

Dhaka observes

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as the rivers receive virtually 'no water from upstream' and the level of the underground water rapidly descends.

They said unless the government decides to use both groundwater and surface water for human consumption and other uses, the problem is set to aggravate.

Although arsenic contamination of groundwater is quite severe in districts, experts at the Institute of Water Modeling (IWM) said the problem could be greatly remedied by installing deep tube wells.

"Intensive extraction of groundwater is emptying the water layers very rapidly and in urban areas the expanding concrete surfaces are hampering the recharging of the underground reservoirs," said M A Karim, a ground water specialist of the IWM.

"We have to seriously think of using surface water to reduce pressure on groundwater," Karim said.

Officials of the NGO, Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, recently said at a press conference that the groundwater level has declined in 48 percent of the country. About 65 to 70 percent of the country's population have access to safe drinking water.

However, in many parts of the city, residents queue up for hours each day for their water supply. In the city's peripheral villages and townships, the water crisis has reached its height as many shallow tube wells have dried up with the onset of the dry season. Thousands of people are forced to walk miles to fetch water for daily use.

Wasa supplies 145 crore litres of water in the city against a demand of 210 crore for 120 million people. Of the 145 crore litres, 27 crore litres come from the Syedabad, Chadrighat and Godnail of Narayanganj water treatment plant and the rest is pumped out from underground.

But another senior specialist of the IWD told The Daily Star that the rivers around Dhaka do not get any flow from the upstream Jamuna during the peak period. During this period the Brahmaputra carries between 6,000 and 8,000 cubic metres of water per second through Jamuna, of which "nothing flows" into the Turag, Balu or the Buriganga due to silt formation in the mouths of the tributaries. Whereas, in the monsoons around 87,000 cubic metres of water per second flow in the Jamuna.

"There is enough water flowing through the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, but we cannot make use of it as we are unable to build a barrage due to the flat surface of the delta and also because of fund constraints," the specialist said.

To mark World Water Day a seminar will be held today at the IDB Bhaban auditorium. The theme of this year is "Water for Life."

A fresh International Water Decade for Action for 2005-2015 will be declared by the United Nations today.

HC convicts editors

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Mohammad Faiz filed a contempt suit against the editors, publishers and reporters. Barrister Azmalul Hossain represented him while Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and Advocate Mahbub-e-Alam represented the defendants along with Barristers Sara Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman Khan and Tanjibul Alam.

The High Court also issued a rule on the accused asking them to explain why they should not be punished for maligning the highest judiciary by publishing the report. The newspapers decided to contest the issue instead of tendering apologies, which is a common practice.

The High Court bench of justices MA Matin and AFM Abdur Rahman handed down the verdict in a daylong session. The hearing of the case began in December.

The bench yesterday observed that the newspapers have grossly committed contempt of court, but the judges took a lenient view because the media persons are working for society.

COURT'S OBSERVATIONS
The court observed that the Prothom Alo and Bhorer Kagoj reports were 'false' since it was not proved that judge Faizee's LLB certificate was fake.

The court said the constitution guarantees freedom of press, but this must not be done at the cost of independence of the judiciary. The press must not scandalise court, the court also observed and gave some guidelines for the media on how to deal with the court.

The media cannot communicate with a judge directly in person, on telephone or in any other form. If the media people must talk to a judge, they will have to take permission from the Supreme Court registrar, the court in its guideline said. The attorney general shall have to be at court during hearing on a case involving scandalisation of court.

The press may formulate a guideline in consultation with the Bar Association that will determine how court reporting should be done, the court observed.

On the headline of the Prothom Alo report -- 'A judge's LLB certificate is fake' -- the court observed that it did not find any basis for the paper to reach such a conclusion or give such a banner headline. The content of the report had nothing to do with the forgery of the certificate. The report did not substantiate the headline, neither did it disclose as to who had committed the forgery, the court noted.

The press reports said the Chittagong University Syndicate cancelled the results of 2,400 students following an investigation into allegations of tampering with results. The report only mentioned judge Faizee. The court noted that the results were not cancelled as the authorities decided to re-investigate the allegation, which means it has not been proved that Faizee's certificate was fake.

