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2 power projects get delayed for a month on bidders' pressure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Power Cell under the power ministry has delayed the Bibiyana and Sirajganj 450 megawatt (MW) power projects for a month under pressure from two US bidders.

The bidders AES and Chevron had been asking the bid submission date of Bibiyana power project be pushed back four to six months saying they cannot confirm availability of plant machinery due to high global demand for power plant equipment in recent months.

The Power Cell settled for moving the Bibiyana project's bid submission date to July 15 from June 11.

Consequently, its other bidding process for Sirajganj power project will be delayed by another month. A top official of the Power Cell said the bid closing of the Sirajganj project will be in September.

The government prioritised

these projects as the past alliance government failed to implement any new large power projects and contributed to the present trend of load shedding.

"There is a scarcity of engineering and procurement contractors worldwide due to high demand for power projects," said a Power Cell source, adding, "We have to accept the fact that the bidders will have to ensure plant machinery when they submit their bids. This is why we have delayed the bid submission date for a month or so."

On April 16, Summit Industrial and Merchantile Corporation appealed to the government to reconsider the order disqualifying it from the Bibiyana and Sirajganj project tenders.

Summit feels it was unjustly pushed out of competition by an arbitrary evaluation of World Bank's sister concern International Finance Corporation (IFC), which

is also the Bibiyana project's consultant for the Power Cell. The IFC calculated the net value of Summit at only \$35 million. The auditor's report submitted to the Power Cell puts the figure at \$120 million.

Summit filed its appeal along with a letter from SF Ahmed and Co, an auditor recommended by the Power Cell in the Bibiyana tender. The auditor's letter reaffirmed that based on International Accounting Standards, Summit's net value stands at \$122 million.

Both Bibiyana and Sirajganj tenders now lack competition. The Bibiyana scheme has three bidders—AES, Chevron (Bibiyana gas field's operator) and a consortium led by Powertek and the Sirajganj scheme just has AES and Powertek.

This competition shrunk due to tactics used by Powertek and its consortium partner Kepco who merged after being pre-qualified to

3 graft cases against Obaidul Kader stayed

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for a month the proceedings in three corruption cases against detained former state minister for youth and sports Obaidul Kader.

An HC division bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Shamim Hasnain also issued rules upon the

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SCRAP METAL

Govt probe body orders ship breakers to curb price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A government-formed probe committee yesterday asked ship breakers to fix a rational price for scrap metals by today.

The probe body led by Housing and Public Works Secretary SM

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BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan talks to reporters after a delegation of pro-Khaleda leaders held talks with advisers to the caretaker government at the state guesthouse Meghna yesterday.

CNG-run bus operators hike fare despite govt directive

Mobile court starts drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The CNG-run bus operators continue to charge extra fares ignoring the government directive, leading to heated rows between the passengers and bus staffs in many places in the capital yesterday.

As a result, the authorities were forced to deploy police at different bus stops in the city.

Besides, a mobile court of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) also started a drive against the CNG-run bus services charging increased fare.

The Association of CNG Bus Companies (ABC) is going to hold a press conference today demanding increase in bus fares.

Regular commuters from

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PHOTO: STAR

Bus owners have increased fares on all routes in the capital following price hike of compressed natural gas (CNG). Ticket sellers stamp increased fares on tickets at a bus stop near the Jatiya Press Club.

SCBA polls begin

UNB, Dhaka

Overdue elections to the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) began yesterday to elect its new executive committee for 2008.

Six candidates are vying for the post of president while the same number of candidates is contesting for the post of general secretary.

The turn out at the polling booths on the first-day of the 2-day voting was rather poor. Of 1779 voters, 539 cast their votes yesterday.

The SCBA election commission said the results will be published today night.

The annual election of SCBA was postponed on March 25, 2007 following the imposition of the state of emergency.

Later, it was scheduled for March 24 but was deferred to April 28-29 after a negotiation between the government and the SCBA.

UN starts meet to hammer out food crisis battle plan

AFP, Berne

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon began talks yesterday with key development agencies on how to tackle the crisis provoked by soaring food and fuel prices.

"This is an exciting time for the United Nations, but it is also a time when we are challenged to exert our best efforts to rise to the expectations that the world is placing on us," Ban said ahead of meetings in the Swiss capital.

The UN was to hammer out a battle plan of emergency measures at the two-day conference in Berne,

while exploring other longer-term measures to solve the global food crisis.

The talks will see advocates of protectionism face off against those who favour opening up markets, as well as arguments between both supporters and opponents of biofuels.

Rising populations, strong demand from developing countries, increased cultivation of crops for biofuels and increasing floods and droughts have sent food prices soaring across the globe.

Ban met first with officials from

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Chevron plans to complete seismic survey by mid-2008

UNB, Dhaka

International oil company Chevron plans to complete its 3D seismic survey in Moulvibazar gas-field by the middle of this year as it is working in full swing to strike new hydrocarbon reserves in the area.

Chevron Bangladesh President Steve Wilson expressed his company's firm belief that if they continue their work as planned, they should finish the survey before monsoon.

"We continue to advance our efforts and hope to complete the survey around mid-year," he told.

