

PDB incurs Tk 42cr loss a month

Chairman bemoans graft, big gap in buying, selling rates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chairman of Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday presented a grim picture of the board's financial performances wondering how it survives over the years incurring a net loss of Tk 42 crore every month.

"It's very surprising how the PDB is still functioning after incurring Tk 41.89 crore loss every month," PDB Chairman ANM Rizwan said. He was pointing out at a roundtable the problems the board is experiencing to face the ongoing challenges in the power sector.

The PDB is facing a serious financial problem, as there is a big gap between the buying and selling rates of power, he said. The board is selling power at a rate lower than its purchase price, he added.

Turning to a possible solution, he said, "It won't be possible to solve the problem without addressing corruption." The situation will not improve unless "power theft" is stopped.

The power theft ranges between 16-18 percent in addition to 7-8

percent technical systems loss, he observed.

The board incurs losses of Tk 11.72 crore for selling power to Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), Tk 21 crore to Rural Electrification Board (REB) and over Tk 5 crore to Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco), the PDB chairman added.

The board itself now distributes only 22 percent of the total power, while the rest is being distributed by the Desa, REB and Desco.

When total power generation is 3,700 megawatt at best, the demand rises between 4,000MW to 4,200MW, he said. The wide gap between the demand and generation is the main reason behind huge load shedding.

The Department of Industrial and Production Engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) organised the roundtable on energy sector at its auditorium in Dhaka. Professor Nurul Islam of the Buet moderated the roundtable.

BD Rahmatullah, director gen-

eral of Power Cell, identified pressure from different organisations and lack of accountability and transparency as main problems in the power sector.

Addressing the roundtable, Desa Chairman Md Tauhidul Islam said the main reason behind Desa's poor performance is its weak management.

Besides, failure of the policymakers to address the problem is another setback, Islam mentioned.

Md Mosharrar Hossain, member of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, said energy price in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the world.

"Tariff has become a very crucial factor. It won't be possible to solve many of the problems in the energy sector without readjusting the tariff," he observed.

Petrobangla Director Rahman Murshed said the current electricity crisis is not for the problems in gas supply.

Shafiu Azam, director of

Hartal called in Rajshahi for gas supply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Traders' Alliance Council (RTAC) called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal on April 9 in the city demanding supply of natural gas through pipelines.

In a press conference yesterday, RTAC leaders announced the hartal saying that the inhabitants of the region are being deceived for a long time in the name of supplying gas.

They are also disappointed by the vagueness in the prime minister's speech delivered in Rajshahi on March 29 concerning the issue, the speakers added.

RTAC President Mosharaf Hossain Akhunjhi and Secretary

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Air chief gets one-year job extension

UNB, Dhaka

The services of Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Fakhru Azam have been extended for a year.

The extension of tenure of the air chief takes effect from April 8, said a defence ministry notification here yesterday.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Chaos prevails at Kansat, Chapainawabganj as BNP cadres swoop on locals demanding uninterrupted electricity yesterday. Three people were killed and 100 injured in the clash.

EDEN COLLEGE JCD leader files counter case for Mar 14 clash

DU CORRESPONDENT

A leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Eden University College unit yesterday filed a counter suit of attempted murder against more than a hundred students and a teacher of the college in connection with the March 14 clash.

Taslima Akter Rehena, joint convener of the college unit JCD and a master's student of Geography, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mamun Al Rashid directed the officer-in-charge (OC) of Lalbagh Police Station to submit a report within next 30 days after investigation.

The accused are Shamima Akter, lecturer of the Krishna History Department, Krishna

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PHOTO: STAR

Australian cricket team captain Ricky Ponting, right, and champion leg spinner Shane Warne look out of bus window on their way to hotel after arriving in Dhaka yesterday to play two Test matches and three ODIs against Bangladesh.

Khaleda snubs opposition for reform stance

UNB, Noakhali

Rebutting opposition insistence on electoral reforms, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday questioned why the Awami League did not reform the system of caretaker government while in power.

Addressing a public meeting at Subarnachar in the afternoon, she claimed the present system of caretaker government is perfect for holding free, fair and neutral elections. She also claimed the present Election Commission (EC) is headed by a neutral man from the country's highest judiciary.

"If the system was faulty, why the Awami League, while in power for five years, did not raise the question of reform and did not do it?" she posed the question before her audience.

In a counter-accusation against

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India to skip Bangladesh to tap Myanmar gas

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India has decided to bypass Bangladesh in its desperate bid to import natural gas from Myanmar and begun the process for an alternative route for receiving the hydrocarbon.

After about a year-long stalemate in talks with Bangladesh, and Myanmar's threat to sell its gas to other countries, India has decided to import the gas from two Myanmarese offshore blocks without touching Bangladesh territory.

The state-owned Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) has asked a private company to conduct the feasibility studies to transport the gas from Myanmar to be received at Patna, official sources said.

ONGC Videsh Ltd has already

taken 20 percent stake and GAIL 10 percent in two blocks of SHWE offshore gas fields in Myanmar. One of these blocks is to start supplying gas to India from 2009.

Another study has been commissioned to assess feasibility of transporting the gas in the form of compressed natural gas (CNG) bypassing Bangladesh, they said. The reports of the studies are likely by next month, the sources said.

The government took the step as Myanmar raised doubts over India's seriousness in the project and sought "clarifications" urgently on how India proposed to move ahead.

Myanmar has threatened that if India does not decide on the project fast, it would consider selling its gas to some other countries like China and Thailand.

