

Power contracts

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(HFO)-fired private power and Shantahar 50 MW HFO private power plants.

Summit has won both these projects competing in a tender floated by the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

In the Syedpur tender, Summit beat five other bidders by offering a Tk 6.99 per kilowatt power tariff for 15 years. In the Shantahar tender, it similarly beat five others by offering a tariff of Tk 7.06 per kilowatt hour for 15 years.

Both these projects have to be completed within 15 months of signing the respective agreements.

Summit has previously won three power projects through competitive tenders: Bibiyana phase 1 and 2 gas-fired private power plant (341 MW each) and Meghnaghat dual fuel 335 MW private power plant. In addition, it won or procured three HFO-fired rental power contracts: Narayanangj 102 MW, Khulna 115 MW and Noapara 40 MW projects.

These six projects alone require around \$1 billion for implementation. Summit chief Muhammad Aziz Khan claims it has \$2 billion investment assurance from different financial institutions.

He also says his company has arranged all technical sets of people to implement these projects in time.

But Finance Minister AMA Muhith feels uncomfortable with putting too many eggs in one basket. He said, "It has been discussed a lot that too many works have concentrated at one place. We have taken this issue into our con-

sideration. We have to fix a policy in dealing with such an issue."

While talking to journalists at the Cabinet Division after the purchase committee meeting yesterday afternoon, Muhith explained the reasons for his concern. He said, "This has got a relationship between capability of the company and timely implementation of projects."

"We have reviewed the works that were awarded [to Summit]. Our concern is with their technical competence and financial involvement," he added.

Replying to a question what kind of policy would safeguard the government interest in awarding multiple projects to a single bidder, the minister said the government would put a ceiling to the number of jobs that can be awarded to a company at a time.

A bidder that has bagged jobs up to that ceiling would not be allowed for more contracts till it delivers the results of awarded jobs.

The minister also expressed concern over subsidising purchase of power from rental power projects. He said he would soon hold an inter-ministerial meeting on the subsidy to take a decision.

Rental power projects seek costly power tariff as these operate on imported petroleum.

The PDB that is purchasing power from rental plants would incur huge loss while selling the same to the consumers. Therefore the PDB has sought huge subsidy from the government and also seeks increase of power tariff.

Seven pilots

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Capt Mahbubur Rahman, Capt Shah Alam, Capt Zakir, Capt Ishfaq and Capt Maqsood -- have already been served with notices in this regard.

Earlier, a five-member probe body headed by Capt Naseer Uddin Ahmed, director of Biman flight operations, in its report recommended actions against 19 pilots and first officers including the seven for their lead role in the last year's unrest in the national flag carrier.

The management and pilots came on a collision course after the airline on September 9, 2010 decided to increase the retirement age of pilots from 57 to 62 years but left them out of rehabilitation and insurance benefits in case of loss of licence for medical unfitness.

For the first time in over two decades, the authority was compelled to cancel all international and domestic flights of October 29 and 30 last year, as Biman pilots refrained en masse from flying.

They withdrew the strike following talks with a representative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The probe body said Biman suffered a loss of around Tk 7.3 crore, as it had to cancel as many as 20 international and domestic flights.

It also recommended divisional enquiry and punitive actions as per service rules.

JS session

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convened the eighth session of the House which will enter its third year on the day.

He is scheduled to address the opening sitting of the session, outlining successes of the Awami League-led grand alliance government.

The Business Advisory Committee led by Speaker Abdul Hamid will sit prior to the session to fix the duration of the session and issues to be dealt with.

BNP has been boycotting parliament since June 2 last year. Out of 174 sittings so far, the opposition lawmakers joined only 43 whereas BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia attended only five sittings.

The opposition lawmakers have been absent from parliament for 58 consecutive days.

According to the constitution, seat of a lawmaker falls vacant automatically if he remains absent from parliament for 90 consecutive days. So, the opposition legislators risk losing their seats if BNP does not join the upcoming session which is likely to continue for over 35 working days.

Several BNP leaders yesterday said they will take the issue up to the party chairperson and come to a decision.

Ital-Thai

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Sheikh Hasina leaves for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on January 16, said official sources.

Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, secretary of the BBA, told The Daily Star that the concession agreement would be vetted by the law ministry and submitted to the cabinet committee on economic affairs for approval by Sunday.

"We will sign the agreement by Tuesday," he said.

