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Re-tender likely for Khulna power plant

China urges govt to award contract on professional merit

SHARIER KHAN

The government might cancel a power contract to a Chinese consortium delaying the 200 to 300 megawatt Khulna dual fuel power project by around a year.

The contract process has generated a series of complaints accusing the tendering authority of unduly favouring controversial Harbin Electric International over other bidders.

A competent source in Power Development Board (PDB) told The Daily Star that the PDB in August had recommended awarding the Khulna 200 to 300 megawatt dual fuel power project to Harbin and Jiangsu Eastern Company. But the decision came under scrutiny of the power ministry based on several categorical complaints by co-bidders.

"It's likely to be re-tendered soon," said a PDB official referring to the decision pending with the power ministry.

As a good number of project bidders were Chinese, the Chinese embassy in Dhaka earlier this month expressed concern over the issue. It urged the government not to re-tender the contract and to make a professional decision to award the contract to the deserving lowest evaluated bidder.

In its letter to Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, the embassy said, "...there are some kind of complaints regarding the evaluation and the award of the Project, which might prompt you to consider re-tendering or even cancelling the Project."

"We are very worried that if the project be cancelled on the basis of news report about the complaints among the bidders, it might on one hand encourage them by doing so, and on the other hand cause negative impact on the good potential bidders and the financial institutions who are deeply involved and committed for the success of the project and make them



Birds love it too! Winter is the time in the rural areas to collect date palm juice. Some birds are trying the sweet juice from collection pots at Khajura of Jessore. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



PHOTO: STAR

MASSIVE IN LIFE, BEYOND ALL HELP IN DEATH: A wild elephant lying dead near the Chakaria Reserved Forest in Cox's Bazar yesterday. A vet of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park said it probably died of illness.

PAHELA BAISHAKH SEXUAL ASSAULT

Are police willing to arrest culprits?

TAMANNA KHAN and MAHDI AL MUHTASIM

Police failure to bring the sex offenders of the Pahela Baishakh incident to book gives a worrying message about law enforcers' willingness and capability in dealing with violence against women, said rights activists, student leaders and a teacher.

They alleged that police from the very beginning were not serious about investigating and solving the case wherein at least 20 women were sexually assaulted by an organised gang in the evening of April 14 on the Dhaka University campus for about an hour.

"They [police] have showed great skills in arresting terrorists. But why don't we see the same level of efforts put in to arresting sex offenders, whose photos were obtained from CCTV footage of the incident?" asked women's rights activist Ayesha Khanom, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Although a number of police personnel were standing nearby, they did not take any action against the assaulters. Moreover, one officer released two of the culprits caught and handed over to him by the people.

Even when the public demanded investigation with the CCTV footage of the incident released in the media, police, until April 18, kept denying that the women were sexually assaulted.

Eight months later, on December 24, they submitted the final report to Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, admitting for the first time that the incident indeed happened, but no arrests could be made.

"Though police identified eight suspected assaulters [from the CCTV footage], they [assaulters] could not be

110 journos killed in 2015

Says Reporters Without Borders

AFP, Paris

A total of 110 journalists were killed around the world in 2015, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said yesterday, noting that while many died in war zones the majority were killed in supposedly peaceful countries.

Sixty-seven journalists were killed in the line of duty this year, the watchdog group said in its annual roundup, listing war-torn Iraq and Syria as most dangerous places for journalists with 11 and 10 fatalities respectively, followed by France, where eight journalists were killed in a jihadist assault on a satirical magazine.

A further 43 journalists around the world died in circumstances that were unclear and 27 non-professional "citizen-journalists" and seven other media workers were also killed, RSF said.

The high toll is "largely attributable to deliberate

Balaknama

The voice of India's street kids



BBC ONLINE

A group of street children are busy in an unusual editorial meeting in a house in the Indian capital, Delhi.

They are bound by a shared passion to bring out Balaknama (Voice of Children), an eight-page quarterly newspaper which focuses on children living and working on the streets.

It proudly calls itself the "world's unique newspaper for and by street and working children".

Eighteen-year-old Chandni, the newspaper's editor, joins the animated discussion over the content of the next edition of the paper whose circulation has gone up from 4,000 to 5,500 copies since she took over a year ago.

The reporters have either been street children or have worked as child labourers in Delhi and neighbouring states. They were rescued by Chetna,

OPINION POLL

Rise in govt popularity

BSS, Dhaka

The government's approval rating reached 66 percent in 2015 while the rating for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hit 67 percent, according to an opinion poll conducted by Nielsen-Bangladesh.

Almost half of the total 2,550 respondents categorically disapproved of the

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PRAYER TIMING

DECEMBER 30

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-30	12-45	4-00	5-27	7-00
JAMAAT 6-05	1-15	4-15	5-30	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Taliban suicide bomber kills 26 in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

A Taliban suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed 26 people and wounded dozens yesterday after crashing into the main gate of a government office in northwest Pakistan, officials said.

The blast in the town of Mardan demonstrated the Pakistani Taliban's continued ability to stage deadly attacks, despite a major military offensive against its headquarters that analysts say has reduced its capacity.

The explosion ripped through the front entrance of a regional branch of the National Database and Registration Authority, which is responsible for issuing ID cards.

"At least 26 people have been killed and more than 50 injured," provincial information minister Mushtaq Ghani told AFP.

"[The] condition of 11 of them is still critical," Ghani added.

District police chief Faisal Shahzad said the suicide bomber was riding a motorbike.

"Apparently the target was the queue as there were around 400 people standing there," Faisal told AFP.

Some of those critically wounded were taken to the main Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar city.

Television footage showed the collapsed front wall of the building and twisted metal debris strewn on the road in the town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Eyewitness Nasir Khan, a 29-year-old labourer who suffered a shrapnel injury to his right leg, told AFP: "I was standing in the queue waiting for my turn as I had gone to renew my identity card when I heard someone shouting Allahu Akbar (God is great) and then I fell to the ground."

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