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Foul play behind delay

Uncertainty grips Ghorashal power project as communications minister meddles with tender process

SHARIER KHAN

A tender process for a 300 megawatt power plant project in Ghorashal, crucial to mitigating the country's power supply crisis, is set to be cancelled in the face of a tussle between the communications minister and the Power Development Board.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain alleged that the company selected as the lowest bidder had fabricated its documents, a view that PDB did not subscribe to.

Incidentally, Abul Hossain's family owned company Sahco is representing a Chinese company that could not become the lowest bidder in the same tender.

The difference of opinions between PDB, which is responsible for checking on bidding companies, and the minister --

coupled with the fact that a Sahco-backed company is a competitor in the bid, raised eyebrows.

Until Abul Hossain became a minister in 2009, he was the chief of Sahco. After his exit, the company's seven-member board of directors is headed by Nurul Haque. Three of the directors however are the minister's wife and two daughters.

Between September and October this year, PDB sought the Cabinet Purchase Committee's approval thrice to award the contract to Chinese Sinohydro Corporation. But every time the communications minister, who is a member of the committee, opposed PDB's choice, and the committee refrained from approving the contract.

At the last purchase committee meeting on October 24, Syed Abul Hossain pointing finger at the PDB chairman, for

unduly siding with the Chinese firm, said Sinohydro won the bid by submitting false documents of experience.

All that the PDB chief could say in response was, the Chinese embassy had validated all Sinohydro documents.

Amid this row, Finance Minister AMA Muhith stopped the communications minister, saying the decision on this project will be taken later through a discussion among the purchase committee members.

Instead of a discussion, the finance minister on November 2 sent a written note to the committee members, saying since it was hard for them to agree on the matter, the tender may be scrapped.

He noted that floating a fresh tender will take additional three months, but it will resolve the disagreements, sources

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Dhaka Wasa, with the assistance of local lawmaker, and the district administration conduct a joint drive to dismantle illegal structures on a Kalyanpur canal yesterday. Attempts like these receive much praise but encroachers eventually return after some time. PHOTO: STAR

PM sends Eid greetings to Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted Opposition Leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Azha.

PM's Protocol Officer Proloy Kumar Joarder handed over the Eid card to the opposition leader's Private Secretary Saleh Ahmed at her parliament office.

BARAPUKURIA VICTIMS Compensation scheme okayed

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) yesterday approved a Tk 191 crore project with a compensation package for rehabilitating the affected people of Barapukuria coal mine.

Some 3,384 people will be given compensation under this package.

The approval came from the Ecne meeting held at the NEC conference room with Ecne Chairperson and Prime Minister

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

RMG workers in Ashulia strike for hiked bonus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 5,000 workers of Cosmopolitan Industries Pvt Ltd (CIPL) in Ashulia went on strike yesterday to press for Eid bonus in line with the new pay structure.

Instead of joining work in the morning, they gathered at the factory gate, and stayed there till leaving the place

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

MP joins drive to free Kalyanpur canal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A joint team of Dhaka Wasa and district administration yesterday resumed their eviction drive to recover Kalyanpur Ka Khal (canal) from encroachers.

Local lawmaker Aslamul Haq, who opposed a scheduled eviction drive of the authority in the area on October 31, assisted the team in conducting the drive and spent over one hour with them.

"I inaugurated the drive on November 3 and now we all including me, local people, Wasa and district administration will complete the

drive," said the lawmaker.

The structures, which occupied a portion of the canal illegally, came under the drive, he said adding that the beneficiaries, which sold the land to the beneficiaries, did not disclose anything about the canal to them.

"I will take initiative to return money or land to the affected people from Pisciculture Housing which sold land to them," he said.

Aslamul conducted an eviction drive on November 3 to "recover" a section of the canal in the capital's Mirpur with the district administration completely in the dark.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Sand traders fined for river encroachment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three sand traders were fined Tk 15 lakh yesterday for encroaching upon and filling up part of the Turag river.

The Department of Environment imposed the fine during a drive conducted by its Monitoring and Enforcement wing.

The DoE fined Ayesha Enterprise Tk 10 lakh, Ma Moni Enterprise Tk 2 lakh and Mama Bhagne Enterprise Tk 3 lakh.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



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