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CAPACITY CHARGE FOR POWER

Tk 16,785cr paid in 9 months

RASHIDUL HASAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government paid Tk 16,785 crore in capacity charges to power plants in the first nine months of the last fiscal year for 22,118MW daily power generation capacity.

But the government had not been able to use more than 14,000MW a day during that period as the country's electricity demand was not higher than this.

As per the government's agreement with power plants, the government has to pay "capacity charges" based on the plant's capacity and establishment costs, regardless of whether the power is bought or produced.



The current demand for electricity ranges between 14,000MW and 14,500MW, but the government is producing 12,000-13,000MW, leading to ongoing power outages.

The government continues to pay for that unutilised power when austerity has been prescribed across all spheres to cope with rising inflation at home and abroad.

The Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), the country's sole electricity buyer, paid Tk 18,977 crore to 101 power plants in 2020-21 and Tk 18,123 crore to 102 plants in 2019-20.

The BPDB submitted this data to the parliamentary standing committee on power, energy and mineral resources ministry in a meeting yesterday.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the submitted papers. On Monday, the government shut down all diesel-fired power plants due to depleting fuel stocks, meaning 1,000-1,500MW remains unutilised daily but payment for the capacity continues.

The same day, the government also announced up to two hours of load shedding across the country.

Experts have suggested renegotiating capacity payments with power plant owners as the government is now struggling to cope with the decreasing forex reserves and capacity charges have to be paid in dollars.

In a report in February, the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) said the government paid Tk 8,929 crore in "capacity payments" in 2019-20 and Tk 13,200 crore in 2020-21.

But these numbers were dwarfed by those provided by the BPDB in the meeting with the standing committee yesterday.

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People looking at rechargeable battery-powered fans and lamps at a hawker's stall near Baitul Mukarram in the capital yesterday. Many are turning to such devices due to power cuts during the summer heat.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ensure austerity in all spheres PM urges once again



BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has again urged all, including the stakeholders in public and private sectors, to maintain austerity in power consumption and other areas amid a rise in global inflation.

If all concerned can pursue austerity, the country will benefit, she said yesterday while chairing the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Enec) this fiscal year.

The PM joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban while ministers, state ministers, members of the Planning

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ENERGY CRISIS Piecemeal steps won't solve it

Badrul Imam tells The Daily Star

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

The government has shut down diesel-run power plants and mulls some other steps to tackle the ongoing energy crisis.

But how effective will the measures be?

The Daily Star spoke to Badrul Imam, energy expert and former professor of geology at Dhaka University, for some insights into the matter.

According to him, a comprehensive assessment of the situation was not done before deciding to shut down the power plants.



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Inflation at 9-year high

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

Inflation raced to a nine-year high of 7.56 percent in June, in a development that lays bare the extent of the cost of living crisis gripping the low-income and middle-class people in Bangladesh thanks to a war taking place some 5,800 kilometres away in Ukraine.

June's data means the average inflation in the just-concluded fiscal 2021-22 was 6.15 percent, overshooting even the revised target of 5.7 percent for the year.

It is a moment unlike anything the international community has experienced in decades: countries around the world are grappling with rapid price increases just the same.

In the US, it hit a 40-year high last month of 9.1 percent, while the UK hit the unfortunate milestone the previous month. In nine out of the 19 eurozone countries, inflation reached double-digit figures in June.

In Bangladesh, the rising price level has left its sizeable middle-class and low-income in a severe cost of living crunch in the absence of a corresponding wage increase.

Take the case of Ekramul Hossain, a medical supply store attendant in the capital's BMA Bhaban. Following repeated requests for a pay hike in face of spiralling expenses, he was told yesterday by his manager that there would be none as the "business was bad".

"We have been getting by on just rice and vegetables - we haven't tasted meat or fish in months," a crestfallen Hossain told The Daily Star while attending to a store full of customers.

It is a similar story for Jalil Ahmed, a security guard supervisor in Dhaka. He earns about Tk 18,000 a month, which is falling short in meeting ends meet for his family in Dhaka and his village.

"You can hardly find any item whose

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING Bangladesh stays put in US ranking

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh was placed in Tier-2 of the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report 2022, the same tier the country was in last year.

The TIP ranks countries by putting them in Tier-1, Tier-2, Tier-2 Watch List, and Tier-3, with Tier-1 being the best in terms of taking actions against human trafficking and Tier-3 being the worst.

Any country in Tier-3 faces sanctions on development assistance.

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An illegal three-wheeler going against traffic on Babubazar bridge in the capital yesterday. Slow-moving and illegal vehicles often put other road users at risk on this key stretch that connects to the Padma Bridge.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BANGLADESH GETTING GSP PLUS Rights situation, labour law have to improve Says European parliamentary delegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Parliamentary Committee on International Trade has categorically said Bangladesh needs to improve rights situation and amend labour law at the soonest in compliance with international standards to be eligible for GSP Plus.

It said the progress in workplace safety here since the Rana Plaza disaster is not substantial and that it has concerns over the delay in amending the labour law, and extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, shrinking of civic space and Digital Security Act.

The six-member delegation that is in Dhaka on a three-day visit starting on July 18 reminded that the country now needs to pass the tougher conditions for GSP Plus, which gives developing countries

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Parties can't be forced to join nat'l polls: CEC

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said it's not possible to force any political party to take part in the next national election.

"We will not force any party to join the polls ... Nobody will take part in the election just because we are urging them," the CEC said during talks with political parties at the Election Commission office in the capital.

The EC organised it as part of a series of dialogue seeking recommendations from a cross section of people on how to hold a free and fair general election.

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বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি ব্যবহারে সাশ্রয়ী হই

বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ে সচেতনতা অবলম্বন করি এবং সরকারি নির্দেশনাসমূহ পালন করে দেশ ও জাতির কল্যাণে অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ হই

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