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Power sector slumps on political prank

SHARIER KHAN

Load shedding may hit as high as 1,000 megawatt next year, the Power Development Board (PDB) fears, blaming lobbying by vested interest groups and politically motivated decisions for stagnation of the power sector.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) ordered in the last couple of weeks re-tendering of the 450-megawatt Sirajganj power project and the 90-megawatt Fenchuganj power project.

The tenders of both projects were almost at the final stage, but the Sirajganj project is being re-tendered apparently due to an anti-Awami League attitude. The Fenchuganj project goes for a record fifth re-tendering as a vested interest group failed to secure the bid, sources said.

Another project, the 450 megawatt Savar power project of the Rural Power Company Ltd., is also being shelved as its main donor has decided to withdraw the fund because of allegations of corruption.

The Sirajganj project tender was cancelled although after three rounds of tendering the PDB secured a bid from Summit Group with a power tariff so low that it

beats the price of the 450-megawatt AES Meghnaghat Project. Summit also received \$116 million credit from organisations like World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Sources said there is no plausible reason for the Sirajganj project to go for re-tendering, especially when the PDB was failing to attract bidders to this scheme.

"The decision for re-tendering was purely political. Summit Group chief Aziz Khan is the brother of Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan," said a PDB official, asking for anonymity.

Aziz last week, however, denied being a victim of politics. "Faruk Khan is an individual and he is free to choose whatever party he wants to get involved with. He is not involved with the affairs of Summit Group and I believe the government is not treating the Summit bid in that light," he said.

But industry insiders say the PMO's decision was based on anti-Awami League sentiment.

The PMO has apparently decided to re-tender the Fenchuganj project which the PDB and the Power Division of energy ministry wanted to award to Japanese company Sumitomo. Sumitomo was selected

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Bodies of seven aborted babies, newborn recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of six premature infants from a footpath in Bakshibazar and that of a newborn girl from a garbage bin near Shankar bus stand in Mohammadpur in the city.

Locals of Bakshibazar said a middle-aged woman abandoned the bodies - five males and a female - on the footpath amid a heavy downpour and hurriedly left the area.

"I saw the woman leaving the bodies on the footpath," said Mimi, a seven-year-old girl of the locality. She informed a police team on patrol in the area, which went to the spot, which is beside a crossroads,

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SUMON KILLING AL calls hartal for July 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday called a dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country for July 24 to protest the killing of Tongi Jubo League leader, who was also a key witness to the party lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder.

Sumon Ahmed Majumder, 30, vice-president of Jubo League's ward No. 10 unit, died in hospital in Tongi early Friday, 10 hours after Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)

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Cry for food in Dhunat

Nepotism rules relief distribution among dam-cut victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Mismanagement in inadequate relief distribution added to the woes of thousands of flood victims camping in the open on the Jamuna river in Dhunat without food and water after a dam-cut wiped their villages on Wednesday.

The victims alleged relief officials distributed relief to only hand-

picked people in a display of nepotism while the helpless flood victims starved in the third day into the tragedy.

Some unknown miscreants cut open a right stretch of the flood protection embankment of the Jamuna in a sequel to a dispute between two pro-BNP groups of contractors over awarding of the dam construction work.

The local district administration is yet to take any step to save about two lakh people perched on the embankment after roiling waters carried their houses away.

Most areas of the upazila went under water in the wake of the embankment collapse amid raging flood in the northeastern and southern regions.

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Desperate to save her valuables from the rising floodwaters at Kazipur upazila in Sirajganj, a housewife shifts an earthen stove onto the tin roof of their half-immersed house yesterday.

DEMAND FOR BY-POLL REPEAL HC stays BDB petition to EC for 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for three months proceedings of the petition to the Election Commission (EC) Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan filed for cancellation of the controversial Dhaka-10 vote, which was scheduled for hearing today.

In another development, the lawyer for the top four government officials - who are facing contempt charges and seeking a stay order from the Appellate Division against the High Court directive for their court appearance, withdrew the submission he made before the chamber judge on Wednesday.