Earlier, the process of selecting the final bidder for the 26-kilometre Dhaka Elevated Expressway (DEE) was stayed by the High Court following a writ petition by the losing bidder, Sikder-KCCJV. An appellate division of the Supreme Court cleared the way by staying the HC order on January 2.

The concessionaire has to start the construction work of the elevated expressway within three months after receiving the work order and complete it in three and a half years.

The proposed route of the expressway runs from Hazrat Shahjalal (R) International Airport through Kuril, Banani, Tejgaon, Moghbazar and Kamalapur Stadium along the rail track.

Meanwhile, the main opposition BNP has been demanding army deployment in all the municipalities to ensure fair polls.

Jamaat-e-Islami, a key constituent of the BNP-led four-party political alliance, has also made the same demand.

But the EC repeatedly said army personnel will be deployed only in risky municipalities where trouble might be created during

Costly purchase

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tonne.

A separate proposal was also approved yesterday for importing 50,000 tonnes of non-boiled rice through private importers at \$450 a tonne.

The price of per tonne rice to be imported from Vietnam is about \$100 higher than that of the private importers.

Nurul Karim, joint secretary of the cabinet division, said the government decided to buy rice from Vietnam at a higher price because nobody can say for sure that private importers will be able to supply rice.

They have already got work orders for importing rice, he said.

The finance minister said private importers participate in tenders and sign agreements with the government. But they often fail to supply the commodity according to the deal.

The government is buying rice at a higher price to ensure supply on the domestic market, he said.

A food ministry report presented in yesterday's meeting showed the government in recent times awarded contracts to 17 firms for importing 5.5 tonnes of rice and signed agreements with 13 firms. But the government has so far received only 78,000

tonnes of rice from them.

Many companies are struggling to supply rice to the government as its prices have skyrocketed on the international market. The prices of coarse rice have increased by 40 percent to Tk 34 to 35 a kg over the last one year, the reports said.

The deadline for many contractors to supply rice to the government will expire within 10 to 15 days. Moreover, bid bonds of three firms have been cancelled for failing to supply rice in line with an agreement, it said.

In order to keep the domestic market stable, the government has decided to continue different programmes including Open Market Sale (OMS), Fair Price Card, Test Relief and Food for Work. It will also introduce rationing for class-IV government employees and village police, the report mentions.

But a satisfactory food stock has to be built to implement the programmes, it said.

Wishing anonymity, a food ministry official said they took many initiatives to increase the food stock over the last one year, but in vain.

On December 29 last year, the country's food stock stood at 8.16 lakh tonnes which was 11.16 lakh tonnes on the same day a year ago.

JBIC ranking

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survey conducted by International Research Office of Japan Bank for International Co-operation (JBIC).

JBIC Residential Executive Officer of Asia and Oceania Region Ryuichi Kaga disclosed this when he called on Industries Minister Dilip Barua at his residence yesterday morning.

During the meeting, Ryuichi said Japanese entrepreneurs are willing to shift their export-oriented industries from Japan to Bangladesh.

"Japanese entrepreneurs are also very much keen to invest in hi-tech textile, IT, railway and road infrastructure sectors in Bangladesh," he said.

About the country's Industrial Policy-2010, Ryuichi said that as the industrial policy has created a scope for local and foreign entrepreneurs to invest under direct investment, joint venture and Public Private Partnership, Bangladesh will achieve rapid investment growth in near future.

He informed that Japanese investors have given special emphasis on setting up Japanese special industrial zone in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh will welcome Japanese investors as a long-time development partner of the country, industries minister said.

The government has been providing various supports including tax holiday, visa facility, work permit and cash incentives for the foreign investors, he added.

The minister urged the Japanese entrepreneurs to invest in various sectors including setting up fertilizer factory, developing road and rail network, setting up environment friendly shipyard and ICT sector in Bangladesh.

Taher

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Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain adjourned the hearing following a time prayer moved by the government.

Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain told the court that Attorney General Mahbubur Alam, who will move the case on behalf of the government, could not appear before the court as he was pre-occupied with other urgent cases.

The bench was set to hear the petition yesterday.

Meanwhile, Additional Attorney General MK Rahman told The Daily Star that his office might submit a reply to the HC rule next week saying that the trial and execution of Col Taher was 'illegal' and 'unconstitutional'.

Col Taher's wife Lutfa Taher, his brother Anwar Hossain and Fatema Yusuf, wife of Yusuf Ali Khan, who was sentenced to life term in the same trial, jointly filed the petition on August 22 last year.

