



SIPG

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Innovative Solutions for Effective Governance and Public Services

Watts and Rewards: Killing Two Birds with One Stone – Saving Energy and Boosting Allowance

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The case studies for this series are collected from real-life cases of civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different proactive approaches taken by civil servants and, in the process, encourage other civil servants to become more proactive in their own workplaces. If you know of other such instances of proactive acts, please email us (mashrur.sipg@gmail.com), and we will get back to you to collect more information.

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illuminating Change- How Chittagong's Religious Leaders Became Energy Guardians?

In 41 wards of the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), there are approximately 51,573 streetlights, a vast network illuminating the streets and public spaces. Managing such a complex lighting system is a challenging task that demands precision and efficiency. Every day, the lights at 1,534 strategic points throughout the city need to be turned on at dusk and switched off at dawn. However, due to previous mismanagement, the lights were not switched on or turned off at appropriate times, resulting in significant wastage of electricity. Lights often remained switched on long after sunrise, leading to unnecessary energy consumption and avoidable costs for the city.

Simultaneously, religious leaders serving various communities within the Chittagong City Corporation expressed dissatisfaction with their current allowances.

Many of these leaders, who guide religious practices and spiritual life within the city, were receiving an allowance of 1,200 BDT from the corporation, which they argued was insufficient to meet their needs and responsibilities. Religious leaders from mosques (Imams and Muazzins), temples (Purohits), and churches (Fathers) appealed for an increase, highlighting the economic challenges they faced and the essential roles they play in society.

PROBLEM

Chittagong City Corporation in Bangladesh faced significant electricity wastage and complaints about insufficient allowances from religious leaders, indicating a need for better resource management.

SOLUTION

Both problems are addressed by assigning the religious leaders the responsibility of managing the lighting.

OUTCOME

This initiative saved electricity and redirected funds to increase allowances for religious leaders.

Enlisting Religious Leaders to Optimize Lighting Management

Faced with these two significant challenges—energy wastage and allowances for religious leaders that were not up to expectations—the Chittagong City Corporation devised a solution that would address both issues simultaneously. In a creative and innovative move, the CCC leadership decided to enlist the assistance of religious leaders in managing the city's lighting system. As most of them get up early in the morning for religious activities like the call for prayer by the Muezzins, the authority took this initiative. Initially, the initiative started with the Imams and Muezzins of the mosques, and then other religious leaders from temples and churches also chipped in. By appointing them to switch the streetlights on and off at designated hours, the City Corporation could capitalize on their availability during critical times, such as sunrise and sunset, which aligned with times of religious rituals.

Religious leaders agreed to take on this additional responsibility due to the importance of reducing wastage and the benefit of improving their allowances. The CCC provided them with clear guidelines and scheduled hours, ensuring that each of the 1,534 switching points would be correctly managed. The inherent timing of religious rituals, which often occur at sunrise and sunset, meant that the religious leaders were well-positioned to perform these tasks efficiently.

Bright Solutions from Wasted Watts to Worthy Allowances

This collaborative initiative quickly proved successful. The religious leaders, equipped with knowledge of their communities and synchronized with nature's rhythms, ensured that the streetlights were turned on and off at the correct times, significantly reducing energy consumption. This new management strategy prevented unnecessary electricity usage and resulted in substantial savings for the city. By eliminating the inefficiency of leaving the lights on when not needed, the CCC saved a total of 22,784,675 BDT (equivalent to 194,486 USD) annually.

These considerable savings were then used to enhance the allowances of the religious leaders. The city government increased their allowances from 1,200 BDT to 1,500 BDT monthly, a significant improvement that addressed the longstanding concern of inadequate compensation. This increase was effectively administered under the direction of the Chittagong City Corporation, ensuring that the religious leaders were duly recognized for their valuable contribution to the city.

Declarations

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Some of his recent publications are:

Baniamin, H. M., & Jamil, I. (2023). Effects of representative bureaucracy on perceived performance and fairness: Experimental evidence from South Asia. *Public Administration*, 101(1), 284–302. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12758>

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