

300-mw coal-fired thermal power plant approved

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved the project conceptual paper of a 300-Megawatt Coal-Fired Thermal Power Plant, reports UNB.

The project, first of its kind in the country, involves an estimated cost of Tk 1,000 crore with a foreign exchange component of Tk 700 crore, said an official yesterday.

The approval was given at an ECNEC meeting held on Monday with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair. Ministers, concerned members of the Planning Commission and secretaries attended the meeting.

The meeting directed the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to look for foreign donors for undertaking technical feasibility studies and also for financing the large project.

The proposed plant to be set up near the Boropukuria Coal Mining Project has longevity of 30 years as compared to that of 20 years of a gas-based power plant.

The coal reserve at Boropukuria is estimated at 100 million tons and is likely to run for 100 years if estimated lifting capacity of one million tons per year continues.

The finance minister directed the executing ministry to look for possible bidder countries which are pioneer in using this type of coal-fired plants and also look for cost effectiveness.

The ECNEC meeting also approved a revised Tk 1,018 crore 3rd phase of the Greater Dhaka Power Distribution Project scheduled to be completed by 1996 for expansion and rehabilitation of the transmission and distribution system.

The project, on completion, is likely to improve the efficiency of the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) by reducing load-shedding.

The DESA now consumes 45 per cent of the electricity while the Power Development Board (PDB) and the Rural Electrification Board (REB) 45 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. The proposed pro-

ject includes purchase of 1,000 transformers for the DESA.

The PDB runs about 5,000 transformers all over the country and several thousand more transformers are inoperative.

The finance minister directed the authorities concerned to submit a report by February 28 next on the transformers which are not operating.

The ECNEC meeting also approved the area-wise expansion of rural electrification distribution system to be undertaken by the REB.

The project aimed at installation of 5,000 KM power supply line by next year at a cost of Tk 203 crore. The REB has a massive plan for installing 25,659 KM of power supply line under the 4th five-year plan.

The ECNEC meeting also gave a go-ahead signal to the Sadipur, Sheola and Baroigram Bridge Project under Sylhet district at a cost of Tk 31 crore to be completed within two years.

It also okayed the 2nd phase of the bridge development and maintenance project at a cost of 16 million pound. British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) will provide grant for the project.

Regarding the Panthapath road project linking Sonargaon Hotel with Mirpur Road involving a cost of Tk 27 crore, the ECNEC directed the Works Ministry and RAJUK to submit a report before January 25 next explaining why the government has to pay Tk 17 crore as compensation against an original estimate of Tk 2.7 crore.

The meeting also instructed the authority concerned to explain why more than Tk 8 crore had already been paid without taking prior concurrence of the ECNEC and to explain whether decision of the arbitration in this connection was appealable.

The ECNEC also approved the revised project proforma of the Babubazar 2nd Buriganga Bridge Project at a cost of Tk 128 crore, which was originally Tk 133 crore.



Palestinian women in the West Bank argue with Israeli border policemen at a disputed hill side south of Bethlehem yesterday where villagers from El-Khader and Israeli Peace Now activists are trying to prevent Israeli settlers from starting constructions that will enlarge the Jewish settlement of Ephrata. — AFP photo

Palestinian

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500 housing units on 150 acres of land just south of Bethlehem. Erekat said the Israel-PLO liaison committee was meeting to discuss the issue, and it would also be taken to the Israeli Supreme Court.

The land on the outskirts of the Palestinian village of Al-Khader is claimed by the Jewish settlement of Efrat, heavily populated with Americans and other Westerners. Al-Khader residents say the land was taken from them illegally.

The KAFCO plant, built under a 510 million US dollars project, started production of ammonia earlier this month. The KAFCO project has private equity participation from a number of countries, including Japan and the Netherlands.

The company said that the expected earnings from the export of the KAFCO products would be around 150 million dollars per year.

Presidents and general secretaries of the BNP of those districts have also been requested to present there.

The Leader of the Opposition and Awami League president said: "We'll submit the resignation letters to the Speaker from 4 to 7 pm today after a rally at Manik Miah Avenue, if the demand for a caretaker government is not met by the ultimatum given to the ruling party."

"The nation has now plunged into a grave crisis and we will resign after today's meeting at Manik Miah Avenue. Our deadline was upto December 27."

Addressing the special extended meeting of the Awami League central executive committee at the Bangabandhu Avenue, she charged, the desire of a person to cling to the chair has created the crisis in the country.