On August 23 last year, the HC issued a rule asking the government to explain why the regulation under which Taher was tried and executed, should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

Advocate Shaden Malik advocated for the petitioners.

TIB documents

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Deputy Registrar Badrul Alam Bhuiyan, the letter read that the SC authorities could not open the Compact Disk (CD) the TIB provided on Tuesday due to technical problems, sources in the apex court said.

The TIB survey, published on December 23 last year, found that most people seeking judicial service fall victim of corruption in the judiciary.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman welcomed the SC letter and said, "The hard copies of the household survey will be sent to the Supreme Court by next Sunday. But information of the respondents will not be published as per norms nationally and internationally accepted."

He, however, said there is no confusion about the scientific quality and acceptability of the survey data.

Speech reaction

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brave enough to admit failure in implementing her party's election pledges.

"The prime minister only spoke of her plans and slurred against the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government," he said.

Obaidul Quader, president member of AL, said Hasina acknowledged the power and gas crisis, price hike of essentials and unemployment problem in her speech and announced a road map to address those.

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad welcomed the premier's speech saying, "The prime minister did not exaggerate anything while pointing out her government's achievements in the last two years."

He said her speech on agriculture, education, health, sport and communications sectors were positive and realistic. Ershad thinks that Sheikh Hasina's pledge to resolve the power and gas crisis, and her call on the people to have patience will give the nation confidence.

Jamaat-e-Islami acting Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam accused the premier of lying about the price of rice. "Price of rice was not Tk 45 a kg during the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party government. This price was during the last caretaker government," he said.

He also said the premier did not say anything about the sufferings of people, signing of the anti-state treaties, violation of human rights and democracy.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu termed the speech a true and objective description of the government's success.

The prime minister's concern over the absence of the opposition in parliament indicates government's sincerity to make the House functional, he said.

About Hasina's remark on price hike, Inu said the premier's speech proves that the government cares about the problems people are facing.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, former caretaker government adviser, said there is nothing wrong with the efforts the government is

making for the advancement of the country and resolving people's problems.

"But regarding the human rights situation, there is no significant improvement as crossfire has not stopped yet," she said, adding, "Every government says that law and order is better than any time but that is not the indicator. The thing that needs to be looked into is whether people of the country feel secure. And according to our observation, the situation is not ideal."

She urged the government to take more effective steps to improve law and order.

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed said the speech would have been better had the premier admitted the failures of her government and promised turnaround.

As the leader of the nation, she should have been more sympathetic to the opposition.

"The explanation she gave regarding the failure of the government is not acceptable in some cases...law and order is very bad and the people know it. The parliament is also ineffective," Emajuddin said.

Mufti Izhar

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Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Huji).

Of the two cases filed with Raajan Police Station, one was filed under Anti-Terrorism Act while the other under Explosive Substance Act.

The same court also granted a total of six-day remand against five Huji activists in the same cases.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Keshab Roy Chowdhury passed the orders after investigation officer (IO) of the case filed under Anti-Terrorism Act, Sub Inspector of Raajan Police Station MA Latif submitted a petition with ten-day remand prayer.

The court sent Mufti on a remand for two days and three days for the five Huji men.

Some issues

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But her government could do little in tackling price hike of essentials, reducing traffic jam in the capital, dredging rivers, preventing pollution and grabbing and fighting climate change what she pledged last year.

She came up with similar commitments yesterday in her address to the nation.

Last year she said war crimes trial would start soon. The government has already arrested some identified war criminals.

On curbing corruption, the prime minister only mentioned the government has taken a tough stance against terrorism and corruption.

Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission and National Human Rights Commission have been working independently, she added.

Last year Sheikh Hasina said steps had been taken to reform and strengthen institutions for checking graft.

Like previous year, the prime minister this time criticised the BNP-Jamaat coalition.

In her previous speech, she called upon the opposition to return to parliament. She had also blasted the military backed caretaker regime.

This time she said the BNP had completely failed to play its role in the House. She, however, spared the caretaker government.

Unlike last year, Sheikh Hasina mentioned nothing about food security or food stock this year.

The premier in her last year's speech said new power stations with 728 megawatt capacities had been set up and another 1,000MW power stations would be built by 2010.

But her government could do little in tackling price hike of essentials, reducing traffic jam in the capital, dredging rivers, preventing pollution and grabbing and fighting climate change what she pledged last year.

