

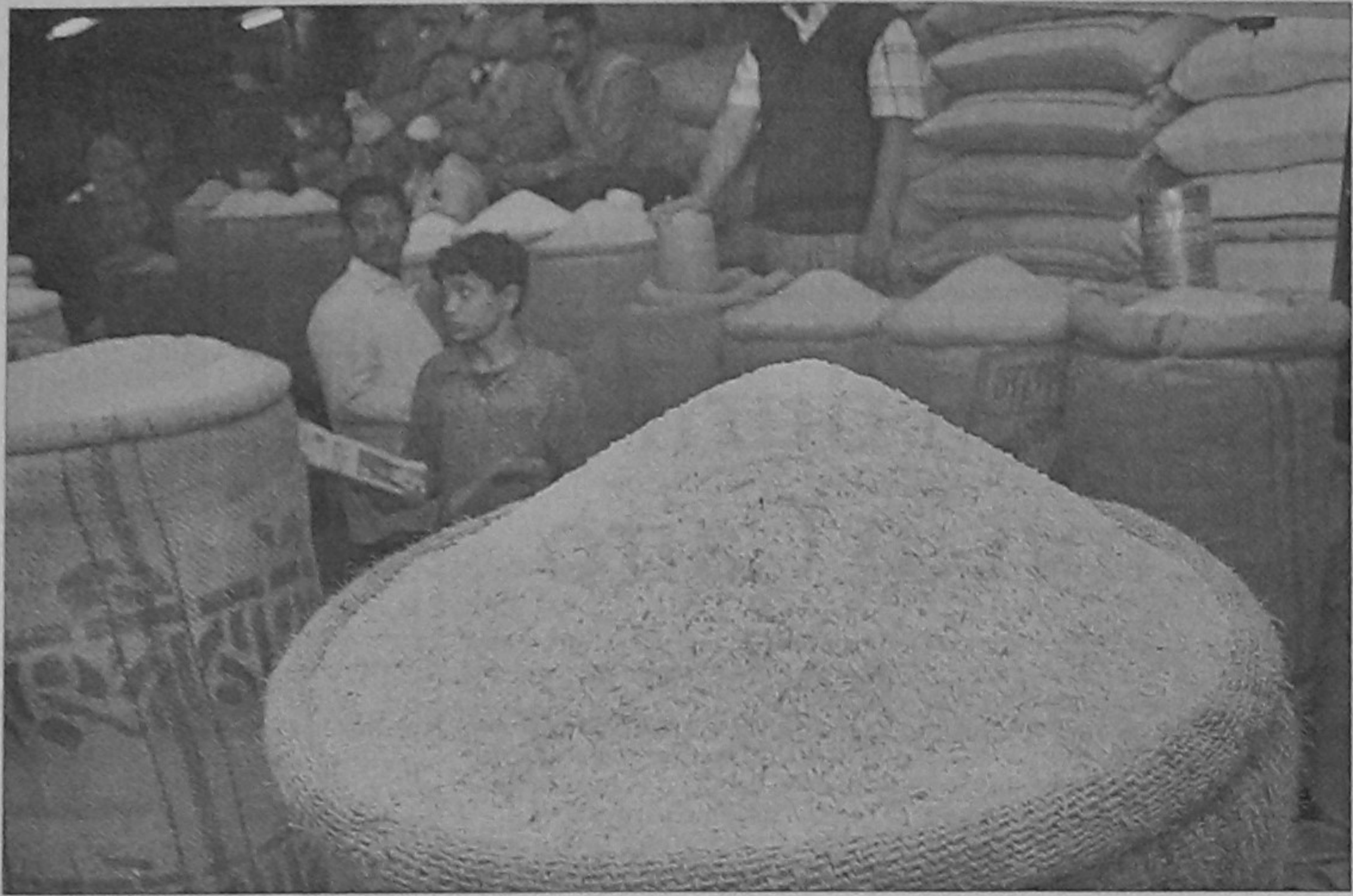
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Garment leaders want food rationing for workers



BGMEA leaders yesterday blamed recent labour unrest on the soaring price of rice (picture above), demanding the government ration essential foods to garment workers.

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment manufacturers and exporters yesterday demanded Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam introduce a food rationing system for garment workers to calm labour unrest in the country's most important export sector.

