



A view of Bheramara rental power site. Its works have begun before contract signing. After many months of delay, PDB signed contracts for three rental power projects yesterday.

## PDB finally signs

**FROM PAGE 16**  
unknown, sources say.  
Now these projects will not be able to begin production from the upcoming irrigation period as planned by PDB when the tender for these costly projects were floated last year.  
The sources allege during this one-month delay, the power project sites were being developed by the project contractors with the help of PDB.  
But the contractors are not supposed to do so before signing of the contracts. "This was mainly for giving them an extra month's time unfairly," quips a high official admitting influence of powerful lobbies over PDB's affairs.  
The diesel plants will have to be commissioned within 120 days of signing of the agreement and the furnace oil plant within 270 days. The diesel plants will sell power to PDB for three years and the furnace oil plant for five years.  
The per kilowatt-hour power tariff from the Bheramara plant will cost Tk 12.58, Thakurgaon Tk 13.74 and Noapara Tk 7.29. This tariff is many times higher than that of any conventional private power project.  
"Two remaining rental power projects are expected to be signed next week," says a PDB official. These two are

Barisal 50 MW furnace oil-fired plant by local company Coastal Saba and Jamalpur 30 MW furnace oil plant by Rahim Afroz.  
The PDB had originally planned to sign agreements for eight rental power projects totalling 530 MW capacity within early December with a view to ensuring extra power supply during the Boro irrigation period from early March.  
But external influence over PDB's selection process and hectic lobbying by various influential business lobbies slowed down the tender process. The government ultimately picked the bids of some local companies that had no prior experience to install and operate rental power projects.  
Rental power projects are different from conventional ones because the contractor in this case must own power plant equipment ready to be installed and uninstalled in a short notice. The contractors are not supposed to buy plant equipment for just one particular project.  
"That is why, power from such projects are typically costlier than that of conventional plants. This is also why more business groups are more interested in rental projects than the typical ones," says a PDB official.  
The prime minister

approved the bids of these five rental projects on January 4. The same were okayed by the cabinet's purchase committee on December 23.  
Previously, the caretaker government had given rental power contracts to novice companies like Energy Prima, Venture Energy and Precision Energy to provide power within May 2008.  
All of these companies failed to bring the power projects in time, and a couple of these rental contracts have not produced power till now.  
The caretaker government's last rental power contract was awarded to Asian Entech to install a 55 MW furnace oil-fired power plant in Sikabaha for three years.  
This project was supposed to be launched in July last year, and then by December 31. But till date it could not begin commercial operation.

## BNP returns to JS

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Asked when they will return to parliament, he said they would let people know before joining.  
The meeting decided to raise the demand for holding discussions in parliament on different issues including deals with India, proposed Tipaimukh dam, price hike of essentials, tender manipulation and business centring admission tests by ruling party men.  
Besides, the opposition lawmakers will speak on other issues including strengthening security of the BNP chairperson, withdrawal of "politically motivated" cases filed against her during the caretaker government's rule, dropping the decision to cancel the lease of her cantonment residence, Farroque said.  
The meeting also decided to place a demand for expunging the recent remarks made by the prime minister and Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim on late president Ziaur Rahman's grave.  
Opposition lawmakers of the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party have been boycotting the House proceedings since the second session of parliament--the

## Road safety

**FROM PAGE 1**  
get down in front of the GPO the bus pulled away. Shafiqul fell and his head struck the pavement. He died on the spot.  
This is just one of many similar incidents of rowdy driving of buses.  
A large number of these vehicles are not road worthy. Many of the buses that ply the city streets do not even have indicators, taillights, or headlights but they do usually have broken windscreens or shattered windows, shabby seats and dents and scrapes all over their body. Some are seen with loose body parts dangling dangerously as they manoeuvre through traffic. Some have smudged, apparently deliberately, number plates to make it easier to avoid being caught after a hit-and-run.  
Prof Md Shamsul Hoque, director of Accident Research Institute at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, said buses are the most important part of public transport. "But the public buses in our country do not have any attributes of being so, mainly because of faulty planning," he said.  
Minibuses, as they are easily manoeuvrable, are the most erratic, he said. Authorities allow different companies under fragmented ownership to operate on a particular route and the operators indulge in competition to make more money with as many trips as possible with each bus ignoring people's safety, he said.  
"Even a company with only a few buses get route permit," he said, adding, "A particular route must be given to a single operator with adequate number of buses in its fleet to satisfy the transport need of the public."  
A total of 380 deaths occur on the streets of the capital every year due to accidents, for which buses, particularly minibuses, are responsible in one way or the other.  
Of the 380 deaths, 75 percent are pedestrians.  
Accidents caused by buses