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Huji man Suman remanded for link to Ramna Batamul blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) leader Arif Hasan Suman was taken on three-day remand yesterday by Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in connection with the bomb explosion at Ramna Batamul during Pahela Boishakh celebration on April 14, 2001.

Earlier on April 25, Suman gave a confessional statement about his involvement in the grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21 in 2004.

CID officials in the forwarding report said as Suman admitted his involvement in the Batamul bomb explosion, he should be remanded for more information.

CID Inspector Abu Mohammad Yusuf prayed for 10-day remand but the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shahnaz Sultana

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Ex-army man regularly made donations to Huji while in service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While in service, detained army lance corporal (ret'd) Shamsul Islam, mastermind of Brahmanbaria bomb explosion, used to pay monthly contributions to outlawed Harkat-ul-jihad-Al-Islam (Huji) for carrying out its activities.

A highly placed source in Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday said Shamsul had often visited the den of Huji leader Abdur Rouf at Bhaluka in Mymensingh where he also took lessons on jihad.

Shamsul yesterday made a statement before the additional judicial magistrate in Brahmanbaria confessing his involvement in militancy and visit to Rouf's den.

In the six-page statement he

said he had also close connection with Huji leader Mufti Abdul Hannan, prime suspect in several deadly grenade attack cases including the August 21 grenade attack.

Rouf is also an accused of the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004 that left 24 killed and scores other injured.

He served as a commander of Huji in Arakan in Myanmar between 1994 and 1998 and was sacked from the organisation in 1998.

He later formed Tanjim-e-Tamiruddin in 2005 but as intelligence agencies learned about its suspected activities, he renamed it Hijbe Abu Omar in the early 2006. He was arrested on August 2 the same year.

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Indian rocket puts into orbit 10 satellites

AFP, Bangalore

An Indian rocket launched a record 10 satellites into orbit in a single mission Monday, underlining the nation's emergence as a major competitor in the multi-billion-dollar space market.

The PSLV rocket ejected all the satellites within minutes of each other after liftoff at 9:20 a.m. (0350 GMT) in clear weather from the Sriharikota space station in southern India, the Indian Space Research Organisation said.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle first put into polar orbit the remote-sensing Indian satellite, Cartosat-2A, fitted with a high-resolution camera and advanced scientific instruments.

It also launched an 83-kilogram (183-pound) Indian mini-satellite and a cluster of eight so-called

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River erosion to make 29,000 homeless by next one year: Study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 29,000 people living along the banks of Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Padma rivers will be rendered homeless by next one year due to riverbank erosion, a research organisation working with river and water resources forecast yesterday.

A study report of the Center for Environment and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) also said 2,840 hectares of land, 450 hectares of settlement, 150 metres of embankment, 1,860 metres of district road, 490 metres of upazila road and 3,750 metres of rural road are vulnerable to erosion along the three rivers.

Besides, a total of 31 educa-

tional institutions, 11 market places, 10 government offices, three non-government offices and two health centres are also threatened by erosion.

The prediction report on riverbank erosion along the Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Padma rivers, 2008 was revealed at a seminar titled 'Proactive Disaster Risk Reduction through Erosion Prediction' at Dhaka Sheraton organised by the CEGIS.

The report was prepared based on field visits, satellite images and data on the past few years' erosion.

"About 29,000 people will lose their homes due to erosion of mighty Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Padma in the next one year," CEGIS

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Train collision kills 70 in China

AP, Beijing

A high-speed passenger train jumped its tracks and slammed into another train in eastern China yesterday, killing at least 70 people and injuring more than 400.

Authorities were quoted as saying human error was to blame.

The death toll could rise, with 70 people hospitalized in critical condition after the pre-dawn crash in a rural part of Shandong province, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

It said a total of 420 people had been hurt in China's worst train accident in a decade. No foreigners were among the dead.

Xinhua said investigators had ruled out terrorism as a cause of the crash. Its English report said it was human error, while its Chinese-

language report attributed the crash to negligence, without giving other details.

Xinhua said two high-ranking railway officials in Shandong had been fired.

The crash just before the May Day long weekend holiday happened when a train traveling from Beijing to Qingdao site of the sailing competition during the Olympics in August derailed and hit a second passenger train just before dawn. Nine of the first train's carriages were knocked into a dirt ditch, Railway Ministry spokesman Wang Yongping said in a statement.

The second train on its way from Yantai in Shandong to Xuzhou in eastern Jiangsu province was knocked off its tracks although it

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Asst judges get senior judicial magistracy power

UNB, Dhaka

The government has given senior judicial magistracy power to assistant judges as a temporary measure to deal with the shortage of senior assistant judges.

The president gave the power to the assistant judges by amending the Bangladesh Judicial Service Rules 2007 exercising his power conferred by the constitution.

A gazette notification in this regard was published on April 22.

According to the notification, the government on advice of the Supreme Court can make posting of assistant judges to the post of senior judicial magistrates in

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PHOTO: STAR

Picture taken on Saturday shows the fire at Khashiya Punji in Lawachhara National Park while Chevron was conducting a three dimensional seismic survey. Locals and forest department personnel doused the fire.

Prayer Timing		
April 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

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