

Khaleda urges people to resist trouble-makers

BSS, Pangsha, Rajbari

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged people to make politically ineffective those who always try to harm the country and its people by perpetrating the politics of destruction.

Addressing a public meeting at Pangsha University College ground here, she said a particular political party is out to create anarchy and chaos, as it has sensed defeat in the next general elections under the caretaker government system.

That is why, she said, the opposition is out to disturb peace and opposing the existing electoral process under the caretaker government system. She said the next polls will be held under the caretaker government system as envisaged in the constitution.

The prime minister urged people to strengthen the hands of those who are implementing the development programmes to make

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Disqualified bidder bags power plant contract

Govt to pay \$8.6m compensation to UK constructor of Bhairab bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee yesterday approved awarding a contract to set up a 90 MW combined cycle power plant in Fenchuganj to a disqualified and lone bidder.

The committee meeting chaired by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman also decided to pay an additional \$86 million to the British construction contractor of Bangladesh-UK Friendship Bridge in Bhairab to avoid litigation.

It okayed three other projects -- to set up a 230 KV power distribution line in Iswardi-Baghabari, to overhaul and expand 27 power substations

and to construct a 33/11 KV substation in Chittagong, and to step up capacities of two power plants in Narsingdi and Comilla

The meeting approved purchase of 20,000 metric tons of wheat from India. It however turned down a land-filling project of Rajuk in Uttara.

FENCHUGANJ PLANT

Chinese Harbin Power Engineering Ltd, backed by a business lobby close to the government, yesterday got the contract for Fenchuganj power plant after Power Development Board (PDB) cancelled five rounds of tender bids.

The purchase committee meeting also decided to give Harbin 10 per-

cent down payment before launching the government-financed project.

Harbin has won the bid by making an offer to complete the project at Tk 5.24 billion, whereas the last cancelled bid drew an offer of \$85 million (around Tk 5 billion at the government-determined conversion rate) from Sumitomo of Japan.

The other cancelled bids generated wider participation and lower price-offers, but every time pressure from the lobbies who tried to win the bid using political clout led to a cancellation.

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Graft-ridden RPCL shakes off govt stake

SHARIER KHAN And JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The board of directors of Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL) set up by Rural Electrification Board (REB) sacked its chairman representing the government stakes in the company on Sunday.

Sources said RPCL claims REB, a government agency, no longer holds any of its shares and palli bidyut boards (PBSs), which previously held its majority stakes, now have completely taken it over.

"Two PBSs from Dhaka and Narsingdi have purchased the REB stakes in RPCL," said RPCL Acting Managing Director Ismat Alam.

When the company went in commercial operation in 2000, it had the provision that REB's shares would be sold out to PBSs by 2005. "Initially REB's share in the company was 51 percent. This has

gradually dwindled to 18 percent recently. At a meeting Sunday, these remaining shares have been off-loaded," Alam explained.

But REB finds the raid abrupt and unacceptable. A REB official said the rural power board still holds 28 percent stake of RPCL.

At Sunday's meeting, in which the two PBSs purchased the REB shares, there was no representation of REB.

"It is known to REB that at one point its shares will be off-loaded," Alam said, when asked how can one sell other's shares without his presence or approval. He claimed REB earlier told RPCL to off-load its remaining shares.

The raid put REB Chairman Dr AKM Helal-uz-Zaman out of the chair of RPCL board, prompting the state minister for power to call REB and RPCL chiefs for a dialogue, which was held yesterday, but

ended inconclusively. Sources said RPCL is passing through a volatile phase due to a government move against rampant corruption in it.

A businessman, who, though an outsider, practically runs RPCL, has been masterminding a series of changes in the company to root out any opposition, sources said.

The businessman representing Lahmeyer Bangladesh, the unsolicited and over-priced consultant and maintenance contractor of RPCL's 140 megawatt Mymensingh power plant, became exposed last year following a report run by The Daily Star.

RPCL launched a manipulative bid to grab a 450 megawatt power project with German finance. This prompted the German government to propose an audit of RPCL projects. While the government was

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PHOTO: STAR

Workers of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority knock down illegal structures on a canal in Mugdapara as part of a drive yesterday.

Tata now to invest \$2.5b in Bangladesh

Submits feasibility report

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Indian industrial giant Tata Group submitted its feasibility study report on an investment proposal in Bangladesh to the Board of Investment (BoI) yesterday, showing interest to increase their investment to \$2.5 billion from a prior figure of \$2 billion.

"We found in the feasibility study that it will take US\$500 million more for implementing the three proposed projects in the country," Tata's Bangladesh chapter head, Manjer Hossain, told the BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman during the submission of

the study report.

The officials expressed their optimism that the group can start groundwork for the projects in Bangladesh beginning next December.

Tata group plans to set up a 1,000 MW power station, a steel mill with an annual capacity of 420,000 tonnes, and a fertiliser unit with one million-tonne capacity.

The proposed investment plan is the second highest, next to Singapore, among Tata's overseas investment programmes, sources said.

The group demanded an

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Govt to make petrol, octane prices equal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to increase the price of petrol to make it equal to octane price as a measure to check adulteration, sources said.

The price of petrol will be raised by Tk 2 to Tk 35 per litre, they said.

"We took a decision in this regard at a meeting with the finance minister on Tuesday and we will soon finalise it," State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain told reporters at

his office yesterday.

The government, the sole importer of fuel, buys petrol and octane at same price from the international market and their prices are same all over the world, the minister said.

In Bangladesh, a section of unscrupulous traders adulterate octane with cheaper petrol to make excessive profit from octane.

The government is also contemplating increasing prices of diesel,

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Sound mixer Mobin killed in road crash

3 Black band members also hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leading sound engineer died and three members of a popular music band of the country were injured in a road crash on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Chouddagram in Comilla in the early hours yesterday.

Composer-turned-sound engineer Imran Ahmed Chowdhury Mobin, along with members of the

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CCC POLLS

EC meets today on security steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hold a high level meeting today to chalk out full-proof security measures for ensuring free and fair Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) polls on May 9th.

Senior officials of the home ministry, the police administration, the army and the Bangladesh Rifles

will attend the meeting at the conference room of the EC secretariat, sources said.

The meeting will chalk out security measures to be implemented by the home ministry, based on a review of the prevailing law and

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Prayer Timing		
April 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-27	6-31
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation