

Rental power

FROM PAGE 1
is partnering with Otobi in the Bibiyana 450 MW power project, and the company was awarded contract for 55 MW HFO-fired rental project in Sikalbaha by the previous caretaker government. But the Sikalbaha plant remains incomplete, and five months behind schedule.

The committee also could not decide anything about Madanganj 100 MW HFO plant although it had invited local leading power company Summit for post-bidding negotiations.

Sources said despite the tender committee's recommendations, high officials of the power division and PDB remain divided over whether awarding rental power contracts to new bidders would produce any positive results. Besides, officials have raised questions about the authenticity of some bid documents submitted by the recommended lowest bidders.

In the past, local firms Energyprima, GBB and Venture Energy had bagged rental power contracts using unverified documents of their past experience and ownership of plant equipment. All of them failed to meet project deadline.

UNCERTAINTY OVER OTHER POWER PROJECTS

But it is not just the rental power projects which have become uncertain. All except 10 power projects with 830 MW capacity remain uncertain. Tender for these 10 projects was floated on November 12 and has remained within deadline. The response was poor which would probably lead to fresh tender for at least two out of the 10 plants. The PDB tender committee continues to evaluate these.

The other tenders facing unusual delays due to outside pressure or tender authorities' incapability are Bibiyana 450 MW plant under the Power Cell, two 150 MW plants in Siddhirganj and a 360 MW plant in Haripur under the Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh (EGCB), and Khulna 150 MW and Sirajganj 150 MW plants under the Northwest Power Generation Company (NWPGC).

The Bibiyana tender saw its failure back in 2008 as it drew no competition. Fresh tender was floated in April this year and it took five months for the Power Cell to select suitable bidders. The selected bidders are Malaysian YTL Power, a consortium of local Summit Mercantile Corporation (lead bidder) and GE Energy of USA, consortium Meiya Power of Hong Kong (lead bidder) and local Shasha Denims, and consortium CMEC (lead bidder) and Shenzhen Shenwan Power of China and Asian Entech and Otobi Ltd of Bangladesh.

Much of this time was wasted as the power ministry wanted the World Bank (WB) to provide consultancy after the tender was floated, and the WB initially said it would be involved only if the tender was floated from the scratch.

The next stage for this tender was preparing a request for proposal (RFP) for the bidders.

It took the Power Cell three months to prepare the RFP in consultation with the WB. The RFP was submitted recently, but the WB now wants to review the pre-qualification (PQ). This might delay the tender further.

In the tender for Tk 1,665 crore Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica)-financed 360 MW Haripur power project, allegations of manipulation to award the contract to a certain bidder loom large.

The project's implementing authorities EGCB in October this year prepared the PQ documents to find suitable bidders for it. But the PQ documents have been allegedly modified in such a way that they do not match other standard PQ documents used in the country.

Sources said the EGCB's PQ is allowing bidders with power generator without any proven record of performance. There is no precedence of allowing use of such generator in Bangladesh.

Besides, the EGCB has broadened the range of power generation for bidders. Usually bidders are asked to offer power generators with a capacity of 10 percent more or less than asked for (in this case 360 MW plus or minus 10 percent) but the EGCB increased the range to 15 percent.

This means a bidder can offer power generation of around 300 MW or 410 MW in this tender. Sources said only one Japanese power company, which has developed a new generation power generator but has no proven record of its (generator) performance, meets this criterion. Again, a powerful ruling party man is lobbying for this power company in this tender.

But these modifications have made the Jica unhappy. It has raised specific questions

regarding these two criteria. The EGCB's answer, sources said, has not satisfied it. Nevertheless, the bid criterion has now been modified.

The EGCB is also struggling with its 300 MW project in Siddhirganj with the WB's financing, the tender for which was floated in April.

The WB imposed a condition that as the bank is investigating corruption charges against leading power generator maker Siemens, it will not entertain bids based on Siemens equipment till the end of 2010. Most of the eight bidders have dropped their offers using Siemens equipment.

Again, the same powerful ruling party man has been influencing the EGCB to award the tender to Gammons Sademi, which become bankrupt recently.

Against this backdrop, the EGCB sent the WB a set of recommendations regarding this project for its approval. The EGCB wants to award the deal to Gammons Sademi as the lowest responsive bidder.

But on the EGCB's recommendations, the WB said on December 15 that all the bids had deviated from the bidding guideline. It (WB) rejected Gammons Sademi's bid and asked the EGCB to re-evaluate the bids keeping in mind that bidders using Siemens equipment will not be entertained.

With financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the NWPGC had floated tenders for the Sirajganj 150 MW plant and Khulna 150 MW plant earlier this year. It took many months to pre-qualify bidders for both the projects.

Only recently, the NWPGC qualified Chinese companies Shanghai Electric and Shandong and Spanish companies Cobra and Isorex for the Khulna project. It also qualified Shandong, Cobra, Chinese CMC and Indian Bhel for the Sirajganj project last week. The ADB will now scrutinise the selections.

"In all cases, the implementing authorities have demonstrated lack of ability to spearhead these tenders properly. They are either bowing down to pressure from lobbies or simply they don't have the commitment to push the power projects urgently," says a high official, expressing his frustration.

Meanwhile, old and new power projects with more than 800 MW capacity are now under implementation.

The present government has so far given final approval to two power projects having 300 MW capacity.

Korea offers

FROM PAGE 16
state-owned company Korean Mining, Security Printing, & ID Card Operating Corporation (KOMSCO) deliver the project in Bangladesh.

In his letter, Suk-Bum Park said, "KOMSCO has implemented this type of project successfully in the past and has more than 50 years of experience in the sector."

"Our government is ready to guarantee the successful implementation of the project in time," he added.

KOMSCO has offered to provide core technology and operative know-how during the transfer stage, including a training programme for officials and civil engineers.

"We will provide everything in the most cost-effective way and will fully comply with all international guidelines and requirements," the company said.

A machine-readable passport is a travel document where the data on the identity page is encoded in optical character recognition format.

Electronic passports use laser beams to record personal details on polycarbonate datasheets, which prevents fading and scratching. They are also more durable than existing passports and will therefore be expected to reduce the costs of re-issuing passports due to wear and tear.

In order to be awarded responsibility for the project, KOMSCO will need to demonstrate benefits superior to those already offered by companies who have submitted tenders.

On November 23 a seven-member evaluation committee headed by Project Director Brig Gen Md Refayet Ullah recommended that the Malaysian firm IRIS Corporation Berhad be selected to introduce MRP and MRV in Bangladesh.

However the committee later found serious inconsistencies in IRIS's tender documents and on December 8 it subsequently recommended that the project be awarded to the Bangladeshi-U.S. company Flora Telecom Ltd.

IRIS had quoted Tk 281.66 crore against Flora's Tk 340.88 crore to implement the project. The assessment is ongoing and a decision is expected to be announced by the government within the next fortnight.

ETP

FROM PAGE 1
in Tongi inoperative while Pacific Fibre Corporation at BSCIC in Konabari is running without any ETP and DoE clearance.

The ETPs of Angel Composite Knitting Industries Pvt Ltd and Cross Line Knitting Fabrics Ltd were found functional but they were put in operation just before the drive.

The court having two executive magistrates fined four brickfields Tk 3.20 lakh for running without the approval of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

Officials from DoE and BSTI took part in the drive from 12.30pm to 5.30pm.

The team fined the Orbit Processing Mills Ltd Tk 80,000 for manufacturing products without the approval of BSTI.

"We shall file cases against the industries after getting the test results of the polluted water," said Jamshed.

The three industries with ETPs have been polluting the Kutia Badam canal near the Badam-Bhakram connecting bridge in Gazipur, said Abdul Alim Molla, councillor and panel mayor of Tongi municipality.

He said the water of the canal was clean even 10 years ago but it has now become polluted and unusable.

"Once we used the water for household work but now it's so polluted that it can cause skin diseases," said Sadeque Ali, a resident in the area.

The mobile court fined MAS brickfield and Siraj brickfield Tk 70,000 each while Messrs Taslim Bricks Manufacturing, and Farid and Company at Gazipur were fined Tk 50,000 each.

Padma bidding

FROM PAGE 1
Muhiut said no doubt the highest fund provider is likely to be the lead donor. However, in selecting the lead donor, its relations with other development partners and the government, and its technical capacity will also be taken into consideration.

The selected lead donor will have to post a high-powered official in Dhaka for prompt decisions. The finance minister told the reporters, during the first year of the present government's tenure the Padma Bridge project has seen much progress, which was not seen during any past government's tenure.

For quick construction of the bridge some experts have to be appointed and some vehicles have to be purchased, the minister added.

Planning Minister AK Khandker, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Moshir Rahman, and other high officials were also present at the meeting.

