

Over 1,000MW loadshedding during Ramadan likely

UNB, Dhaka

With more than 1,000 MW loadshedding during the peak hours across the country a regular feature, the holy month of Ramadan begins today.

Official sources said despite repeated efforts by the authorities concerned, there was hardly any improvement in the power generation and supply situation across the country.

They said the country might experience about 1,000MW load-shedding during the peak hours in the holy month of Ramadan with a number of large power generation units gone out of operation for various reasons.

Officials at the Power Development Board (PDB) apprehend that people

are likely to face the worst ever power crisis during the holy month due to a huge shortfall in generation.

Power generation of at least nine large units remained suspended as of yesterday. These include unit 4 and 5 of Kaptai hydropower station (capacity 100 MW), 210 MW unit of Raosan, unit 6 (210 MW) of Ghorasal station, unit 4 (150 MW) of Ashuganj station, unit 1 (210 MW) and old unit (50 MW) of Siddhirganj station, 40 MW unit of Shikabaha and 60 MW unit of Khulna station.

Besides, a number of small units in the northern region are also out of order.

PDB officials said they made several attempts to resume operation of the closed units before the start of the

Ramadan, but those proved abortive.

At present, the PDB and the independent power producers (IPP) generate between 3,100 and 3,200 MW electricity against a countrywide daily demand of about 4,200 MW.

PDB officials said it is almost unlikely that the situation would improve during the Ramadan. Rather, they apprehend that the situation may aggravate further if any more unit is forced to go out of operation.

They mentioned that electricity generation has become most vulnerable with the majority of the plants being old and decrepit, as they lost their installed operational capacity.

"Most of these old units were due to retire long ago... but still the PDB is compelled to operate the units for lack

of new generation units", said a top PDB official.

"We know these units are vulnerable and may be forced to go out of operation anytime. But we don't have other options," he added.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood recently held a meeting at the PDB headquarters with top officials of different bodies under his ministry to discuss the power supply situation.

At the meeting, the officials of the PDB, Reb, Desa and Desco mentioned the constraints in the power sector and expressed their inability to assure the minister that the situation would be better during the month of Ramadan.

Natwar Singh for removal of visa barriers among Saarc nations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India's External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh yesterday said he favours elimination of visa barriers among the Saarc member countries.

The issue will be discussed during the forthcoming Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit in Dhaka, he told the Geo TV of Pakistan after a meeting with the politicians and senior citizens in Karachi.

He also said that opening of Karachi and Mumbai consulates is a top priority for reducing people's suffering.

During a meeting with the businessmen, Natwar Singh said that industrialists and traders would enjoy visa relaxation soon.

Traders and common people of both the countries are backing the peace process, he said, adding that Pakistan and India have vast prospects of cooperation in civil aviation, pharmaceuticals industry, textile, agriculture and banking sector.

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mother has appealed for financial assistance to save the eyesight of her 13-month-old daughter.

Nafisa Mehreen Samin had already lost her one eye when she was only four months old. Doctors removed the eye after she was diagnosed with Retina Blastoma, a kind of tumour, says a press release.

Medical tests suggest that her remaining active eye, the left one, may develop a similar tumour, making her visually-impaired.

Although doctors managed to stop further spread of the tumour through laser surgery, they fear it will grow unless she is given treatment up to five years of age.

The treatment requires her parents to take her to eye specialists in Chennai, India at least once every three months and the total costs involve about Tk 15 lakh.

Samin's father, a bank official, and mother, administrative officer of an organisation, can no longer afford to bear such a huge expense.

Her mother, Rehana Akter Ruma, has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save the eyesight of the baby.

Contributions can be sent to the Savings Account No.-21008405, City Bank, Dhaka Chamber Branch, Motijheel, Dhaka. Interested persons can also call at 152-410293 or 0189-454691.

Tariqat Fed protests harassment of its leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Tariqat Federation yesterday strongly protested the harassment of pir mashaekhs (spiritual leaders) and its leaders by the intelligence agencies.

