

First modular joint venture power plant ready for production

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bangladesh's first modular combined-cycle power plant, jointly developed by the government and United Group, is ready to take off in Ashuganj to help boost electricity production.

"Given the pressing, immediate demand for electricity supply, the government is opting for projects with smaller gestation period. As per the power purchase agreement, 15 months were allocated for the projects to be in action from February 19, 2014," Moinuddin Hasan Rashid, managing director of United Ashuganj Energy (UAEL), said in a statement.

Because of an acute power crisis, the company worked to commission the plant ahead of schedule.

"Now, the power plant is perfectly eligible for operations."

The plant allows the public sector to maintain its ownership in the power sector while letting the private sector implement the project efficiently and arrange financ-

ing for it too.

The project comes at a time when over a third of the country's population is still without electricity access, creating a significant impediment to economic growth.

A core demand of the new project was meeting the government's strict guidelines for efficiency through implementing a more efficient and flexible modular co-generation system.

The new plant was a test case by the government, Rashid said.

"To ensure project development at fast pace, private sector participation is inevitable while facilitation and cooperation of the public sector ensures timely completion of the project," he added.

UAEL has designed the project to have an unprecedented combination of flexibility and efficiency making this new plant eligible as a model for the country's power sector, said Syed Abdul Mayeed, former chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board.

"The facility has been designed

such that it has a thermal efficiency of about 47 percent."

A good majority of the power plants in Bangladesh are extremely old ranging from 25 to 40 years, with operating (thermal) efficiency range between 22 to 28 percent."

Efficiency is the single most important factor in determining the viability of a power plant as poor efficiency means greater fuel consumption, lower power output and increased emission.

"Achieving such high efficiency will definitely be a milestone for the government in the power sector," he said.

The new plant comprises 20 units of Wartsila's gas engines, each producing about 9.73MW electricity.

In addition, the facility has a co-generation element, whereby the exhaust heat from the engines will be run through the waste heat recovery boilers, fitted with each engine, to produce steam, which will turn a steam turbine-generator,

boosting the power output by a further 16.1 MW.

Designing the power plant itself was a big challenge indeed as the plant had to be accommodated within only 6.48 acres plot but collaborative work led to a compact plant that meets all technical demands and is environment friendly due to reduced emissions, said Rear Admiral Bazlur Rahman, a director of UAEL.

Bangladesh has a very erratic demand for electricity, necessitating these kinds of modular plants which can ramp production up and down within minutes, Faridur Rahman Khan, another director of UAEL, said.

The sponsor company, UECL, has arranged foreign financing for the project where the World Bank is funding around 50 percent of the debt portion from its IPFF fund and the remaining 50 percent is funded by a consortium of lenders comprising DEG, IFC, Finnvera (ECA) with Standard Chartered Bank as the lead arranger.



Mohammed Haider Ali Miah, managing director of Export Import Bank of Bangladesh, opens the new premises of the bank's Imanganj branch at Nurani Centre in Chawkbazar, Dhaka on Saturday.

Denim makers link up with retailers in Dhaka

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"So we think Bangladesh is an important country for us. In future, we may go for partnerships with Bangladeshi firms," he said.

With the rise in business, local fabrics makers are also going for expansion or setting up new production units.

"Production in our new factory will start from July. Initially, we have a target to produce two million yards of denim fabrics a month, but we will increase our capacity to six million yards from next year," said

Muhammad Zakir Hossain, deputy manager of Square Denims Ltd, a new entrant and a unit of Square Group.

Hossain said they are in talks with major international brands and retailers to sell their fabrics. "We are also going to open a factory to make denim products," he said.

Bangladesh has 25 denim mills and five more are going into production by the end of this year. Bangladesh produces 20 million yards of denim fabrics a month and can meet 60 percent of the demand, while the rest is met through import.



Md Ahsan-uz Zaman, managing director of Midland Bank, presents a cheque for financial assistance to Masuda Islam, owner of Protina HM Food, which works for diabetic and functional food processing, as part of the bank's corporate social responsibility, at the bank's head office in Dhaka recently.



Shaikh Abdul Aziz, managing director of Uttara Bank, attends the bank's second branch managers' conference for Dhaka central, north and south areas, at its auditorium in the capital on Saturday. Md Fazlur Rahman, deputy managing director, was also present.

Sheltech's top officials get CIP status



Kutubuddin Ahmed, Toufiq M Seraj, and Tanvir Ahmed, STAR BUSINESS DESK

Kutubuddin Ahmed, chairman of Sheltech, along with Toufiq M Seraj, managing director, and Tanvir Ahmed, a director, have been honoured as commercially important persons (CIP) for 2014, the real estate company said in a statement yesterday.

