

2ND MEGHNAGHAT POWER PLANT

Move on to contract tender rule violator

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) is seeking the power ministry's approval to award a major power plant contract to a consortium which has violated the tender rules on several counts including changing its lead sponsor without permission.

The contract is to set up a second 450 megawatt Meghnaghat Power Plant and the favoured consortium is pushed by UAE-based trading company Belhassa and comprises Orion Power Company of Bangladesh.

To pre-qualify in the bidding for this plant, in September 2003 the consortium showed Nissho Iwai Corporation, an experienced Japanese power company, as its lead sponsor, PDB sources said.

But, five months earlier, in April 2003, Nissho had merged with another company called Nichimen Holdings and turned into Sojitz, according to documents of Sojitz Corporation.

Nissho's experience in setting up combined cycle power plants in different countries helped the consortium to qualify in the bid in which a total of four parties participated, sources said. A Malaysian company, Malakoff Berhad, also pre-qualified in the bidding.

Though the tender document dictates that "at least 35 percent of the total equity shall be provided by the Lead Sponsor," Nissho did not make any such commitment.

In the next phase, the final bid proposal, the Belhassa consortium showed Nissho Iwai as the project's financial adviser, not lead

sponsor.

But the tender document says, "Should the lead sponsor... decide to change the participants within the pre-qualified consortium, it may do so only with prior approval from the PDB."

At this point, instead of rejecting the Belhassa consortium as technically non-responsive, the power board sought the ministry's clearance. The ministry sent back the proposal for re-evaluation.

During the re-evaluation, the Belhassa consortium replaced Nissho with a German company Steag AG as the lead sponsor violating tender rules. But the PDB once again accepted such a drastic change.

The power board had sought offers similar to the Meghnaghat

Phase One 450mw power plant that was built by American company AES with a 22-year levelised power tariff of 2.79 cents per kilowatt-hour. The power tariff offered by Belhassa is 2.78 cents per kilowatt-hour.

"There is a lack of participation in new power projects because of confusing signals of the government, frequent re-tendering and strong lobbying favouring certain groups. As a result genuine bidders are avoiding Bangladeshi schemes," said an industry insider.

But a PDB high official unwilling to be named defends the Meghnaghat-2 bidding process: "There is nothing wrong in Belhassa's proposal. They comply with our standard."



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia looks at books at a stall after opening the Amar Ekushey Book Fair on the Bangla Academy premises yesterday.

PHOTO: PDB



PHOTO: STAR

(From left) Head of the EC Delegation in Bangladesh Esko Kentschynskyj, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, Awami League Presidium Member Abdus Samad Azad and the Netherlands Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer are seen with Sheikh Hasina when a delegation of the EU heads of mission meet with the opposition leader at Sudha Sadan yesterday.

THREAT ON PM'S LIFE Six cases filed against AL's Sultan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A staggering six cases have been filed against Awami League (AL) Organising Secretary and former lawmaker Sultan Muhammad Mansur for his alleged threat on the life of Prime Minister (PM) Khaleda Zia.

Two BNP leaders in Natore and Chapainawabganj districts yesterday filed cases separately yesterday while BNP lawmaker Ilias Ali and three other local BNP leaders on Monday filed four others.

Besides, Rajshahi BNP President Azizur Rahman yesterday filed a general diary against the AL leader with Rajpara Police Station.

Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila

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KL delays crackdown on illegal immigrants

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has delayed a major crackdown on illegal immigrants apparently at the request of Indonesia, the Philippines and the United Nations, local media said yesterday.

No official announcement of the postponement was made, but local media quoted home ministry sources as saying an amnesty period would be extended and one official told AFP he had not received a directive to begin the sweep, due to begin Tuesday.

"We are awaiting the green light to launch the nationwide crackdown," Mahadi Arshad, director-general of the People's Volunteer Corps told AFP.

Half a million members of the

corps, an organisation of uniformed part-timers who have some policing powers, were due to be deployed to help hunt down the illegal immigrants.

"So far we have not launched any raids today. But we are on standby," he said.

Tuesday was a public holiday in Kuala Lumpur and government officials were not immediately available for comment.

Indonesia, whose citizens make up most of the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants in Malaysia, had appealed for an extension of a three-month amnesty, ambassador K.P.H. Rusdiharjo told The Star newspaper.

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Shibir 'interferes' in CU results

AKBAR HOSSAIN

The Chittagong University (CU) authorities 'under duress of Jamaat-e-Islami's student wing' are allegedly interfering with the master's results at the communication and journalism department.

Teachers of the Department of Communication and Journalism had alleged that leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami, are putting pressure on the CU authorities to reassess the examination sheets of Abul Kalam Azad only to move him to the first position.