At an emergency meeting, the Federation leaders alleged that the officials of different intelligence agencies came to the meeting places of the pir mashaekhs and pressed them to issue a protest letter for publication in the newspapers to the effect that they do not have any links with the federation.

The officials also harassed Maolana Zakir Hossain, secretary general of the Federation, at his office, said a press release.

The Federation leaders threatened that they would launch a tough movement if the four-party alliance government does not stop its repressive acts. They said the pir mashaekhs are now united to protect the nation and the Islam from terrorism and bombings.

Condemning the recent bomb blasts in three districts, the leaders called on the government to bring the culprits to book.

Presided over by Federation Chairman Syed Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari, the meeting was addressed by Golam Mosabbir Hossainee Chisti, Syed Habibul Bashar Maizbhandari, Shah Nure Belal Sureshwari and Syed Rezaul Haq Chandpuri.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Dr GM Mohiuddin, senior medical consultant of Bangladesh Council of Scientific Research (BCSIR) died of cancer at Holy Family Hospital in the city on Tuesday night at the age of 48.

He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter.

He was buried at the family graveyard of his village at Kachua in Chadpuri.

POWER GENERATION

PM's claim travesty of truth: Saber

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's political secretary, yesterday demanded withdrawal of the recent claim by the Prime Minister about generation of power terming it as a travesty of truth.

He also condemned the PM's claim saying that people could not help but lose trust on the government while the highest person of the government tells a lie.

In a statement Saber said the state minister for power confessed his failure in generating power on August 8, saying that only 80 MW of electricity was added in the national grid in the four years of the alliance government and that project was also taken during the previous AL regime.

"Only a month after the state minister's confession, the PM baselessly claimed for increasing the power generation by 1,200 MWs," Saber said.

He pointed to the conflicting statements by the government high-ups on one issue and commented obviously one of them was making a lie.

"It also proves the lack of coordination inside the government."

Saber further claimed that the AL government boosted the power generating capacity of the country from 1,600 MW to 4,000 MW and blasted the government for increasing the price of electricity time-to-time. He said, "The alliance government totally failed to meet the increasing demand of power."

"There is no way to hide the failure of the government with false information," Saber added.

Time to deposit Hajj money extended

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Time to deposit money for Hajj pilgrimage 2006 has been extended.

The intending ballotee Hajj pilgrims shall have to deposit money by October 16 and non-ballotees by October 31.

The ministry of religious affairs yesterday said all the intending pilgrims may collect the forms from Sonali, Rupali, Agroni, Janata, Pubali, Dhaka, Islami Bangladesh, Oriental, AL Arafah banks, City Bank, Krishi and Rajshahi Krishi Unayan Bank or Dhaka Hajj office. They are to submit duly filled-in forms to respective administration offices by 16 October.

Deputy Commissioners will send forms to Dhaka Hajj office by October 18. Deputy Commissioner will also send the list of intending Hajj pilgrims to police supers/commissioners and chiefs of district medical boards for police clearance and medical examinations.

Court hours during Ramadan

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain fixed the office timing for the Supreme Court and its subordinate courts during the month of Ramadan yesterday.

An official handout said the office hours of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court from Sunday to Thursday will be from 8:30am to 2:00pm.

The court hours of the High Court division will be from 10:30am to 3:15pm with a 45-minute recess at 1:15 pm. The office hours for the Division will be from 9:45am to 3:30pm with a 15-minute recess at 1:15pm.

For Civil Courts under the HC division, the court hours will be from 9:30am to 3:00pm with a 15-minute recess at 1:15pm. The office hours for the civil courts will be from 9:00am to 3:30pm with a 15-minute recess at 1:15pm.