The court said the reports were based on some decisions of the university syndicate. These decisions did not specifically mention anything against anyone or any roll number.

The court said the caption and sub-caption of Bhorer Kagoj did not reflect content of the report. The reporter gave his own opinions that Faizee became a judge without achieving the qualification, but he could not prove that Faizee did not pass the LLB examinations. The report also could not establish that Faizee was involved in wiping or inking the LLB tabulation sheet.

When a judge is appointed, he will function independently keeping himself completely free from the pressure of the executive, media or any other quarter. The reports questioned Faizee's qualification to become a judge and his recruitment process, it further noted.

The court said publication of the news shook public confidence in the judiciary. The Supreme Court Bar Association also lost trust in the judge.

Court does not function individually but institutionally. Following the press reports, Faizee was withdrawn from the bench in which he was attached to and so, the institution has been deprived of his services.

Those who attack court should know that judges are indispensable to

ensuring the rule of law. As judges cannot protest when such an attack is made, they need to be protected.

QUALIFICATION OF A JUDGE
The court said if an unqualified person is appointed a judge, there is a remedy. This can be challenged at the High Court and the Supreme Judicial Council can have a look at the issue. But, raising questions about the appointment cannot be an option.

Educational qualification is considered as a big criterion. But in the history of the judiciary, it is seen that many became famous judges although they were not good at studies.

While appointing a judge there should be a rule for effective consultation with the chief justice and the full court of the Supreme Court. No selection can be absolutely appropriate.

REFERENCE TO A PREVIOUS CASE
Drawing its conclusions, the court referred to a verdict of a contempt of court case of 1899 and said in a country like Bangladesh where the literacy rate is low, printed words have strong influence. The general public does not read all the news published, but when a news is printed red in banner headline, they pay attention. This is a misuse of freedom of press.

In the 1899 judgement Lord Morris had said contempt laws regarding scandalisation of court may be necessary in 'small colonies, consisting principally of coloured populations'.

REACTION
Advocate Mahbub-e-Alam, counsel for one of defendants, told reporters, "I'm certainly not happy (with the judgement). We will appeal to the Supreme Court against the judgement."

Petitioner's counsel Azmalul Hossain in his reaction told the press that the verdict has proved that the reports were baseless and the certificate was not forged. "For these baseless news, Faizee has been unable to serve for the last six months. Now it has been resolved. Besides, the court has identified how far the freedom of expression in the constitution can go."

Barrister Tanjibul Alam told The Daily Star, "The court has expressly stated that this contempt matter was not about the truthfulness of the report or as to whether Justice Faizee was indeed guilty of misconduct. Therefore, any claim that the court has declared the certificate of Justice Faizee genuine is untenable."

'Robber' lynched
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Goli of the north Kazipara under the Kafur Police Station at around 8:30am, police said.

Taking them as robbers preparing for an action, locals chased the gang and nabbed three. After beating them severely the locals handed them over to police.

Police rushed Russell to the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where he died at 11:30am.

Sagor and Deen Islam were given first aid and later taken to police custody.

Duty officer of the Kafur police station said the two arrested admitted preparing for a robbery in the locality.

'Outcasts'
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people face various forms of racial discrimination in the country as they are being deprived of their basic rights, even those ensured by the constitution.

The program, organized by 'Paritran', a voluntary Human Development Organisation for the outcasts by the outcaste, featured Dr. Meghna Guha Thakurata of Dhaka University and Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar as the special guests.

Main accused
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"Thomas Lubanga was arrested two days ago and taken to Makala," a former militia leader confirmed to the news agency yesterday, referring to Kinshasa's main prison.

The arrest has not yet officially been confirmed by the government.

Three other militia chiefs were arrested earlier this month.

Plaintiff wants

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position on the chargesheet.

Majid, also organising secretary of district Awami League (AL), told The Daily Star last night that the investigators in the case had neither shown him any documents, nor informed him about the developments of the probe.

"Being the plaintiff in the case I have every right to know the chargesheet and developments of the case," Majid said over telephone.

"I told the court that I came to know about the submission of the chargesheet though media reports yesterday," he added.

Majid said he had waited at the court until afternoon on Sunday but the police did not confirm him about the submission of the chargesheet. But in the evening, Munshi Atiqur Rahman, CID assistant superintendent of police, submitted it to the court.