The Prime Minister will not give up power though she agrees to give up everything," Hasina said, adding: "Free and fair elections are not possible under this government. So we have started the agitation for a caretaker government to establish the voting right of the people."

"What is the use of going to this Parliament where we will not be able to discuss the problems of the people?" Hasina asked just a day before the Opposition's planned resignation from Parliament after the boycott of the House for more than nine months on the demand.

The BNP has ruled the country for more than nine months ignoring the opinions of the people and created immense misery for the people by unleashing widespread terrorism, corruption and politicisation," she alleged.

"The government did not

KAFCO begins urea production

By Staff Correspondent

The Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd (KAFCO), the largest multinational joint venture in the country, has started production of urea at its Chittagong plant yesterday.

"KAFCO is pleased to announce that urea production commenced today at its plant in Rangadia, Chittagong," said an announcement from the company's head-office here yesterday.

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Hasina at party meeting

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People concerned at political impasse, survey says

By Staff Correspondent

An overwhelming majority of the people are concerned at the persisting political crisis and want a peaceful solution to it.

This was revealed in a public opinion survey conducted by 'Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC)' among a cross section of people in Dhaka and three district towns, covering 1335 persons.

Seventy-nine per cent of the respondents felt that the continuing stalemate was causing a great deal of anxiety.

Emphasising the need for exercising flexibility by both sides, 63 per cent of the respondents urged the government to go for a dialogue, while even a larger number (70 per cent) wanted the Opposition to avoid harts.

The opinion poll on the basis of findings in December is the second survey conducted by the same organisation, the first being in September. It found that 92 per cent of the respondents felt that a crisis was prevailing.

People were, however, keenly following the efforts for resolving the crisis, the survey said. Eighty-nine per cent of the respondents were aware of the dialogue process while 71 per cent felt that the dialogue between the government and the Opposition had failed.

Eleven per cent were still hopeful of further talks to end the crisis.

Fifty-five per cent of the respondents said lack of mutual trust between the two sides was the cause of failure of the dialogue. Eighteen per cent said government intransigence and 17 per cent said intransigence of the Opposition was the cause of failure.

The source hinted that the Gazipur function may be cancelled at the last moment.

Another source said the opposition parties have added some new points during the negotiations, which have created problems.

He said the attending leaders received phone calls from opposition leaders during their more than four-hour meeting.

In a related development, Shahidul Huq Jamal, MP, who played a key role in organising last-minute negotiations between the two camps, held an hour-long meeting with Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali at his residence.

Barkatullah Bhulu, MP, was present at the meeting which began after midnight. Both Jamal and Bhulu declined to comment.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar said, "The negotiation process is on."

He hoped that something positive would be worked out by today.

Another BNP standing committee member said the proposal that his party was discussing now was from the Opposition which, he claimed, had declined to put it in writing.

He said that all-out efforts would be made by both sides today for an amicable, honourable settlement.

According to another source, speaking on condition of anonymity, the ruling party and the Opposition were bargaining till late last night with regard to certain provisions of the proposed formula for an interim government with the President heading a 10-member cabinet — five each from the two sides.

The opposition was demanding that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her cabinet should resign immediately after the announcement of the election schedule. But the BNP was insisting that she would resign on the last day set for withdrawing the nomination papers, it was reliably learnt from both the sides.

The opposition also wanted that the BNP Chairperson should convey her acceptance of their demand either in writing or through a public announcement.

On the other hand, the BNP high command demanded a guarantee that the Opposition would honour any such announcement.

Both sides were discussing the nitty-gritty of the proposed compromise formula and hoped that they would be able to iron out the differences at the eleventh hour, competent sources said.

The opposition parties are scheduled to submit their resignation letters to the Speaker between 4 pm to 7 pm today if the negotiations fail.

Meanwhile, the major opposition parties in Parliament held a joint meeting at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday evening with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in the chair. Hasina reportedly

The Midnight File

Student killed in Riyadh during protest: IRNA

TEHRAN, Dec 27: Saudi Arabia's security forces last week crushed a protest against King Fahd at Riyadh University, killing at least one student and wounding several others, the official Iranian news agency (IRNA) said today, reports AFP.

24 killed in Bolivian bus accident

LA PAZ, Dec 27: A crowded bus plunged into a 150-metre ravine west of La Paz, killing 24 people and injuring 22, police said Tuesday. Police Commander Gen Willy Arriaza said most of the victims were peasants who were on their way to spend Christmas at Moco-Moco, a village 120 kilometres west of La Paz, near the Peruvian border, reports AP.