According to an understanding

between India, Myanmar and Bangladesh, the construction of an 800-kilometre pipeline was scheduled to start this year. The project was estimated to cost about \$2.5 billion (approx Rs 12,000 crore) and gas was to be delivered from 2009.

However, the project got entangled in delay because of Bangladesh's insistence that India meet its certain demands before it allows passage of the hydrocarbon through its territory, the sources said.

Bangladesh demanded duty-free access of its goods to India and transit facility for its goods to Nepal and Bhutan. India however says Bangladesh already has transit facility for its goods to Nepal and Bhutan.

With regard to the duty-free

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Next polls may be influenced by militancy

Says Canadian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Canadian High Commissioner in Dhaka Barbara Richardson yesterday said the upcoming general elections in Bangladesh might be influenced by militancy if all the militant attacks were not fully investigated.

"The government has many things to do to eliminate the root of militancy from the country. The upcoming elections might be influenced if all the attacks are not fully investigated," the envoy told reporters after her meeting with

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40 militants killed in Pak fighting

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani authorities said yesterday that up to 40 militants were killed by security forces in clashes a day earlier in a remote tribal region near the Afghanistan border.

After a major operation on Wednesday in North Waziristan tribal district, the military had said at least 16 militants were killed and 19 captured.

An official statement by the tribal area administration in North West Frontier Province did not elaborate on the higher death toll.

"The clashes that took place

between the miscreants and security forces in two different areas of North Waziristan Agency on Wednesday left as many as 40 miscreants dead," it said.

The army backed by gunship helicopters went into action in the Shawal region of North Waziristan after militants attacked a security post with rockets, killing three soldiers.

Another soldier died in the ensuing clashes.

Two soldiers were injured in another attack Tuesday by militants on a nearby post in Dattakhel

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BIMAN'S LOSS CONTROL MOVE

Dhaka-NY flight through Manchester from tomorrow

REAZ AHMAD

Biman Bangladesh Airlines reroutes its Dhaka-New York flight from tomorrow in a last-ditch effort to end a perennial financial damage.

Aiming at halving the weekly loss of Tk 35 lakh in operating the Dhaka-Dubai-Brussels-New York flight, the national flag carrier now reroutes the flight through Manchester, UK, dropping Brussels as a stopover point.

Biman has already closed down

its Brussels office and would soon bring back to Dhaka its station manager and operation manager there. Its off-line office in Manchester would now be upgraded as an online office, official sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Biman Managing Director MA Momen and Director (marketing) Mahmoodur Rahman are scheduled to be on the rerouted first

flight through Manchester at 8:00 am tomorrow.

"With its New York flight rerouted through Manchester, the national airlines would be able to better serve both the incoming and outgoing ethnic air passengers from UK," said a top Biman official.

Besides, Manchester Airport authorities have agreed to provide Biman with ground handling facilities at economy rate, he said.

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Thaksin must quit politics completely

Demands Thai opposition

AFP, Bangkok

Opponents of Thaksin Shinawatra forecast yesterday that he would hold on to power despite stepping aside and vowed to keep up protests against the former Thai premier until he quits politics completely.

Thaksin on Tuesday bowed to months of demonstrations demanding he resign for abuse of power and said he would give up the premier's post, even though his ruling party won a majority of the vote in week-end elections.

But the billionaire businessman turned politician also said he would stay on in parliament and as leader of the Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) party he founded and led during his five years in power.

Speaking on the eve of more protests against Thaksin Friday, opposition Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva said the outgoing premier would seek to keep control of the government.

"If he is just taking a break to pull the strings, it is not exactly stepping aside but staying in control of the

new premier," said Abhisit.

"Thai democracy will suffer huge damage if one person has a lot of power without responsibility. That would cause more conflict among the Thai people."

Thaksin, 56, has appointed his deputy and justice minister Chidchai Vanasatidya to replace him as caretaker prime minister.

On Thursday he said he would stay in Bangkok for three or four days to finish up remaining business and get a medical checkup, denying reports he would visit his northern home city of Chiang Mai or his daughter in Britain.

"I'm not talking about politics today, it's enough," Thaksin told reporters in Bangkok, where the streets were quiet on Thursday, a public holiday, in stark contrast to the tumultuous scenes of recent months.

Mass protests demanding Thaksin's resignation began in early February after his family sold 1.9 billion dollars of shares in Shin Corp, the telecoms firm he founded

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BSF kills 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) killed a Bangladeshi youth at the bordering Taralia village under Swarnapara thana in Chhabish Pargana yesterday.

The dead was identified as Aatur Rahman, 21, son of Gobindakathi village of Sathkira Sadar upazila.

Sources said Aatur and four others were going to India to buy cattle. On the way, the BSF nabbed them at Taralia village and brutally beat them up.

At one point, BSF personnel

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Prayer Timing		
April 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		



PHOTO: STAR

Relatives of a patient set the intravenous saline apparatus as interns of the Chittagong Medical College and Hospital continue their strike for the second day yesterday.

Murder case accused killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A chargesheeted accused in the DCC ward commissioner Binoy Sarkar Bina murder case was killed in "crossfire" during a gunfight between his associates and police Sutrapur in the capital yesterday.

The dead, Shamim Alam alias Guddu, 37, a resident of Lal Mohan Saha Street in Sutrapur, was accused in at least nine other cases including six for murders.

Plainclothes police arrested Guddu on March 3 at his sister-in-law's house in West Jatrabari. He was on a two-day remand in connection with a murder case.

Police sources said Guddu admitted that his armed associates were hiding at a dilapidated house on Lal Mohan Saha Street. A police team took him there to recover the firearms and arrest his associates

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