

Cabinet okays plan to set up first waste-based power plant

REJAIL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday gave its nod to a proposal to set up the country's first ever waste-based power plant.

The state-run Bangladesh Power Development Board now has permission to establish the plant in Jalkuri under Narayanganj district.

The cabinet committee on purchase approved a total of six proposals involving Tk 2,568 crore

At a meeting chaired by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, the cabinet committee on purchase permitted BPDB to sign an agreement with a consortium of the UD Environmental Equipment Technology Co., Everbright Environmental Protection Technology Equipment (Changzhou) and SABS Syndicate for the plant.

The deal would be signed for 20 years.

Once completed, this would be the country's first power plant fired by waste.

The capacity of the plant is six megawatts.

BPDB would pay Tk 1,665.48 crore to the consortium to buy electricity from the plant during the period. Per kilowatt-hour

electricity would cost Tk 17.60.

Yesterday, the committee approved a total of six proposals involving Tk 2,568 crore.

It gave its consent to a proposal to buy 1,02,720 SPC (spun pre-stressed concrete) poles for Tk 164.87 crore. The Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board would buy the equipment from Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory Ltd in the form of imports.

State-run Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) would buy 30,000 tonnes of bagged granular urea fertilizer for Tk 66.92 crore from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company.

BCIC also got permission to purchase 30,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid from its subsidiary, DAP Fertilizer Company Ltd, in the form of imports for Tk 87.59 crore.

Meanwhile, the committee allowed the food department to buy 2 lakh tonnes wheat for Tk 437.56 crore from Moscow-based Prodintorg.

Per tonne of wheat would cost \$258, said Nasima Begum, an additional secretary of the cabinet division.

The government has a plan to import 5 lakh tonnes of wheat in the current fiscal year.

The committee awarded one of the public work portions of a project that is converting the Kurigram (Dasherhat)-Nageshwari-Bhurungamari-Sonahat Landport Road into a national highway to a joint venture of Spectra Engineers Ltd Rana Builders (Pvt) Ltd. The portion would be built at a cost of Tk 145.63 crore.

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FOR THE LOVE OF GROWING FRUITS



One of four Thai year-round watermelon varieties grown by a couple at Ajimpur village in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila. Primary school headmasters Hasan Mahmud Sayed and Mosammat Tahmina Begum, inset, have been growing foreign fruits on four acres of land for the past 24 years. This year for the first time they grew 250 watermelon saplings from two packets of seeds purchased for Tk 1,040. The fruits were ready for plucking within two and a half months, each weighing anywhere between two to six kilogrammes and selling in markets in Dhaka and Barishal for Tk 60-Tk 80 per kg. Earning Tk 2 lakh against an investment of Tk 35,000, the couple insist that making a profit was not their aim. It was rather the pleasure of bringing to life such visual treats.

Most safety net benefits go to ineligible households: CPD

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Around 65.6 per cent of the country's households that receive financial assistance under the government's social safety net programme (SSNP) are ineligible for the scheme as they belong to the non-poor category, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

As per a recent CPD study on the efficiency of delivery mechanism of five leading SSNPs in Bangladesh, it was found that most beneficiaries were selected through political consideration and nepotism.

The five SSNPs were maternity allowance for poor mothers, primary school stipend programme (PESP), secondary school stipend programme (SESP), employment generation programme for the poorest (EGPP) and old age allowance.

The study's findings were disclosed during a virtual dialogue on the 'Efficiency of delivering social protection programmes in north-west

region', organised by the CPD in association with European Union and Oxfam Bangladesh yesterday.

The dialogue was conducted by Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the CPD, while Towfiqul Islam Khan, a senior research fellow, made a presentation on their findings.

Carried out in Rangpur division, the study covers four disadvantaged districts, namely Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur.

According to Khan, among the five SSNPs covered under the study, EGPP had the best targeting while SESP had the worst.

The increase in fund allocations for SSNPs failed to match the pace of the overall rise in budgetary allocation or GDP, CPD data shows.

As a part of its study, the CPD interviewed officials from the local administration and other representatives from NGOs and the civil society.

For the quantitative part of the survey, 1,500 households which had at least one SSNP beneficiary were surveyed using a semi-structured questionnaire.

It was then found that almost a third of the total SSNP budget is used to pay the pensions of retired government officials and their families.

This makes the actual resource envelope even smaller than it appears, the CPD said in its findings, adding that in the absence of a proper information dissemination campaign, potential beneficiaries are decided by middlemen.

Beneficiaries who maintain a good relationship with their respective UP chairmen and other administrative members, including secretaries, are always the first to know about maternity or old age allowance cards.

Although school authorities were asked to prepare a new list featuring 30 per cent of

the poor female students and 20 per cent of the poor male students from each class every year, the field study showed that school authorities often neglect the SESP policy guidelines.

Authorities select the beneficiaries for the SESP once they reach class six but do not repeat the process each year as required.

In other words, the lists never include new

of UP chairmen, members and government officials, most targeting errors arise in the case of maternity allowance and old age allowance distributions as cards are given away on political consideration.

While addressing the dialogue, AB Tajul Islam, MP and chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, alleged that certain

the issue before the government.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow of the CPD and of Convenor the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, said the government and its development partners are now quite alert towards the poor community's needs.

The government has been undertaking big programmes to address the hardships faced by the poor in Bangladesh and most field level officials work with utmost sincerity in this regard.