Efforts continue

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or minor in nature he replied. "We can only comment after we have been conveyed the actual proposal." He also hinted that the government leaders were unable to arrive at a common decision themselves.

Besides top leaders of the Awami League, Jatiya Party leader Anwar Hossain Manju and NDP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury were present at the marathon meeting at Sheikh Hasina's private residence where she moved on Sunday.

FBCCI president Saiman Rahman was also present there for some time.

Meanwhile, the ruling party had reportedly failed to reach any decision at its meeting which continued till 00:15 am, a BNP source said. The BNP leaders will meet again today after party chairperson and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia returns from Gazipur where she will attend a convocation ceremony at the Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT).

The source hinted that the Gazipur function may be cancelled at the last moment.

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Cricket final today

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31 overs, they would have overhauled Bangladesh's +0.03 for a place in the final.

India, who like Pakistan and Bangladesh, also two wins from their three robin league games earlier confirmed a slot in the final by virtue of a superior net run rate.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Bangladesh skipper Akram Khan preferred guarded optimism.

"My boys would try to perform the way they did in the previous match," said the burly right-hand middle-order batsman.

Akram said the Indians would be keen to efface the memories of Monday's upset

Opposition

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opposition parties, despite having wide differences in ideologies and opinions, had united, boycotted Parliament proceedings for long, held dialogue with the government and finally decided to resign, he said.

Nasim said the government showed obstinacy on the popular demand for elections under a caretaker administration. "We'll give a befitting reply to the Prime Minister's position against the people's will just to cling to power for a short time," he added.

Reacting to the Prime Minister's reported comments on the Opposition programme for a fresh agitation, Nasim said, "We heard such threat from the autocratic governments in the past too and we'll face such warnings the way we did previously."

Replying to a question, he said the Opposition had not received any proposal from the ruling party yesterday.

Public rallies

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government and the Opposition to reach a last-minute compromise.

The earlier announced Opposition programmes also include submission of resignation letters to the Speaker after the rallies, between 4 pm to 7 pm today, according to Opposition sources.

The Awami League's rally will be held at the Manik Miah Avenue at 2 pm.

The Jatiya Party will hold its rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram, also at 2 pm, while the Jamaat-e-Islami's meeting will be at the north gate of the national mosque.

Nirmul to observe 'nat'l hatred day' tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The Ekattor Ghatok Dal Nirmul Committee yesterday held a demonstration in front of the Jatiya Press Club to make the "National Hatred Day" tomorrow a success.

Speakers at the rally said the Jamaat-e-Islami, on December 29, 1991 declared Golam Azam as its Ameer. As a mark of protest, the Nirmul Committee observes this day as the "national hatred day."

It was addressed by Kamal Hossain Badal, Al-Haj Khaled Ahmed, R N Bose and Md Shahidullah.

Like the previous years, the Nirmul Committee will put up an effigy of Golam Azam at the Press Club premises tomorrow. Other programmes include public meeting and procession.

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"The government did not

Sikh leader renews call for homeland

CHANDIGARH, Dec 27: A Sikh leader, Simranjit Singh Mann, on Tuesday reiterated the demand of a Sikh homeland, two years after the government crushed the Sikh uprising, reports AP.

Mann, who heads a splinter group of the Akali Dal, said only the homeland, called Khalistan, is acceptable to the Sikhs, who are in a majority in the northwestern state of Punjab.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Board of Directors of Bangladesh Biman held yesterday with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan in the chair.

Impress Group, a business house, has announced an award of Taka 20,000 each for the highest Bangladesh runner-getter and wicket-taker in today's final.

The Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association (BSJA) and Bangladesh Sports Journalists' and Writers' Community (BSJWC) have also decided to give different prizes for the 'man-of-the-tournament' for the home side.

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Fighting near Grozny continues

Yeltsin asks army to crush rebellion

GROZNY, Dec 27: Chechen independence forces were defiant today as Russian troops continued their onslaught at two strategic positions and President Boris Yeltsin called on the army to make every effort to crush the Chechen rebellion, reports AFP.

By early evening Russian troops had again proven unable to break the stalemate at key positions east and west of the capital Grozny.

