declared solidarity with the people on their demand for uninterrupted power supply.

*February 16, 2006:*

BNP rejects AL demand, along with many others, to discuss Kansat issue in the parliament.  
February 24, 2006:

Meeting to resolve Kansat crisis was scheduled to be held at Shibganj Upazilla Parishad auditorium. Mayor Minu convened the meeting with government officials, public representatives, representatives from different professions and leaders of Palli Bidyut Samity. Golam Rabbani, convenor of the district Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Committee arrived on the upazila parishad premises at about 10:30 am. But Rabbani soon left the spot for Kansat citing security reasons as tension arose between his supporters and the BNP activists.

Instead of the compromise meeting, another meeting was held with Acting Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ferdous Alam in the chair at noon. Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu and others addressed the meeting. Minu declared withdrawal of meter charge and late fees of Palli Bidyut and to fix the minimum charge at Tk 65 instead of Tk 105 as per the demand of the demonstrators. He also announced that the family of each killed in the Kansat incident will be given Tk 100,000 from the government and Tk 50,000 on behalf of the local MP. Besides, he said each injured will get Tk. 20,000 and, if necessary, Golam Rabbani will be sent abroad for better treatment.

The mayor assured that stern action would be taken against those found responsible for the tragic incident in Kansat, as per the report of the inquiry committee. Golam Rabbani rejected Minu's offer and threatened to launch a movement from February 28 to realise their 11 point demands.

*March 2, 2006:*

Mayor Minu had a meeting with Golam Rabbani at his residence. Golam Rabbani submits 14-point demand of PBUSP. Minu agreed to accept all demand in front of the people and journalists present at the meeting site. A public announcement in a meeting was scheduled for March 12, 2006.

*March 12, 2006:*

Mayor Minu failed to show up in the meeting on ground of illness. The meeting was rescheduled for

*March 19, 2006.*

Mayor Minu kept absent from the public meeting without prior notice.

*March 29, 2006:*

Hartal called in Kansat. Seven people injured in a clash with BNP activists during hartal. Rabbani warns of heavy movement if mayor Minu does not agree to their claims.

PBUSP withdrew hartal around 3 p.m. upon request from local authority.

Local BNP leaders claim that PBUSP has called hartal to obstruct their supporters to join prime minister's meeting. They called for a protest meeting on April 6, 2006. They PBUSP had already called for a broom and stick procession the same day.

*April 1, 2006:*

The Shibganj UNO delivered a letter from Mayor Minu to Golam Rabbani. In the letter, he offered his condolences to the bereaved families and proposed further dialogue on the 14-point demand.

The government put two of PBUSP demands under consideration and one other pending for discussion with the energy ministry.

Golam Rabbani and the PBUSP leaders rejected the letter, claiming it to be ambiguous about their claims and vowed to continue with their movement. Golam Rabbani, in a meeting, urged the people to make the broom and stick program a success, which was scheduled for April 6th, 2006; unless the government unconditionally meets all their demands by April 5, 2006.

*April 5, 2006:*

Tension increased in the Kansat and Shibganj area due to simultaneous program declarations from both BNP and PBUSP. A dialogue committee was formed with additional police super Mahbubul Alam as the convenor. A meeting was held at the Upazilla Parishad auditorium. This meeting was attended by local leaders and 15 union chairmen. The UNO, Dewan Abdus Samad, stated that the administration may take stern actions including declaring 144 in the area if PBUSP did not withdraw their program. But no PBUSP representatives, including Golam Rabbani, attended the meeting. However, Golam Rabbani assured Mahbubul Alam over telephone that the procession will not carry brooms or sticks and will not enter Shibganj municipal area. He also added that he needs to finalize this with other PBUSP leaders.

PBUSP held a meeting at a local quad prior to their April 6 program. Dr. Kamal Hossain was scheduled to join the program.

*April 6, 2006:*

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*April 6, 2006:*

Four people died and 100 others were injured in a two and half hour clash between BNP cadres and PBUSP supporters.