The plaintiff said he would like to review the chargesheet and other documents of the case before giving his decision about whether he would accept the chargesheet. He will give his statement about it to the court during the hearing.

Asked to comment on the chargesheet, Majid said: What I have known from the media reports, it seems to me that the chargesheet is made incompetently.

The CID pressed charges against 10 BNP leaders and workers for their alleged role in the grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Habiganj on January 27.

The accused are Habiganj district BNP Vice-president AKM Abdul Quaiyum, Ayat Ali, Kajal Mia, Selim Ahmed, Tajul Islam, Shahed Ali, Jainal Abedin Jalal, Jamir Ali, Jainal Abedin Mumin and Muhibur Rahman.

Police have arrested eight of them while the other two -- Kajal Mia and Muhibur Rahman -- are on the run.

PM's programme
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the mistakes have raised questions about the ministry's capability to keep information up to date.

The book mentioned Abu Zafar as press secretary to the president. Zafar left the Bangabhaban job in the last week of October last year and took over as director general of the Department of Mass Communication before going on leave preparatory to retirement.

He was later appointed principal information officer (PIO) of the Press Information Department (PID) and is serving in that capacity since February 5.

His full name is Abu Zafar Md Iqbal but the book wrote only Abu Zafar.

Journalist Mokleshur Rahman Chowdhury was appointed Press Secretary to the President on December 4 last year but the foreign ministry seems unaware of this even now.

The ministry also mentioned Khandaker Monirul Alam as PIO of the PID although his contractual appointment expired on December 31 last year. Abu Zafar Md Iqbal was appointed to that post.

In another error, the book mentioned AHM Abdullah as senior deputy PIO although he was transferred to the Department of Films and Publications long ago.

Sub-sea cable
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despite the fact that one of the members on the evaluation committee had repeatedly expressed his reservations about the contract.

"The committee also observed that the BTBT violated the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) in many areas. This is why the cabinet wants the BTBT to set clear-cut evaluation criteria during the re-tendering," the official said.

"The cabinet also wants the officials responsible for manipulation of the bidding to be punished."

The submarine cable project itself has already been delayed by more than four years. In March last year, after sitting on the project for four years, Bangladesh signed an agreement with a consortium of 16 international telecoms operators.

The submarine system will span around 20,000 kilometres across the eastern and western worlds to set an ultra-fast terabit per second connectivity. Bangladesh will get 10-gigabyte bandwidth, enough to match its next 10 years Internet and telephony demands. Presently, it needs about 150- megabyte bandwidth.

But to avail this infrastructure inland, the BTBT needed to install the fibre-optic cable network.

The state telecoms operator received a good price proposal in the bids floated early last year but it mysteriously took eight months to evaluate them.

FBI agent

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He said following recent development in the investigation into the killing of Kibria, Trung Vu returned to Dhaka on March 20 to meet the law enforcement officials and participate in the inquiry.

The FBI investigator had earlier visited Bangladesh for preliminary work, when he had requested setting the terms of reference to investigate the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj that also killed four others.

Tornado toll hits 40

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collapsed during the twister.

Several thousand people of the affected villages, rendered homeless by the tornado, passed last night under open sky and without food, said a victim of village Kishamat Hamid.

The storm smashed all the huts in the village within a couple of minutes, he added.

The survivors recovered 14 bodies from under the collapsed houses and sent the injured people to different hospitals and health complexes.

The dead were identified as Shahera Khatun, 31, Abdul Gafur, 65, Mozaher, 42, Nurun Nahar, 31, Swadhin, 20, Liton, 28, Hamid, 42, Tofajjal, 40, Monalisa, 5, Santana, 25, Ranju, 22, Alamgir, 18, Rozina, 23, Anju Ara, 35, Chand Mia, 33, Fulmoti, 30, Rubina, 55, Shamsel, 40, Sirajul Master, 45, Sathi, 12, Jobayed, 44, Khaibar, 20, Ajan Ali, 33, Liton Chandra, 15, Anju Ara, 26, Dulali, 22, Masuda Akhter, 26, Mukti, 15, Rina, 20, Arjina, 60, Shahera, 43, Rubila, 55, Jannati, 22, Kamrunnahar, 25, Nawab Ali, 60, Sarvan Bibi, 55.

Upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Sadullapur confirmed the death of 23 people in the upazila while UNO of Sundarganj put the death figure at 12.

District administration allocated Tk 1,500 for burying each of the dead.

The tornado victims badly need food and medicare services, said Ismail Hossain, chairman of Naldanga union.

A total of 230 injured were admitted to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital while 10 critically wounded people sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

As the hospitals are crammed with injured people, the doctors and nurses cannot take proper care of each of them.

Asadul Habib Dulu, deputy minister for food and disaster management, visited the affected areas and ordered officials to extend all possible help to the victims.

Our correspondent from

Rangpur adds: Four people were killed and several hundred others injured in the tornado that swept 17 villages in Pirgachha and Mithapukur upazilas Sunday night.

Around 5,000 families in the affected areas were rendered homeless as the storm razed their houses to the ground within 10 minutes from 7:00pm.

Three of the dead were identified as Shadzaman Khondaker, 17, of Madhyapara village in Mithapukur upazila, Chhaka, 45, and Abdul Aziz, 22, of Majhipara Kandirhat in Pirgachha.

Another injured person succumbed to his injuries at Mahiganj while he was being taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital but his identity could not be known.

Most of the victims were injured in house collapse and when tress fell on them.

The critically injured people were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital and local health complexes. Hospital sources said the condition of more than a hundred injured still remain critical.

While visiting the tornado-hit areas in Pirgachha and Mithapukur upazilas yesterday, this correspondent found a trail of devastation left by the storm.

Almost all thatched houses were razed to the ground in Deulpara, Haripur, Muradpur, Arifpur, Imadpur Chhoto Krishnapur and Porabash of Mithapukur upazila.

Apart from houses, a large number of schools and madrasas were damaged by the storm.

Visiting the affected areas in Mithapukur, the deputy minister for food and disaster management said the government has sanctioned Tk 1 lakh and 100 bundles of tin (corrugated iron sheets) for the victims in Mithapukur.

Besides, Tk 3 lakh and 300 bundles of tin were sanctioned for the victims in Gaibandha district, he said.

The tornado-hit villagers of Imadpur complained yesterday that they did not get any relief materials.

Kibria family

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AL leader told newsmen at her residence yesterday.

She said, "Media reports on the charge sheet suggest that investigators have stopped the inquiry after a certain stage following dictates of the government high-ups."

Though the report claimed that Qaiyum managed a grenade for the attack, it did not mention where he got it from, she said.

Reiterating the demand for a US Federal Bureau of Investigation probe, the slain lawmaker's wife stressed that any such probe will have to be independent of any government control and the report has to be made public.

She also asked to record Qaiyum's statement detailing on whose instructions he planned the killing.

Reza Kibria, son of Shah AMS Kibria, said, "The charge sheet identified Habiganj district BNP leaders' involvement with the killing, but we believe both the Sylhet unit BNP and the central [BNP] have links with the accused leaders of Habiganj district BNP."

He alleged that senior ministers of the government including M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Matiur Rahman Nizami have influenced the investigation process by making comments in public about the crime.

Quoting Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's remarks after the incident, Reza Kibria said, "How could Saifur Rahman say that the killing resulted from conflict over local politics and personal feud?"

He said that LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Mannan Bhuiyan accused AL of the killing, but the police investigation so far has detected BNP leaders to be the culprits in the murder.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil rejecting the charge sheet said that the government through the charge sheet has tried to save the persons who originally masterminded the killing.

"It's a bid to save the masterminds by putting blame on some local level leaders of BNP," he said reiterating the party's demand for an international probe into the killing.

Senior AL leader Suranjit Sengupta MP said, "Through the charge sheet, the government has blocked the way for neutral international probe into the killing as its high-ups are involved."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu said it proves the prime minister's and her senior colleagues' accusations that AL killed Kibria, were totally untrue.

On Qaiyum's involvement, Inu said, "He is merely a small fry who had carried out the orders of his bosses, and the bosses have to be identified through an international probe."