and trucks take the figure to around 3,700 across the country, he said.  
Quoting Bangladesh Road Transport Authority high officials, Prof Md Shamsul Hoque said 50 to 70 percent licences the drivers hold are fake.  
Deputy Commissioner (traffic west) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Selim Md Jahangir said they prosecuted 2,704 bus drivers in January in the west zone alone in connection with picking passengers at unauthorised places.  
"I myself conducted a random seizure of driving licences in the last week of January and seized 92 licences," he said, adding, "To my shock, only six of them turned out to be genuine."  
A total of 3,133 drivers were prosecuted in connection with lane-rules violation in the west zone during the same period.  
The problem of continued rowdy bus driving does not lie only with the police, he said, adding that there are other agencies like Bangladesh Road Transport Authority who are responsible.  
Interestingly, DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque has said they issued a deadline for fake driving-licence holders to obtain licences by March 31.  
"We will go for legal action after the deadline," he said.  
Khandakar Rafiqul Hossain Kajal, president of Association of Bus Companies (ABC), said indiscipline and rowdiness exist in the bus-service sector due to various interest groups. "Unless and until extortion is tackled, rowdiness in the sector will not stop," he said.  
The ABC once took an initiative to recruit authentic drivers and conductors but failed as the vested quarter opposed it, he claimed.  
"There are many examples of bus drivers maiming or killing people through callous driving," he said.  
He said 60 percent of the driving licences are fakes but they could not take actions against those bus drivers due to dearth of drivers.

## 13 lakh acres

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"Bangabandhu Safari Park" on a 4,000-acre land in Gazipur to conserve wildlife. The project awaits government approval.  
Speaking on a private-member resolution on steps to resolve housing problems for people on low incomes, several lawmakers had a go at the land grabbers.  
They urged the government to recover the lands and distribute those among the landless.  
AL lawmakers Israfil Alam and Nurul Islam Sujan and Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujibul-Haque Chhanna were among those who backed the private-member resolution, piloted by Apu Ukil.  
In response to the resolution, State Minister for Housing Abdul Mannan Khan said his ministry has taken various measures to resolve housing crisis.  
Those include expanding the capital, developing satellite cities and building over a lakh flats.

## Abubakar's death

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Medical College Hospital on Wednesday.  
He received severe wounds during a factional clash of Bangladesh Chhatra League in the hall on Tuesday.  
Teachers and students of Islamic History department boycotted classes and examinations in protest at the incident. They also formed a human-chain at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla around 10:30am.  
A black flag was hoisted at the department while teachers and student wore black ribbons.  
Members of the department in a memorandum to DU vice chancellor demanded proper investigation into the incident and punishment to the people behind the killing.  
The Progotishil Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, staged a protest march on the campus around noon. Leaders and workers of the alliance also demonstrated in front of VC office.  
In a press conference at DU Madhur Canteen, alliance leaders placed a five-point demand including punishment to policemen and Chhatra League activists involved.  
"Tension was prevailing on campus since morning."  
Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said culprits

behind the incident would be punished after the ongoing investigation.  
"Hope we will get a comprehensive report from the probe body and be able to ensure punishment to the people responsible for the killing," Arefin Siddique told The Daily Star.  
The VC added alongside financial aids, other necessary supports would be given to the victim's family.  
PRIME MINISTER ON BCL  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night asked three organising secretaries of Awami League to monitor the activities of party's associate body Bangladesh Chhatra League.  
The three organising secretaries are Jahangir Kabir Nanok, Ahmed Hossain and BM Mozammel Haque.  
One of the organising secretaries confirmed it to The Daily Star over phone last night.  
Ruling party chief Hasina gave the direction in the wake of Chhatra League's recent violent activities at the educational institutions across the country that provoked a storm of criticism against the government.  
A number of BCL sources said the three organising secretaries would submit a report to the premier after monitoring the present situation of the student body.

## Justice

**FROM PAGE 1**  
next chief justice, as incumbent Chief Justice Md Tafazzul Islam is set to retire on Sunday.  
The chief justice-designate said clearing the huge backlog of pending cases, and dispensation of fair justice at a minimum cost within a short time are among the challenges his office will face.  
"The challenge before me does not have any limit. The continuity of the present rate of disposal of cases should be upheld," he said.  
The number of cases has increased due to the large number of population of the country, and it is possible to overcome the obstacles if the judges and lawyers work in cooperation, he added.  
Justice Fazlul Karim, who will retire on September 30 this year, said he was involved in politics for justice during his student years, but never was a member of any political party.  
"When I was a lawyer, I was elected the secretary of Supreme Court Bar Association, since the lawyers love me. I was also involved in the movement against the rule of HM Ershad," he said.  
Justice Fazlul Karim also said the media is playing a very important role in the development of the country.  
The chief justice-designate will assume his office after taking oath on Monday, SC sources said.

## Local golfers shine

**FROM PAGE 16**  
26-year-old Sohel, a member of the gold winning team, started the crucial second round of the 36-hole competition in the morning hearing that his 55-year-old father, Kazi Mohiuddin, had just passed away. A pall of gloom gripped everybody, but Sohel decided to carry on keeping his emotions in check.  
"It was a tough decision for me. But I knew it well that if I discontinued we would lose the gold. I just tried to forget everything and focus on my own game and helped the team win the gold," said Sohel, who however rushed to his home at Mirpur immediately after the ceremony.  
Apart from the golf gold for Bangladesh, the seventh day of the Games totally belonged to the Indians. They won all the

five gold decided in badminton, captured four shooting gold, won both the men's and women's kabaddi titles and lifted the men's volleyball gold. With 12 gold in their coffers, the runaway leaders improved their collection to 32 gold, 14 silver and nine bronze medals. Pakistan held a distant second position with 6-15-8. Bangladesh remained in the third position, a target they wanted to achieve this time, with a tally of 5-6-15.  
Meanwhile, the swimming competition will start at the National Swimming Complex in Mirpur today. However, all eyes will be fixed on the Bangabandhu National Stadium where the Bangladesh men's football team face off with India in the first semifinal at 5.30pm.

## New books

**FROM PAGE 16**  
booklovers are expected to flock to the fair premises on the weekend.  
As many as 161 new titles came out yesterday totalling 301 new books in the fair.  
Of the yesterday's new titles, 38 are novels, 20 collections of short stories, 28 collections of poems and five collections of stories on the Liberation War.  
A number of writers and poets including poet Asad Chowdhury visited the fair yesterday.  
Many visitors said they had not found books of their choice in the first four days of the fair.  
Some visitors also said information centre could not provide them with the necessary information they were asking for.

## Big plan on war

**FROM PAGE 1**  
written query from BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid.  
He said, the process of purchasing two maritime patrol aircraft through international tender and building of five patrol craft at Khulna shipyard is underway. The decision on building or purchasing two large patrol craft, a hydrographic survey vessel and one oil tanker at local or foreign shipyard is also under consideration.  
In addition, the government has planned to purchase one or two old frigates for navy from other countries under government to government deal, he said, adding that process of purchasing of offshore patrol vessel from UK navy and a large patrol craft are progressing.  
"The government also has plans to upgrade missile boats and patrol crafts with modern missiles to improve the combat efficiency of navy," he said.  
On modernising the air force Khandker said the gov-

ernment has a scheme to purchase a fighter squadron, air-to-air missiles, one surface-to-air missile system, one air defence radar and two helicopters in the current fiscal year.  
**EXPENDITURE ON MEDICAL & TRAINING**  
In reply to AL lawmaker Israfil Alam's query, the planning minister also placed a report on the armed forces' previous five years' expenditure on medical and training purposes through military medical service directorate.  
According to the report, since fiscal year 2005-06 Tk 338.03 crore was spent on medical purpose while Tk 1.35 crore on training.  
**NEW CADET COLLEGE**  
In response to a query from Jatiya Party lawmaker MA Jabber, the planning minister said the government has a plan to set up a women's cadet college in Gopalganj or in Khulna or Bagerhat depending on availability of land and fund.

