

# Power outages cost \$778m in lost industrial output

## USAID report says loss gobbles up 11.5pc of GDP of Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Power outages cost Bangladesh \$778 million in lost industrial production a year, said the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) after a study of the country's electricity supply situation.

The USAID-sponsored study, titled "Economic Impact of Poor Power Quality on Industry, Bangladesh", observes that the loss translated into 11.54 per cent of the industrial sector GDP or 1.72 per cent of the national GDP in fiscal 2000-01.

Due to 94 per cent unplanned and 6 per cent planned outages, nearly 14 per cent of the industrial

sector's electricity demand could not be met by the utility organisations.

On average, the study report says, 64 per cent of the industrial installations have standby generation, mainly diesel-fired. "Assuming that the standby generation facilities are in operation throughout the grid-supply outages, the additional financial burden on the industrial sector is estimated to be about \$4.5 million a year."

South Asian Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/E) and Nexant jointly conducted the study for the USAID. The findings will be presented at a workshop here on October 7.

Under the study, investigation

was carried out using a detailed nationwide survey sample of industries consisting of 208 installations, covering main categories of industries contributing to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

"Although 95 per cent of the participating industries felt they overpay for the quality of power they receive, 50 per cent of the samples still would be willing to pay even more for higher power quality," said the US agency.

Also, more than half the sampled industries would have invested more in electricity-dependent industries if the quality of power supply were better.

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# AL again misses council deadline

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The Awami League (AL) has failed to complete long overdue councils of its district and thana units by the end of September, the third deadline set by it.

The main opposition party planned to complete holding of the councils to form its new units at the grassroots level to rejuvenate it ahead of the planned massive anti-government movement in the coming winter.

After missing the previous deadlines of completing the councils of thana and district units respectively by the end of May and June this year, the AL Central Working Committee decided to complete the process by September 30.

The party has so far completed councils of 300 out of 530 organisational thana units and only eight out of 72 organisational districts. The eight organisational districts are Dhaka, Gazipur, Shariatpur, Habiganj,

Kurigram, Rangamati, Bandarban and Dhaka city.

The party leadership will shortly announce a new time frame for the councils of the remaining district and thana units.

AL insiders said intra-party conflict at the grassroots level is the

main reason behind the failure to complete holding of the councils. Party leaders and activists in most units are split in several groups over formation of new committees.

"The grassroots level leaders have formed rival groups with the backing of a section of central leaders, who want to have their men on the new committees," said a senior AL leader seeking anonymity.

"In a number of thana and district units, top posts are being held by the same persons for years because councils were not held. But this situation must come to an end as the units need young leadership to strengthen the party for a resolute movement," he added.

After its polls debacle in October 2001, the AL initiated steps to revamp its units at all levels.

September 30 last year was the first deadline set for completing councils of the party's thana units and October 31 for councils of district units. The party leadership blamed non-holding of the councils in time to 'repression on political opponents by the four-party ruling alliance.'

The AL then held its central council on December 26 last year and formed a new central committee comprising old guards and fresh blood to infuse dynamism in the party.



PHOTO: STAR

A girl, symbolising the virgin form of goddess Durga, is worshipped at a ritual, known as Kumari Puja, at Ramkrishna Mission Temple in Dhaka yesterday. The ritual is based on Hindu philosophy that emphasises purity of women.

# Two students drown in Korotoa

UNB, Bogra

Two students of Government Azizul Huq College here drowned in the Korotoa river on Thursday.

Police said Tanvir Ahmed Shuvo and Shovon Roy, both 1st-year students of the college, drowned while they were trying to learn swimming in the river, which flows through the town, at noon.

A woman, who saw them sinking, informed local people. They tried but failed to find the bodies. Divers were called in from Rajshahi and they recovered the bodies at about 9:00pm.

Shuvo, the only son of Abdur Razzak of Malatinagar in the town, and Shovon, son of Mangal Roy of Chelopara, passed SSC examination this year with GPA 5 (A+) and GPA 4.88 (A).

A pall of gloom descended on the town over the tragic death of the two bright students.

# 27 hurt as AL, BNP clash at Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

At least 27 people were injured in a clash between the activists of the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League at Dhangara Mahalla under Sirajganj Poursava yesterday.

Police said the activists of both the parties clashed at 11am over establishing supremacy in the area. They chased each other and hurled bricks. They also damaged four shops and three houses during the clash.

Police rushed to the spot and clubbed the activists of the feuding groups to bring the situation under control. They arrested three people, Mamunur Rashid, Faridul Islam and Jewel.

Seven of the injured were admitted to Sadar Hospital while others to different clinics.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area where riot police were deployed to maintain law and order.

# Road accidents kill seven in Rajshahi, Sirajganj

BSS, Rajshahi

Seven people were killed and 15 others injured in separate road accidents in Rajshahi and Sirajganj yesterday and on Thursday night.

Of them, five were killed in Rajshahi and the rest in Sirajganj. In Rajshahi, five people were killed and another was injured when a Rajshahi bound passenger tempo collided head on with a truck at Chaihati on the Rajshahi-Chapainavabganj Highway yesterday morning.

Four of the dead were identified as Mostafizur Rahman, 19, Haji Shahjahan, 60, Romesh Adibasi, 30, and Azizul Haque, 38. Identity of the other could not be known.

The injured, driver of the tempo, was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

In Sirajganj, a woman and her daughter were killed and 14 others injured in a road accident on the western side of Jamuna Bridge Thursday night.

The dead were identified as Monowara Begum, 30, and her daughter Aklima Khatun, 7 of Saidabad under sadar upazila.

The accident took place when two Dhaka-bound passenger buses -- one from Kurigram and the other from Joyprhat -- tried to overtake each other and rammed a rickshaw van on which Monowara and her daughter Aklima were travelling.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 04		5-43 pm
Oct 05	5-52 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-25
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-50	5-55
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Kuril water crisis hits a new low

TAWFIQUE ALI

A severe water crisis in School Road area near Kuril road crossing in Dhaka persists for more than a month, causing unbearable sufferings to local residents.

The area under Zone-5 of the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is getting scant supply of water from the local Kuril and Kuratali pumps of Wasa.

Wasa water is available only for 30 minutes anytime between 3:00am and 4:00am. Sometimes that also does not happen keeping people sleepless throughout the night in the hope of collecting water, local people said.

They were facing shortage of water for the last three months but the situation worsened last month. Now they mainly depend on waters of Basundhara Jheel, rain water or water brought from distant neighbours.

The water crisis is also causing diseases like diarrhoea and dermatitis in the area.

Narrating their plight, Md Hashem Mia, a resident of the area, said they got meagre supply of water late night only three last month. "I had to go to my daughter's

house at Kanthalbagan to have a bath. We somehow live fetching drinking water from distant neighbours," he said.

Thirty-nine children of sex workers and four resident staff of a shelter run by Nari Unnayan Sakti, a non-government organisation, are among the sufferers.

"It has been quite difficult to cope with recurrence of diarrhoea and skin diseases among the children due to acute water crisis for the last one month," said Sanjida, a vocational trainer of the children.

"We sometimes take the children to Basundhara Jheel or on the roof of the house during rains for bathing and washing of their clothes. We are to spend Tk 120 a day to buy 120 litres of drinking water brought by a rikshawpuller," she added.

Syed Nazrul Islam, a resident of the area, said, "We applied to the engineer concerned of Wasa Zone-5 about two months ago, seeking a solution to the persisting water crisis but nothing has been done as yet."

Local Ward Commissioner of the Dhaka City Corporation Kazi Hazrat Ali said, "The engineer, Kabir Ahmed, said water crisis in the area

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# 2 gunmen attack bus in Karachi: 5 Shiites killed

REUTERS, Karachi

Two gunmen attacked a bus carrying Shiite Muslim worshippers in the Pakistani port city of Karachi yesterday, killing at least five people and wounding seven, police said.

Gunmen riding a motorcycle opened fire with automatic weapons on a government bus carrying the worshippers to Friday prayers, Tariq Jameel, a deputy inspector general of police, told Reuters.

"Five people have been killed and seven others wounded," he said. "We have launched investigations."

Police said the gunmen had fled the scene.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but police blame Sunni Muslim militants for most of the sectarian bloodletting in Pakistan.

Hundreds of people, mostly Shiite Muslims, have been killed in sectarian violence in Pakistan in recent years. At least 57 Shiite worshippers were killed in July in an attack on a mosque in the southwestern city of Quetta.

Pakistan is a predominantly

Sunni Muslim nation, with Shiites accounting for about 15 percent of the country's 149 million people. The two communities largely live at peace with each other and violence is restricted to the militants.

# Alleged criminal gunned down in Fatikchhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An alleged criminal was gunned down by his rivals at Fatikchhari in the district yesterday afternoon.

The dead was identified as Moslem Uddin, 31.

Witnesses said the gunmen called Moslem out of his house at village Dinejuri of the upazila at about 3:00pm and shot him point blank. He died on the spot.

According to sources, Moslem was a criminal and came home recently after absconding for long.

Two brothers of the victim were also gunned down by their rivals three years ago, sources said.

# 7 killed in blast near US base in Afghanistan

AFP, Bagram Air Base

At least seven people were killed and six others injured on Friday in an explosion at a house outside the US-led military coalition's main base in Afghanistan, witnesses said.

"Seven bodies have been recovered and people are still sifting through the rubble for more victims," witness Mohammad Nazim said, adding the toll may go up as a wedding party had been underway in an adjacent house.

"Lots of people who had gathered for the wedding were seen rushing out of the party in panic," he said.

No official casualty figure was immediately available.