In first year 488MW electricity was generated while in the second year 512MW was added to the national grid.

In both speeches, Hasina blamed the BNP-Jamaat led government for power crisis and said the coalition failed to add even one-megawatt power to national grid in its five-year tenure.

About controlling price hike of essentials, the prime minister mentioned her government would probe into the rice price hike during this harvest season.

Like past year, this year she also mentioned works of different communications projects would begin soon.

In 2010 she said necessary steps were taken to set up the Padma Bridge but this year she said the construction will start soon.

Last year she promised to complete the work by 2013 and start building a second Padma Bridge but this year she did not say a word on this.

In both her speeches, Hasina said Dhaka-Chittagong highway was being upgraded to four-lane. Although last year she spoke about modernisation and expansion of railway, this year she said nothing.

Last year she said steps have been taken to provide employment for youths under the national service programme but yesterday the premier noted so far 65 thousand youths of three districts have been employed for two years under the scheme.

Although last year Hasina said her government would ensure trial of jail killing, August 21 grenade attack, ten trucks arms case, she mentioned nothing in this regard this year.

PM lists

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sectors.

"Let's work together for the welfare of the country putting aside all differences of opinions and rising above petty personal interests," said the premier.

LAW AND ORDER, PRICES OF ESSENTIALS

The premier claimed that the law and order improved last year. Her government has taken a tough stance against crime and corruption, she said.

On the price hike of essentials, Hasina mentioned her government's initiatives to ensure fair price to farmers. She, however, said that the government is investigating why rice prices went up in the peak of a season.

She asked people not to leave even an inch of land uncultivated. "You [people] take your own initiative to cultivate land and the government will lend support," she said.

RESOLVING POWER CRISIS

The premier said the AL government has so far added 1,000MW of electricity to the national grid and 2,361MW more will be added by next year.

Criticising the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government for the prevailing power and energy crisis, Hasina said work to set up 33 power plants to generate 2,941MW of electricity has started.

Tenders have been floated for building 24 more power plants while initiatives have been taken to generate 12,000MW of power by the next five years, she added.

PARLIAMENT, WAR CRIMES TRIAL

Hasina said a number of identified war criminals have already been arrested to the satisfaction of the people. The trials would be started soon.

She claimed that her government has made parliament the centre for practising democracy.

It is said that the main opposition party has totally failed to play a responsible role in parliament, she said.

Hasina said those who looted huge public wealth and siphoned off money when they were in power are still trying to hinder the progress of the country.

BNP obstructed the trial of Bangabandhu murder case at every step of the way and now it is trying very hard so that the trial of war criminals is not held, Hasina said.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

About infrastructure development, Hasina said they are upgrading the Dhaka-Chittagong, Chittagong-

Hathazari, Joydevpur-Mymensingh and some other highways to four lanes. Construction of the Padma Bridge, which will also have rail lines, will start soon.

Construction of Kuril, Gulistan-Jatrabari and Banani-Jurain flyovers have already started while that of Dhaka Elevated Expressway is to start soon, said the prime minister. The study regarding metro rail in Dhaka has been completed and initiative taken to launch commuter train service on Dhaka-Joydevpur, Dhaka-Narayanganj and Dhaka-Mymensingh routes, she added.

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS

The premier said her government has adopted up-to-date science-based education policy, 2010 and passed Private University Act, 2010 to improve the standard of education.

The pass percentage in higher secondary and secondary school certificate (HSC & SSC) examinations reached almost 80 percent in the last two years, she said.

The prime minister mentioned that her government has resumed activities of 1,000 community health clinics across the country and recruited 13,500 healthcare providers, 4,500 doctors, 2,000 nurses and 6,000 health assistants to ensure medical service for all.

She said the government reduced the price of fertiliser thrice and ensured fair price to farmers.

Secretary faces

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against him.

The bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain gave the order following a contempt of court petition filed by one Riaz Uddin, son of Shahid Uddin, a freedom fighter from Kamal Nagar upazila in Laxmipur.

The HC directed the establishment secretary on June 10 last year to appoint Riaz as an upazila health assistant within a month since he qualified in a written examination and attended the viva test under freedom fighters' children quota.

Riaz recently filed the contempt of court petition with the HC as the establishment secretary failed to comply with the court order.

Advocate Gazi Mostaque Ahmed appeared for the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain stood for the government.