The call from the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) came after the industry has been rocked in recent weeks by a renewed wave of industrial disputes that many believe have been sparked by the rocketing price of essential foods and oil.

Some economists estimate that just the cost of rice accounts for 60 per cent of the salary of a garment worker in Dhaka receiving the minimum wage in the sector.

The BGMEA leaders made their demand in a meeting with the finance adviser at his Secretariat office. BGMEA President Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez) led the team in the meeting.

After the meeting, Parvez said the recent labour unrest at the city's Mirpur area was not prompted by a failure to implement the minimum wage, but rather by the price hike of the

essential commodities in the local markets.

This meant workers could hardly afford to buy basic essentials, he said.

Recently the BGMEA claimed that more than 95 percent of garment factories have been paying their workers in line with the minimum wage board at Tk 1662 per month.

"The government should introduce the rationing system such as subsidising the workers' foodstuffs. The sector is the largest employment generator, as well as the largest export earner," Parvez said.

Last year garments accounted for 75 percent of the country's export earnings.

When asked how the rationing system would work, he said this had not yet been fixed as the initiative was still at the primary stage.

However last night the idea received the support of some workers leaders. Nazma Akter, President of Sammilito Garment Workers' Federation, welcomed the BGMEA move.

"But, the ration should go to the workers' welfare, not for the welfare of others," she told The Daily Star.

Thanking the move of the BGMEA, Nazma urged the finance

adviser to implement the proposed rationing system for the garment workers as early as possible.

Parvez quoted Azizul Islam as saying that he assured the BGMEA leaders that welfare programmes would be introduced for the workers.

Talking to The Daily Star, economist and a professor of the Department of Economics of the University of Dhaka, MM Akash said the move is good as it could be made successful.

He said a garment worker paid 60 percent of his total salary buying rice.

"The prices of commodities did not remain at the level at which the minimum wage was based. So essential commodities could be supplied to the workers at a cheaper price," he said.

During the discussion meeting with the finance adviser the BGMEA also demanded a reduction in bank interest rates and the rehabilitation of the sick garment industries.

Parvez said at present, the local garment factory owners can hardly make a profit after paying 17 percent bank interest rate whereas in the competing countries including India and China the bank interest rates range between 3 and 4 percent.

Govt introduces training programme for RMG workers

UNB, Dhaka

The government has undertaken a training programme for the garment workers to improve their relationship with the owners of the garment factories.

It was disclosed at a training workshop held yesterday, with Labour and Employment Ministry Secretary Ashfaq Hamid in the chair, as part of an initiative to streamline the garments sector. The workshop addressed issues concerning how the midlevel officials can resolve problems of the factories.

Among others, joint secretary (Labour), deputy secretary (Labour), labour director, and midlevel officials of BGMEA, BKMEA and garment factories also attended the meeting.

Earlier on Tuesday, the government decided to form welfare committee in garment factories to ensure "overall welfare and enhanced living standard" of the workers of the export industry.

New executive body chairman of AL- Arafah Islami Bank



Abdus Samad Labu has been elected as the new executive committee chairman of AL- Arafah Islami Bank Ltd, says a press release.

He was elected unanimously at the 159th meeting of the Board of Directors held on Friday.

Abdus Samad, who is a sponsor director of the bank, is the vice chairman of S Alam group and a director of Northern General Insurance Co Ltd.

Pran to build first foreign plant in India

KOWSHER JAHAN KHALED

Pran, one of Bangladesh's leading processed-food and beverage companies, is to build its first foreign factory in India, taking advantage of the country's recent decision to lift its ban on Bangladeshi investment.

The plant will be built in the north-eastern Indian state of Tripura. It will initially produce jelly and drinks and is expected to come into operation by 2009 with an annual turnover of around Tk100 crore.

It will supply the markets of northeast India -- Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh -- known as 'Seven Sisters', said a senior official of Pran Exports Ltd.

Last year India lifted its ban on direct investment from Bangladesh and said it would welcome investment from its neighbour. The move was seen as a precondition for Dhaka to consider the large-scale investment plans of Indian companies such as Tata in Bangladesh.

The plant will initially produce jelly and drinks, which have already won popularity in those areas, said Paramuddin Hossain, senior manager (Export) of Pran-



Bangladeshi beverage producer Pran sees huge potential for its products in Northeast India's market, building a new plant in Tripura.

