

MATARBARI PLANT

Japanese firm Sumitomo won't bid for phase-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan's Sumitomo Corporation, a member of the consortium building the Matarbari coal-fired power plant under phase-1, has announced it will not participate in the second phase's bidding process because of its revised policy on decarbonisation.

Sumitomo, which is currently working in 65 countries across the world, announced the decision on its website on February 28. The development came amid the global campaign for reducing carbon emissions.

Talking on the matter, Hasan Mehedi, general secretary of Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt, said the revised policy made it clear the corporation would not join the EPC (Engineering, Procurements and Construction) bidding for the phase two of the project in Cox's Bazar's Moheshkhali.

"It's a huge decision by Sumitomo Corporation. We have long been requesting it to leave coal and switch to renewable energy," he told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that Japan must provide Bangladesh with technological support and funds to help it use renewable energies.

Contacted, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for energy, said there was possibilities that the government itself might not continue the second phase of the coal project. If it does, it will be a liquefied natural gas-based power plant, he said.

"Sumitomo's decision won't have any impact on us," he said.

Scheduled to go into operation next year, the plant is expected to produce 1,200 megawatt of power every day under phase-1.

Currently, preparatory survey for the second phase is going on, according to the information available on the website of the Coal Power Generation Company Limited.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talking to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, at the Dubai Exhibition Centre Leadership Building on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PID

Bangladesh, UAE to deepen relations

PM meets VP of the emirates, they laud each other on Covid response; 4 MoUs signed

UNB, Dubai

Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to further strengthen the existing bilateral relations between the two countries for mutual benefits.

They reached the consensus at a bilateral meeting held between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum here on Tuesday.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Sheikh Mohammed, also the ruler of Dubai, stressed the need for increasing the frequency of Emirates flights between the two countries.

Hasina in reply said her government was constructing the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. "We're trying to enhance our capacity to this end."

She said the UAE has plenty of scope to trade with and invest in Bangladesh.

The premier lauded the UAE government for successfully tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sheikh Mohammed appreciated the Bangladesh government. "You've done well [in Covid-19 management]," he was quoted as saying.

The UAE vice president thanked Hasina for visiting his country during the celebration of the International Women's Day.

Hasina said the UAE has plenty of scope to trade with and invest in Bangladesh.

The two leaders led their respective teams to the meeting at the Dubai Exhibition Centre.

Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders Saima Wazed, Foreign Minister Momen, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmad, PM's Private Industry and Investment Affairs Adviser Salman F Rahman and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs

Fazilatun Nessa Indira, among others, were present at the meeting.

FOUR MOUS SIGNED

Following the meeting, Bangladesh and the UAE signed four MoUs, aiming to boost bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The signed instruments were exchanged between the two sides in presence of the two leaders.

The instruments are: MoU on Cooperation in Higher Education and Scientific Research between Bangladesh and UAE, MoU on Cooperation between Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), MoU on cooperation between the foreign services academies of the two countries, and MoU on cooperation between the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Dubai International Chamber.

Hasina arrived at the Gulf country on Monday on a five-day official visit at the invitation of UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed.

Cruelly cut

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"How can you leave me so soon, maa?" Tasfia's mother Rozina Akhtar kept wailing. Tasfia, who was second among three siblings, lived in her grandparent's home. Her father Bhulu Mir works in Oman.

Mim's mother Rupa Akhtar was numb with grief. Mim was Rupa's eldest. Mim's father is ill and cannot work.

The victims' namaz-e-janaza was held at Bijoypur Bazar later in the day. Mim and Rima were buried at their village homes while Tasfia was laid to rest in the graveyard of their ancestral home.

Accidents on the rail tracks are quite common in

BCB gives

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to think. After two days, I called him to know his plan and Shakib said 'I am still physically and mentally unfit,' and for that reason, he is not willing to tour South Africa," Jalal told the media yesterday.

"Then we had a meeting with the BCB president, CEO and some board directors were also present there. Taking Shakib's interest into consideration and considering that he is terming himself physically and mentally unfit, we have decided to give him the rest. So we granted him a complete break from all forms of cricket till April 30," Jalal added.

The BCB director also said that they would sit with Shakib over his future plan upon his return on Thursday from Dubai, where the cricketer is busy

the country mainly due to unprotected level crossings, poor conditions of the tracks and a lack of safety awareness among people.

According to a report of Accident Research Institute of Buet, at least 105 people were killed in 99 rail-related accidents last year.

The actual number could be higher as many incidents go unreported.

Of the 105, 82 were pedestrians, said the report, which was prepared based on media reports. Twenty-two people were killed at level crossings, it said.

People's lack of awareness while crossing rail tracks is one of the main reasons behind the fatalities, according to ARI.

fulfilling his commercial commitments.

When asked whether the BCB was embarrassed over the Shakib saga, Jalal said, "He could have asked us but he didn't do that. I think you should ask him that question. He could have discussed it with us as he had said the same thing to the BCB president. Since Shakib is pressing the mental issue, we decided to give him the rest. This never sets a good example and we admit this since we have another 14 cricketers in the team. Everyone follows the seniors, so we also hope the seniors bring that positive vibe."

The Bangladesh team is scheduled to leave for South Africa on March 11 to take part in a three-match ODI and a two-match Test series.

'Why didn't you come back too?'

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in Ukraine as the Russian invasion started a day after it anchored at Olvia port on February 23.

A "missile" attack claimed the life of one of the crew, third engineer Hadisur Rahman.

Yesterday, all the crew members arrived in Bangladesh by a flight of Turkish Airlines from Romania around noon. Hadisur's body is still in Ukraine, and efforts are underway to bring the body home, officials said.

Mowla told journalists that the airport authority actually didn't say whether Hadisur's body would arrive. "My parents are asking me but I don't have any answer."

He said, "We knew that 28 sailors would return. It was our hunch that my brother's body may also arrive. We want to see the body of my brother."

Hadisur's mother Rashida Begum too went to the airport with her

husband and younger son.

"My son will never ask me to give him something good to eat. My son will no longer ask me for anything," she said.

All the 28 sailors walked out of the airport around 2:00pm as their family members and officials of the shipping corporation and foreign ministry were waiting to receive them.

Among the sailors, GM Noor e Alam, captain of the ship, spoke to the media.

He started by thanking the Bangladesh government and all officials who worked to bring them safely back to Bangladesh war-torn Ukraine.

"We are glad that we returned home safely. With the clear direction of the prime minister and help of all officials concerned, we were able to return to the country safely and at the earliest."

He said all the sailors were extremely worried after the attack but the government had taken

sufficient initiatives to bring them back safely. "We are very tired."

"Usually, we don't talk with senior government officials, but after that attack, government officials talked to us and gave us courage."

Narrating the journey, he said, "It is beyond imagination. Actually, we could not imagine that we would return in such a way. There are citizens of many big countries who are yet to return home. But it happened due to the prime minister's sincere efforts and cooperation from the diplomats."

Expressing sorrow for Hadisur, he said, "We are deeply saddened. We would request the government and the corporation [Bangladesh Shipping Corporation] to give proper compensation to his family."

Asked whether there was any chance to bring back the ship damaged in the war, he said, "After the

war broke out, 19 channels of the port were closed and there was no chance of using any other channel."

Sikder Badiruzzaman, director general of the East Europe wing of the foreign ministry, told journalists that, "It is a great pleasure to us that we could bring all the 28 sailors to Bangladesh. Now they are safe and will go to their families."

He said they are hopeful of bringing Hadisur's body back at the earliest, but he could not give any timeline. "It is tough to fix any date. You can understand. A war is going on and people's movement has stopped."

Regarding the compensation, he said, "We will do whatever is required."

All crew members, rescued from the ship on March 3, took shelter in a bunker in the war-ravaged European country.

After two days, they reached Romania via Moldova.

Venezuela state oil company PDVSA and have been held in Venezuela since 2017, accused of corruption.

The United States has repeatedly called for their release.

Fernandez, a Cuban-American, was arrested in 2021 in Tachira state, bordering Colombia, after being accused of terrorism.

The NGO Coalition for Human Rights and Democracy tweeted that Fernandez "was unjustly detained... and accused of being a terrorist, simply for carrying a drone."

Covid positivity rate drops to 2-month low

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday reported 1.97 percent Covid-19 positivity rate against 16,370 tests, the lowest after December 23 last year when the positivity rate hit 1.95 percent against 19,624 tests.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) logged 323 new infections and one death from Covid in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

With the latest death, the total number of Covid fatalities in the country now stands at 29,097 and the mortality rate is 1.49 percent. The total number of cases rose to 19,48,471, said a DGHS release.

