

POWER SITUATION IMPROVES SIGNIFICANTLY

Load shedding drops to 200MW from 1200MW

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) has made a significant improvement in power supply in the last two months mainly by improving day-to-day management where officials and technical experts are encouraged to take independent decisions, sources said.

Moreover, the government's successful implementation of load management and staggering holidays at industrial zones, improvement in gas supply to power plants, and high emphasis on bill collection also have significant contributions in this regard. Now the margin of load shedding has dropped from 1,200MW to a mere 100-200MW.

The country experienced load

shedding by a massive margin of maximum 2,000MW a day last year.

Against an official maximum demand of 4,240MW, the PDB is now supplying more than 4,100MW of power from 100 different power units of 27 power plants by improving plant efficiency.

The same number of plants was providing the nation with maximum 2,800MW of power last year.

Since then, only one additional power unit of 70MW--the Mymensingh Power Plant--came into operation two months ago.

Currently, 12 power units remain shut down for maintenance work. If all these units start operation, the country's power production could be as high as 4,600MW, which is more than the official demand.

In addition to increased power

production, revenue collection by the PDB and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) has also shot up significantly.

Sources said PDB's revenue collection has shot up to Tk 5,000 crore in the calendar year, while its bill collection ratio has shot up to 110 percent from its previous 80-85 percent.

PDB's biggest single client Desa's payment to PDB for purchase of power has exceeded Tk 100 crore a month.

"Desa's bill collection ratio has also significantly gone up. Fearing arrest by the joint forces, many large power consumers that had deliberately defaulted on bills of hundreds of crores of taka are now paying off their arrears," said an official.

The PDB's overall systems loss has also improved by 2.5 percent in the last nine months. Whereas the systems loss was 17.5 percent in January, it quickly came down to 15 percent after the change of government.

"This alone has saved PDB power worth Tk 110 crore in the last nine months," the official added.

"It doesn't mean PDB's problems are over. It means that even within limitations, professionals can do a better job if they are properly given the responsibility.

"There can be a major power blackout or grid failure and there is still load shedding. To ensure a safe power supply, we must have at least

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The 40-year-old building of Wapda in Mirpur-11 Block-B is falling apart. The building, which houses around 100 stranded Pakistani families, was declared abandoned three years ago and the inhabitants were asked to leave, but they are still living there ignoring the danger.



PHOTO: STAR

A woman browses through saris hung at a shop at Eastern Plaza in the capital yesterday as the rush of Eid shopping kicks off. The price of sari is allegedly higher than that of previous years.

8 die after eating puffer fish

OUR CORRESPONDENTS, N'ganj

Eight people, including a couple, died and 20 others became sick after eating large sea puffer fish (patka fish) in Araihaaz upazila of the district.

They bought the fish from Golakandail village market on Thursday and died in between Thursday night and Friday morning.

Of the victims one died at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) while receiving treatment. Six persons are receiving treatment at DMCH.

Harimohon, the fish seller, told reporters that he had bought the puffer fish, weighing 250 grams each, from Jatrabari wholesale fish market in Dhaka and sold them at Tk 30 per kilogram.

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T20 WORLD CUP

Tasty semis today

SPORTS REPORTER

After eleven days of absorbing cricket, India and Pakistan face the strong Oceanic contingent of Australia and New Zealand in two semifinals of the ICC Twenty20 World Championships in South Africa today.

In the first semifinal, to be played from 5pm Bangladesh Standard Time (BST), volatile Pakistan take on New Zealand at the picturesque Newlands ground in Cape Town while in Durban at 10pm BST, India face Australia. Both sub-continent giants would look to breathe life into a year full of controversies and move into the final. Both matches will be telecast a live on ESPN.

But the more mouth-watering contest is in Durban where India, riding high after two top-class

performances against England and South Africa, take on Australia, world champions in all forms of the game, but showing unusual signs of susceptibility in the Twenty20 format.

India have the advantage of being familiar with the conditions as they have played three times under the Kingsmead lights and will know to a large extent what to expect from the pitch and the conditions. Australia, on the other hand, have never played in Durban during this tournament, and only one of their five games have been a late start.