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that the charge sheet is not a complete work as the mastermind of the killing is yet to be identified.

"Circumstances of the killing suggest that religious extremists may have links to it as part of a big conspiracy," Selim said. He is, however, against independent inquiry by the FBI men, and said this organisation is not reliable enough to find out the truth about the crime. "Rather, the government should form an independent inquiry commission that will work with assistance from local and international experts," he added.

Secretariat made

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enforcement agencies to seize their permanent and temporary passes for entry into the secretariat.

Besides, a list of the names of the 28 officials has also been given to the head of police team at Bangladesh Secretariat, so that those officials cannot enter into the secretariat by showing their old passes.

The entry passes were cancelled at the time of their compulsory retirement but there are allegations that the retired officials frequently visit Bangladesh Secretariat and conduct anti-government campaigns.

There are also reports that they are working to organise a platform similar to the 1996 "Janatar Mancha" ahead of the present government's end of tenure.

The government is determined to quell any sort of 1996 "Janatar Mancha" style anti-government agitation and planning to send more officials having direct links with the main opposition Awami League to compulsory retirement, sources said.

Intelligence agencies have been instructed to keep a close eye on officials and employees in Bangladesh Secretariat and other important offices to see whether anyone is involved in anti-government activities, sources said.

Besides, some pro-BNP officials have been asked to prepare a list of the pro-opposition officials, who will complete 25 years of service in next few months.

As per reports of the intelligence agencies and the assigned officials, the government may give compulsory retirement to some officials by the year-end.

The 23 joint secretaries who were sent to compulsory retirement are: Mohammad Hossain Seraniab, Mominullah Patwari, Abu Taher, Khan Mohammad Belayet Hossain, Mohammad Musa, Begum Rezina Akhter, Hemayetuddin Talukder, Asaduzzaman Bhuiyan, Mahbubul Alam Khan, Nuruzzaman Bhuiyan, Maksudul Haq, Abdus Salam, Shamsul Haq, Mahbubur Rahman, Dewan Afsaruddin, Mohammad Shamsul Haq, Tarik Kanti Roy, Sazzad Hossain, Hatem Ali Khan, Giasuddin Ahmed, Sheikh Shafi Ahmed, Sailendra Nath Majumder and Khan Mohammad Nurul Huda.

The five deputy secretaries are: Dr Mujibur Rahman, Abdul Hye, Abdus Sattar Khan, Enamul Kabir and Farhad Rahman.

Nine arrested

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In another drive, police arrested one Abdul Hye of Malik Deluxe Travels yesterday afternoon after one Monir Hossain filed a case with the police station against Hye for swindling him out of Tk 50,000.

In the FIR Monir mentioned that the travel agency took the money from him a few months ago, assuring him they would send his wife to Kuwait. The travel agent demanded Tk 1.10 lakh and took Tk 50,000 in advance from him. But ultimately they embezzled the money.

Twenty-four Bangladeshis fortune-seekers returned home on Saturday, a year after travel agents illegally sent them to the West African country of Mali on promises of finding them jobs in Italy.

The manpower agents dumped the unsuspecting youths in the Sahara desert, where they wandered for days with no food and water. They were later thrown into a Mali jail after police rescued them from the desert.

In addition, 11 out of 26 Bangladeshis who, with the aid of a travel agency, left the country on December 23, died last month of hunger and thirst in a boat on the Mediterranean en route to Spain from Morocco.

Along with 15 other Bangladeshis, they ran out of fuel and supplies and went without food and water for 10 days on the high sea, as the boatman lost his way and headed for Algeria instead of Spain.

DCC to rename

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Panthapath-Sonargaon crossing to Russell Square as Bir Uttam Quazi Nuruzzaman Road after Col (ret'd) Quazi Nuruzzaman, Bir Uttam.

Nuruzzaman unveiled the name plaque at 5:30pm at the crossing in presence of DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Md Rezaul Karim, among others.

Nuruzzaman said he was fortunate to be honoured as a freedom fighter, appreciating the steps of the DCC mayor that include a reunion of the freedom fighters.

The recent step was taken to "honour the greatest children of the soil" for their glorious role in the Liberation War, said the mayor.