The deceased was a man, aged between 51 and 60.

Two held over rape of speech impaired girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Police arrested two people in Bogura's Shibganj upazila early yesterday over raping a 16-year-old speech impaired girl.

Law enforcers picked up Zahidul Islam, 33, and Abir Hossain, 18, both from Kalai municipality area of Joypurhat, after the girl's mother filed a case with Kalai Police Station in Joypurhat on Tuesday night.

Later yesterday, a Joypurhat court sent the arrestees to jail.

According to the case statement, Zahidul and Abir intercepted the girl in Shimultoli village of Kalai upazila on March 6 afternoon when she was returning home from her relative's house. The two took her to a nearby place and raped her.

Woman's body recovered from wheat field

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police yesterday recovered the body of a female stone crushing plant worker from a wheat field in Panchagarh's Golabari village.

Locals suspected that Karima Begum, 35, a resident of Amarkhana village in Panchagarh, might have been killed after being raped.

Jahangir Alam, a relative of the deceased, said Karima went out on Tuesday morning to go to work at a stone crushing plant in Banglabandha Land Port area, but she didn't return home.

Yesterday morning, locals found her body in a wheat field, with a shopping bag filled with daily essentials and her lunchbox lying beside.

'Pro-AL men' vandalise, lock Patuakhali BNP office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Sweachhasebak League men vandalised the Patuakhali district BNP office in the town's College Road area and locked it yesterday morning, alleged the opposition party.

District Sweachhasebak Dal President Mashiur Rahman Milon said they staged a demonstration in Patuakhali court area around 9:30am protesting the soaring prices of essentials.

Leaders and activists of Sweachhasebak League attacked the BNP office around 11:30am. They damaged chairs, tables, banners and festoons in the office and locked it, Mashiur alleged.

However, district Sweachhasebak League General Secretary Rifat Hasan Sajib denied the allegation, saying that it was the result of the BNP's internal feud.

On train to Lviv

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Bangladeshis and around 700 Indian students on a journey to Poltava, a city located on the Vorskla river in central Ukraine.

"There were fears of bullets, bombs and deaths. The buses were overcrowded. My wife, my children and I had to keep standing almost all the way," he said.

"But this suffering was nothing compared to the joy of being alive."

It took them 12 hours to reach Poltava though it's normally no more than three hours' journey. The green channel arranged for civilians was zigzag and the vehicles moved slowly.

Their buses had the symbols of the Red Cross, so they faced no troubles on the way, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star over WhatsApp around 3:00pm yesterday (Bangladesh time), he said now they felt safe as they headed to Lviv.

After crossing the Ukraine-Poland border, it will take some six hours to reach Warsaw, the capital of Poland, which is sheltering hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and other foreigners who fled the war.

Asked about his days in Sumy, he said they had to hole up in the bunkers whenever they heard sirens. Every day, they had to remain in bunker for four to six hours.

With the power stations hit by Russian bombing, there were no water supplies and electricity. The temperature was minus 5 degrees Celsius.

"I cannot say how painful it was to live in the shivering cold without any hitting system," he said.

He said Russian troops bombed an area only some 150m away from his residence. Some 22 people including two children were killed in the bombing. "We could also be among the 22 people if we were not rescued."

Rubaiyat said he had no words to express his gratitude to Bangladesh Ambassador to Poland Sultana Laila Hussain.

"Our ambassador maintained contact with us day and night. She was reachable whenever we called her. She supported us, gave us mental support. We are extremely grateful to her," he said.

"We are indebted to Ambassador Sultana."

Contacted, Ambassador Sultana said the embassy was working to rescue all Bangladeshis, not only the nine.

"We had been in touch with the Red Cross and Indians. We had requested the Indian officials to evacuate them with the Indians. We thank the Indian officials and Red Cross," she said.

Sultana said some more Bangladeshis were still stranded in Ukraine and they were trying to evacuate them.

Chinese-linked hackers target six US states: report

AFP, San Francisco

At least six US states have been targeted by hackers linked to China who exploited vulnerabilities in web programs, cybersecurity company Mandiant said in a report.