RFL Group.

The company chose Tripura due to its closeness to Bangladesh. "We will be able to transport raw materials for our products from Bangladesh to Tripura very easily due to the easy communications," said Paramuddin.

He said there is similarity in lifestyle, culture and economy

between the people of Bangladesh and these areas of India, adding that this is one of the main reasons to choose Tripura.

Negotiations have been going on between the parties concerned about acquiring land for the project. India will allocate a 10-acre industrial plot for the purpose.

The Indian government has also

assured Pran of banking, electricity and other infrastructure facilities. Initially Pran will employ nearly 200 people, including Bangladeshi and Indian nationals.

Pran exports its agro-processed foods and drinks to nearly 70 countries, including USA, UK, Sweden, Cyprus, Australia, Malaysia, Italy, Germany, South Korea, and some Middle East, East and West African countries.

The news of the new plant was announced at an 'Export Sales Conference 2008' of Pran Exports Ltd held yesterday in Dhaka. Deputy Managing Director of Pran-RFL Group Ahsan Khan Choudhury and other senior officials were present at the conference.

ML Debnath, president of Tripura Chamber of Commerce and Industries, also spoke at the conference attended by hundreds of importers and dealers from different states of India and Nepal.

Ahsan expressed his concerns over different types of tariff and non-tariff barriers that the Indian government is imposing on the export of Bangladeshi food products to Indian markets. He urged the government to help the business community solve those problems through bilateral discussions.

BSRS board 'virtually ineffective'

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The board of one of the country's oldest industrial lenders is packed with unsuitable members and 'virtually ineffective,' with loan activities 'insignificant,' according to an independent assessment completed recently.

Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) was established in 1972 to provide credit facilities to large industrial concerns and encourage investment. However years of changing government policies and priorities has landed BSRS with a high percentage of non-performing loans.

The government now plans to privatise BSRS through a direct listing on the Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges. As part of this process, BSRS commissioned Credit Rating Information and Services (CRISL) Ltd to com-

pile an independent report on the financial institution.

In the report CRISL said BSRS has strong fundamentals, good capital adequacy and liquidity and experienced human resources. It also pointed out that its financial performance was "above average" recording a net profit of Tk105.78 million for the full year 2006-07.

However it highlighted the bank's high percentage of non-performing loans, frequent changes in board membership, small market share, insignificant loan activities and stagnancy in organisation.

Board members lacked professional banking experience, with not a single member on the key audit committee having any finance background.

Members of BSRS Board were mostly consisted of retired officials as well as officers from active ser-

VICES with no professional banking experiences. The government did not pay due attention to provide replacement as soon as a director is withdrawn/removed. The above has created an unstable situation which virtually made the board ineffective," CRISL said in its report.

The rating organisation hailed the government for the latest decision to privatise BSRS shortly and hoped that the step will not only broaden the ownership base but will also provide opportunity for improvement of its investment activities as specialised institution for more profitability in future.

When contacted, Managing Director of BSRS FRM Hafiz ul Islam expressed his reluctance to comment on the issue of the board.

But he said BSRS is seriously trying to increase its investment into the labour intensive industries such as

textile and knitwear manufactures, instead of capital intensive ones.

"We are looking for more investment at textile, garments and knitting factories to regain BSRS reputation as the leading industrial credit lender of the country," Hafiz ul Islam said.

A high-level committee to disinvest the organisation recently recommended the government to raise its paid up capital to Tk 1 billion from reserve fund before it goes to the capital market through direct listing.

BSR's non performing loan has decreased to Tk 1059 million on June 30, 2007 from Tk 1257 million on June 30, 2006.

The BSRS operating income shows an increasing trend for the last three years. Its operating income in the FY2006-07 stood at Tk 287.20 million in comparison to Tk 283.08 million in the FY2005-06.

Bangladesh won't benefit much from Safta deal

Experts fear

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh would not benefit from the existing Safta agreement as the treaty among the South Asian neighbours is predominantly focused on 'trade in goods', experts at a regional seminar said yesterday.

Alongside the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), the country should go for bilateral and multi-lateral free trade agreements with these countries to expand its export to the region, they said.

"They also proposed a 'Safta-Plus' agreement, which would include regional cooperation mechanism in the areas of investment, finance, services trade, trade facilitation and technology transfer.

