

Rahimafrooz to produce solar power for national grid

DPDC will purchase electricity from the panel to be installed on secretariat's rooftop

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy will produce solar electricity for Dhaka Power Distribution Company after installing a 50kw panel on the rooftop of Bangladesh secretariat.

Sanjit Kumar Ghose, superintendent engineer of DPDC, and Munawar Misbah Moin, managing director of Rahimafrooz Renewable Energy, signed a deal on power purchase in Dhaka yesterday.

Rahimafrooz, the nation's largest solar power system provider, will design, install, operate and maintain the project for 20 years with photovoltaic materials and technology. The panel will be set up in six months.

After installation of the grid-tied solar system, Rahimafrooz will sell the generated power from the system to state-run DPDC at Tk 19.95 per unit.

The system will generate 75 megawatt hours of electricity per year and reduce carbon emissions by around 50 tonnes annually.

This is the first solar power purchase contract in the country, said Taposh Kumar Roy, chairman of DPDC.

"It will be a milestone for rooftop solar applications in Bangladesh. This model can be used on the rooftops of other government offices as well."

Moin said it is possible to generate up to 2,000mw power by installing solar panels on the rooftops of different establishments in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Funds too low for Rana Plaza victims, say union leaders

Protesters demand ILO standards in compensation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Trade union leaders yesterday threatened to launch countrywide protests if the government does not scale up compensations for Rana Plaza victims in line with ILO standards.

The government-appointed 31-member panel recommended Tk 14.5 lakh for each dead victim's family; but under the ILO's 'loss of earnings' standards, which fix compensation based on the age of the victims and the national life expectancy, it would come to Tk 28 lakh.

Union leaders demand compensations based on the national life expectancy which is 67 years for males and 69 years for females in Bangladesh.

The lowest compensation for a survivor under the ILO standards is Tk 5 lakh, whereas it is Tk 1.5 lakh according to the recommendations of the government committee formed on a court order on August 29 last year.

"If our demand is not met, we will go for much bigger protests. We know how to realise the demands of the workers," Wajedul Islam Khan, a central leader of Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad, said at a rally organised in front of the National Press Club in Dhaka.

He said the Rana Plaza collapse happened only for the negligence of the building and garment owners and for weak government mecha-

BY THE NUMBERS

UNION LEADERS DEMAND

Highest compensation for the dead

Tk 28lakh each

Lowest amount for survivors

Tk 5lakh each

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS BY GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Permanently disabled

Tk 14.5lakh

Dead or unidentified

Tk 14.5lakh

Loss of one limb

Tk 7.5lakh

Long-term treatment

Tk 4.5lakh

Traumatised

Tk 1.5lakh

nisms. "Rana Plaza was like a death trap."

Nazma Akter, president of Sammilito Garment Sramik Federation, a garment workers' platform, said the fatalities at Rana Plaza were like planned killings, adding that the garment owners are using the members of the civil society to lower the compensation amount.

"Why was there no representation of trade unions in the committee? It is a matter of the workers, after all. Why Tk 14.5 lakh all of a sudden? Who put pressure on the committee?" Hamida Hossain, convener of Workers Security Forum, said at the rally.

She went on to criticise the government, retailers and garment owners for the delay in compensation payment.

Sultanuddin Ahmed, assistant executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, said it is surprising that only the recommendations have come 10 months after the incident—and not the compensation itself.

He urged the government to take responsibility and fix the compensation itself as soon as possible.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of National Garment Workers Federation, demanded the international retailers and the government

Ecneec approves pharma park after revision

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council yesterday approved the second revision of the pharmaceuticals park project, raising the cost by 42 percent from the first revision.

The cost of the revised project stands at Tk 332 crore and is expected to be complete by 2015. The pharmaceutical park will accommodate industrial units on 42 plots to produce active pharmaceutical ingredients.

The cost was increased to Tk 233 crore in the first revision in 2012 from Tk 213 crore originally earmarked in 2008.

The cost revisions and time extensions were needed as a result of delays in land acquisition and adding new components to the project, the planning ministry said in a statement.

Under this project, a pharmaceutical industrial park would be built on 200 acres at Baushia and Laxmipur Mouza beside the Dhaka-Chittagong highway under Gazaria upazila in Munshiganj.

The park will directly employ 25,000 people.

Ecneec, in a meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, approved this and four other projects at a total cost of Tk 640 crore.

After the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal briefed newsmen and said his ministry will run with full transparency.

"We will not work with corrupt people; we will proceed by leaving them behind," the minister said.

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Local TV stations demand user tax on foreign channels

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local television channels yesterday recommended user tax on foreign channels with the aim to create a level-playing field and boost the government coffers.

The proposal was made by a delegation of the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO) during a meeting with Finance Minister AMA Muhith at his secretariat office.

The association's leaders said the foreign TV channels particularly the Indian ones have a large audience in both urban and rural areas. They do not have to pay anything, whereas the local TV channels are subjected to a host of taxes by the government.

Housewives will view foreign channels even with taxes, which will increase government revenues, they said.

The TV channel owners complained that the neighbouring country does not allow airing of Bangladeshi channels but Indian stations have occupied the Bangladeshi market and promoting their goods through ads.

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Titas profits rise 5.3pc

GAZI TOWHID AHMED

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company marked a 5.3 percent year-on-year rise in profits to Tk 206 crore in the October-December period last year thanks to low interest expenses.

The company's revenue saw a decline of 0.6 percent as there was news of multiple exploratory wells coming into production in the last six months, BRAC-EPL said.

The 300mmcf/d gas that is expected to come at the end of 2014 from Chevron's Bibiyana field will be a major catalyst for the stock, the leading stockbroker said.

"Higher than expected gas price hike would be an upside risk for the stock."

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