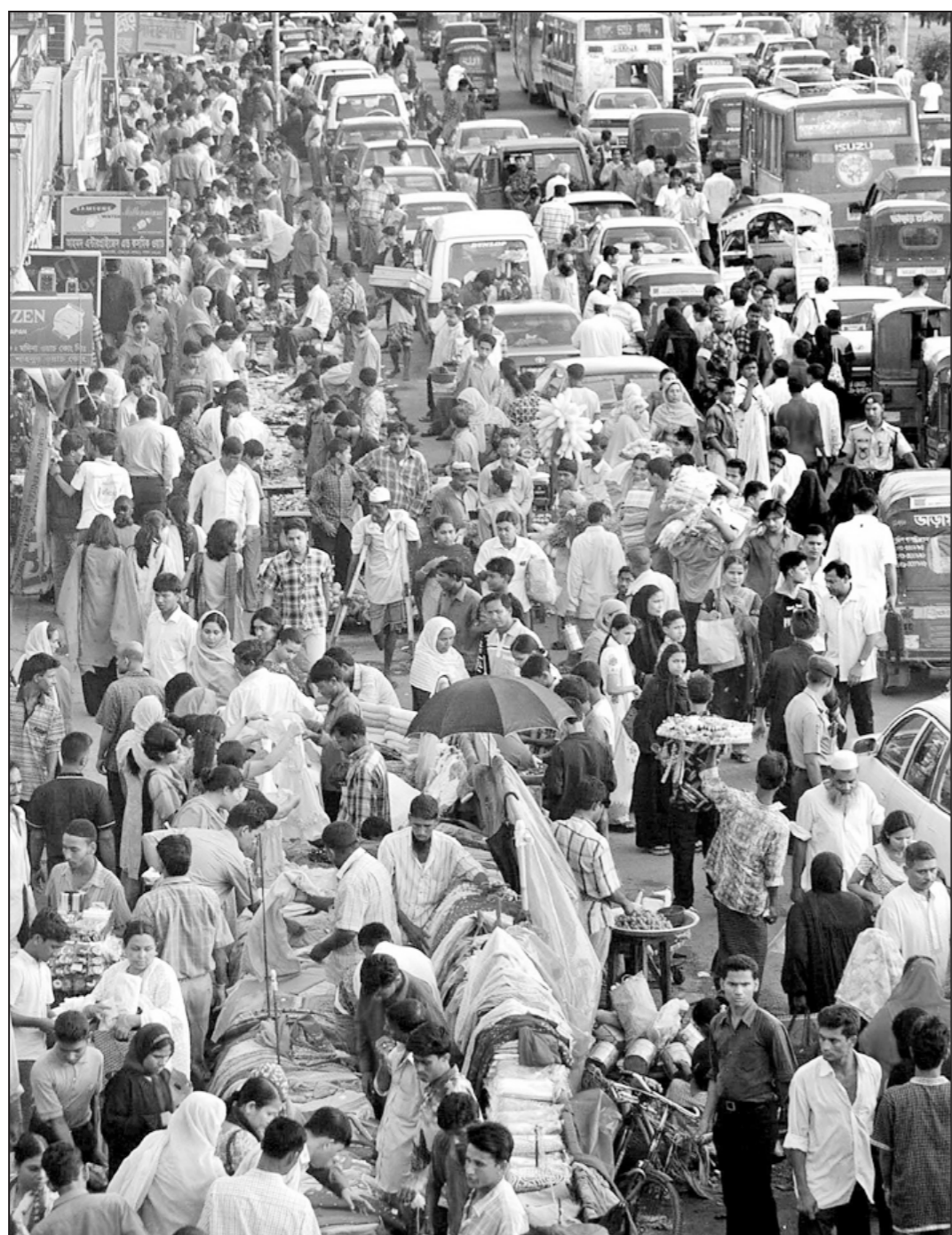


PHOTO: STAR

Hawkers have again occupied the footpaths in the New Market area in the city, forcing the pedestrians to walk along the road, which leads to traffic congestion.

Tk 32 cr Dhaka-Joydevpur dual-gauge rail line okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved two projects involving an expenditure of Tk 49 crore.

One of the projects will replace the existing metre-gauge line on Dhaka-Tongi-Joydevpur rail route with dual-gauge line at a cost of Tk 32 crore.