A major limitation in the existing Safta treaty is that 'trade in services' is missed out, they said.

The economists and experts in various fields were speaking at a seminar in Dhaka titled 'Safta and its Implications for the Member Countries' jointly organised by the Dhaka Secretariat of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), CUTS International of India, and Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Chairing the session, economist Professor Rehman Sobhan suggested sector wise bilateral discussions for a dynamic outcome.

"Bangladesh can't gain too much from the existing Safta treaty to enhance its growth opportunities merely by promoting exports to the regional market," said Selim Raihan, executive director of Sanem.

Bangladesh's exports to the South Asian region are very small, and a doubling, or even quadrup-

pling of its intra-regional exports will not lead to any significant expansion of its total export, he further said.

They also said too long sensitive list is also major barrier for Bangladeshi products to enter into the other South Asian countries especially in India, while the Bangladesh's export basket is very narrow.

They urged the South Asian countries including India to shorten the sensitive list as well as reduce the tariff or duty structure.

"The proposed Safta-Plus agreement should call for creating an enabling environment to promote intra-regional investment. The creation of a Saarc investment agreement could create such an environment," he suggested.

Speaking at the function, economist Atiur Rahman said lack of political commitment is a major problem for which the Safta agreement may not be implemented in full fledged.

He said apart from government, non-governmental organisations, especially chamber bodies and civil societies should be involved for creating a real ground in implementing Safta or such regional cooperation.

Zaidi Sattar, a Dhaka-based senior economist of the World Bank, said South Asia still remains a lower integration region due mainly to high protection tendency among the member states, which is a major obstacle in regional cooperation.

Manzur Ahmed, former director of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, also spoke.

Invitation for Tenders RURAL POWER COMPANY LIMITED

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01	Agency	Rural Power Company Limited				
02	Invitation for	Procurement of Microbus & 25KVA-35KVA Diesel Generator for Rural Power Company Limited				
03	Procurement Method	Open Tender				
FUNDING INFORMATION						
04	Budget and Source of Funds	RPCL's own fund				
		Date	Time			
05	Tender Starting Selling Date and Time	24.01.2008	10:00 AM			
06	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	20.02.2008	11:00 AM			
07	Tender Closing Date and Time	20.02.2008	12:00 Noon			
08	Tender Opening Date and Time	20.02.2008	12:30 PM			
09	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address				
	- Selling, Receiving & Opening Tender Document	Rural Power Company Limited (Ground floor), House No.-25, Road No.-18, Sector No.-03, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka- 1230, Bangladesh.				
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER						
10	Eligibility of Tenderer	Bonafide supplier having valid Trade License, TIN & VAT registration from concerned authority of Bangladesh/ Manufacturer(s).				
11	Validity of Tender and Tender Security	90 (Ninety) days and 120 (One hundred twenty) days respectively from the date of opening of tender.				
12	Brief Description of Goods/ Services					
Package No.	Lot No.	Tender Enquiry No.	For the Supply of	Price of Tender Document (non-refundable) (BDT)	Tender Security Amount (BDT)	Time of completion of Supply/Work
1	1	Pur-007/2007	Supply, Installation and commissioning of 25KVA-35KVA Diesel Generator for Corporate office of Rural Power Company Limited	500	2.5% of the quoted price	60 days from the issue of work order
2	1	Pur-001/2008	Procurement of Microbus for Rural Power Company Limited.	750	2.5% of the quoted price	60 days from the issue of work order
13	Regarding Tender Document					
The Tender Document may be purchased by the interested tenderers on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non refundable fee as specified. The method of payment will be by Pay order / Bank draft in favor of Rural Power Company Limited, Dhaka, Bangladesh.						
14	Special Instruction					
The RPCL reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.						
15	Address					
Rural Power Company Limited, House No.-25, Road No.-18, Sector No.-03, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka- 1230, Bangladesh. Phone: +88-02-8912274, Fax: +88-02-8922526, E-mail : rpctech@dhaka.net						
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দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