The government allocates around 2 per cent of the country's GDP for SSNPs but the size of this fund is insufficient to cover the people's needs, especially after pension disbursements for former government officials is deducted, he added.

Bhattacharya went on to emphasise on the need to develop an accurate database to build up institutional efficiency for SSNP distributions.

He also said local administrations should play a more proactive role in informing the people of their rights while suggesting that the scope to provide assistance through digital platforms should be added.

An allowance for pregnant women and women in distress should be added to the SSNP, said Parveen Akhter, director general for the department of women affairs that works for pregnant women and VGD programme.

Meanwhile, Fahmida Khatun, executive director of CPD, stressed on the need to prioritise the poorest of the poor in the list of beneficiaries.

According to the CPD executive director, the organisation tries to provide maximum benefits right to the door step of SSNP beneficiaries.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the allocation for labour from Tk 200 per day to Tk 500
- Better utilise the SSNP fund to ensure maximum penetration for those in need
- Form an accurate national database to help select beneficiaries
- Have local administrations monitor disbursements more closely
- Ensure that assistance can be provided through digital platforms
- Keep an allocation for pregnant and distressed women
- Remove any overlapping programmes to ensure maximum utilisation of SSNPs
- SSNPs should be handed out on need basis, not supply

students who get admitted in upper classes, but on the other hand, the authorities never fail to exclude students from the programme if they fail an examination or get married.

Similarly, even though the EGPP policy stipulates that beneficiaries selected in the previous year cannot be changed the next year, in certain districts locally elected representatives assume that once finalised, the beneficiary list cannot be altered.

This results in the misuse of such funds as beneficiaries who have completed their graduation continue to receive benefits under the programme.

According to statements from a number

of government initiative pushes its officials to conduct irregularities since the directives do not match the situation in reality.

According to him, there is a Tk 200 per day allocation for a labour, which is insignificant when considering the size of the sector in Bangladesh.

For this reason, it is not possible to manage workers with this low wage and the allocation eventually goes to another account with a fake name, Islam said, adding that the budget should be increased to Tk 500 per day as it would help address the issue.

He also hoped that the CPD's findings will prove helpful for policy makers when raising

The government should prioritise the poorest of the poor on the list of the beneficiaries, says Fahmida Khatun, executive director of CPD

United Power to acquire two sister concerns

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

United Power Generation & Distribution Company, a listed firm, plans to buy a 99 per cent stake in two of its sister concerns -- United Anwara Power and United Jamalpur Power.

The acquisitions will be completed at net asset value (NAV) based on the two's financial statements as of June 30, 2020 and both will be effective from July 1 this year.

However, the acquisitions are subject to the compliance of all related regulatory requirements, including approval from shareholders.

United Power, which debuted on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) in 2015 and has paid-up capital of Tk 526 crore, shared this information through a disclosure on the DSE website yesterday.



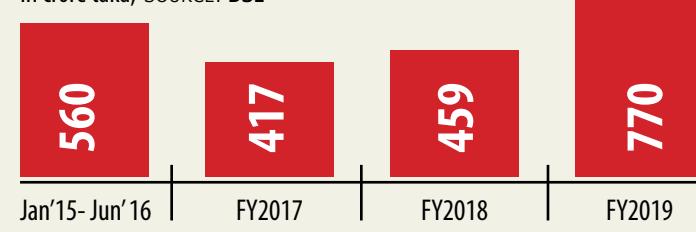
However, the share price of United Power dropped 1.46 per cent to Tk 316 yesterday, which earlier spiralled 45 per cent to hit Tk 320 in the last one month, DSE data shows.

Both Anwara Power and United Power are combined cycle, modular power plants that are heavy fuel oil-fired and equipped with state-of-the-art engines that have environment friendly co-generation facilities.

The 300-megawatt Anwara

Profits of United Power

In crore taka; SOURCE: DSE



Power, situated in Chattogram, started commercial operation on June 22 in 2019 while the 115-megawatt United Jamalpur stepped into the field on February 21 of 2019. The Anwara plant signed a power purchase agreement with the Bangladesh Power Development

Board on November 13, 2016. United Power has a reserve of Tk 2,277 crore, according to DSE data.

Sponsors hold 90 per cent of the company's shares while 7.14 per cent belongs to institutional investors and the remaining 2.82 per cent is with general investors.

Visa unveils 3-year enhanced security plan

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Global payments technology behemoth Visa yesterday launched a "Future of Security Roadmap for Bangladesh" for the next three years to strengthen payment security and enable the country to embrace and grow digital payments.

The announcement comes amidst recent alleged attempts by North Korean hackers to make fraudulent money transfers from banks and cause automated teller machines to spit out cash around the globe.

Apprehensions prompted many local banks to keep services through ATMs and points of sale suspended from 12:00am to 7:00am.

Visa's plan is for all local issuers of its credentials to adopt an EMV® 3-D Secure messaging protocol, says a press release.

It promotes frictionless consumer authentication and enables consumers to authenticate themselves with their card issuer when making card-not-present e-commerce purchases.

In addition, Visa recommends that

merchants support in-app tokenisation for mobile transactions and payment security. By tokenising customers' credentials, merchants can add another layer of security and better manage the customer journey and payment data.

The roadmap also envisages ATM EMV migration to further secure the ecosystem and clients further strengthening their capabilities by deploying real time fraud monitoring tools.

It also includes devaluing data by removing sensitive payment data from the ecosystem and making stolen account details useless and protecting personal data and account details by implementing safeguards.

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