## 9 killed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
at Sadhurhat under Mirersarai upazila around 12:30pm.  
The people were going to Afroza Garden Community Centre at Bara Takiya from Mithanala village under the same upazila. The driver lost control over the steering at a turning near Sadhurhat Bazar without slowing down, said the sources.  
The accident left three passengers dead on the spot and nine others injured, said Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Mirersarai Police Station.  
Of the injured, six others died at Matrika Hospital, a local private clinic, while the rest three were undergoing treatment in the same clinic, he said.  
"We are trying to salvage the microbus from the pond," said the OC, adding that the driver could not be traced.

## Fugitive killers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has been activated again, said Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, who attended the meeting.  
Attended also by Home Minister Sahara Khatun, State Minister for home Shamsul Huq Tuku and State Minister for law Quamrul Islam, the meeting was convened to assess the government's efforts in bringing back the killers and discuss future course of actions to this end.  
"We are making highest efforts to learn the whereabouts of the killers," Shafique said, adding that the foreign minister has already directed Bangladesh missions abroad to search for them.  
The law minister said the government would take all necessary measures to bring the killers back "within the tenure of the present government".  
"Discussion is going on with different countries and the Interpol to expedite the

process. The government will take steps for signing extradition treaty and mutual legal assistance with the countries, if necessary," he said.  
Shafique said every country has its own different legal procedures and the killers will be brought back following international rules.  
In reply to a question, Sahara Khatun said they are communicating with the Interpol about tracking down the killers and it is making progress in this regard.  
Dipu Moni said a few killers were earlier brought back from countries with which Bangladesh has no extradition treaty. She expressed hope that the government's present efforts in this regard will also be successful even if there is no such treaty with the countries the killers are hiding in.  
Five of the 12 condemned killers, who had been in prisons in the country, were recently hanged. Another killer died in 2001.

## SSC exams

**FROM PAGE 16**  
education boards.  
This year the number of SSC examinees is around 1.40 lakh more than the previous year. Last year 1,063,848 examinees appeared at the examinations.  
However, the dropout rate came down to 36.05 percent this year, which was 42.15 percent in 2009 and 48 percent in 2008.  
According to the statistics available at the education board computer centre, more than 13.61 lakh students got registered in class IX under the ten boards during 2008/09 session.  
Around 8.70 lakh regular students and some 3.35 lakh failed students from previous years are going to take part in the SSC exams for 2010, it says.  
At a press briefing held at the secretariat yesterday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the government has completed all the necessary preparations to hold the examinations in a copy-free peaceful atmosphere.  
He warned that stern actions will be taken against those teachers if any involvement is found in doing unfair means in the SSC examinations.  
"If any teacher involves in copying in the examinations, the teacher will be suspended immediately and the allocation of government portion of salaries or the monthly pay order facilities will be cancelled," he said adding that the examination centre will also be cancelled if any allegation of copying is found there.  
The minister held the last preparatory meeting on the exams with the chairmen of all education boards, secretaries and exam controllers at ministry's conference room.  
Nahid urged all including the local government representatives not to enter the exam centres without any reason.  
"Still a week is left for examination, so come to the examination halls with full preparation; don't even think of adopting unfair means," he urged the examinees.

## 10,000 workers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Manpower which asks 'illegal workers' to leave the country or update their papers without paying financial penalties or serving jail terms. The workers must register with their embassies to get the benefits of amnesty, says Dubai based newspaper Gulf News on January 25.  
This is good news for the irregular workers as they can now return home without paying any penalties, Ferdous said, adding that earlier Oman's such amnesties required a large amount of fines for such workers.  
Many workers who even have been working for 10-15 years could not dare to respond to the amnesty, he added.  
According to an official figure, so far some 2.56 lakh Bangladeshis went to the Sultanate in the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula.  
However, a large number of irregular workers have entered Oman after crossing the borders of the United Arab Emirates or Iran, the Bangladesh Embassy officials said.  
The US has put Oman on a blacklist because of human trafficking, SM Ferdous said, adding that Oman therefore framed a strict law last year. If any company provides jobs to any irregular foreign workers,

it will have to count heavy penalties, he said.  
"Therefore, the companies also now will not give shelter to any foreigners having illegal status," Ferdous said, adding that the Bangladeshis living here irregularly are bound to leave for home.  
Oman, home to 1.05 million foreign workers, is really disciplining the expatriates labour sector, he said.  
Thousands of Indian and Pakistani workers are also queuing up to their embassies concerned to respond to the amnesty of Oman government, he said.  
**Girl takes**  
**FROM PAGE 16**  
to hospital where doctors declared the girl dead.  
OC Belayet Hossain of Ishwardi Police Station confirmed the incident and told that the victim's father filed a case accusing two persons.  
SP Nibash Chandra Majhi of Pabna said the criminals and their family members are still hiding. Police are after them.  
Meanwhile, students of the school brought out a procession yesterday and submitted a memorandum to the UNO demanding punishment of the culprits. The teachers too urged the law enforcers to nab the criminals immediately.

## 600 trees

**FROM PAGE 1**  
manger, blamed Badarkhali agricultural cooperative association for chopping down the trees.  
Contacted, Mohammad Ali first denied the allegation, but later requested journalists not to report on the tree-felling.  
Rafiqul Haque Titu, manager of Chakoria Ubinig, said he had informed the upazila administration when the cooperative's men put a cord around the forest area in June last year. But no action was taken.  
Chakoria Upazila Nirbahi Officer Zakir Hossain said he did not know anything about the developments. His office would probe and take measures if it receives any complaint in this regard.  
Rashedul Islam, Chakoria upazila assistant commissioner (land), said, there are no rules to allow clear-felling to build a shrimp farm.

## US under secrecy

**FROM PAGE 16**  
according to an announcement of the US embassy in Dhaka yesterday.  
McHale's portfolio includes all State Department-funded educational and cultural exchange programme, including the Fulbright programme.  
Prior to joining the State Department, McHale was the former president and chief executive officer of Discovery Communications.  
While at Discovery, McHale launched innovative education and development initiatives in the United States and around the world, including the Discovery Channel Global Education Partnership.  
Discovery Channel Global Education Partnership provides free educational programming and technological support to more than half a million students at 200 schools and community centres throughout rural Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.  
Judith A McHale as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is helping to lead America's engagement with the people of the world.  
Appointed by President Obama, she was confirmed by the US Senate on May 21, 2009 and sworn in on May 26.

For two decades, McHale led to build Discovery Communications, the parent company of the Discovery Channel, into a far-reaching and renowned global media enterprise with 1.4 billion subscribers in 170 countries.  
She forged partnerships around the world and created innovative strategies that focused on understanding and respecting different cultural contexts and tapping local voices to succeed in diverse markets.  
**Comilla Medical**  
**FROM PAGE 16**  
night when a BCL faction led by Biva attacked the rival group at Hall No 1 with sticks leaving seven activists wounded.  
Vice-Principal Dr Mosleh Uddin said the decision to close the college was taken by the academic council.  
Expressing dissatisfaction, general students said despite the ban on student politics on the campus, BCL was divided in line with recent BMA election in the district intensifying the rivalry.  
Kazi Matul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali thana, said additional police have been deployed on the campus to avert further trouble.

## BDR, BSF trade fire

**FROM PAGE 1**  
acting Battalion Commander-1 of Meghalaya SK Turki led the Indian side in the meeting.  
BDR sources said after a bitter exchange of word, a team of BSF of Mokhtarpur camp took Mujibur to their territory while he along with four colleagues was patrolling near border pillar No 1284.  
The BSF men were also patrolling near the area at that time.  
On information, officials from BDR Headquarters in Sylhet reached the area.  
Maj Mamun, second-in-command of 21 Rifle Battalion, told The Daily Star that in the meantime a proposal was sent to BSF for holding an emergency flag meeting to hand over BDR Nayek Mujibur Rahman.  
But all of a sudden, BSF opened fire without any provocation around 4:00pm, an hour ahead of the emergency flag meeting, forcing BDR to

retaliate it.  
BDR Director General Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam told The Daily Star that the exchange of gunfire took place following a misunderstanding between the two sides.  
A rumour spread along the border that BSF men took BDR Nayek Mujibur Rahman to their territory with bullet injuries, he said adding, "But it was not correct."  
"BSF returned our soldier and he is absolutely okay," said the BDR DG.  
The problem was solved following the flag meeting and communication between BDR headquarters in Dhaka and BSF headquarters in Delhi, he added.  
Sources said BDR and BSF had a long standing dispute over 50 acres of farmland in the bordering area.  
Indians have been trying to drive out Bangladeshi farmers from the bordering lands for years.