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Sirajganj power project set to be revived

PDB primarily accepts Summit proposal on the 450MW project cancelled by BNP-led govt

SHARIER KHAN
The Power Development Board has primarily accepted a proposal of leading local power company Summit to revive the 450-megawatt Sirajganj power project, which the last BNP-led alliance government had cancelled in 2004 without any explanation. Reviewing Summit's proposal, the PDB said Summit had modified its past proposal. Except for one or two issues in this modification, the PDB believes Summit's proposal is acceptable. Technical details on this proposal may be finalised when a contract between the PDB and Summit is signed. The Sirajganj power project was the first public-private partnership power scheme when its tender was floated in October, 2002.

The PDB would have had 40 percent stake in this project. The PDB sent its review of the Summit proposal to the power ministry two weeks ago. The power ministry has primarily opined that there was a gas crisis in Sirajganj and the PDB should ask Summit to implement this project by installing a "dual-fuel" system without changing the power tariff. However, installing a dual-fuel system that enables a power plant to run on both gas and petroleum fuel, increases power plant cost between 10 and 20 percent. Summit had submitted the revised proposal in October last to the prime minister expressing its willingness to build this gas-fired plant in partnership with the PDB, offering its original

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER
Certain quarters with alleged links to influential people have occupied these chars in the Karnaphuli River. Dredging followed by eviction of the encroachers is essential to restore the natural flow of the river. This photo was taken recently at Chaktai in Chittagong.

PM moves to Gono Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her family moved into Gono Bhaban yesterday. She had been living in state guesthouse Jamuna on Hare Road since February 6 last year. She shifted there from her Dhanmondi residence Sudha Sadan a month after taking oath as prime minister for the second time. Throughout her first stint, Hasina lived in Gono Bhaban, the official residence of the prime minister. But this time the house was not ready for use, and it needed a makeover after remaining vacant for seven years.

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Detained Jaish man tells plane hijack story

SHARIFUL ISLAM
Detained Billal, a suspected Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) operative, has admitted that he made a safe passage for several militants, who were involved in 1999 Indian plane hijacking, to India from Bangladesh. "Nannu Mia alias Belal Mandal alias Billal told us during interrogation that he helped enter such 12-13 militants to India from Bangladesh. He knows one Abdur Rahman among them," said an interrogator who quizzed Billal at the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell. In December 1999, militants hijacked the Delhi-bound Indian Airlines plane (flight number-814) after it took off from Kathmandu. They forced the aircraft to land in Kandahar of the then Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Rab arrested Rezwan Ahmed, a Pakistani national, Abu Naser Munshi, Imad Uddin alias

Munna and Sadeque Hossain alias Khoka from a flat in Sukanya Tower near Dhaka College on Sunday while Billal from Gausia Market area. Four local militant suspects--Billal, Naser, Munna and Khoka--were produced before a Dhaka court on Thursday on completion of their three-day remand. Motlubur Rahman, investigation officer (IO) of the case filed against them, told the court that the four are the members of banned militant organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh and have links with Pakistan based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). IO Motlubur, also SI of New Market Police Station, pleaded the court to confine the four to jail for further quizzing. Billal also said he got introduced with Rezwan around seven to eight months back through another Pakistani national and suspected JeM militant Zawad.

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6 houses torched in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati
At least six houses of indigenous families were set on fire at remote Dane Baipachhara at Bagaihat under Baghaichhari upazila here Thursday night. Unidentified persons burnt down the houses around 8:45pm but their motive could not be traced immediately, sources said. No death or injury was reported as the families deserted the houses soon after a series of clash had started in hill areas last month. "I have visited the spot. We could not find any reason

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Commentary

Speaker's opportunity

Time to transform the nature and quality of debate in the parliament

MAHFUZ ANAM
Enemies of democracy, especially of the parliamentary form, must have had their biggest laugh last Wednesday. If they wanted to stage something extremely insulting to the highest law making body and the supreme symbol of the people's power and the nation's sovereignty, they could not have done anything better than what a section of lawmakers did three days ago. It was among the lowest points in the short history of our parliamentary politics. Abusive language, extremely disrespectful remarks about our leaders, name-calling, hurling of slang and making gestures indicative of intent

to assault, words with sexual overtones, and the like dominated the news from the parliament on that day. We could have taken a kinder view of the incident, had it occurred spontaneously (for delinquent behaviour in parliament has been known in other countries as well). On the contrary it smacked of premeditation. The woman MP who hurled a most insulting remark about the demise of Bangabandhu had clearly planned to do so before, for nothing had happened in that particular session that could have provoked her to make the remark. So we can say that she went to the parliament that day for nothing else but to disrupt its proceedings.

