

Govt signs deal for 55MW wind power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Power Development Board yesterday signed an agreement with a consortium to build a wind farm in Bagerhat's Mongla that will produce 55MW electricity.

The consortium -- Mongla Green Power Ltd -- will complete the project in the next two years, according to the contract. And the BPDB will purchase electricity from it for the next 20 years.

Per unit (kilowatt-hour) electricity will cost \$0.1320 (about Tk 12.5).

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said the country would pay more attention to renewable sources to get electricity.

Virtually joining the programme at the Biduyt Bhaban in the capital, he said the project is part of the government's target to generate 40 percent electricity from clean energy by 2041.

Mongla Green Power Ltd is a consortium of Envision Energy (Jiangsu) Co Ltd, China, SQ Trading and Engineering, Bangladesh, and Envision Renewable Energy Bangladesh Ltd, Hong Kong.

BPDB Director Golam Rabbani and Mongla Green Energy Managing Director Xu Wentao inked the deal on behalf of their respective sides.

According to the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority, the country only has three small wind farms that have the capacity of producing 2.9MW.

50 hurt as BCL attacks BNP in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Members of Chhatra League attacked former MP Nur Islam Moni in Barguna's Patharghata upazila as he tried to visit his home after 16 years yesterday.

Over 50 BNP men, including Moni and BNP convener Farooq Chowdhury, were injured during the attack around 4:00pm. The attackers also set several motorcycles on fire. On information, police went to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Additional policemen were deployed in the area to avoid any further untoward incident, said Abul Bashar, officer-in-charge of Patharghata Police Station.



Firefighters douse the rubble of a restaurant complex destroyed by a missile strike in the second largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

Brace for bleak winter

Ukraine's Zelensky warns Europeans; IAEA says line down at Zaporizhzhia plant but backup working

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has told Europeans to expect a difficult winter as the Russian assault on his country leads to cuts in oil and gas exports by Moscow.

Zelensky was speaking on Saturday night after Moscow shut down a main pipeline that supplies Russian gas to the continent. "Russia is preparing a decisive energy blow on all Europeans for this winter," he said in his daily video address.

Moscow has cited Western sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine and technical issues for the energy disruptions. European countries who have backed the Kyiv government with diplomatic and military support have accused Russia of weaponising energy supplies.

Some analysts say the shortages and a surge in living costs as winter approaches risk sapping Western support for Kyiv as governments try to deal with disgruntled populations.

Last week, Moscow said it would keep the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, its main gas channel to Germany, closed and G7 countries announced a planned price cap on Russian oil exports.

The Kremlin said it would stop selling oil to any countries that implemented the cap.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said yesterday his government had been planning for a total halt in gas deliveries in December but he promised that his country would make it through the winter.

Meanwhile, the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern

Ukraine again lost external power, UN inspectors said.

The last remaining main external power line was cut off although a reserve line continued supplying electricity to the grid, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a statement. Only one of its six reactors remained in operation, it said.

On other battlefronts, Ukrainian Telegram channels reported explosions at the Antonivsky bridge near the southern city of Kherson, which is occupied by Russian forces.

The bridge has been severely damaged by Ukrainian missiles over the past weeks, but Russian troops were trying to repair it or to set up a pontoon crossing or barges to maintain supplies to Russian units on the right bank of the Dnipro river.

A songsmith extraordinaire

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before being taken to hospital.

His sudden demise has left a massive void in the country's cultural arena, which is graced by his tireless work for over six decades.

Celebrities and noted singers have penned heartfelt messages on social media, paying tribute to the extraordinary life of Gazi Mazharul Anwar.

Dhallywood superstars Shakib Khan, Sucharita, Bappa Raj, Ananta Jalil and Barsha Jalil, among others, rushed to the hospital upon learning about his death.

Born in 1943 in Cumilla's Taleshwar village, Mazharul Anwar started writing for Radio Pakistan in 1964. For almost six decades, he penned, through his songs, stories of patriotism, war, love and sacrifice.

His work in Bangla cinema began with the film "Ayna O Oboshishto" by legendary director Subhash Dutta. His lyrics for the song "Akasher Haate Achhe Ekrash Neel" is an all-time classic.

On his 78th birthday, Mazharul Anwar published a book, "Olpo Kothar Golpo Gaan" in 2021, which featured 200 of his songs.

"I have led a happy and content life. I have no regrets," Anwar said, in his last interview with The Daily Star in 2021.

"I have been writing for over five decades and won numerous awards, including the Ekushey Padak, National Film Award, and President's Gold Medal. I didn't work for such prizes, but receiving them always inspired me to work better."

Gazi Mazharul Anwar also received the Swadhinata Padak last year.

Some of his masterpieces are "Achhen Amar Moktar", "Ektara Tui Desh Er Kotha Bol Re Ebar Bol", "Ganer Khatay Swaralipi Likh", "Shudhu Gaan Geye Porichoy", "Ei Mon Tomake Dilam", "Chokher Nojor Emni Koir", among countless others. His body will be taken to the Central Shaheed Minar at 11:00am today for final respects.