Earlier on Sunday, the DCC renamed the link road from Mohakhali crossing at Jal Khabar to Gulshan Circle-1 as Bir Uttam AK Khandaker Road after another sector commander AK Khandaker, Bir Uttam.

Renaming of three other roads are on the cards after sector commanders MA Rabb, Bir Uttam, Shawkat Ali, Bir Uttam and CR Datta, Bir Uttam, DCC sources said.

Other valiant freedom fighters will be honoured in the same manner, the sources added.

BDR issues

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Both the BDR and BSF equipped with heavy firearms have taken a face-to-face position on the border.

Traffic movement on the frontier road stopped at about 4:00pm and locals were leaving the areas fearing fierce battle between the border guards.

Commanding Officer of 2 Rifles Lt Col Imamul Huda said the BSF move to build fences must be stopped at any cost.

The BSF however stopped the construction following the BDR red alert.

Border tension was mounting for the last two months over the construction of barbed wire fences within 150 yards of the zero line.

The Indian side suspends construction in daytime in the face of the BDR's resistance but resumes it at night.

Cop jailed

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A patrol police team of Kushtia Sadar Police Station, led by SI Abdus Satter caught SI Nurul Islam and two professional thieves Asadul and Abhi red-handed while heisting goods from the storehouse on August 9, 2002.

Police arrested the thieves and released the SI, who continued his job for a year and retired on August 22, 2003.

The court sent the thieves to jail but the SI was absconding since his retirement.

SI Abdul Jalil, investigating officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet against the three on February 2003.

4 outlaws killed

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Bashir was rushed with bullet injuries to Sadar General Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, police said.

Meanwhile, Patuakhali Sadar police nabbed Ujjal, 28, son of Abdul Rashid, from a wedding party of Joinkathi area at around 3:30pm.

During interrogation, Ujjal, an accused in nine cases for rape, extortion, looting and police assault, admitted possessing arms and ammunition in a hideout, said police.

Sadar police then went to seize the arms under Palkanda Bridge in the city where they found a revolver and three bullets.

On the way back to the police station, Ujjal's accomplices opened fire on police who retaliated. Ujjal was injured during the exchange of fire and doctors declared him dead when he was taken to Sadar General Hospital.

Proposal not okayed

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The Private Sector Infrastructure Guideline's clause 6.4.4 clearly states that composition of bidders cannot be changed after pre-qualification. Other government bid documents also bar such changes.

"The cabinet committee sought some documents and explanations which were not included in the proposal," said State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud. "We shall soon send the proposal again with appropriate documents."

The ministry's proposal outlined a power tariff of 2.78 cents per kilowatt hour for the Meghnaghat-2. The first Meghnaghat 450 mw power project had offered 2.79 cents levelised tariff for 20 years.

The ministry was pushing the Belhasa-Orion bid giving it some additional flexibility. For instance, they were being given performance bond worth only \$10 million whereas in the case of Meghnaghat-1 or a Siraijan plant, the bond was worth \$30 million.

Yesterday's meeting of the cabinet body also reviewed the current load shedding problem and ways to overcome it. The power policy is not helping setting up of new power plants fast, it felt.

"The purchase committee suggested the power ministry to frame a policy under which contracts for small power projects generating up to 50 megawatt can be awarded directly on selection basis, avoiding tender process," said a meeting source.

But the Prime Minister's Office last year cancelled a bid to award contracts for 15 small power plants in different parts of the country despite response from a number of bidders. Sources said the problems lie not with the bidding but with 'politicised decision' because the top policymakers view one of the dominant bidders as 'linked to the Awami League'.

The purchase committee yesterday approved Dhaka Electric Supply Authority's proposal to set up four 132/33kv power sub-stations in Kamrangir Char, Tongi, Bhulata and Narsingdi. China National Electric Wire and Cable Import and Export Corporation (CNEWC) will install these with finance from Asian Development Bank (ADB).

It okayed a proposal by Power Grid Company Bangladesh to set up a 230kv power transmission line at a cost of Tk 145 crore under Chinese supplier's credit. The CNEWC will implement it.

The committee also approved the primary education ministry's proposal to import 12,000 tonnes of paper worth Tk 70 crore from India. Moreover, it approved expansion of a 250-bed hospital to a 500-bed one in Comilla.