The dead in yesterday's skirmishes are Rabbani's brother-in-law Akramjaad Khan, 32, local UP chairman Ashraf's brother and Krishak Dal leader Mahbubul Alam, 35, Masidul Huq of Dewan Jaigir, and Abdul Jilani, 14, son of Kalimullah of Bahanbari, Kansat, They were either beaten or stabbed to death. Among the dead, Akramjaad and Mahbubul belonged to the BNP and the teenage boy to the PBUSP.

Of the injured, seven people were admitted at the Shibganj Health Complex and two others at Sadar Hospital. PBUSP accused local BNP chapter for the incident.

Earlier, around 20-30,000 men, women, and children from surrounding areas gathered at the Rajbari square with brooms and sticks in their hands for the PBUSP program from around 2.45 pm. Chanchala Karmaker, mother of Nayan – who died on 4th of January in police firing, lead a procession of women coming from Chakkirti. The PBUSP activists armed themselves with sticks, brickbats, and bows and arrows to resist an anticipated BNP attack. Golam Rabbani and other PBUSP leaders addressed the gathering at 4 p.m. The procession started to move with women and children leading the 30,000 people; some of them riding in trucks and other vehicles like bullock carts.

On the other hand, BNP lead rally took place at the Shibganj Upazilla square at 5 p.m. The local leaders vowed to resist the PBUSP procession.

BNP men waiting on rooftops hurled bombs one after another at the PBUSP procession when it reached the Paily crossroads. The PBUSP activists retaliated by throwing bricks and arrows, said witnesses including some photojournalists. The blasts of some 50 bombs scattered the procession, with people running for life to take cover, while police watched the fierce battle impassively, they added. Some PBUSP activists, however, chased and caught two bombers. Witnesses said the two held with bombs were lynched on the spot. Police let the skirmishes continue up to 8:00pm and only then moved in to take control of the situation.

PBUSP activists later barricaded the roads and disrupted communications in the upazilla. Leaders of the PBUSP called for indefinite strike in Kansat.

*April 7, 2006:*

PBUSP activists barricaded roads and dug out culverts on the first day of indefinite strike. Sonamasjid port activities halted due to the strike.

Golam Rabbani, in a meeting blamed supporters of local MP and upazilla chairman for the attack and pledges to continue with the movement. PBUSP activists claimed to be threatened by BNP men of arrests and harassment. Meanwhile, mayor Minu pledges to take action against 'rowdy mass'. MP Shahjahan accuses Golam Rabbani and PBUSP for attacking BNP meeting 7 km away from Kansat. UP chairman Ashraf filed a murder case against Golam Rabbani and others for the killing of his brother Mahbub Ali.

Police recovered the bodies of Masir and Mahbub from a cropland near Beki crossroads. Masir's head was violently fractured and both the eyes of Mahbub were gouged out, police said. Mahbub was a listed terrorist accused in several cases of murders, extortion and violence. All the bodies were buried after autopsy.

The situation in Kansat remained volatile. People, including women and children, were seen in scattered demonstrations through out the day. They brought out a broom and stick procession later to protest against government inaction about their demands.

*April 8, 2006:*

The power-starved people of Kansat attacked law enforcers, injuring 10 including an additional superintendent of police, as they continued their demonstrations and observed hartal for the second day. The angry mob also damaged three police vehicles and eight trucks at Mobarakpur near Kansat when the police were escorting the goods-laden trucks from Sonamasjid land port in the early hours.

Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP at a press conference at Chapainawabganj said a terrorists' group in the name of Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP) is responsible for April 6, 2006 skirmishes. The authorities stated that the arrest of Golam Rabbani is in the process.

Meanwhile, PBUSP Convener Golam Rabbani demanded security from the government and sought the prime minister's intervention. He alleged that local BNP leaders were threatening to kill him.

An Awami League parliamentary team led by Advocate Abdul Hamid MP was scheduled to visit Kansat in Chapainawabganj for a spot inspection of fresh clash and killings.

*April 9, 2006:*

Shibganj upazila administration banned any gathering of more than 3 people within 5 km radius of Kansat invoking Section 144. The authorities gathered about 1,000 police, 100 Armed Police Battalion members and 200 BDR troops in and around Kansat to enforce the ban. Law enforcing troops took positions in different places including the residence of Golam Rabbani.