A US military official said at least six Afghans were injured and were brought to the base for treatment.

"I have counted six injured people being evacuated in US military ambulances, they were all locals," a US guard at the Bagram Air Base's northeastern gate told AFP.

Residents said the blast took place in Qala-e-Gulai village, less than one km from the base.

Witnesses said coalition teams were on the spot for relief and rescue operation after the blast destroyed several houses.

# Two Iraqis killed in Kirkuk blast

## 'US troops find trucks with rockets'

AFP, Baghdad

The US military said yesterday that two Iraqis were killed by an explosion in the northern city of Kirkuk, but would not confirm reports by local officials they were suicide bombers.

The blast went off as US troops approached two Iraqis trying to plant an "improvised explosive device (IED)" late Thursday, said a military spokesman who asked not to be named.

"The IED exploded killing the two Iraqis," the spokesman said. He could not give any further details.

Local civil defence officials in the northern oil center had earlier reported that two suicide bombers blew themselves up late Thursday outside a dry cleaners used by US troops in Kirkuk.

They reported no American casualties in the blasts, which came after six other explosions rocked the city, leaving at least two soldiers wounded, officials said.

The US military spokesman said

he had no reports of suicide bombings and no word on the other explosions.

Meanwhile, US troops pursuing two wounded assailants in the Baghdad area found two trucks loaded with hundreds of rockets and a detonator that indicated they were being used to make a bomb, the Pentagon said Thursday.

General Richard Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, disclosed the find Wednesday at a news conference here, telling reporters 14 people were detained in the neighborhood where the trucks were found Wednesday.

US snipers wounded two people who were preparing to fire a mortar, and then followed them to a compound, he said.

"A search of that compound and the neighborhood resulted in finding those individuals along with 12 other Iraqis, and while patrolling these side streets they found two

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PHOTO: AFP

This undated combo shows (L to R) Brazilian President Inacio Lula da Silva, Pope John Paul II and former Czech President Vaclav Havel who are strong contenders for the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize to be announced October 10.

# Nobel Peace Prize favourites

AFP, Oslo

The Nobel committee chose Monday the winner of the 2003 Peace Prize amid top secrecy, and while speculation was rife ahead of next week's big announcement, observers said there was no clear favourite this year.

Two names thought to be strong contenders for the 10-million-kronor (1.28-million-dollar, 1.12-million-euro) prize were Pope John Paul II and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

"We have made a decision and this decision will be announced on October 10," the head of the Nobel Institute, Geir Lundestad, told AFP on Monday as the committee

wrapped up its final meeting before the announcement.

With a record 165 nominations, the five members of the Nobel committee had plenty of names to choose from this year. The winner is selected by consensus.

But unlike some previous years, none of the candidates seemed to be obvious winners, Nobel watchers said.

The head of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), Stein Toenneson, said "no political leaders have distinguished themselves in ways deserving of the prize".

He said he was putting his money on the pope. "The main reason is his outspo-

ken opposition to the war in Iraq. Because of his position as a religious leader, his opposition has vastly contributed to lessening the potential rift that opened up between Christianity and Islam, and that could have made the Iraq war a 'crusade'," Toenneson said.

The fragile health of the 83-year-old pontiff, who has been nominated on numerous occasions, could be one reason why the Nobel committee would choose to honour him this year.

Meanwhile, Espen Barth Eide, a researcher at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUIPI), said the choice of the pope would be "a bit strange" unless he

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# DOWN TO EARTH

## Steady growth of residential hotels in Dhaka city

ASM NURUNNABI

Residential hotels have mushroomed in the city mainly due to a large number of new arrivals looking for temporary accommodation in the bustling metropolis while hunting for jobs. This is however a fairly recent phenomenon. Not too long ago, the demand for hotels was much smaller than it is now, but the situation has undergone a radical change over the past few years and the city is now dotted with such establishments giving rise to a booming hotel business.

According to sources at Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the number of licenced residential hotels runs into a few hundred, but the number of unregistered hotels is said to be more than a thousand. These hotels are mainly of three types: low standard, medium standard and a fairly tolerable standard.

The low standard hotels are mainly located near bus terminals, railway stations and wholesale markets. The rent is pretty cheap in such hotels, which are located mainly in Kamalapur, Jatrahari, Saidabad, Fakirapool, Sadarghat, Islampur, Gulistan and Nawabpur areas. Boarders at these hotels are mostly truck drivers, small traders and poorly educated job hunters. These hotels are often very dirty and rooms are very small.

The medium standard hotels cost between Tk 300 and Tk 800 per day. These hotels are found at Motijheel, Rajarbagh, Malibagh, Topkhana Road, Bijoynagar, Mohakhali and Farmgate. According to police, many of these hotels cater to sex trade run by prostitution rings and also serve as dens of criminals including drug traffickers. A syndicate of gangsters and hotel owners, managers, room attendants and busboys is said to run such illegal businesses backed by

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