Meanwhile, the passage of the results in the CU Syndicate is getting delayed, as the Vice Chancellor

of the CU has ordered re-evaluation of Azad's examination papers, said a teacher of the communication and journalism department yesterday.

Azad, allegedly an activist of ICS, sat the Master of Arts (MA) final examinations in 2004 and secured the second class fourth position. The results of MA were published on September 23, 2004.

But not content with the grades obtained, Azad petitioned the CU VC Professor AZM Nuruddin Chowdhury on September 26, 2004 for re-evaluation of his examination sheets. Shortly after the petition documents had reached the VC office, the VC sent a note to the CU controller of examinations to take steps to that end.

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AL mulls whether to join JS session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Against the backdrop of the speaker's refusal to adjourn the sitting on Monday after the adoption of an obituary reference on its lawmaker Shah AMS Kibira, the main opposition Awami League (AL) is seriously examining whether they will join the parliament session when it resumes on February 8.

The AL lawmakers staged a strong protest and boycotted the first sitting of the year, as their demand for deferring the presidential speech to the second day through adjourning the sitting was not met.

The speaker refused to meet the demand saying that the constitution does not allow it.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina is now consulting her party deputies about joining in the parliamentary proceedings.

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AHSANULLAH KILLING Witness feels insecure

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness in the Ahsanullah Master, MP murder case yesterday told a court that he could not disclose the names of the MP's killers to the investigation officer (IO) for the sake of his children's security.

Advocate Ajmatullah Khan, chairman of Tongi Municipality,

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HABIGANJ GRENADE ATTACK

Cops question more suspects

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK, Habiganj

Investigators of the Habiganj carnage continue to question more suspects and feel that, unlike in the past, the investigation this time will make headway.

The investigators are tightlipped about how many suspects have been picked up for questioning from different areas of Habiganj, Sylhet and the carnage spot of Baidderbazar's Bangaon village,

but they say they have not yet arrested anyone. Sources said they have detained "several" suspects.

They said that the information obtained through questioning the suspects and witnesses yielded a lot of important clues, although this information needed thorough verification.

Investigators are also tightlipped about clues relating to Thursday's grenade attack, which killed 5, including former finance minister

SAMS Kibria. "We don't want the culprits to be aware of what we know and get away before we can take action," said an official.

"We have come to know that there is one or more persons who actually saw the assailants throwing the grenade," said an investigation team source.

Some of the detained persons were released after questioning.

Habiganj Chhatra Shibir former

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Ministry's legal fight to recover forestland from grabbers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The forest department is pursuing a legal battle to recover forestland allegedly grabbed by a group of youths backed by a lawmaker in Pirganj upazila of Rangpur, official sources said.

The youths illegally occupied four acres of land on January 13, 1999 in the name of a youth organi-

sation --Juba Artho Samajik Unnayan Sangstha then cut down trees and dug a pond on it.

Officials at the Ministry of Environment and Forest said the forest department filed a case against the organisation but it is still pending with the court.

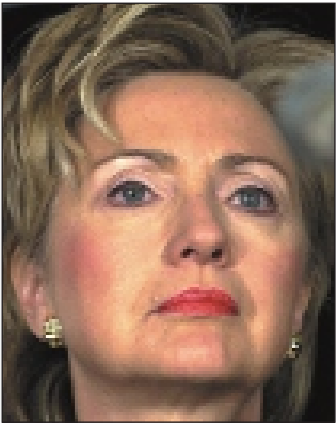
They said there has been tremendous pressure and lobbying to withdraw the case to recover the

land, and that a local lawmaker recently initiated a move in favour of the encroachers.

In a letter to the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Jatiya Party legislator Nur Mohammad Mandal, an advisor and patron of the youth organisation, requested the ministry to withdraw the case.

He claimed that unemployed

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Hillary collapses during speech

AFP, New York

US Senator and former first lady Hillary Clinton collapsed Monday while giving a speech in Buffalo, New York, but made a quick recovery to resume her scheduled itinerary.

Clinton, 57, had just started her address on social security to the Amherst Chamber of Commerce when she fainted, her office said in a statement.

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AL called fresh hartal to foil Saarc summit, says Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the sole motive behind Awami League's (AL) calling hartal again is to thwart the February 6-7 Saarc summit in Dhaka and ruin the image of the country.

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Qulkhwani of Kibria held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria was held yesterday afternoon at his Dhanmondi residence seeking eternal peace of the departed soul and praying to the Almighty to help destroy conspirators and killers.

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, political leaders, academicians, professionals, judges, lawyers and other people were present on the occasion.

Recitation from the holy Quran continued for the last four days for the qulkhwani.

Imam of Dhanmondi Hakkani Mosque Maulana Abdus Zahur

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Admirers and political leaders offer munajat at the qulkhwani of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria at the Dhanmondi residence of the Awami League leader yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Prayer Timing		
February 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation