

Power import starts formally tomorrow

National grid to get 175 MW electricity from India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-talked about power import from India will get under way on a commercial basis from tomorrow through the addition of 175 megawatt (MW) of electricity to the national grid.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally inaugurate the electricity import at the power transmission centre in Bheramara, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will attend the programme through video conference," said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury yesterday.

Tawfiq, energy adviser to the premier, was speaking at a press conference at the PID conference room in the capital.

The test supply of power began on September 27 when 50 MW of electricity were added to the national grid through a high voltage sub-station at Bheramara in Kushtia, said a senior official of the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB).

Initially 175 MW power will be imported and supplied to the national grid. The transmission will be increased up to 500 MW at the end of November, said Tawfiq.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the two countries in 2010 on import of a total of 500 MW power from India.

Half of this power will be coming from

the Indian central government electricity quota and the rest from its open market.

The purchase price of 250 MW of power that will come from the Indian government's quota will be Tk 4 and some paisa per unit, Tawfiq said.

For the remaining 250 MW of electricity, which will come from the open market, the purchase price will be around Tk 6 per unit, he added.

The total amount of electricity, which is to be imported under a 35-year contract, will improve the country's power crisis situation, which is now being tackled through costly but short-term rental power plants, said an official of PGCB.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, who was present at the press conference, said, "We are looking forward to an initiation of regional power trade through grid connectivity."

When newsmen asked whether India stood as an obstacle to Bangladesh's move for importing electricity from Nepal and Bhutan, Indian Power Secretary PK Sinha said India was very much positive about such moves.

"But Bangladesh needs tripartite discussions on implementing such projects," he added.

State Minister for Power and Energy Enamul Haque also spoke at the press conference.

DRAFT VERDICT LEAK

DB starts probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives are listing the people involved in preparing the draft verdict against BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, which was apparently leaked before the court delivered it.

"We are trying to know how a draft of a court verdict is prepared. We will interrogate all the people, who had involvement in the process, to find out the culprits behind the leak" said Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam of Detective Branch (D B) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday.

A 164-page document, which did not contain judges' observations or the sentence, was found online on Monday night with claims that a draft verdict had been leaked.

DB began an investigation after AKM Nasiruddin Mahmud, registrar and spokesman of International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), filed a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station in connection with the leak.

On Tuesday, ICT-1 awarded the BNP leader the death sentence for committing crimes against humanity and genocide in Chittagong during the Liberation War in 1971.

Immediately after the pronouncement of the verdict, his family members and defence lawyers told the media that the verdict had been available in a few websites before the tribunal delivered it.

They also alleged that the draft verdict had been retrieved from a computer of the law ministry and that it was written by the ministry itself.

ICT the following day confirmed that an organised vested group had leaked parts of the draft verdict from the tribunal and uploaded it on the internet to make the war crimes trial controversial.

Since the draft was leaked while it was being prepared, the DB investigation is initially centred on the tribunal's staff associated with the process, Monirul told The Daily Star.

No one, however, has been arrested yet, he added.

The judges of ICT-2 held a meeting yesterday with top officials of the tribunal to discuss different aspects of its security, said Registrar AKM Nasiruddin.

Seven to eight cleaners used to stay at the tribunal building at night and a decision has been taken to shift them somewhere else, he added.

Lalu jailed

FROM PAGE 20

Indian city of Ranchi also imposed a fine of Rs 25 lakh on him.

Another former chief minister of Bihar, Jagannath Mishra of Congress, was also sentenced to four years in prison for the scam. Jagdish Sharma, a prominent politician of the ruling Janata Dal United, got a four-year sentence which means he also is no longer a member of parliament, thanks to a new ordinance that bars convicted lawmakers from office if convicted more than three years.

Lalu Prasad, 67, has been in jail in Ranchi since Monday when he was found guilty of facilitating the embezzlement of Rs37 crores of government money for fictitious medicines and fodder for cattle. The verdict came 17 years after the case was registered.

The scam had come to light when he was the chief minister of eastern Indian state of Bihar in 1990s, after which he had to resign from that post.

Earlier, Lalu's lawyer argued in the court that the RJD leader should get minimum punishment as he was a respectable person and held a "high position in society."

Pro-BNP lawyers trying to save BDR rebels: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the pro-BNP and Jamaat lawyers are trying to save the rebels of the 2009 BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) mutiny.

"You [people] inquire of the lawyers of the mutineers. All are people from the Jamaat and BNP. They try to save the killers and hinder the trial process," she told a meeting with the grassroots leaders of Awami League at Gono Bhaban.

Seventy-four people, including 57 army officials, were killed in the February 25-26 mutiny. Hasina claimed that 33 of the slain army officers were from pro-AL families.

The government has completed the trial of 1,800 mutineers, while the trial of 850 more was nearing the end for their alleged involvement in killings, looting, vandalism and arson, noted the premier, also the AL chief.

Hasina asked BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to let people know about her whereabouts during the mutiny in the paramilitary force. She questioned, "What involvement you [Khaleda] had in that incident [mutiny]?"

Referring to a case filed against the opposition leader over misappropriation of Zia Orphanage Trust fund, the prime minister said Khaleda does not appear before the court as she knows that she would be convicted of misappropriating orphans' fund.

"She [Khaleda] avoids court hearings every time on different silly grounds. A person who misappropriates orphans' money can't give anything to the country and its people," mentioned Hasina.

She directed AL grassroots leaders to remind people about the rise of militancy, communalism and terrorism, unbridled corruption by the Hawa Bhaban, killings and torture of people by the BNP-Jamaat men during 2001-2006.

Referring to Khaleda's statement that the opposition leader does not want to see the AL president in power, the prime minister said Khaleda along with her son and cabinet ministers wanted to kill her by carrying out grenade attack on her on August 21, 2004.

KSA plans crackdown

FROM PAGE 20

deadline for the amnesty, allowing the illegal foreign nationals to legalise their visa status, or transfer their jobs, or return home without facing any penalty.

Later, the amnesty period was extended until November 4 following the demand of the foreign nationals.

The move came as a blessing for many Bangladeshis who had been staying in the KSA for several years without any valid documents, and were

not getting any chance to get legalised.

However, some Bangladeshi migrants without any "entry documents" are still in danger, as they are not allowed either to return home or to legalise their status under the ongoing amnesty.

These migrant workers are those who ran away from their legal employers, leaving behind their passports and other documents with the employers, said the embassy officials.

As a result, these workers

lack necessary documents, and thus fail to prove that they entered the country through legal channels, they added.

Emdadul Haque said a few thousand Bangladeshi workers, who went to Saudi Arabia before 2008, did not have their fingerprints recorded with the Saudi immigration department, as the mechanism was not introduced before 2008.

"We have urged the Saudi government to allow these workers to take the

advantage of the amnesty by receiving temporary work permits from our consular services so that they can return home or legalise their visa status," the labour counsellor said.

The Bangladesh foreign minister and expatriates' welfare minister had also raised the issue during their visit to the kingdom last July, he added.

Over 1.2 million Bangladeshis are currently working in Saudi Arabia, one of the largest labour markets for Bangladesh.

NO MORE LEGALISATION IN MALAYSIA

The foreign nationals staying in Malaysia illegally will not get any more chance to legalise their jobs, as the Malaysian cabinet on Wednesday decided not to start the legalisation process again.

The cabinet committee on foreign workers and illegal immigrants made the decision at a meeting chaired by the Malaysian deputy prime minister, Malaysian English daily The Star reported yesterday.

Contacted, Mantu Kumar

Biswas, Bangladesh high commission labour counsellor in Kuala Lumpur, told The Daily Star that he had not received any official notice in this regard.

"I came to know about the matter from the media. However, there is little scope for the illegal workers, who do not have any documents, to be legalised," he added.

The Malaysian government had declared an amnesty titled "Ops 6P Bersepadu programme" for the foreign nationals to legalise their job status in 2011.

AL's Shawkat wins Barguna by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League candidate Shawkat Hachanur Rahman won yesterday's by-election to the Barguna-2 constituency.

He bagged 65,813 votes, while his opponent Golam Sarwar Hiru of Islami Andolon Bangladesh got 57,993 votes, Returning Officer Mostafa Faruk told The Daily Star.

The BNP did not field a candidate, but its leaders and workers were seen campaigning for Hiru.

The voting ended peacefully. Hiru later rejected the results claiming that some AL men forcibly drove his agents out of some polling centres and then cast fake votes for the AL candidate.

District AL Organising Secretary Golam Sarwar however dismissed the allegation.

The constituency fell vacant after Golam Shabur Tulu died in a road accident on July 26.

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