The government honoured them for their outstanding contribution to the country's economy, Sheltech said.

Bandwidth export deal next month

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The new connection is expected to come on stream by 2016.

India's northeastern states -- Arunachal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Shilong -- have huge demand for bandwidth.

Currently, Bangladesh has bandwidth of 200 Gbps and Bangladesh can use only 33 Gbps or 16 percent of it.

In February last year, Bangladesh decided to export the unused internet bandwidth following a request from India in July, seeking 40 Gbps bandwidth for their eight eastern states.

Meghna Group to build two economic zones

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"We are getting good responses to establish factories in the EZs from Japan, China and India."

Foreign and local investors have shown interest in the EZs, thanks to low labour costs, a large domestic market and government incentive packages, he added.

The government aims to establish 100 economic zones in 15 years. The governing body of BEZA has approved the proposals for 22 economic zones and eight more sites have been primarily selected to set up EZs.

The construction of the economic zones at Mongla, Anwara, Mirsora in Chittagong, Moulvibazar and Cox's Bazar is ongoing, according to BEZA.

Exports will grow by \$40 billion a year and one crore jobs will be created if 70,000-75,000 acres of land can be allocated to EZs, said Chowdhury.

Earlier, BEZA handed over the first pre-qualification licence to AK Khan Company to build a 200-acre EZ in Narsingdi and a second to Abdul Monem Ltd to develop a 216-acre EZ in Gazaria, Munshiganj.

The annual turnover of Meghna Group is about \$2 billion. The group has 30 business units located on 350 acres in Sonargaon, according to Kamal.

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Citigroup says sued by Argentina

AFP, New York

Citigroup said Monday it had been sued by Argentina and that some employees could face criminal charges there due to a court battle between Argentina and US hedge funds.

Argentine officials have since late March "taken certain adverse actions against Citi Argentina, including filing a lawsuit against Citi Argentina and instituting a suspension of certain activities," the US bank said in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Additional potential sanctions include "the loss of licenses to operate in Argentina and criminal charges against bank employees," Citigroup added.

Citigroup's travails come amid longstanding litigation between Argentina and US hedge funds NML Capital and Aurelius Capital Management, which did not accept a restructuring deal of Argentine debt. The funds seek \$1.3 billion from Argentina.

ACC opens probe into graft allegations at Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Anticorruption Commission has started an investigation into alleged irregularities and corruption of several projects undertaken by Chittagong Port Authority or CPA.

Sheikh Fanafillah, Dhaka-based deputy director of ACC, arrived in the port city to examine different documents and talked to several officials of marine, accounts and mechanical departments of CPA over the last two days as part of his investigation.

Based on complaints from individuals, the ACC started investigating the irregular-

ities of projects including purchase of three old vessels, scanner and other equipment.

The Daily Star reached Fanafillah by phone, but he refused to comment on the probe.

Earlier, a three-member parliamentary sub-committee formed by the parliamentary standing committee on the shipping ministry visited the port on February 24 to open an investigation into irregularities and corruption of six projects.

They found out irregularities in purchases of three container vessels, an excavator, an ambulance boat and a bay cleaner.

IFS launches updated business software

STAR BUSINESS DESK

IFS, a global enterprise applications company, launched its Applications 9, a new version of the product.

The application will provide users with five additional features to help quick adaptation to change, the Swedish company said in a statement.

IFS Applications is a single, integrated application suite that enables global businesses to successfully handle four core processes -- service and asset management, manufacturing projects and supply chain management, according to the company's website. Among other features, the new version includes IFS Lobby, a modified view

which presents at-a-glance business information by making it accessible through desktops, tablets or smartphones, it said.

The notification system -- IFS Streams -- has been designed to notify users of any change momentarily, and the layered application helps automatic customisation to help maintenance costs, it added.

The new embedded CRM makes business data easily accessible.

"We are very proud to present IFS Applications 9, which brings a large number of new features, a fantastic user experience, and over 500 enhancements to new and existing customers," said Thomas Sald, senior vice president of research and development at IFS.



Md Rafiqul Islam, managing director of South Bangla Agriculture and Commerce Bank, poses with the participants of a daylong training programme on remittance organised for the employees of the bank at its training institute in Dhaka recently.



Md Halim Chowdhury, managing director of Pubali Bank, and Mohammad Ali, general manager, attend the bank's first managers conference at a hotel in Khulna recently. Md Humayan Kabir, general manager of Khulna region, was also present.