

Lone concrete sleeper plant falls asleep

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Production in the lone concrete sleeper plant of Bangladesh Railway has remained suspended for over a year making many rail tracks vulnerable.

An unusual delay in importing raw materials from India put the production at the 'Pre-Stressed Concrete Sleeper Plant' at Chhatak to a complete halt in June last year, official sources said.

Railway authorities cannot supply sleeper now though many tracks require immediate replacement. Its reserve stocks exhausted three months back.

The plant, set up in 1986 with a long-term plan of replacing the wooden sleepers in phases by the concrete ones, is dependent on import of two major raw

materials-MCI (malleable cast iron) and HT steel wares (high tension steel wares).

The plant, which started with an annual production target of 50,000 pieces of sleepers and gradually succeeded in increasing the output to 90,000 pieces a year, was last supplied with the raw materials in May 2007. In 2007-08 fiscal, 86,000 pieces of sleepers were produced in the plant that provided jobs to 100 employees.

Although the annual demand for raw materials was placed before the railway headquarters well in advance, the plant is yet to get the imported materials, an official of the plant told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sources said a tender process for import of 2,40,000 pieces of MCI and 300 tons of HT steel wire was completed in August last year. After several months, the authorities con-

cerned cancelled the process in April this year, sources said.

Now preparations are underway to float a fresh tender for import of the aforesaid quantity of raw materials. It may take a few more months to complete the import process.

"We were compelled to suspend production since June last year with the exhaustion of the stocks of raw materials received in May 2007," the plant in-charge Executive Engineer Hirenranath Majumder told The Daily Star.

Every year the tender process takes much time resulting in unscheduled suspension of the plant's production, sources alleged, adding that this time the unusual delay put the railway in a vulnerable situation.

India launches indigenous N-powered submarine

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India yesterday joined a select group of countries with the launch of its first indigenous nuclear-powered submarine as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said New Delhi does not have any aggressive design but asserted "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

The submarine, the first of five planned, is powered by an 85-megawatt nuclear reactor and can reach 44 kilometres an hour (24 knots) underwater, according to defence officials.

It will be armed with torpedoes and ballistic missiles, and carry a crew of 95 men.

The INS Arihant will be commissioned in the Indian Navy after extensive outfitting and sea trials. It is the first of three such vessels to be built in the country and marks a quantum leap in India's shipbuilding capabilities.

The launch of INS Arihant is a major step towards India's building an effective response to a possible nuclear attack by giving the country the ability to launch atomic weapons from land, air and from under the sea. Speaking at the launch of the submarine christened INS Arihant at Visakhapatnam, Singh said the event is a "historic milestone in the country's defence preparedness and a reflection of the immense technical expertise that exists in our country and the strength of our research and development organisations."

"More importantly, the launch represents the determination and patriotism of our technologists, scientists and defence personnel who have overcome several hurdles and barriers to enable the country to acquire self-reliance in the most advanced areas of defence technology," he said.



Traders sell brick and sand occupying the footpaths of Nabab Siraj-ud-Doula Road near the Parade Ground in Chittagong City, in defiance of restrictions on it by the Chittagong City Corporation. PHOTO: STAR

BUS RAMS CAR Journo, 2 others killed in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Three people, including a journalist, were killed and three others injured as a bus rammed their private car on Rangpur-Bogra Highway at Rahubal in Shibganj upazila yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Litu Anam, 35, Rangpur correspondent of private television channel ntv, Ashiqur Rahman Mishu, 43, Deputy Director of Rangpur Community Medical College, and driver of his car Atiqul Islam Apu, 32.

Police said the accident occurred when a bus of Chishtia Paribahan rammed their car, coming from opposite direction, at around 6:45 am.

Mishu and his driver died on the spot when Litu was declared dead at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's personal driver Shahjahan Molla, his daughter Shanta Islam and Sub-Inspector Raihan Alam of Kotwali Police Station of Rangpur received injuries in the accident.

Molla and his daughter were rushed to Orthopedic Hospital in Dhaka while Raihan to RMCH.

Police said, the victims were returning to Dhaka by the car.

Meanwhile, a BSS report says Rangpur Kotwali police rescued Shanta Islam, 16, the daughter of the prime minister's driver, from Charamatha point in the town yesterday four days after her abduction from Dhaka's Pallabi area.

Section 144 in Lalmonirhat

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Local administration yesterday imposed section 144 on Chaparhat High School premises in Kaliganj upazila amid high tension between the activists of ruling Awami League and BNP.

Police said the upazila unit BNP arranged a meeting on the school premises at 4:00 pm. Local AL also called its meeting at the same venue.

UNO Abu Horayra visited the spot and imposed the ban from 3:30pm to 11:30pm yesterday to avoid any untoward incident.

Local BNP leader Saleh Uddin Helal claimed that they called the meeting three days ago while local Awami League called the meeting on Sunday.

AL leader Nuruzzaman Ahmed who is also the upazila chairman, however, refuted the allegation saying they called its meeting four days ago.

Additional police have been deployed in the area.

5 JMB men get life for looting a Brac office

UNB, Sherpur

A court here yesterday sentenced two JMB leaders and their three accomplices to life term imprisonment for looting a local Brac office six years back.

The convicts are JMB Dhaka divisional north unit commander Salahuddin alias Salehin and Sherpur district commander Mujahidul Islam Sumon and their cohorts Hasmat Ali, Kalu and Kashem Ali.

All but Kashem Ali were present in the court during the verdict.

The court also acquitted seven other accused as allegations brought against them could not be proved.

According to the prosecution, the convicts led by JMB kingpins Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai swooped on Dhanshai Brac office after blasting a bomb in Jhenagati upazila on February 9, 2003 and looted its valuables and documents.