The second project involves development of Maowa-Bhanga highway and construction of Haji

Shariatullah bridge.

Tk 17 crore was approved for the project. The amount is additional to the project's original cost of Tk 1100 crore. The additional amount was required as the model of the project had been changed.

A third item in the agenda concerning import of one lakh ton of rice was not raised in the meeting as the minister concerned was not present.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman presided over the meeting.

Painter dies in fall from second floor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A painter died after falling from the second floor of a four-storey building at Monipuri Para in the city yesterday.

Mosharrar Hossain, 18, along with two other workers was painting an outside wall of the building in the afternoon, but suddenly he slipped to the ground.

Ratan, one of his colleagues, rushed him to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

When contacted, Tejgaon Police said they have no knowledge of such an incident.

Meghbarta completes seven years of publication

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Meghbarta, an online magazine, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, completed its seven years of publication on Tuesday.

The address of the website is www.meghbarta.org. The monthly webzine, edited by Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University, has been published both in Bangla and English on the Internet since 1999.

The Meghbarta publishes different types of articles and interviews, highlighting incidents of discrimination and repression taking place both at home and abroad.

Besides, it contains photography, cartoons and audio and video clips. It is going to publish a special supplementary on Latin America.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over the country till 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 34.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 21.2 degree Celsius at Sayedpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:41 pm today and rises at 5:52am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.2	25.7	77	81
Chittagong	32.5	25.3	84	85
Rajshahi	26.4	22.8	91	88
Khulna	32.2	25.6	81	85
Barisal	33.0	25.6	83	85
Sylhet	34.0	24.4	74	79
Cox's Bazar	32.4	25.4	80	80



PHOTO: STAR

Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital forms a human chain in front of the Supreme Court in the city yesterday to raise awareness about breast cancer.

Bangladesh achieves two MDGs

Foreign Secy tells Committee of Whole House in London

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has already achieved two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) -- access to safe drinking water and gender parity in the primary and secondary education, said Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin at a meeting of the Committee of the Whole House in London yesterday.

He also made interventions on a number of agendas, including democracy and development and human rights, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Hemayetuddin, now in London to attend the Commonwealth senior officials' meeting, held a meeting with his British counterpart Sir Michael Jay at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Tuesday.

They discussed the entire range of

bilateral matters in a constructive manner and exchanged views on regional and international issues.

The foreign secretary also had a meeting with Commonwealth Secretary General Don Mackinnon. They discussed issues relating to the forthcoming Commonwealth Summit to be held in Malta in November as well as ways to step up cooperation between Bangladesh and the Commonwealth, particularly in the areas of technical assistance.

He briefed the Commonwealth Secretary General on various developments Bangladesh has achieved in the socio-economic arenas in recent years.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in the UK AH Mofazzal Karim was present at the meetings.

Cardamom worth Tk 50 lakh recovered in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) police recovered two trucks of imported cardamom worth around Tk 50 lakh and arrested one person in the port city in the early hours yesterday.

Tipped off, a squad of DB police raided an iron-manufacturing factory of MA Malek at Nasirabad area at around 3:00am.

They recovered cardamom in 125

cartons worth around Tk 50 lakh from Mahmud Iron Safe Products Factory and arrested Sunil Dey in this connection, sources said.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) arrested 118 persons on different charges in separate raids conducted in the different areas of the city during the last 24 hours ending at 6:00pm yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Awami Sechchhasebak League march in a procession in the city yesterday protesting price spiral of essentials and bomb attacks across the country.

DHAKA TODAY

Launching ceremony

Unnayan Shamannay and Cuts, India, jointly organise the launching ceremony of the project titled 'Linkage between trade, development and poverty reduction' with Redwan Ahmed MP, chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce, as guest of honour. Dr Atiur Rahman, chairman, Unnayan Shamannay, will preside over the ceremony. Venue: Brac Centre Inn auditorium, Mohakhali. Time: 2:00pm.