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2 schoolboys killed on roads

STAR REPORT
Two schoolboys were killed in road accidents at Madan upazila of Netrakona district and Shibchar upazila of Madaripur district yesterday morning and Thursday evening. Ashraful Islam, 9, a student of class-IV of Keshjani Govt Primary School, died when a truck knocked him down on Netrakona-Madan road at Keshjani around 9:00am yesterday. In Madaripur, Shah Alam Khalifa, 15, a class-IX student of Bakharekandi High School, was crushed under the wheels of a bus at Shibchar on Thursday. Our Netrakona correspondent reports that Ashraful, son of Abdul Mannan, of Gobindapur village, fell victim to the accident on his way to

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Toxic fumes emitted by chemicals in this drum (left) killed three workers at a tannery in Hazaribagh area yesterday morning.

Three tanners die from gas poisoning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Three workers died from inhaling toxic gas and several others fell ill at a tannery in the city's Hazaribagh area yesterday morning. Carbon monoxide, a gas lethal to humans and animals, was the cause of death. It was produced by chemicals mixed in a wrong drum, said officials of the factory, Apex Tannery Ltd. The three were identified as Shah Alam, 45, Dulal Mia, 45, and Mohammad Solaiman, 55. The first two died on the spot as they opened the large wooden drum at around 7:00am. Solaiman, who went to the rescue of his coworkers, died at Sikder Hospital. Of those taken ill, nine were admitted to hospitals and clinics in the city. Syed Manzur Elahi, chairman of Apex Tannery, told The Daily Star that it was an accident and it was first of its kind in the company's 36 years. "Of the deceased, one had 29 years' experience in leather-making and the rest two had nine years' each," he added.

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Bangladesh beaten easily

Eng wrap it up 3-0

ATIQUAN ANAM from Ctg
England opener Craig Kieswetter scored his maiden hundred as the visitors beat Bangladesh by 45 runs in the third and final match of the Beximco ODI Series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium here yesterday to wrap up the series 3-0. Put in to bat, England posted a daunting total of 284 for five in fifty overs thanks to a 123-ball 107 from Kieswetter and a quickfire 32 from all-rounder Luke Wright. Then paceman Tim Bresnan took four wickets for 28 as Bangladesh reached 239 runs for nine conceding a 45-run defeat. There were a couple of starts from the Bangladesh batsmen, but no

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Govt starts job scheme for 12.5 lakh ultra poor

PORIMOL PALMA
The government has launched the Employment Generation Programme (EGP) from March 4, after the High Court vacated a stay order on the EGP. Under the Tk 600 crore programme, 12.5 lakh extreme poor throughout the country will have jobs for 40 days during the lean season of March-April. They will get Tk 120 each day for seven hours of work, an official of the food ministry said. The programme, which was scheduled to start from March 1, got delayed as the Union Parishad Chairman Samity filed a writ petition with the High Court against the government's decision to appoint bureaucrats as chairmen of UP level

committees to execute EGP. The UP chairmen used to be the heads of EGP committees, but this time the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management decided to appoint upazila level government officers through the upazila nirbahi officers. The ministry considered that the UP chairmen might use the EGP to serve their purposes in the UP elections in May, said the food ministry official. Following the writ petition, the High Court on February 28 issued a stay order on EGP. The government immediately appealed to the court saying the programme was meant for the lean season when the ultra poor have fewer job

opportunities and they might starve if the stay order was sustained. "The court vacated the stay order and we moved for starting the programme right away," said the food ministry official. As per the EGP guideline, unemployed and unskilled poor of ages between 18 and 60 and landless and marginal farmers will be eligible for the programme. However, those who are already under other safety net programmes cannot register for EGP and at least one-third of the total beneficiaries should be women. More beneficiaries will be selected from the areas where more than 40 percent people are below poverty line. These

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BNP leader killed in Jessore

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore
Unknown criminals hacked a local BNP leader to death in Jessore Thursday night. The victim was identified as Anarul Islam, 40, of Sajjali village under sadar upazila who is also the vice president of Churamonkhati word BNP. Locals said 13 to 15 criminals attacked Anarul around 8:00pm with sharp weapons when he was returning home. They hacked him indiscriminately and fled the spot, very close to his house leaving him seriously injured. Hearing his screams locals and family members rushed to

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Jubo League men occupy UZ chairman's house

Claim ownership of house where Thakurgaon UZ chairman's family lived for around 50 years
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon
A group of Jubo League men led by its district unit general secretary occupied the residence of a upazila chairman at College Para in the town yesterday morning following a dispute over the ownership of the house. Sultanul Ferdous, sadar upazila chairman and general secretary of district unit Jatiya Party, claimed that they had been living in the house since 1961. But Thakurgaon Jubo League General Secretary Abdul Majid said his family purchased the 89-decimal land and his late father Abul Hossain in 1964 rented the land and the house to late Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury, father of Ferdous and a former silent welfare minister. "For the sake of relationship, we did not say anything during this long time," Majid added. Addressing a press conference at district Jatiya Party office yesterday afternoon, Ferdous alleged around 200 Jubo League activists led by Majid attacked his house and damaged three rooms and the boundary wall. They also looted valuables and damaged furniture. Police played the role of silent spectators during the attack, he added. Ferdous, grandson of Haji Danesh, said he contacted the deputy commissioner, superintendent of police, acting president of district Awami League and water resources minister

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