India captain Mahendra Singh and stylish batsman Yuvraj Singh have assured that they are fit for the semifinal. Dhoni struggled with a back strain in their superb win over South Africa on Thursday night

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Police disperse protest march towards Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday dispersed a march towards the office of the daily Prothom Alo in the capital, which was protesting the publication of a cartoon strip in the newspaper's weekly satirical magazine Alpin.

The march was organised by Hizbut Tahrir, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Islami Oikya Andolon, Bangladesh Chhatra Mukti Andolon, and Islami Shasantantra Andolon, despite repeated apologies from the editor of the daily for the inadvertent publication of the cartoon strip.

The protesters demanded arrests of Prothom Alo Editor Matiar Rahman and its publisher Mahfuz Anam, and imposition of a ban on the publication of the newspaper.

Police dispersed the marchers by charging batons when they reached close to Shahbagh intersection trying to approach the

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2 PCJSS men abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Two leaders of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) were abducted allegedly by the armed cadres of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) from remote Chhoto Pilak village under Guimara Police Station of the district on Thursday night.

The abducted leaders are Remrachai Marma, president of PCJSS Chhoto Pilak unit, and Tingguli Marma alias Chachuli Marma, secretary of the unit.

Police said about 10-15 UPDF cadres raided the Chhoto Pilak village at midnight and picked up the two PCJSS leaders from their houses at gunpoint.

Sources said the UPDF cadres abducted the two as they failed to give them Tk 1.5 lakh in toll demanded earlier.

Family members of the two

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CA leaves for NY today

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed leaves for New York today to attend the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

It will be his first trip to the USA after assuming office of the chief adviser on January 12 this year. He will seize the opportunity to inform the world leaders about his government's objectives and performance to reach the goal.

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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Dhaka to push for proportional allocation of aid

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

Bangladesh will push for proportional allocation of global aid to finance climate change adaptation strategies, as part of broader efforts to reduce global warming, when Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed attends a high-level UN panel on climate change in New York Monday.

The panel set up by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, will comprise heads of state and government to debate ways towards a comprehensive multilateral framework for action on climate change for the period after 2012.

The chief adviser will make a five-minute presentation and he will also co-chair the afternoon session

of the debate with Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende.

Bangladesh is looking to posture as a post-Kyoto regime, whereby countries who are likely to be the hardest hit by climate change will look to enforce more binding agreements beyond greenhouse gas emission targets, diplomatic sources say.

Dhaka prefers a post-Kyoto protocol, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, regime as the long-term plan, as foreign ministry officials told The Daily Star that the refusal of powerful countries, such as the United States, to sign the

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100 trawlers with 1200 'missing' in Bay

UNB, Barisal

Over 100 fishing trawlers with some 12,00 fishermen aboard went missing in the Bay as high waves, triggered a by sudden storm, hit the trawlers on Thursday night.

The fishermen who returned to the shore said they saw three trawlers sinking in the rough sea.

Barguna District Trawler Owners' Association Adviser Golam Mustafa Chowdhury told the news agency that about 400 out of 500 fishing trawlers returned to the coast, but the fate of the rest 100 with 1200 fishermen could not be known.

Patharghata UNO said he heard that 70-80 trawlers went missing and three capsized. He conveyed the news to the Barguna district administration.

Fishermen of trawler "FV Laboni" who returned from the

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DIALOGUE WITH EC AL for common stance with 14-party allies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday decided to take a stance common to the other components of the 14-party coalition on the Election Commission's (EC) dialogue and the issues to be discussed there.

The party presidium, the highest policy-making body, at a meeting also endorsed different political parties' calls for not allowing Jamaat-e-Islami to register with the EC and bringing them to book for the crimes they had committed during the Liberation War.

It also stressed the need for keeping intact the alliance unity. Chaired by acting AL president Zillur Rahman, the meeting authorised Tofail Ahmed to make contact with the alliance leaders to agree on a

strategy for the talks on the electoral reforms proposed by the commission.

"We want to have an integrated approach," Tofail told reporters after the meet held at Zillur's Gulshan residence.

