

## ELECTRICITY IMPORT

## Bangladesh to get 600MW more from India by 2017

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh is expected to get at least 600 megawatt of additional power from India between December 2015 and June 2017 under stepped-up power sector cooperation between the two countries.

Bangladesh is also expected to get a sizable chunk of about 6,000MW to 6,500MW of power by being the transit point of a proposed ambitious grid connecting the Indian states of Assam and Uttar Pradesh, Bangladesh Power Secretary Monowarul Islam told representatives of Bangladesh media after a meeting with his Indian counterpart PK Sinha.

The meeting yesterday jointly agreed on a deadline of June 2017 for transmission of 500MW more power from India to Bangladesh besides the existing 500MW through the Bheramara-Bahrapur grid, which began on October 5 last year, Islam said.

A joint technical committee report on Bangladesh's purchase of 500MW additional power had been approved by Dhaka, he said, adding the two sides would work out the grid connec-

tivity now.

Islam said 100MW of electricity from Palatana power plant in north-eastern Indian state of Tripura was also expected to reach Comilla by December 2015. The two sides were working on a 400KV transmission line between Tripura and Comilla to export the power.

Bangladesh had facilitated construction of the Palatana power plant by allowing transportation of equipment through Ashuganj river port, saving both time and money for India.

According to Islam, Bangladesh and India are working on a "visionary programme" for bilateral power sector cooperation under which about 6,000MW to 6,500MW of electricity will be transported from Assam to Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh through Barapukuria of Bangladesh.

He said there would be a landing station in Barapukuria in Dinajpur on the proposed cross-country power transmission line and Bangladesh was expected to get a "sizable chunk" of the power from the grid in return for allowing the power supply transit.

Pressed further, Islam said

Bangladesh expected 3,500MW of power from the proposed project which would be developed over the next few years.

Termining his talks with the Indian power secretary "very fruitful", Islam said Bangladesh was "indebted" to India for being supportive of bilateral cooperation in power sector.

"You will see many more achievements in bilateral power sector cooperation in the coming years," he said without elaborating.

He added power sector cooperation between Bangladesh and India got a big push from the bilateral Framework Agreement signed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her then Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh during the latter's visit to Dhaka in September 2011.

Islam further said India and Bangladesh were also committed to boosting power sector cooperation among the Saarc states and a meeting of energy ministers of the regional body would be held in New Delhi on October 16-17 ahead of the Saarc Summit in Kathmandu in November.

## Morales set to cruise to third term in Bolivia vote

AFP, La Paz

Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, is expected to win a third term against a fragmented opposition Sunday, with a large Congressional majority to continue pushing through his leftist reforms.

Morales, who has blended leftwing economic policy with nationalist rhetoric and a focus on indigenous rights and the environment -- all while presiding over an economic boom -- is polling at 59 percent heading into the election.

That puts him more than 40 points clear of his nearest rivals, business magnate Samuel Doria Medina with 18 percent and conservative former president Jorge Quiroga with nine percent.

Morales, 54, stands to extend his time in office to 14 years, until January 2020, after Bolivia's Supreme Court ruled last year that his first term was exempt from a new constitution adopted in 2009 that imposed a limit

of one reelection for sitting presidents.

"El Evo," as he is often called in Bolivia, looks virtually guaranteed to win in a single round.

To avoid a December 7 run-off, he needs to take more than 50 percent of the vote, or win more than 40 percent and finish at least 10 points clear of his nearest opponent.

His Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) is meanwhile on track to win a two-thirds majority in the Senate and possibly in the Chamber of Deputies, as well, according to opinion polls.

Morales, who rose to prominence as a union leader fighting for the rights of the country's coca growers, has brought sweeping changes since taking office in 2006.

His government has nationalized a broad range of sectors including oil, gas, mining, telecommunications and water, rolled out welfare grants for the elderly, children and expecting mothers, and moved to empower previously marginalized groups, including the 65

percent of the population that is indigenous.

Defying opponents' dire warnings of economic catastrophe, Bolivia has instead seen a boom.

GDP grew 6.8 percent last year and is forecast to grow more than five percent this year, one of the fastest rates in Latin America.

The economic and political stability are welcome in Bolivia, which has had 160 coups since independence in 1825 and remains one of the region's poorest countries.

Morales has also aligned himself with Cuba, Venezuela and Iran and had an antagonistic relationship with the United States over drug policy.

He has shielded coca growers from the US push to eradicate the plant.

Besides being the base ingredient for cocaine, coca leaves are widely chewed in Bolivia and brewed as a tea -- uses Morales has vigorously defended as part of the country's cultural heritage.