Earlier police tried to remove some of the barricades from the highway in the night, but the villagers protested their move and restored some of the barricades. PBUSP held a meeting and announced continued movement until all demands are met.

Meanwhile the High Court in an ad-interim rule prohibited detention or harassment of any Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP) member outside legal provisions. The court also demanded explanation from the government three weeks time why it should not be ordered to pay adequate compensations to the families of the violence victims. The rule had also show-caused the government, the local administration, and power-supply authorities to rationalize why they should not be directed to ensure a minimum supply of electricity to the restive area at night. Further explanations were sought as to why the police firings on January 4 and January 23 on demonstrating villagers at Kansat, killing 10 people, should not be declared illegal. Dr Kamal Hossain led the team of lawyers that moved for the petitioner.

*April 10, 2006:*

In the morning police forced the shopkeepers to keep their shutters down. Entered households and beat up 10 people including two women and arrested nine. Section 144 was expanded up to 17 km radius of Kansat from 10.00 a.m.

UNO Dewan A. Samad, with the help of police, BDR, and roads and highways employees, tried to remove the barricades in the morning. But they had to retreat in the face of protests from a few thousand angry protesters with sticks, spades, knives, spears and axes. People took to the street defying section 144 and chanting slogans against administration.

Police attempt to remove barricades and people restoring them, chase and counter chase marked most of the day. The police lobbed 20 tear gas canisters and fired at least 50 rubber bullets to disperse them.

Different groups of protesters made guerrilla style attacks on the deployed policemen at different points. When the policemen were returning to Kansat, the protesters vandalized two trucks, as many pick-ups and a microbus near a filling station at Kansatbazar.

Clashed could be averted in some instances due to interference from the PBUSP leaders.



Meanwhile, Golam Rabbani blamed local BNP stalwarts for the situation and urged the prime minister to intervene. He felt that his life is at stake and dreaded another 'crossfire' scenario.

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury demanded that the persons responsible for the killings at Kansat in Chapainawabganj be brought to book immediately.

*April 11, 2006:*

Sporadic clashes with the police and protests marked the day.

The police also arrested Rokeya Begum, wife of Golam Rabbani's brother Rezaul, Daibarani Shushila, Mabera Khatun and two others from Rabbani's house at 8:30pm.

*April 12, 2006:*

Government in their attempt to take control of the situation in Kansat, resorted to sheer force and brought on an assault on the people that is quite unprecedented. Around 4000 police and armed police battalion stormed through 12 villages around Kansat in the middle of the night ransacking houses, looting, indiscriminately beating up women, children, and elderlies, and finally firing upon fleeing villagers killing at least 6 people, including a 10 year old boy, and injuring more than 300. Hundreds of rounds of bullets, rubber bullets, and tear gas canisters were fired on the people. They had also arrested 29 people on the sixth day of indefinite hartal called by PBUSP. The police also arrested Rokeya Begum, wife of Golam Rabbani's brother Rezaul, Daibarani Shushila, Mabera Khatun and two others from Rabbani's house at 8:30pm on Tuesday.

The six people reportedly killed were identified as Anwar, a 10-year-old boy of Shibnagar Jaigirpara, Babu, 18, of Sonapara village, Shahin, 20, of Chokkitti village, Sahimuddin, 36, and Monsur, 40, of Bianibazar, and Abdur Rahman, 63, a teacher at Shibnagar High School. Shahin, Sahimuddin, and Monsur were later found to be alive in police custody. Abdur Rahman, a patient of chronic heart disease, died of a heart attack when a tear gas canister blew up right in front of him. The police also beat up journalists, threatened them and barred them from visiting the villages. They blamed the media for the clash and denied any atrocities.

Mayor Minu, visited the spot and promised release of all those arrested and stated that he would take necessary steps to resume dialogue with PBUSP leaders.

*April 13, 2006:*

Panicked locals of five unions under Shibganj Upazilla fled their homes dreading further police atrocities. Villagers were seen fleeing on foot, by rickshaw, boat, etc. with their belongings. Abbasbazar, Biyanibazar, Biswnathpur, Karimbazar, Mahilabazar, Dhokpukur and a few other villages of the area were found completely deserted. Kansat became a ghost town. People took refuge at near by paddy, sugar cane fields, and mango groves. People have been living under open skies for the second day in a row. Barricades were still on the roads and the power supply to Golam Rabbani's house was cut off.

Meanwhile the local people accused police of looting, stealing, and assaulting women. They were feasting on villagers' livestock. The police even attacked the local mosque. Some villagers accused that BNP men were leading the attack in guise of policemen.

The bodies of the three victims were buried but no case was filed for these murders. PBUSP vowed to continue the movement.

Government formed a high powered probe committee and Mayor Minu sought the help from media to resolve this issue. AL-led 14 party held a meeting at Kansat with more than 20,000 people. AL called for hartal on April 20th in protest of the killing.

Deputy home minister expressed government's concern about Kansat and assured investigation on police atrocities. It should be noted that he had earlier denied any police excesses in this matter. BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan expressed grief and offered condolences.

People and organizations across all sectors condemned and protested the killing and police brutality in Kansat. Student strike was called in Dhaka University and the teachers announced silent procession program for April 17.

*April 14, 2006:*

Representative members of 11-member Supreme Court Bar Association probe committee on Kansat along with Dr. Kamal Hossain visited Kansat and promised legal aid for the people. Dr. Kamal spoke in a public meeting at Kansat. Police blocked a procession of around 10-12, 000 people from joining Dr. Kamal's meeting.

*April 15, 2006:*

Police and BDR withdrawn from Kansat and section 144 was relaxed. Those who were in custody in cases filed by government after April 6 were scheduled to be released. Thirty two of 37 people arrested were released from police custody. Government took decision to withdraw all cases against around 100 villagers including Golam Rabbani. Mayor Minu sought apology for calling Golam Rabbani a criminal on April 6. Jubilant people were seen in a festive mood on the street. They still demanded punishment of Mayor Minu and MP Shahajahan Mia and burned effigies. They demanded resignation of Shahajahan Mia, MP.

Government team led by deputy minister Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir met with PBUSP representative in a closed door meeting in C'nawabganj circuit house. The meeting lasted all day. Golam Rabbani was scheduled to join as soon as his bail petition is approved.

Strike observed in Dhaka University. Protests and condemnation across the country continues. Civil society called for peaceful resolution of the issue.

*April 16, 2006:*

Kansat Solidarity day was observed by different social and political organizations in different parts of the country. Eminent politicians, intellectuals, and civil right activists addressed meetings and rallies demanding resolution of Kansat issue and justice for the victims of police atrocities. A high court writ petition hearing seeking court intervention in the Kansat issue was scheduled for April 17, 2006.

Golam Rabbani set five conditions for Government-PBUSP dialogue. They were withdrawal of police, section 144, cases filed against PBUSP activists, release of PBUSP activists, and resignation of local BNP lawmaker. Government earlier agreed to most of these pre-requisites for dialogue. In a meeting in Rajshahi circuit house, government accepted all but one of the 14-point demands of PBUSP. Deputy Minister Mirza Fakrul Islam Alamgir, on behalf of the high-powered five-member ministerial level committee and Golam Rabbani, leading a 27-member PBUSP team signed a memorandum of understanding.

Besides, Golam Rabbani, three PBUSP joint convenors — Golam Aref Tissu, Jahir Choudhury and

Joynal Abedin, two lawyers of Rabbani and 22 other PBUSP leaders were the rest of the team members.

While the other members of the government committee were Rajshahi City Mayor and Minister in Charge of Chapainawabganj District Mizanur Rahman Minu, Housing and Public Works State Minister Alamgir Kabir, Food and Disaster Management Deputy Minister Asadul Habib Dulu, and Chapainawabganj-2 Lawmaker Syed Manzur Hossain.

Besides, the Rajshahi divisional commissioner, deputy inspector general of police of Rajshahi range, and Chapainawabganj deputy commissioner and police super were present in the meeting on behalf of the local administration.

Strikes were called off and decision to remove road blocks were taken upon the return of the PBUSP team to Kansat. People of all around gathered in Kansat, held victory rallies, distributed sweets, hugged and embraced each other, rejoiced on the streets, and chanted slogans. Five PBUSP activists who were still in police custody were scheduled to be released in the evening.

