

530MW RENTAL POWER PLANTS

PDB under pressure to change bid criteria

Business lobby for selection of bidder with no experience, seeks scrapping of contract termination clause

SHARIER KHAN

The Power Development Board is facing tremendous pressure from a quarter of influential local businessmen who want the bidder selection criteria for the upcoming three-year-long rental power projects to be unusually relaxed so that anyone can win a deal.

These businessmen--a couple of whom are involved with some failed rental power projects while others have never been involved with this sector--want the PDB to demand "zero experience" from bidders and unbelievably low penalty clause for failure to implement

the power project, competent sources said.

In fact, the PDB's request for proposal for eight plants is unlikely to have a contract termination clause for the contractor's failure to implement the project.

The business lobby is even trying to stretch the three-year rental contract to a five-year one. "This would be absolutely suicidal for the PDB because rental power tariff can be up to four times higher than conventional power tariff. If the PDB prolongs purchase of power at such costly rate for five-six years, it will incur a huge loss," observes an expert.

"It seems that certain businessmen's

bagging these contracts is more important to the PDB than ensuring power projects' beginning operation in time, which is the actual goal," said a high official of PDB. "This whole exercise reminds us of the last BNP-led alliance government's failed bid in 2005 to award 44 rental power projects to various party men."

With a view to easing the load shedding situation temporarily while four large coal-based power projects are implemented by 2013, the PDB has proposed setting up eight rental power plants of three years' term totalling 530MW

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Elderly woman murdered, house looted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A septuagenarian woman was killed at her Central Road residence in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday allegedly by her domestic help who made off with gold ornaments and some other valuables.

The deceased Sajeda Amin, 70, wife of a late physician, had no child and lived alone in her residence on the first floor of a two-storey building after the death of her husband in 1997. She owned the building and rented out the ground floor to a family.

The police are on the hunt

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Upazila parishads left with no work

Sit almost idle for over 7 months since election; lawmakers, UNOs play major role in development

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Over seven months into being constituted through public elections, the upazila parishads have yet to start functioning as the Awami League (AL)-led government is still allowing members of parliament (MPs) and the civil administration to carry out the parishads' jobs.

The practice however is in contradiction with the country's constitution and the ruling party's electoral pledge for establishing a strong local government system.

According to the constitution and Upazila Parishad Act, the functions of the parishads

include dealing with local administrative and establishment issues, ensuring law and order and services related to public welfare, and formulation and implementation of local economic and social development plans.

But local civil administrations led by upazila executive [nirbahi] officers, who were made secretaries to the parishads by law, have been controlling almost all parishad functions with the central government's blessing, hampering the elected local governments' ability to function properly.

Lawmakers, who were made advisers to the

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After the BIWTA eviction drive in June, encroachers have again started filling the Turag river. The dying river further falls victim to greed and gold.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Boon for Rajuk, bane for plot applicants

Tk 1,650cr deposited for Uttara, Purbachal plots; allotment not made in 10 months

HELEMUL ALAM

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) is making profits out of over Tk 1,650 crore deposited by about 1.65 lakh people who applied for plots of Uttara Model Town (third phase) and Purbachal New Town Housing Project around nine months back.

Rajuk sought applications for plot allotments of the two projects in November 2008 and was supposed to announce the results in December last year.

As the new government extended the time for application submission till April 30 Rajuk is yet to make the announcement.

The present government fixed June 2009 for the announcement of plot allotment. Rajuk missed the deadline and is going to miss it again in August much to the frustration of the applicants waiting since December last year.

The standing committee on public undertakings on August 23 asked Rajuk to return the deposited money along with bank interest to those who are not going to get the plots.

"It is the responsibility of policy making body to take a decision on the matter," said Chairman of Rajuk Nurul Huda on August 26.

The committee headed by Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir asked Rajuk to be transparent in allocating plots of Purbachal,

Jhilmil and Uttara projects.