Ways to secure release of the detained party chief Sheikh Hasina came up for discussion at the meeting.

Besides, the presidium talked about a possible timetable for the next AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting and the incident where four senior leaders including AL acting general secretary Mukul Bose were jostled and subjected to verbal abuse by a

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Both BNP groups stake claim for EC's letter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the BNP factions are out to get invitation from the Election Commission (EC) for the ongoing dialogue on proposed electoral reforms.

They plan to write to the EC again stressing that they represent the mainstream BNP and deserve to be in the talks that began on September 12, said sources close to the groups feuding over intra-party reforms and leadership of the immediate past ruling party.

Earlier, leaders loyal to detained Chairperson Khaleda Zia sent a letter to the EC, informing it of the expulsion of Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Ashraf Hossain.

On the other hand, the reform group led by expelled secretary general Bhuiyan in a letter to the commission termed Khaleda's

expulsion orders 'illegal'.

Both the factions claim the party's election symbol "sheaf of paddy" belongs to them.

"The BNP remains united under Khaleda Zia and the entire committee is with us," Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, an adviser to the BNP chairperson, yesterday told reporters at his Mohakhali residence.

Meanwhile, expelled joint secretary general Ashraf Hossain has said, "We're the real BNP and we believe the Election Commission will consider this while assigning the election symbols."

Talking to reporters at Bhuiyan's Gulshan residence, he claimed that members of the working committee and former BNP lawmakers were with them.

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Opposition calls for Musharraf's downfall, protests polls plan

AFP, Islamabad

Hundreds of opposition supporters called yesterday for the downfall of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in a turbulent start to the countdown to presidential elections set for next month.

Demonstrators chanted "Go Musharraf, Go!" outside the Supreme Court in Islamabad and in the southern city of Karachi, a day after election officials said Musharraf would seek another five-year term in polls on October 6.

The rallies came as military ruler Musharraf appointed a new spy chief, setting up the likely succession if he wins the poll and then honours his vow to quit as army chief and become a civilian leader.

Musharraf also reshuffled army top brass promoting five generals



yesterday.

The opposition had on Thursday pledged to boycott parliament and launch nationwide protests if Musharraf, a key US ally who seized power in a coup in 1999, seeks election while still in uniform.

Most of the protesters were

Islamic hardliners but there were also supporters of ex-premier Nawaz Sharif -- who was expelled from Pakistan last week after trying to return -- and of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan.

"Musharraf is making a mockery of Pakistan," Khan told the crowd of around 1,000 in Islamabad.

Authorities imposed tight security for the demo, deploying about 200 riot police carrying batons and shields, and backed by armoured police vehicles and a contingent of elite police commandos.

Another 300 people protested in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city. One person was arrested but the small police contingent withdrew amid angry scenes, witnesses said.

The fundamentalist parties and

Khan have both filed legal petitions in the Supreme Court challenging Musharraf's dual military-civilian role and his eligibility to stand in elections.

The court is expected to rule early next week.

Musharraf has faced mounting protests this year since his failed bid to sack the country's chief justice in March and his popularity has slumped, leading him to finally announce his intention to quit the army.

Musharraf on Friday appointed Nadeem Taj as the chief of the Inter Services Intelligence, or ISI, which is engaged in the hunt for al-Qaeda militants as well as providing internal security.

The move is significant because

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Farmers are again busy transplanting Amon seedlings at their fields in Comilla yesterday after the floods devastated their crops earlier in the season.

Retrenched jute mills workers get arrear wages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Retrenched workers of seven jute mills of Khulna-Jessore industrial belt started receiving partial arrear wages and gratuities yesterday.

This decision to pay the arrear wages and gratuities was made at a tripartite meeting held Thursday in the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) zonal office with BJMC Chairman Ataharul Islam in the chair.

Project directors of all eight state-owned jute mills in the region, heads of jute purchasing departments and officials of jute trading agencies attended the meeting.

According to Zonal Coordinator of BJMC Abu Taher, workers of the closed Peoples Jute Mills Ltd will get full payment of their gratuities within the next three weeks. Payment from their provident

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