

Donor-dictated policy puts PDB in peril

Gross inconsistency in tariff structure causes Tk 400cr loss a year, reveals audit report

SHARIER KHAN

The donor-driven government policy in the power sector in general and the Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) and the Rural Electrification Board (REB) in particular are systematically ruining the Power Development Board (PDB), according to an audit report. Exposing inconsistencies in the internal power tariff structure, the report recommended against PDB's

sale of power to the two utility agencies at subsidised rates.

An annual loss of Tk 400 crore was not due to revenue theft or financial mismanagement in the PDB itself but due to a gross inconsistency in the government policy on how power agencies should operate, says the audit report on the 2001-2002 accounts of PDB.

Contrary to the net loss, the PDB actually earned Tk 441 crore in profits the same year through direct

sale of power to consumers, according to the report filed with the energy secretary on May 29.

But the profit outlook was shadowed by a loss of about Tk 650 crore, incurred through selling power to the DESA and the REB at a low rate, and purchasing power from independent power projects (IPPs) at a much higher rate. The PDB also incurred a loss of Tk 200 crore because of exchange rate fluctuations.

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Budget session begins today amidst AL boycott

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The budget session of the Jatiya Sangsad opens at 7:00pm today amid boycott by the Awami League (AL) lawmakers.

The main opposition legislators are also likely to stay away from the House when Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman will place the budget for the 2003-2004 financial year on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui talked to Hamid by telephone yesterday and asked the main opposition to join the session.

AL will also not attend the session. SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Yashwant may lead team to JEC meet in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha is expected to arrive here on July 19, leading his country's delegation to the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in Dhaka.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will lead the Bangladesh side at the crucial meeting on July 20 that is likely to take up all the vexed issues left unresolved over the decades between the two next-door neighbours.

The India-Bangladesh JEC meeting is crucial to resolving the long outstanding bilateral issues and improving the relation, which is often marked by doubts and mistrust. The last JEC meeting took place in 1997.

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Outlaws slaughter 3 in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three persons were slaughtered by armed cadres of an outlawed party at Jalma union in Batiaghata upazila of Khulna district on Sunday night.

The victims were identified as Balam Roy, 30, of Rajband village, Anupama Mondal, 28, and Biren Golder, 45, of Dargatala village of the union.

According to witnesses, a group of outlaws went to Rajband village and called Balam Roy out of his house.

They blindfolded Balam and took him to a nearby paddy field. They shot the victim in the head and then slit his throat.

The outlaws immediately left the

scene and went to neighbouring Dargatala village.

They called Anupama Mondal and Biren Golder out of their houses on the pretext of discussing important matter.

They took Anupama and Biren to a paddy field, half a kilometre from their houses, and knifed them to death.

According to Batiaghata thana police, the killers belong to outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) who are trying to capture New Biplobi Communist Party dominated Batiaghata upazila.

The slain persons were informants of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), said

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BNP blasts AL for linking it to Natore killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday blasted the Awami League (AL) for accusing a state minister of playing a part in the murder of an AL leader in Natore.

It also urged the AL to refrain from levelling baseless charges against BNP leaders in the interest of identifying the killers.

Speaking at a press conference at the BNP central office, BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan challenged the AL contention and said the ruling party would accept investigation by any agency into the killing. "We are also

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COULDN'T CARE LESS



The BNP Kotwali Unit blocks the busy road, left, to Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday to hold a discussion on its founder late president Ziaur Rahman, which left no option for passengers but to walk, bottom right, and created traffic jams on the roads, top right, around the only launch terminal of the city. It is illegal to hold any public function by blocking roads.

25,000 development project staff carried over to current budget in last 5 yrs

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's size gets bloated every year through assimilation of staff released from different completed development projects.

Some 25,000 temporary staff of finished development projects have been absorbed into the current expenditure budget since 1996-97.

This had an incremental effect on

the government's expenditure on salary and wages. This is evident as the budget documents show that salary and wage outlay has increased 38.1 per cent since fiscal 1998-99 from Tk 5,346 crore to Tk 7,381 crore in the current fiscal.

The current fiscal's salary incidence increased by Tk 700 crore or 10.5 per cent in a year from last

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16 top criminals still out of police dragnet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixteen of the 23 most wanted criminals elude arrest even 17 months after law enforcers announced cash rewards for catch.

The concern over failure to nab them came to a head afresh, as a criminal on the police list fled after leading a shootout in which a sub-

inspector was killed at Agargaon on June 3.

Mohammad Hannan nicknamed Pichchi Hannan, sentenced to life imprisonment in absence in the killing of advocate Habibur Rahman Mondol, orchestrated gunshots that left sub-inspector Humayun Kabir and one of his gang members dead.

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Robbers in guise of tenants loot residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers in the guise of tenants looted cash, gold ornaments and other valuables said to be worth over Tk 4.5 lakh from a residence at Monipuripara, Tejgaon yesterday.

Introducing themselves as prospective tenants, a gang of five entered the house of Haji Mohammad Alam at around 1:45pm, police said.

The gang allegedly took away Tk 2 lakh in cash and gold ornaments weighing about 30 tola.

The duty officer at the Tejgaon Police Station, however, said no case was filed till last evening.