Rajuk will earn around Tk 165 crore as interest if they keep the deposited money (Tk 1650 crore if we take it for granted that one applicant deposited one lakh taka on average) for one year under FDR scheme on 10 percent interest, said a banker of a private bank.

And it will draw Tk 82.50 crore as interest normally from an STD account of a bank on five percent interest, he added.

Rajuk also earned around Tk 16.50 crore through selling 1.65 lakh application forms to 1.65 lakh applicants (Tk 1000 for each form), sources said.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan after joining

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CLIMATE CHANGE
UN chief pledges support

UNB, Geneva

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has assured Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of giving all necessary support to cope with the challenges of global climate change.

He also gave the assurance that the UN would continue its support for further strengthening parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh.

The assurances came when the Bangladesh premier met with the UN chief at the Palais des Nations here on Thursday evening.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed newsmen after the meeting.

During the meeting, Ban

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WHO offers help to combat swine flu

UNB, Geneva

The World Health Organisation will provide all necessary assistance to Bangladesh in preventing the spread of swine flu virus.

The assurance came when Executive Director of WHO Margaret Chan paid a call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her suite at Hotel Kempinski here Thursday afternoon (local time).

Briefing to the media after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said Hasina told the WHO executive that the Bangladeshi government is fully aware about spread of the virus and has taken necessary precautionary measures to tackle the scourge.

Hasina said she already has asked the pharmaceutical companies to halt the export of medicines for now to face any crisis to be caused by the swine flu.

"The present pro-people government is monitoring every aspect of the spread of swine flu virus in Bangladesh," she said.

Margaret suggested the PM to keep Bangladesh's health workers and security agencies' members sound on priority basis for the interest of keeping the common people safe from attack of the virus.

Hasina in the meeting mentioned various plans and programs of her government to ensure cheap but quality health facilities for the grassroots people.

She deplored that the previous Awami League government

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King of Pop laid to rest

AFP, Los Angeles

Michael Jackson has finally been laid to rest in a crown-adorned glittering gold coffin after family and friends saluted the tragic "King of Pop" in a poignant farewell.

More than two months after the singer died from a drug overdose, around 200 mourners -- led by the Jackson family and also including Hollywood icon Elizabeth Taylor -- gathered at a picturesque cemetery

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HELLO
MAYOR
...
IS THIS OUR
FOOTPATH?

Construction materials over the footpath on Rokeya Sarani in West Kafrul display the outrageous practice of occupying public pavements right under the DCC's nose. This picture representing silent sufferings of the city dwellers needs proper attention from the authorities concerned.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Nato airstrike kills 90 in Afghanistan

Taliban, 40 civilians among the dead

AP, AFP, Kabul

A Nato jet blasted two fuel tankers hijacked by the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, setting off a huge fireball yesterday that killed up to 90 people, Afghan officials said.

The Nato command said a "large number of insurgents" were killed or injured in the pre-dawn attack near the village of Omar Khel in Kunduz province. An Afghan police officer said the 90 dead included about 40 civilians who were siphoning fuel from the trucks.

He spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the information.

The top Nato commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, has ordered curbs on airstrikes after a strong backlash among Afghans against the high number of civilians killed in such military operations.

Police Chief Gulam Mohyuddin said Taliban fighters stopped the vehicles as they were about to cross the Kunduz River.

Navy Lt Cmdr Christine Sidenstricker, a

public affairs officer, said Nato warplanes attacked and destroyed the two tankers after determining that there were no civilians in the area.

She said that Nato and the Afghan government are investigating reports of civilian casualties.

Another Nato spokesman said one reason the fuel tankers were targeted was they are frequently used in suicide attacks.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said insurgents hijacked the trucks as they were headed from Tajikistan to supply Nato forces in Kabul.

When the hijackers tried to drive them across the Kunduz River, the vehicles became stuck in the mud and the insurgents opened valves to release fuel and lighten the loads, he said. He said about 500 villagers swarmed the trucks to collect the fuel despite warnings that they might be hit with an airstrike, he said.

Mujahid said no Taliban died in the attack.

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