

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.

"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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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.

"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.



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.



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.

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 magazine Aaplin.

The march was organised by Hizbut Tahrir, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Islami Oikya Andolon, Bangladesh Chhatra Mukti Andolon, and Islami Shasanta 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 Matiur 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

100 trawlers with 1200 'missing' in Bay

UNB, Barisal

Over 100 fishing trawlers with some 12,000 fishermen aboard went missing in the Bay as high waves, triggered by a sudden storm, hit the trawlers on Thursday night.

The fisherman 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.

Patharghat 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

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 Araihazar 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.

Harimohan, 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.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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 live on ESPN.

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

2 PCJSS men abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Two leaders of Parbata Chittagong 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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, 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

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.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Opposition calls for Musharraf's downfall, protests polls plan

AFP, Islamabad



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 move is significant because

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Farmers are again busy transplanting Amom 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 fund

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6