Singapore talks focus

FROM PAGE 1
and South Asian countries.

Appreciating its progress and development in different fields, Lee billed Bangladesh as a practically tolerant, moderate Muslim country.

The Singapore prime minister also appreciated various pragmatic steps of the government of Khaleda Zia, including the measures for improving law and order and curbing terrorism, and assured lending his country's support to antirterrorism drive by providing information.

Singapore will recruit more Bangladeshis professionals including doctors, engineers and nurses, it was informed in the meeting.

The two prime ministers agreed that Bangladesh is a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia, and on the need for more expansion of business.

Lee said Singaporean businessmen are keen to invest in Bangladesh.

"Bangladeshis working in Singapore are law-abiding and can be trained easily, and they will help build a bridge between the two countries," he added.

As Bangladesh requested for simplifying visa procedure, the Singapore side said they are ready to provide urgent visas for medical treatment and informed that they have already introduced S (special) category visa, which Bangladeshis can avail for visit and jobs in Singapore.

About checking money laund-

dering, Singapore has given permission to open a branch of Agram Bank in the newly developed Asean country. Bangladeshi expatriates sent remittances totaling about Tk 400 crore last year.

Khaleda invited Prime Minister Lee to visit Bangladesh. She stressed the need for frequent visits by ministers and businessmen as well as other professionals between the two countries to open up new windows of interaction.

After the official talks, she made a courtesy call on Singapore President SR Nathan.

During the meeting, the president expressed his readiness to help Bangladesh in developing human resources and the IT sector.

In her speech at a dinner hosted by Singapore premier Lee Hsien Loong Lee at Istana last night, Khaleda said Bangladesh wants to be a dialogue partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and full member of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) to provide a bridge between south and southeast blocks of Asia in the common pursuit of development and security.

Appreciating Singapore's commitment to support Bangladesh's aspiration, the prime minister hoped that in the forthcoming meetings of the Asean and the ARF Singapore will actively pursue and steer Dhaka's case.

On the outcome of the official talks, she said the two sides had a number of fruitful meetings seeking to find new avenues and directions to strengthen and intensify the bilateral relations. "Prime Minister Lee and I have committed ourselves to continuing and following these efforts up in the days ahead."

On bilateral trade, the prime minister said two-way annual trade stands close to 1.5 billion Singapore dollars. Some 70 projects with a total investment outlay of about 1.4 billion Singapore dollars have been registered in Bangladesh. Over 45,000 Bangladeshis workers are employed in Singapore.

On global terrorism, Khaleda said Bangladesh and Singapore are active co-partners in the global war on international terror. She praised how Singapore coped with the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and successfully curbed the threat of terrorism.

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, in his speech, offered to enhance his country's cooperation with Bangladesh in areas like trade, investment, air services and shipping to catalyze a closer relation between Asean and South Asia.

Bangladesh is Singapore's second-largest trading partner in South Asia while Singapore is one of the top foreign investors in Bangladesh, he pointed out.

Last year both the countries signed "Investment Guarantee Agreement". And "we are now looking forward to signing a maritime transport agreement. These agreements, he said, will foster economic cooperation and attract more Singaporean investors to Bangladesh.

Welcoming Khaleda's visit, Lee said Singapore is an opportunity for both the countries to lead this relationship to the next height, as Bangladesh goes ahead with its economic reforms.

The dinner was attended, among others, by Mrs. Lee Hsien Loong, senior Singaporean leaders and members of the Bangladesh delegation.

There is no provision for any other organisation to take any administrative decision, leave alone transfer, about them, the letter adds.

The letter goes on to say that since the Cabinet Division has not transferred these officials, they will not get any official benefits or formal support for it.

Lt Col Abdul Hannan Mridha, a Bac director and also a reserved employee, issued the transfer order using a non-existing designation of director (administration and establishment) of ACC.

The order came after ACC Commissioner Prof Maniruzzaman Miah had asked for 12 Bac officials to attach to him. Of them, seven were on the transfer list.

After receiving the transfer order, the eight officials applied to the Cabinet Division for arranging their transfer with advance transfer and dearness allowances and last pay certificates.