- ১। মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ : বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ, বিদ্যুৎ-জালানী ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়।
- ২। প্রকীর্তি/এজেন্সি : পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ (পিজিসিবি) লিমিটেড।
- ৩। দরপত্র আবেদনকারীর নাম ও ঠিকানা : মহাব্যবস্থাপক ও প্রকল্প পরিচালক, ২য় পূর্ব-পশ্চিম বৈদ্যুতিক আন্তঃসংযোগ সম্মেলন লাইন প্রকল্প, বাড়ী নং- ৬, রোড নং- ২৩/এ, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা-১২১২।
- ৪। কাজের এলাকা : সিরাজগঞ্জ ২৩০ কেভি সুইচিং স্টেশন, সয়েদাবাদ, সিরাজগঞ্জ।
- ৫। কাজের নাম : (ক) সুইচিং ইয়ার্ড এবং আবাসিক ও স্টোর এলাকা পৃথক করার জন্য Chain Link Fencing নির্মাণ কাজ।
(খ) ৭৫০ বর্গমিটার ক্ষেত্র বিশিষ্ট ওপেন স্টোর ইয়ার্ড এর বর্ধিতাংশ নির্মাণ কাজ।
- ৬। কাজের পদ্ধতি : সরবরাহ ও স্থাপন।
- ৭। অর্থের উৎস : এডিপি (স্থানীয় মুদ্রা)।
- ৮। জামানতের টাকা : দরপত্রের সহিত সর্বমোট (ক) টাকা ১৮,০০০.০০ (আঠার হাজার) মাত্র (খ) ৯,০০০.০০ (নয় হাজার পাঁচশত) মাত্র পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ (পিজিসিবি) লিমিটেড এর নামে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার এর মাধ্যমে দাখিল করিতে হইবে। (ফেরৎযোগ্য)।
- ৯। দরপত্র দলিলের মূল্য : (ক) টাকা ৪০০ (চারশত) মাত্র (খ) ২০০ (দুইশত) মাত্র অফেরৎযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এর মাধ্যমে পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ (পিজিসিবি) লিমিটেড এর নামে পরিশোধ করিতে হইবে।
- ১০। দরপত্র দলিল প্রাপ্তি এবং জমাদানের স্থান : নির্মাণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান কর্তৃক নিজস্ব লেটার হেড প্যাডে আবেদনের মাধ্যমে ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের যোগাযোগ সংশ্লিষ্ট হালনাগাদ দলিলাদির মূল কপি প্রদর্শন পূর্বক (ক) মহাব্যবস্থাপক ও প্রকল্প পরিচালক, ২য় পূর্ব-পশ্চিম বৈদ্যুতিক আন্তঃসংযোগ সম্মেলন লাইন প্রকল্প, বাড়ী নং- ৬, রোড নং- ২৩/এ, গুলশান-১, ঢাকা-১২১২ (খ) মহাব্যবস্থাপক, ওয়েস্ট জোন প্রকল্প, ৮০, মহাখালী, ঢাকা (গ) উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক, প্রকল্প-১, আফতাব নগর, বামপুরা, ঢাকা হইতে দরপত্র সংগ্রহ করিতে হইবে। এবং শুধুমাত্র "ক" এর বর্ধিত দস্তুরে দরপত্র জমা দান করিতে হইবে।
- ১১। ঠিকাদার প্রতিষ্ঠানের যোগাযোগ : একই প্রকারের কাজের পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন বিউ.এ.পি, পি.ইউ.ইউ.ইউ, এল.জি.আর.টি ও ভেসার তালিকাভুক্ত প্রথম শ্রেণীর সিভিল ও ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং ২৩/০১/০৮ কেভি উপকেন্দ্রের অভ্যন্তরে কাজের পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা।
- ১২। দরপত্র দলিল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় : ১৩/০২/২০০৮ইং অফিস চলাকালীন সময়।
- ১৩। দরপত্র দলিল জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় : ১৪/০২/২০০৮ইং বেলা ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
- ১৪। দরপত্র দলিল শোষণ তারিখ ও সময় : ১৪/০২/২০০৮ইং বেলা ১২:০০ ঘটিকা।

দরপত্র দরদাতা অথবা মনোনীত প্রতিনিধি দরপত্র শোষণ সময় উপস্থিত থাকিতে পরিবেন। নিম্ন স্বাক্ষরকারী কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই যে কোন দরপত্র অথবা সমুদয় দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মহাব্যবস্থাপক ও প্রকল্প পরিচালক
২য় পৃপসলা প্রকল্প, পি.জি.সি.বি.ঢাকা।