Staying proceedings of Mannan's petition, the High Court bench of Justice Joykul Abedin and Justice Sharifuddin Chakladar also asked the EC and Mannan to reply in three weeks why proceedings of Mannan's petition should not be declared illegal.

The court ruling came on a writ petition filed yesterday by ruling coalition's Mosaddak Ali Falu, who won the July 1 ballot.

Mannan on July 3 filed an appeal to the EC challenging the validity of

the by-poll marred by what he said was massive rigging. The next day, the EC asked Mannan and Falu to make their arguments on July 8.

The EC heard both and directed Mannan to submit an affidavit by July 15 on the allegations that his agents were driven out of polling centres on the election day. The EC also asked Falu to submit his side of argument through a counter-affidavit by today.

Mannan submitted 55 affidavits to the EC containing evidences of ballot rigging.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman representing Falu in court said according to constitution and Representation of the People Order 1972 (amendment), the EC has no legal authority to hear any election dispute case.

The matter can be taken up with no other forum but the High Court, Rahman said. He argued there is no scope to hear the petition now that the EC gazette has declared Falu the winner and he has been sworn in parliament and attended its latest session.

The lawyer also said they appealed for rejection of the petition

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks with visiting German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Fischer lauds Dhaka's role in regional cooperation

UNB, Dhaka

Germany has appreciated Bangladesh's role in fostering regional cooperation in South Asia and also in the United Nations (UN) through participation in peacekeeping missions in different troubled pockets of the world.

The appreciation came when the visiting German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

He said Bangladesh is one of the largest democracies in the world but it is very important to maintain economic development, peace and

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Dhaka non-committal about Berlin's UNSC berth

German foreign minister leaves for Sri Lanka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh was non-committal about Germany's bid to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), but backed UN reforms after German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer sought Dhaka's support yesterday.

Asked if Bangladesh will support Berlin's bid for permanent membership of the now five-member UNSC,

Morshed said, "We have to review the whole system. We would like to see fixed criteria. --- It the criteria are fixed under consensus, I am sure Germany will find its right place."

"We firmly believe that the UN itself has to go through reforms with the change of time," he said while addressing a joint press conference with Fischer at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

"We hope that if there is reform of

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Bar sends memo to CJ for fresh criminal bench

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday submitted a memorandum containing a six-point demand to the chief justice, which includes reconstitution of criminal motion benches of the High Court.

The Bar suggested senior judges with proven ability to quickly dispose of cases replace the poorly performing incumbents in three of the four criminal motion benches. Cases clog court and arrestees rot in jails for years on end because of

them, the Bar said.

The memorandum, copies of which were also submitted to Supreme Court judges, comes following a resolution the Bar adopted at a requisition meeting on Wednesday. Earlier, 186 Supreme Court lawyers across the political divide took a stance on the reconstitution of the motion benches and asked the Bar to adopt a resolution to that end.

The memorandum expressed frustration that there has been no

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Doa Mahfil

Special Doa Mahfil to seek salvation of the departed soul of late Delmon Ara Begum, Chairperson of Opsonin Group of Industries will be held at Opsonin Bhaban, 30 New Eskaton, Dhaka today, 18 July, 2004 after Asr prayers.

All the relatives and well wishers of late Delmon Ara Begum are invited to attend the Doa Mahfil to offer special doa for the deceased.



Management & Staff of Opsonin Group of Industries

Ton-up Hameed stars Pak win

AL MUSABBIR SADI, from Colombo

Memories of Bangladesh's fifth overall one-day victory were laid to rest in 24 hours when the Tigers crashed to a 76-run defeat against defending champions Pakistan in the Eighth Asia Cup here yesterday.

Chasing Pakistan's 257-6 built around Yasir Hameed's third one-day century, Bangladesh were

bowled out for 181 in 45.2 overs with opener Javed Omar smashing back-to-back half-centuries at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground.

Fresh from his 68 against Hong Kong, whom Bangladesh defeated by 116 runs the previous day, Javed stroked his way to 62 off 89 balls. His sixth one-day fifty was laced with seven fours and included a few

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