## Li visits Germany, China's 'anchor' in Europe

AFP, Berlin

China's Premier Li Keqiang met German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday for the year's third top-level talks between the Asian and European export powers despite growing disquiet over human rights and business rules.

The visit comes at a sensitive time as China grapples with Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests while the host nation gears up to celebrate a quarter-century since the fall of the Berlin Wall ended communism in East Germany.

But Berlin and Beijing, in a year of high-frequency diplomacy, stress they want to boost their multi-billion-dollar trade and investment ties and deepen a new "innovation partnership".

Merkel and President Joachim Gauck rolled out the red carpet and

received Li, joined by his entire cabinet and an entourage of 130 business chieftains, with full military honours.

Both sides then held a joint government meeting, a format that is rare for Germany and unique for China.

Li's 14 ministers met 12 German counterparts to discuss cooperation in fields ranging from climate change and agriculture to using German green-tech to manage China's bottleneck economic growth.

Both sides planned to sign some 30 cooperation and investment deals worth over two billion euros (\$2.5 billion) in sectors including health, education and the environment.

European aviation giant Airbus said it would ink an agreement, and Deutsche Telekom announced a joint

venture with China Mobile to build a digital network for cars on Chinese roads.

Li's second Europe trip this year, which will also take him to Russia and Italy, started on the day street protests looked likely to flare again in Hong Kong, the former British colony that was returned to the Chinese mainland in 1997.

Crunch negotiations slated for Friday were called off by the Beijing-backed city officials, leading students to ratchet up their protests.

Hong Kong's 17-year-old student leader Joshua Wong asked Merkel for support, telling Germany's Bild daily that "only when Germany, Europe and the whole world put pressure on China and show solidarity with us will our protests have a chance".

## Bombs 'meant for Bangladesh'

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before the blast there on October 2 was organised and funded by Bangladesh-based terror outfits, the CID on Thursday identified the destination for the bomb consignments to be Rajshahi.

The investigators claimed the bombs were being supplied to Bangladesh during the recent political chaos to ensure minorities' protection in the bordering districts of Bengal.

Interrogation of one of the suspects, Hassem Ali, revealed that the consignment of bombs was being prepared to be delivered to a person at Rajshahi, the newspaper wrote.

Kausar, the alleged kingpin of the bomb-making unit and an absconding suspect, was supposed to receive it and depart for Rajshahi.

The border points and the transporters were also fixed for the delivery.

A senior CID official said, "We had been trying to apprehend Kausar and we had some information of him crossing the border on October 2, the day the blast took place in a house of Burdwan town's Khagragarh leaving two suspected militants dead and

another person injured.

In another major development, India's National Investigation Agency began its probe into the Burdwan blast by registering a case in New Delhi, while eight more persons were arrested in connection with the incident.

Of the eight, two were arrested at their homes at Ketugram in Burdwan yesterday on charges of selling SIM cards to the terror suspects.

They were held after interrogating four persons arrested earlier, reports The Daily Star's New Delhi correspondent.

Six others were arrested from Barpeta district of northeastern state of Assam; they have suspected links with terror organisations, officials said.

**MAMATA ATTACKS CENTRE**  
The West Bengal Government was reportedly trying to downplay the Bangladesh connection and the CID was criticised for not handling the investigation properly.

On Thursday, the central government handed over the probe to the NIA bypassing the state government after one arrestee allegedly told investigators that the bombs they were assem-

bling were meant for terror strikes in Bangladesh.

The decision apparently angered West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Yesterday, she attacked the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying there was an increasing trend of interference in state matters ever since the new BJP-led federal government took over.

This is "unprecedented, undemocratic and unethical", she wrote on her Facebook page.

"This marks a dangerous signal of violation of the constitutional norms, jeopardising the federal structure and democratic fibre of our country," Mamata said without mentioning the Burdwan blast.

"Ever since the new government has come to power at the Centre, there is an increasing trend of interference by the central government in the state matters."

The Mamata administration reportedly said the federal Indian government took the decision to hand over Burdwan blast probe to the NIA suo moto and "no opinion has been given by the state government".

## Christian clerics urge recognition of Palestinian state

AFP, Jerusalem

Three leading Christian clerics in the Holy Land appealed yesterday for more European governments to recognise a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

The call from the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Lutheran prelates -- all of them Palestinian -- came after EU member Sweden last week

announced its intention to recognise Palestinian statehood, to the anger of Israel.

"From Jerusalem, our occupied capital, we send our urgent message to the whole world and particularly to Europe -- we are yearning for justice and peace," the three churchmen said in an open letter.

"Recognising Palestine and defining Israel's borders is a first step towards that goal."

Signing the letter were the former Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, the Greek Orthodox archbishop of Sebastia, Atallah (Theodosios) Hanna, and Lutheran World Federation president Bishop Munib Younan.

The current Latin patriarch, Fouad Twal, was not among the signatories.

"We are tired of calls for resumption of negotiations while we can't reach our churches due to a foreign power and our people continue to be humiliated by an undesirable occupation," the letter said.

"Europe has a moral, legal and political duty to hold Israel accountable and support Palestinian non-violent initiatives to end the Israeli occupation, including the recognition of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border with east Jerusalem as its capital."

Other EU member countries that have recognised a Palestinian state are Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Romania.

Israel, with the backing of its US ally, insists that Palestinian statehood can only come through negotiation between the two sides.

Nine months of US-brokered peace talks broke down in April and prospects for any resumption remain remote.

## 3 Bangladeshi

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of Murafata village of Jhalakathi. These two are now in stable condition, said the statement.

The Daily Star, however, could not confirm how the Bangladeshis were injured in the ambush.

A peacekeeper from Pakistan was killed and five others, including the Bangladeshis, were injured in the ambush that took place around 1.5 kilometre away from a transit camp of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MIUNSCA) on Thursday.

The UN convoy was coming back from the MIUNSCA Force Headquarters, added the ISPR statement.

Another Bangladeshi, Deputy Force Commander of MINUSCA Major General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, who was also in the UN convoy, is safe and sound, added the statement.

Religious unrest has killed at least 5,000 people this year in CAR, says BBC.

Clashes erupted again this week - the worst since the UN took charge of peacekeeping operations in September.

## Hudhud

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The met office also asked the maritime ports to hoist cautionary signal number three, meaning vessels should not leave ports until further notice, said the bulletin.

Cyclone Hudhud, named for a bird, is expected to hit coast or make landfall around the port city of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh tomorrow morning, packing wind speeds of up to 140 km, reports NDTV, quoting Indian Met officials.

The Indian Met department also warned that heavy rainfall and strong winds are likely to disrupt electricity and telecommunications services, and road and rail traffic in the country.

AccuWeather.com meteorologists believe this developing cyclone will track west-northwest across the Bay of Bengal in an environment that will allow the storm to strengthen into the strongest cyclone of the year in the north Indian Ocean.

Odisha state government has asked for additional satellite phones as the telecom network is expected to be affected when the cyclone hits the coast.

A year ago, a severe cyclone called Phailin battered the same region, also on October 12. Strong disaster preparedness, including the evacuation of nearly one million people to cyclone shelters, helped save many lives, NDTV report added.

## Too young to wed

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Sharmin, however, does not offer an alienated instance of someone subjected to the ills of child marriage.

Like her, 66 percent of all Bangladeshi girls are married before reaching adulthood, says Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2011.

According to the country's existing Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, the minimum age for a girl's marriage is 18.

Against this backdrop, the country observes the International Day of the Girl Child to recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges they face around the world.

The theme of the day this year is "Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence."

A study on child marriage conducted last year by icddr and Plan International found that two percent of Bangladeshi women are married before the age of 11.

The study 'Child Marriage in Bangladesh' said 86 percent women who were married before 18 years of age had received no education.

According to BDHS 2011, about one third of the country's girls get married before 15.

Despite many significant improvements in women and children's health and rights in recent years, Bangladesh still ranks among the countries with highest rates of child marriage and has the highest prevalence of child marriage in Southern Asia.

"Lack of education causes rampant child marriage which is also true the other way round," said Farukh Ahmed, project director of Stop Child Marriage at Plan International Bangladesh.

Poverty remains the main cause of making a girl child vulnerable to marriage, he said.

The median age for women to marry is 18.3 years among the wealthiest fifth of the population compared to 14.6 years from the poorest fifth, according to a UNFPA report on Child Marriage in Southern Asia.

Social practices like protecting the girls' honour and fear of having to pay hefty dowries to the groom if the girl reaches 15 also drive parents to marry off their daughters early, Farukh explains.

An inevitable fallout of the rampant child marriage is adolescent mother-

hood, which has serious health consequences for both the child and the mother.

"Malnutrition is a vicious cycle. The child of an undernourished girl is very likely to be undernourished as well," opined Mohsin Ali, a nutrition specialist of Unicef.

A testament to this is Sharmin's daughter who suffers from frequent attacks of diarrhoea and other chronic diseases.