Syed Abul Hossain said, "The Padma Bridge project took off after we assumed power, and it will be completed within the tenure of this government. When the bridge is built 1.2 percent will be added to our national GDP."

Govt bucks trend

FROM PAGE 16
period last fiscal year, gross sale increased by 2.63 percent and net sale went up by 120.10 percent.

A Bangladesh Bank official said the banks in recent times substantially lowered interest rate on deposits. As a result the depositors are opting for savings instruments instead of banks.

Since July, the government repaid more to the central bank but it took more loans from the commercial banks. In this regard Bangladesh Bank sources said the amount of excess liquidity in commercial banks is much more now. Though the amount of excess liquidity fell slightly, the amount is still above Tk 35,000 crore.

On the other hand, even though inflation is still low, in the recent months it is gradually increasing and remittance is showing a boom. As part of overall monetary management, money is being mopped up from commercial banks and higher payment is being made to the central bank so that it does not have an impact on inflation.

PM returns

FROM PAGE 16
provided with compensatory grants and easily accessible adequate funds to meet the full cost of adaptation to climate change."

The PM also urged the world nations to rise above perceived and petty national interests in the greater interest of this mother planet, threatened by climate change due to excessive carbon emissions from the most developed countries.

The climate summit concluded Saturday with provisional accords about reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions and funding adaptation to changing climate in the victim countries.

Hassina left Dhaka for Copenhagen on December 14.

Birthday gift

FROM PAGE 1
their third birthday at home.

The girls, who were born joined at the head, have amazed medics with their recovery since a complex, 32-hour operation to separate them five weeks ago.

"We are absolutely delighted with their progress," Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital neurosurgeon Virginia Makner said of the girls, who turn three today.

"I look forward to seeing them live a long and happy life - that's my wish for them."

Trishna and Krishna were brought to Melbourne two years ago after they were discovered in a Dhaka orphanage by Australian aid workers who realised they faced certain death unless they received intensive medical care.

Arriving in Australia dangerously ill, the twins were nursed back to health by their guardians and staff at the Royal Children's Hospital who prepared them for the marathon separation surgery.

Although the girls were given only a 25 percent chance of them both surviving the difficult operation without brain damage, both have a shown remarkable resilience since the surgery.

They are now finding their feet, a change from their old habit of crawling around on their backs, and doctors believe they have come through the operation without serious neurological damage.

They were given an emotional and tearful farewell from the hospital's neuroscience centre on Monday as they were pushed in two strollers by Australian guardian Moira Kelly and carer Maria Mardi.

"I'm so grateful to all the staff at the Royal Children's Hospital," Kelly said. "They have given these two little girls a new life. I can't wait to take them home."

The girls will spend their first night out of hospital at the Children First Foundation, the

charity run by Kelly which brought them to Australia and organised their surgery.

"My life really begins today, theirs started five weeks ago," Kelly told reporters. "I think when these little girls put their heads down on a soft pillow tonight it will become a bit more real."

Kelly said she believed her prayers to the woman set to become Australia's first Catholic saint, beatified nun Mary MacKillop who died in 1909, helped the girls.

"Mary MacKillop has certainly I believe played a big role in this," Kelly said.

In Bangladesh, the biological mother of the twins, Lovely Mallick, told AFP she was "delighted" at the news of the release and wished them healthy lives.

Mallick, 22, gave up Trishna and Krishna soon after their birth because there was no way she and her husband could care for the sickly newborns. She has said she is happy for them to stay in Australia.

"I wish I could see them now. Krishna and Trishna are always in my thoughts," she said.

"I don't have the money, but I one day, I hope, I will be able to visit them in Australia just to see how they are doing."

The story of the conjoined twins born into poverty and brought to Australia for life-saving surgery made headlines around the country, and the hospital was inundated with so many gifts for the children they had to ask that well-wishers direct their presents to the Children First Foundation.

The girls, who will receive weekly check-ups at the hospital, are likely to receive more presents on Tuesday when they celebrate their first birthday as separate children.

Kelly, a twin herself, said while there would be two birthday cakes the event would be a "small and humble" celebration.

Amnesty names Indian as new secy general

AFP, London

Amnesty International announced yesterday the appointment of a new secretary general, Salil Shetty, an Indian national who has been director of the UN's Millennium Campaign for the past six years.

"We are thrilled that Salil will be joining us and leading Amnesty International as we renew our fight to end injustice -- campaigning with those imprisoned because of their ideas, those on death row, those being tortured, and those who have their rights denied because they live in poverty," said Peter Pack, chairman of the London-based rights group's executive committee.