There was fighting at Karpinski hill, about 12 kilometres to the west and clashes were expected in Argun, 18 kilometres to the east. Rockets, artillery and heavy machine guns could be heard from central Grozny.

Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev's eldest son was badly wounded in fighting today, Interfax reported.

Avlor Dudayev, 23, was seriously hurt as he took part in an attack against Russian positions near Argun, Chechen Vice Foreign Minister Ruslan Chimayev said.

Meanwhile, the Russian Air Force plans to use special laser-guided bombs against military targets in Grozny, a senior Defence Ministry official told Interfax news agency today.

The official said the air force had only been able to use the high-precision weapons sparingly so far against targets in Grozny because of bad weather hampering visibility.

Political positions also appeared to be hardening, excluding any possibility of negotiations to end the bloodshed that started December 11 when Russian troops entered Chechnya to crush its three-year independence bid.

In Moscow, President Boris

Ahmadiyyas concerned at press reports

By Staff Correspondent

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat community yesterday expressed its concern over the reported move to ban their publications.

Speaking at a press conference in Dhaka, leaders of the Ahmadiyyas, better known as the Qadianis, said such a move would curb their freedom of expression as well as freedom of religious activities as guaranteed by the country's Constitution.

A section of newspapers recently reported that imposition of a ban on the Ahmadiyya publications was under consideration.

National Ameer of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Mohammad Mostafa Ali, Naeb-e-Ameer Tawfiq Elahi Chowdhury, Secretary General Mir Mobashsher Ali, Tobarak Ali and Chief Missionary Abdul Awal Khan Chowdhury spoke at the press conference.

Mohammad Mostafa Ali alleged that certain circles were conspiring against the Ahmadiyya community for political gains.

Ahmed Towfiq Elahi Chowdhury said that a section of religious extremists was threatening the Ahmadiyyas at different places of the country.

Abdul Awal Khan Chowdhury brushed aside allegations like Qadianis were non-Muslims and said such propaganda was "politically motivated."

Border talks with India ends

RAJSHAH, Dec 27: The two-day border talks between the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi and the District Magistrate of Murshidabad, India, ended at the Circuit House here today, reports BSS.

The two sides discussed bilateral matters including demarcation of land boundary, Nirmal Char problem and cross-border smuggling.

It was decided that the assessment of land boundary between the two districts will be held in February next year.

Both the sides agreed to maintain "peace and tranquility at all cost" in the border belt of the two districts and also help check cross-border smuggling including drug trafficking.

Abdul Malek, Deputy Commissioner, Rajshahi led the five-member district level Bangladesh delegation to the talks. The other members were Superintendent of Police, Rajshahi, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Revenue, Rajshahi, representative of Twenty Rifle Battalion and Assistant Director of Land Survey.

Sanjib Chopra, District Magistrate of Murshidabad led the six-member Indian delegation which comprised Superintendent of Police, Murshidabad, Deputy Director of Land, Assistant Director of Survey, Deputy Commandant, BSF and Assistant Commandant, BSF.

10 hurt in N'ganj gunfight

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 27: At least 10 persons were injured, four of them seriously, in a gunbattle between two groups here this morning. The incident occurred over purchase of a garments stock in the Masdar graveyard area.

Four persons who received serious bullet wounds are Jewel, 20, Rassel, 7, Rahim, 35, and Belal, 25. They were admitted to the Narayanganj Hospital.

Some ten crackers were exploded during the clash witnesses said, the two groups were from Gabtoli and West Masdar.

HSC merit lists

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According to sources, the publication of the withheld results of around three per cent examinees of the three other boards — Comilla, Jessore and Rajshahi — would take another two weeks.

The computer centre of the Engineering University (BUET) has not yet received the replies to its queries from these three boards. The services of the computer centre are being utilised for the publication of the results.

The Dhaka Board authorities would revise the combined merit lists of the three groups after publication of the withheld results of the remaining 400 examinees.

PM: Biharis

From Page 1 Col 5

The Prime Minister termed the existing relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan as good and hoped that the bilateral ties, particularly in the field of trade, would be further strengthened in the years to come.

Anwar Kemal, who began his diplomatic assignment in Bangladesh about five years ago, said he had many rewarding experiences during his tenure in the country.

He termed Begum Zia as a great lady for her important role during the anti-autocratic agitation in 1990 and for playing a very significant role in building up the nation.

"You have already contributed a lot for the nation. The people of the country will remember you for your contribution in establishing democracy," the envoy told Begum Zia.