"Doctors say my daughter is underweight and may suffer poor health all her life," said Sharmin, who appears to be quite frustrated about her daughter's health.

While child marriage is common all over the country, it is most prevalent in western Bangladesh, specifically, in Khulna Division with 75 percent while the lowest is in Sylhet Division with 48 percent.

UNICEF recently reported that the largest number of very young brides can be found in the Western and Southern parts of Bangladesh.

## Mass graves found in missing Mexican students case

AFP, Iguala

The case of 43 Mexican students missing since an attack by gang-linked police took another grim turn Thursday with the discovery of new mass graves where suspects said some were buried.

Four new suspects took investigators to the site of the four pits, 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of Mexico City, but the number of bodies remains unknown, said Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam.

"They say there are remains of students," Murillo Karam said, adding that some of the bodies appeared burned.

The discovery has put another dent on hopes of finding the students alive almost two weeks after they were pursued by Iguala police officers accused of working in tandem with the Guerreros Unidos gang.

## BNP not ready

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convening committee was formed 17 years ago. A regular committee could not be formed in the district, as the party high-ups failed to resolve conflicts among the rival groups, they added.

The unit in Chittagong district, the second most important unit after the one in the capital, is also being run by the convening committee for over five years.

"In the absence of a full-fledged committee, party activities lose steam, because dedicated leaders and activists do not feel encouraged to take risks," said a BNP leader in the port city.

In August, the BNP chief assigned 42 of her party leaders to visit organisational districts to resolve internal feuds. A number of those leaders told this correspondent that they failed to do much in this regard.

Khaleda has also failed to reorganise any of the nine front organisations of her party.

The BNP has also two associate bodies -- Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal.

Of them, Sramik Dal was reorganised in May through its council. But selection of its new leaders triggered criticisms and controversies within the party due to their poor performance in previous movements.

In September, a section of Sramik Dal leaders announced a fresh com-

mittee, saying some BNP leaders had formed the previous committee in exchange for money.

Earlier in July, Khaleda announced a 56-member Dhaka city convening committee with Mirza Abbas and Habib-un-Nabi Sohel as convener and member secretary. She also asked her party's city chapter to complete formation of all ward and thana committees in two months.

It took more than two weeks for the committee to start working due to conflicts between Abbas and Sohel.

Then, after one and a half months, Abbas in September said it was not possible for them to complete formation of all ward and thana committees in a month.

So far, the convening committee has formed about 40 of the 100 city ward committees.

Party insiders said Khaleda was deeply disappointed at this.

Still, she announced launching of a "tougher movement" after Eid-ul-Fitr in July and then after Eid-ul-Azha (observed on Monday) only to keep the party morale high.

Asked, BNP acting secretary general Fakhru Islam Alamgir said on Wednesday that his party was already in the middle of a movement and that every movement had its ups and downs.

## Latif's removal

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Committee (ALCWC), the highest decision making body of the ruling party, sits tomorrow to decide Latif's fate in the party.

As per the constitution, a minister can resign placing his resignation letter before the prime minister, which would then be forwarded to the president.

The prime minister may also ask the minister to resign, and if a minister fails to comply, the prime minister may advise the president to terminate the appointment.

A Prime Minister's Office official told The Daily Star yesterday that Latif did not send any resignation letter to the prime minister. So it is almost certain that he is going to be removed from the cabinet, added the official preferring not to be named.

The official, however, could not say whether the premier requested Latif to resign.

The official said if Latif was removed, a strong message would be sent to the people that the prime minister would not tolerate hurting people's religious sentiments.

Another PMO official said the prime minister was very annoyed with Latif for his comments on hajj, Prophet Muhammad (SM) and Tabligh Jamaat and did not talk to him afterwards, even to request him to

resign.

A message was sent to Latif, on behalf of the premier, to resign from the cabinet, claimed the official.

Meanwhile, ALCWC is likely to decide tomorrow to remove Latif from the AL Presidium, the highest policymaking body of the party.

AL insiders, however, could not confirm whether he would be expelled from the party altogether. If expelled, Latif would lose his parliament membership from Tangail-4 constituency, they said.

AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star last night that there would be no room for any one, regardless how influential he or she may be, if party's policies and principles are violated.

Latif, who was advised by the PMO not to return home to avoid possible unrest created by Islamist groups over his comments, has been living in Canada with his daughter and celebrated Eid there, according to sources.

Latif's recent remarks in New York triggered widespread criticisms at home and abroad and embarrassed the government and the AL. Dozens of cases were filed against him.

Latif's younger brother Kader Siddique would brief the media about his brother's comments at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club today.