Shetty ran British development charity ActionAid for five years until 2003, when he joined the UN Millennium Campaign tasked with realising the Millennium Development Goals. He will take over at Amnesty in June.

"I feel privileged to be given this amazing opportunity at a time when the world needs human rights for all more than ever before," he said.

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 16
The attorney general told The Daily Star that the trial court might issue the death warrant today on the basis of the records.

The jail authorities will take steps to execute the five convicts between 21 and 28 days after receiving the death warrant, he added.

The five convicts are Lt Col Syed Farooq Rahman, Lt Col Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Maj Bazul Huda, Maj (Lancer) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Lt Col (Artillery) Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Replying to a question, Mahbub Alam said the process for executing the convicted killers of Bangabandhu will not stop, even if they file review petitions with the SC against the verdict.

"The convicts will try to stop the process of execution through filing review petitions with the Supreme Court. But we will try to dismiss their petitions," he said.

He added the lawyers for two convicts -- Syed Farooq Rahman and Mohiuddin Ahmed -- got the certified copy of the SC judgment, while the rest will get it today.

Earlier in the day, the SC registrar's office sent the copy of the apex court judgement to the offices of the home secretary, attorney general, High Court registrar, Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court and inspector general (prisons).

On November 19, the Appellate Division upheld the death sentence to a dozen killers including the five convicts earlier handed down by the HC.

Six of the convicts -- Lt Col Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col Shariful Haque Dalim, Lt Col SHMB Nur Chowdhury, Lt Col AM Rashed Chowdhury, Capt Abdul Mazed and Risalard Mosleuddin Khan -- are on the run.

The other convict Lt Col Abdul Aziz Pasha died in Zimbabwe in June 2001 where he had taken political asylum.

Feni BDR

FROM PAGE 1
Col Gazi Mohammad Salauddin, also the commanding officer of the battalion, read out the charges brought against the BDR men.

He told the court that a group of BDR members had expressed their solidarity with the mutineers of BDR Headquarters and looted arms from the armoury.

The BDR men also created panic by putting barricades on Feni-Maljee road and firing blank shots during the mutiny, said the prosecutor.

He urged the court for an exemplary punishment to those involved in the mutiny as per the BDR laws.

Deputy Attorney General Farhad Hossain aided the court as a representative from the Attorney General's Office.

Some members of the Rifle Battalion under Comilla sector took part in the mutiny by firing blanks and putting up barricades on the road on February 26 following the revolt at the Pilkhana headquarters in Dhaka.

Dagonbhuiyan police filed the case against the BDR jawans in this connection.

The Feb 25-26 mutiny at Pilkhana killed over 73 people. The rebellion also spread to other BDR camps around the country.

On Nov 15, six special courts were formed to try some 3,500 BDR men in 40 cases filed in connection with the mutiny.

The first trial of mutiny started in Ranganmati on Nov 24, followed by a trial in Sakhira on Dec 7. The third trial began in Feni on Sunday.

Big freeze kills 80 across Europe

AFP, Paris

The death toll from winter storms across Europe rose to at least 80 yesterday as transport chaos grew amid mounting anger over the failure of Eurostar high-speed trains.

With tens of thousands stranded by the cancellation of London-to-Paris trains and hundreds of flights across the continent, new accidents and mass power cuts added to the big freeze tumult.

A car that veered off an icy road caused the derailment of a Paris commuter train, injuring 36 people. Another commuter train in the Croatian capital hit a buffer injuring 50 people.

Polish authorities said 42 people, many of them homeless, had died of cold over three days in the country after temperatures plunged to minus 20 degrees Celsius (minus four Fahrenheit).

Ukraine reported 27 deaths while six people were killed in accidents in Germany and three in Austria. France has reported at least two deaths of homeless, and the power company cut electricity to two million people on Monday saying it was needed to avoid an even bigger blackout amid surging demand.

More flights were cancelled in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and main highways were blocked across Europe where some regions had more than 50 centimetres (20 inches) of snow.

The breakdown of the Eurostar service under the Channel, linking London with Paris and Brussels, has symbolised Europe's suffering.

After the nightmare of more than 2,000 people stuck in the tunnel when five trains broke down Friday night, tens of thousands more people have missed trains that have been cancelled since then.

With no services planned until at least Tuesday, French President Nicolas Sarkozy summoned the head of the state SNCF rail company,

Guillaume Pepy, to demand a speedy resumption of the service.