The government had agreed to the following:

1. To cancel two categorical meter charges (10 Tk. for 220 volt and 50 Tk for 440 volt)
2. To allow presence of subscriber during meter readings,
3. Not to impose illegal fines on the subscriber,
4. To set minimum monthly fee at 78 taka instead of 105 taka (PBUSP demand was 72 taka),
5. To abolish fees and fines for stolen transformers and cables,
6. To provide taka 2 lakh each to families of the dead, taka 1 lakh to the PBUSP activist with eye injury, and taka 50,000 each for 10 wounded individuals. Besides, 100 badly injured Kansat people will receive taka 25,000 each and 600 more wounded 3,000 taka each. The list to be prepared on the basis of a report from the civil sergeant, a magistrate, and PBUSP convenor.
7. To waive fines if accessory line is drawn from households to venue of religious programs or institutions,
8. To withdraw four cases filed by the police and to make concerted effort to withdraw the other filed by BNP members,
9. Not to harass the 160 people accused in these cases and to release those who are in custody,
10. To waive fines for bills since August 8, 2005 – the start of the movement and to adjust the arrears in nine installments,
11. To build a memorial for the dead of Kansat movement,
12. To observe January 4 or January 23 as prayer day for the salvation of the dead in Kansat movement.

However, the government team did not accept the PBUSP demand for resignation of MP Shahajahan Mia on the grounds that it was out of their jurisdiction.

Mayor Minu claimed that the government had already accepted all the demands earlier but a lack of communication had caused the April 12 incident. Local people continued to hold MP Shahajahan Mia and Mayor Minu responsible for all their sufferings.

### **Human rights and Kansat:**

The peaceful and apolitical movement of common people for their rights met with an oppressive mindset of the government and trigger-happy law enforcement agency; ultimately leading to the killing of 17 people, including a few minors. Police fired indiscriminately on the protesters on January 4, 23 and April 12, 2006 without provocation killing 2, 8, and 3 people respectively and injuring hundreds. On one other instance, violence provoked by local chapter of the ruling party on April 6, 2006 caused deaths of 4 more people. Even the journalists could not escape the wrath of the administration. The situation worsened and lingered on for more than 6 months owing to an

obstinate standpoint of the government, deceptive and treacherous maneuvering of the situation by mediating political leaders and inclination to crush any voices raised against the government.

During the course of events, the people of Kansat were stripped off their right to protest, they were beaten brutally by the police inside their houses regardless of their age and sex, their homes were ransacked and looted, they were forced flee their habitat, they were arrested indiscriminately, their leaders were tortured while in police custody, and above all, they were denied a trial for the death of 17 people. Till date, no one is held responsible for the killings and no judicial inquiry has been formed.

Social, political, and human rights organizations, including Amnesty international, have widely condemned this ruthless violation of human rights and demanded government action for justice. Conclusion:

All the cases filed against the PBUSP activists were withdrawn by May 18, the compensations were distributed in a public meeting on May 24, 2006, and eventually the energy minister was replaced. With the election a few months away and situation going out of control, the government quickly resorted to a temporary solution to cover up the gross incompetence of their administration and the widespread corruption in the system. Meeting few demands of people of a remote village in the northwestern region is no solution to the longstanding and deep rooted problem in the power sector.

As the events transpired, people of the country wondered what had happened in Kansat and why it happened. The opposition blamed the ruling party, the ruling party blamed the opposition and factions of its own, police blamed the administration and vice versa, PBS blamed REB, REB blamed the corruption within PBS. Amidst the blame games and conspiracy theories, a legend is born. Some termed it the victory of the people, and some called it the first 'peasant uprising' in recent days. In reality, it is the tale of awakening of the people, their resilience, struggle, and fight for their right against injustice and discrimination that led to the path of glory. Kansat became a role model for all sectors of the country. We have seen that in Shanir Akhra, in Chatmohor, in Sylhet, and in many other parts of the country. Kansat has heightened awareness in common people and gave them hope.

Life in Kansat became ordinary once again. As people in Kansat go about their farming and daily chores, they would probably take a moment to pause and reminisce with a faint smile on their lips and walk about with their head held a little higher.