Two Brac employees were injured in the bomb blast. Brac area officer Kamal Bashar filed a dacoity case on the following day with the local police station.

The names of Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai have been dropped from the case after they were executed during the immediate past caretaker government regime.

After examining the records and witnesses, Judge of the Joint District and Sessions Judge Court-1 Badrul Islam handed down the verdict.

Dhaka eyes \$4.68b from Beijing

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka will formally request Beijing to provide \$1.4 billion to implement the Ganges Barrage Project, and \$88.12 million for restoration of the flow of Buriganga river and for a project for prevention of river pollution, says the list of projects to be discussed at the talk.

Earlier, Bangladesh requested China to provide \$560 million for implementing the North-West Fertiliser Company Limited project. China however proposed a mixed credit scheme for the project, to which Bangladesh responded by urging China in June this year to provide the assistance for Shahjalil Fertiliser Company in Fenchuganj instead.

At the talk in Beijing, once again Bangladesh will request for a financial assistance of \$600 million for the much awaited Rooppur Nuclear Power Project. In February 2007, ERD sought the assistance from China, but a response is yet to come.

National ICT infrastructure network for the Bangladesh government phase-2 at an estimated cost of \$130 million, construction of a single line metre gauge railway track from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar via Ramu, and from Ramu to Gundum at an estimated cost of \$210 million, a railway bridge with provision of dual gauge double track over the Jamuna river at an estimated cost of \$172 million,

Karnaphuli tunnel at an estimated cost of \$289 million, and construction of Barapukuria 125 megawatt coal fired thermal power station at a cost of 47.4 million are the other projects expected to be discussed.

China already showed interest in construction of five simply equipped rural schools in Bangladesh, and in conducting a feasibility study for Kazirka Bridge over the Ariakha river. ERD will seek financial assistance for those too.

An inter-ministerial meeting was held on Wednesday at the finance ministry with Finance Minister Abul Mal Abdul Muhit in the chair to prepare the delegation for the JEC talk.

ment of Bangladesh, he said.

Since Bangladesh entrepreneurs often face difficulties in obtaining Chinese visa, Dhaka will request Beijing to review the existing Mutual Exemption of Visa Agreement that does not cover business and tourist visas.

A proposal for a comprehensive consular agreement is under consideration of the Chinese government to address the visa issue, the official said. "Dhaka hopes China will expedite the process in view of the growing economic and trade relations with Bangladesh."

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, who is leading a seven-member delegation to the JEC meeting, said the main focus of their discussion will be on how to decrease the trade gap.

"We will also discuss a number of important projects, and we are hopeful of positive outcome," Mosharraf told The Daily Star.

LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam, Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Post and Telecommunications Minister Raziuddin Razu, Power and Energy Adviser Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, State Minister for Power and Energy Shamsul Haque Tuku, and State Minister for Science and ICT Yafes Osman attended the meeting.

"Since China is an expert in the infrastructure sector, I hope all important projects will be accepted after discussions," Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star after the meeting.

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE FAEL KHAIR SCHOOL-CUM-SHELTERS BUILDING CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM IN BANGLADESH

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) a multi-lateral institution invites reputable Consultancy Firms (individually or jointly) to participate in competitive bidding for provision of Consultancy Services as the Project Management Consultant (PMC) for the Fael Khair School-cum-Shelters building Construction Program in Bangladesh.

BACKGROUND: On November 15, 2007, a very powerful cyclone (Cyclone Sidr) impacted the South Western Coast of Bangladesh accompanied by heavy rains, a storm surge of about 20 ft high (6 meters) and wind speeds of up to 223 kph, resulting in loss of life and considerable damage in 30 of the 64 districts of the Country.

With the intention of providing a long term solution to the hazards faced by the population due to the recurring cyclones which periodically afflict Bangladesh, an anonymous philanthropist (FAEL KHAIR in Arabic) has entrusted to the IDB a generous donation of USD 130 million for relief assistance to the Cyclone victims. The assistance program includes construction of about 600 schools to be designed as multi-purpose shelters and the restoration of livelihoods for the afflicted population in the coastal belt of Bangladesh.

INSTRUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS: The Services to be performed under this contract are expected to commence in September 2009 and will cover the School-cum-Shelters construction, which is anticipated to be until October 2012. The Consultant is required to mobilize within thirty (30) days of the signing of the contract. The PMC will assume overall responsibility for the implementation of the Program including concluding, supervising and administering agreements with various Consultants, Contractors and Suppliers. More details on the requested services are provided in the Terms of Reference that can be viewed or downloaded from the IDB Website. The RFP will be delivered by email to all interested consulting firms, upon registration of the firm's interest in this assignment. To register, when requesting the RFP, interested firms are only required to submit their contact details and a brief on their activities (name and activities, address, telephone number, fax, email, and name of contact person for this assignment) to the IDB at the postal, or email address indicated below. Interested firms can also visit the IDB offices in Jeddah or the Program Office in Dhaka, to obtain a copy of the RFP. Please note that IDB will reply to clarification letters by email or "hard copy" depending on the preference of the interested Consultant.

The participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the local conditions and to take them into account in preparing their technical and financial proposals. A pre-proposal conference will be held in Dhaka on 15th August 2009. Site visit to typical project sites will be conducted on 16th August 2009.

Original Proposals of the participants should be received not later than 3:00 pm on 31th August 2009 by the IDB H.Q. with a copy to the Program Office in Dhaka at address as mentioned below:

Please note that (i) the cost of preparing the proposals is not reimbursable; (ii) A Consultancy Firm will be selected following the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) procedures as defined in the RFP document. The Islamic Development Bank is not bound to accept any of the proposals submitted. The eligibility of Consultancy Firm will be determined on the basis of satisfactory fulfillment of the post qualification requirements as indicated in the RFP.

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