Eurostar said trains may start again Tuesday if test runs through the tunnel "go well" but that normal service would not resume before Christmas on Friday.

The French transport ministry has ordered an investigation into the breakdown, which Eurostar said has been caused by trains unable to handle the change from freezing temperatures outside to warm temperatures in the tunnel.

Eurostar said it had launched its own review by independent experts into the breakdown.

Cops to use

FROM PAGE 16
footages across the city and the ADC (Traffic command and control) would analyse the footages to identify the traffic rule breakers.

The DMP authorities would issue case slips to the violators after identifying them by their vehicle registration numbers, he said, adding that the meeting also decided to introduce the new lane system in all the city roads as the initiative has marked significant improvement in traffic congestion.

Besides, there would be separate lanes for rickshaws in four roads -- Malibagh intersection to Kamalapur, Jigatala intersection to Dhanmondi-27, Taltola to Mirpur-10 Round Square and Rainbow crossing to Mohakhali Terminal.

From December 8, the DMP has been conducting a special drive to penalise violators of traffic rules and light signals.

In the last week of November the authorities reactivated electronic traffic light signal system replacing the manual traffic controlling and also introduced lane system in three major thoroughfares.

Pak courts face

FROM PAGE 1
protecting them from charges.

On the other hand a bench of Pakistan's Supreme Court has decided to hear appeals from politicians after it lifted an amnesty for politicians facing graft charges.

The three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry will hear the appeals.

Senior figures, including interior and defence ministers, are among those affected by the Supreme Court ruling.

The move has sparked calls for Zardari to resign, rocking the US-backed civilian government at a time of rising extremist attacks and mounting pressure from Washington to crack down on al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

The ruling party is determined to ride out what could be the worst challenge to Zardari's troubled 15 months in power, pledging to fight any charges brought against its leaders and making it clear there will be no resignations.

"The allegations are false. I'm not worried at all. We think that it's good that we'll go through that process and clear our names," Malik told CNN in the latest in a series of interviews pledging his innocence.

But the net closed in Monday as he received a second court summons, to appear January 2 over revived corruption charges.

"Mr Malik will appear in court. We are not afraid of appearing in the courts," his defence lawyer Amjad Iqbal told reporters in the garrison city Rawalpindi, where Taliban militants have staged increasingly brazen attacks.

Prosecutors confirmed they were bringing hundreds of cases to court.

"We reopened all the cases after the Supreme Court judgment and hearings in a number of cases all over Pakistan are going on," said Salar Ghazni Khan, spokesman for the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

"Around 20 anti-corruption courts are working... There are hundreds of cases pending and following the Supreme Court verdict we expect the number of these courts to increase substantially," said one bureau official.

The end of the 2007 National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) was fated by a public disappointed by corruption and government performance as Pakistan grapples with recession, social ills and extremist attacks.

The Pakistan People's Party

(PPP) won elections in 2008, marking a long-awaited return to civilian rule, but Zardari's relations with the powerful military are strained and his public approval ratings at rock-bottom.

It is possible lawyers could now challenge his immunity in the Supreme Court and petition judges to declare him no longer eligible for office.

Travel restrictions have been slapped on up to 253 individuals and Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar was banned from leaving on an official trip to China.

Critics say the revived graft cases are politically motivated and involve allegations relatively insignificant in a country ranked 40th most corrupt in the world by watchdog Transparency International.

Zardari, so tainted by corruption that he is nicknamed "Mr Ten Percent", spent 11 years in jail on charges ranging from corruption to murder.

The defence minister has spent time in prison and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani spent five years in jail under former military ruler Pervez Musharraf on charges of misusing authority.

The Supreme Court has ordered a monitoring body to oversee anti-corruption trials, granting itself the power to ensure action is taken and exacerbating pressure on the government.

"We don't believe in confrontation... Party policy is to defend the cases in the courts," PPP spokeswoman Fauzia Wahab told Geo television.

Governments in Pakistan have fallen as a result of military intervention over accusations of graft. Unlike Zardari, cabinet ministers have no immunity and if convicted would not be eligible to hold office.

"A tussle has already started between the government and the judiciary," senior lawyer Salman Raja told AFP.

Most analysts believe the government may be forced into a cabinet reshuffle and that while the end of the amnesty cannot unseat Zardari, the ensuing fracas may set the ball rolling towards his dismissal.

"The ultimate exit of President Zardari depends on political pressure. If the pressure is huge, he may quit but not on the basis of the court verdict," senior lawyer Abid Husain Minto told AFP.