Discussion on maths

Bigganchetona Parishad, an organisation to create consciousness about science, organises a special

discussion on 'Philosophical nature of mathematics' with Professor Liaqat Ali, president of Sanskriti Bikash Kendra, as keynote speaker. Professor Mozaffar Ahmed, president, Bigganchetona Parishad, will preside over the function. Venue: Office of the organisation, Aziz Super Market, Shahbagh. Time: 6:30pm.

Rally

Green Voice will hold a student and youth rally protesting conspiracy of multinational corporations to loot country's coal resources and demanding cancellation of unequal treaty with Asia Energy. Venue: Shahbagh (opposite to Public Library). Time: 11:30am.

AMCH AWARENESS CAMPAIGN 'About 1.20 lakh women suffer from breast cancer'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

About 1.20 lakh women have been suffering from breast cancer in the country.

Director of the Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) Prof Dr MA Hai said this at a human chain programme in the city yesterday.

Dr Hai said many of them die miserable deaths mostly because they were not properly aware of the symptoms of it, do not take care at the primary stage and come to the doctors when it is beyond control.

"Now a days cent percent of the breast cancer cases can be completely cured through medical treatment if detected at the early stage," he added.

AMCH organised the human chain as part of its month-long programme on breast cancer awareness throughout October.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam, former health secretary Fazlur Rahman, representatives of Bangladesh Scouts and a good number of doctors, nurses, NGO workers and the social elite joined the human chain.

As part of its programme, AMCH will be offering mammography and other screening services at a 50% reduced rate throughout October and anybody can learn breast self-examination procedure from trained lady nurses of this hospital free of cost.

DHAKA EASTERN BYPASS Committee to formulate plan, implement project

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government has formed a 25-member high-powered committee headed by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman to formulate a plan and implement the mega Dhaka integrated flood control dam-cum-eastern bypass project.

"The committee was formed on September 28 as per demand of the World Bank (WB) to set up a separate authority to implement the project," said a source at the Water Resources Ministry.

The committee headed by Saifur Rahman comprises five cabinet ministers, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) mayor, two state ministers, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, nine secretaries of different ministries and heads of Rajuk, Roads and Highways, Dhaka Wasa, Local Government and Engineering Division, Forest and Environment Department, CEO of DCC and Water Development Board Director General, who has been made member-secretary.

The committee will form a detail plan of the project mentioning scope of work, objectives, components, financing and implementation methodology of the project.

It will also recommend about the coordination during the implementation period of the project.

The Dhaka integrated flood control dam-cum-eastern bypass project is a multi-dimensional, complicated and expensive plan, sources said.

For the project's largeness and huge monetary involvement, Saifur earlier said, "We need to conduct more and more studies on whether we have capacity and other regulatory measures to carry out the work."

The cost of the project was estimated at Tk 2,475.82 crore, of which, Tk 821.65 crore was supposed to be provided by development partners, particularly WB and the remaining Tk 1,654.16 crore by local sources.

About the project, Saifur said the cost was projected in 1999 and it would not be less than Tk 3,000 crore in 2005.

Resignation of commerce minister demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Left-leaning 11-party leaders yesterday demanded expulsion of the commerce minister from the cabinet for allegedly giving shelter to Mufti Abdul Hannan, prime accused in a plot to assassinate Awami League President Sheikh Hasina in 2000.

Addressing a meeting in the city, they also asked the government to expel all ministers and lawmakers of Rajshahi region for 'assisting and giving shelters' to Islamist militants including Bangla Bhai.

The 11-party leaders said from the confessional statement of Mufti Hannan it is now clear that the militant groups have strengthened their position with the assistance of alliance government and its ministers.

Taking the advantage of government's negative stance on August 17 blasts across the country, the militant groups have again dared to carry out bombings in the courtrooms of three districts, they added.

Party leaders Rashed Khan Menon, Nurul Islam, Bimol Biswas, Mofizul Islam Khan, Dilip Borua, Abdus Samad and Zakir Hossain spoke at the meeting.