It will then be taken to the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, where his first namaz-e-janaza will take place.

His second namaz-e-janaza will take place at the Banani Graveyard, after which he will be laid to rest in the same place where his mother was.

Gazi Mazharul Anwar is survived by his son and his daughter, also a talented singer.

A visit more crucial amid global crisis

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cooperation and border management.

Modi came to Dhaka last year to join the celebrations marking the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, and Hasina last time went to India in 2019 to take part in a summit organised by the World Economic Forum.

Praising various friendly gestures from India, including its role in the evacuation of Bangladesh nationals stuck in Ukraine, Hasina on the eve of her visit told news agency ANI that there can be differences but these should be addressed through dialogue.

She, however, said India should show more generosity concerning water sharing of common rivers, especially the Teesta, as Bangladesh lies downstream.

Acknowledging that Modi is eager to solve the problem, she said in the ANI interview, "... the problem is in your country. So ... it should be solved."

Briefing journalists yesterday on PM's visit, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said this is significant amid the Ukraine crisis, global economic downturn and ongoing Covid pandemic as the two neighbours seek enhanced cooperation to overcome the challenges.

Dhaka and Delhi will likely sign at least seven MoUs on water management, railway, science and technology, and information and broadcasting, he said.

"We hope the visit will be very successful. It will help achieve our goals," he told reporters at the foreign ministry, adding that Bangladesh thinks the visit will open new "windows of cooperation" between the countries.

Hasina will leave for India by a VVIP chartered flight of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 10:00am from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Teesta sorrows overflowing

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Teesta dries up. To meet the irrigation cusec water flowed in the Teesta, the lowest in history. The last 10 days of March is recognised as the height of lean season in Bangladesh.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension, about 60 percent of an estimated 90,000 hectares of land on the banks of the Teesta remains unutilised in the dry season.

Asfa Uddoula, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Dalia, Lalmonirhat, said from mid-June to September, the flow usually hovers between 60,000 cusec and 65,000 cusecs.

The flow starts to dwindle in October and by December, and the

State Minister for Railways and Textiles of India Darshana Vikram and Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Imran will receive her at the Palm Airport, New Delhi, where a red carpet will be rolled out in honour of Hasina.

During her visit, the prime minister will meet Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar apart from holding talks with her Indian counterpart Modi at the Hyderabad House.

Former Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh Deb Mukherjee views it as a goodwill visit as "there are positive feelings on both sides".

He also said, "There is a lot of potential for scaling up bilateral cooperation but it depends on how we handle our relations."

Veena Sikri, another former Indian envoy to Bangladesh, said Hasina's visit would be significant for keeping up the momentum in relations between the two countries despite the Covid-induced disruptions.

"I think the two prime ministers may give the green signal for the launch of negotiations for the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement [CEPA] under which both sides will gain immensely and Bangladesh more."

Connectivity and energy cooperation will be two key issues to feature in the Hasina-Modi talks. Energy sector cooperation would be of particular importance for Bangladesh, which has been hit hard by electricity shortage and a sharp rise in petrol and diesel prices, added Sikri.

This visit is crucial given that the West and Russia and China, the two rival blocs, are trying to draw countries on their sides, said former Bangladesh foreign secretary Shahidul Haque.

"The state-level visit will be crucial in the context of global economic and geopolitical changes. Dhaka will definitely want Delhi to help stabilise

the economy, especially the supply of energy and essentials."

In South Asia, where Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are in trouble, India and Bangladesh want to work together for regional stability, which is also related to regional security, added Shahidul Haque.

Another former foreign secretary, Md Touhid Hossain, however, thinks the rhetoric that this visit will make great changes in Indo-Bangla relations is a bit "far fetched".

"I don't think the people of the country would expect much from this visit. A few MoUs are likely to be signed and maybe there would be some arrangements over water sharing of the Kushiara," he said.

"Our relationship with India is very important and it will remain so in the coming years. However, people's expectations vis-à-vis India have gradually gone down since 2011. At that time, an agreement on Teesta was ready, but could not be signed because of India's internal politics."

He also said that despite the claims of a golden period of relations from both governments, there has been no progress on this in the last 11 years.

"If CEPA is signed," he added, "we have to see if it leads to better market access for Bangladeshi products and if Indian investments come under win-win conditions."

Prof Shahab Enam Khan, international relations analyst, thinks Bangladesh has been considerably contributing to the Indian economy and security. But he doubts "if there is any other regional neighbour that India has to keep its political constituents or security domains stable".

"The true value of friendship lies in reciprocity than verbatim. It's time to de-politicise water and focus on win-win growth. Bangladesh did its part long ago," he said.

and Rangpur get affected as the river runs dry for months every year.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association, said Indian authorities surveyed the water flow of the Teesta in 2012, but had not published the report. "We do not even know whether our government asked for the report... It seems our people will continue to suffer," she said.

AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem, deputy minister for water resources, last month participated in a meeting of the Bangladesh India Joint Rivers Commission. He said India again made promises of a Teesta deal.

2 school students killed in train accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two school students were killed in a tragic train accident near Mirpur Railway Station in Kushtia yesterday.

Naeem Hossain, a grade-X student of Mirpur Border Guard Public School, and Ritu Khatun, a grade-X student of Mirpur Secondary Girls' School, died on the spot around 3:30pm.

The victims were going to attend a coaching class as the Khulna-bound Rupsa Express hit them, said Manjer Ali, officer-in-charge of Poradah Railway Police Station.

The bodies were sent to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy, he added.

Charges pressed against Evaly MD, 7 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department has pressed charges against Evaly Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Rassel and seven others in a fraud case.

The seven others are: Rassel's wife Shamima Nasrin, also chairman of the e-commerce platform, its Manager Jahedul Islam, Head of Accounts Selim Reza, Accounts Manager Jubayer Al Mahmud, Rassel's Personal Secretary Md Rezwan, bike department officer Sakib Rahman and Evaly staffer Akibur Rahman Turjo.

Investigation Officer Emdadul Kabir, also a CID sub-inspector, yesterday submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

JP all out for next nat'l polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Party is taking preparation to participate in all 300 constituencies across the country in the next national elections, Mujibur Haque Chunnun, general secretary of the party, said yesterday.

Chunnun, also a lawmaker of the JP, made the announcement while meeting with the party's potential candidates for the next general election at the JP chairman's office in the capital's Banani.

The party, with the leadership of GM Quader is now stronger than ever, he said, adding, "No one will succeed with conspirations against the Jatiya Party."

The next elections would be a question of existence for many politicians. If defeated, one might be erased from the history, he said.

India should show more generosity

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Hasina also asserted that Bangladesh's economy is strong and in a position to repay debts on time. She rejected the possibility of Bangladesh being hit by an economic crisis like the one Sri Lanka experienced earlier in the year.

She also thanked Modi for India's Vaccine Maitri programme, and termed India's role in the evacuation of Bangladesh nationals who were stuck in war-hit Ukraine, a "friendly gesture."

Hasina also praised the decades-long relationship between the two countries. "Even in 1975, when I lost all my family members, the then Indian PM gave us shelter in India," she said.

When asked about Dhaka's relationship with China as well as India, Hasina said her main goal is the country's development. "Our foreign policy is very clear -- friendship to all, malice to none. If there's a problem, it's between China and India. I don't want to put my nose in there," she said.

Sheikh Hasina also urged bilateral solutions to any issues between the two countries.

"When you are living side by side, some problems will come up or remain or you can solve them. We still have

issues but I think we will continue our dialogue. For our development, we need cooperation from any country which is suitable for our country," she told ANI.

On being asked about the possibility of her son Sajeeb Wazed joining politics, the PM said that she has left it up to him to decide.

"He's working for the country. Digital Bangladesh is his idea and he is assisting me with this. But, he has never thought of taking any position in the political party or any ministry," she said.

Referring to the incidents faced by Hindus in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, the prime minister said that hers is a secular country and the government has always taken immediate action against such incidents.

The PM is scheduled to visit India between September 5 and 8, during which she will meet with Indian President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

She last visited India before the coronavirus pandemic in October 2019.

EC to procure 2 lakh EVMs

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Director Syed Raquibul Hasan said, "A Tata car does not cost the same here as in India.

"You can't compare our EVMs with those of any other country. In our EVMs, we have added features like a fingerprint matching system, audit card, polling card, and other safety and security measures. The Indian EVM has no such features.

"If a fingerprint scanner and other accessories were added, what will be the cost of an Indian EVM?" Hasan said.

Asked why the EC has not floated any national or international tender for the EVMs, which might have yielded competitive bidding, Hasan said, "Only BMTF can provide the specific machine."

The state-owned BMTF has the capacity to deliver two lakh EVMs ahead of the next general election, likely to be held in late December next year or early January 2024, according to Hasan.

The move to buy the additional EVMs comes on the back of the EC's August 23 decision to go for electronic voting in up to 150 constituencies in the polls despite major opposition parties' objection to the use of the devices.

The EC has 1.5 lakh EVMs that can be used in 70-80 constituencies at one

go in the next polls.

The development project proposal now being prepared includes the setting up of 10 warehouses in 10 regions, recruiting manpower and training them to handle the devices, and buying vehicles for transporting the EVMs.

The warehouses will have foolproof security, firefighting equipment and temperature control for the proper preservation of the EVMs.

The three-storied warehouses would be on 40 kathas of land with more than 60,000 square feet of space to keep around 45,000 EVMs.

"We will need money to buy or acquire land and to have modern facilities to store the machines," Hasan said. Campaigns would be required to make people aware of the EVM use and dispel misconceptions.

The EC is yet to choose the constituencies where EVMs will be used in the next general election.

"This will be finalised when the election schedule is fixed," said an EC official.

EVMs would mostly be used in the urban seats with smooth transportation and also where the devices were earlier used for different elections, the official added.

EVMs were first used in the 2018 parliamentary election.