



DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 7, 2023

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIII No. 139

JAISHTHA 24, 1430 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILQAD 17, 1444 HIJRI

16 PAGES : Tk 15.00



P10
Fisheries stymied by lengthy ban



P7
US, China talks in Beijing strike upbeat tone



P6
Antonagar portraying life in metro



P3
Allocation to tackle graft unclear

POWER OUTAGE

Only one-third plants operating at full capacity

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Of the 153 power plants in the country, 49 are operating at capacity, which explains the ongoing power outages amid the searing summer heat.

At least 53 of the remaining 104 plants have been shut for maintenance or for being out of fuel due to the dollar crunch. The 53 have a combined capacity of 4,930 megawatts, shows data from the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

The other 51 plants, which have the capacity to produce 7,855MW, are generating 3,568MW because they are short on fuel.

Meanwhile, people and industries are left without power for four to five hours in the capital and eight to 10 hours in rural areas amid the unrelenting summer.

Yesterday, the temperature in Dinajpur and Saidpur reached 40.5 degrees Celsius, and in Dhaka 38.7 degrees Celsius. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department warned that the heatwave might continue for a few days.

As of 9:00pm yesterday, the average load-shedding was 2,636MW per hour against a demand of 15,800MW. The highest generation per hour was 13,763MW.

Power generation was dealt a setback after Payra 1,320MW Thermal Power Plant shut down on Monday amid coal shortage.

The Rampal power plant, another major generator, has been operating below capacity since it resumed operation on May 16 after three weeks of closure due to a coal shortage.

It is now producing just 300MW to 350MW a day against a capacity of 660MW.

"We have been told to keep the power plant operational as long as possible with the last shipment of coal," said Anwarul Azim, deputy general manager at Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company, which operates the Rampal plant.

The letters of credit for coal import for this month have been opened, so there would not be any problem for now.

"But if there is a delay in opening LCs again, there will be a problem," he added.

Among the five coal-based power plants, only the Adani power plant in India's Jharkhand is supplying at its installed capacity of 748MW.

The Barapukuria power station and Barishal 307MW plant are producing at half their capacities.

Due to the heatwave, many furnace oil-based plants are facing issues in generating power, according to officials of the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

Independent power producers (IPPs) maintain that the electricity situation will not improve unless the government takes extraordinary measures.

"We went through the same situation before Ramadan, when the power demand was similar," said an independent power producer on the condition of anonymity.

Due to record power generation during Ramadan, there were no major incidents of power outage then.

It was because of the government's initiatives to ensure the availability of necessary dollars and pay the dues of private companies, said the producer, adding that the same measures are necessary now.

"We are not able to import furnace oil as per our demand as the banks are not opening LCs due to the dollar shortage. Besides, the government owes huge sums to many plants," the power producer added.

As of March, the IPPs were owed Tk 18,000 crore, according to the Bangladesh Independent Power Producers' Association.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Feeling drained and exhausted after hours of pulling his rickshaw in yesterday's scorching heat, 60-year-old Abdul Halim takes rest on a pavement beside Gulistan Park in the capital. The hot and humid weather is likely to continue in Dhaka and some other regions, according to the Met office.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

HIGH INFLATION, POWER CRISIS

PM asks ministries to find a way out

Issues set of directives at Ecneec meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the ministries concerned to come up with a roadmap to tackle inflation and power crisis, the biggest sources of people's sufferings.

"Inflation can't be allowed to rise any further," Planning Minister MA Mannan quoted the prime minister as saying at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec).

The prime minister ordered the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) to have larger stocks of essentials so that it could intervene when the prices rise, Mannan told reporters at the planning ministry.

"Inflation has become unbearable. I said last month inflation would be reduced, but it increased further," he said.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data, inflation last month was 9.94 percent, the



highest in 11 years.

But inflation cannot be tackled in just two or four weeks, the minister said, adding that the government will use all instruments at its disposal to reduce inflation.

He then said power cuts had become intolerable due to the closure of a power plant.

The crisis may persist for two more weeks, he said, referring to a recent comment of Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power.

Every day, Dhaka residents have been experiencing four to five hours of power outage while those in the rural areas get electricity only about half the time.

Asked why the prices of certain products were rising in Bangladesh even though they were getting cheaper in the international market, Mannan said this happened because of the dollar crisis.

The taka has been losing its value against the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

IMPASSE OVER NATIONAL POLLS

AL ready to sit with BNP

Says Amu, seeks UN mediator

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League is ready to sit with the BNP to discuss the next general election with the mediation of a UN representative, AL advisory council member Amir Hossain Amu said yesterday.

"The door for dialogue is open. Keeping the constitution in mind, we are ready to do anything for a solution. Come forward, we are willing to sit with you," he said, addressing the BNP.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to holding a free and fair election, Amu said at a programme organised by the AL-led 14-party alliance at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

His remarks came hours after BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the BNP would not participate in any polls under the incumbent government.

Fakhrul said this after a meeting with US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas.

Amu, coordinator and spokesperson of the AL-led alliance, said, " ... Let a representative of the United Nations come. We want to sit with the BNP face-to-face and see where the differences are.

"Where is the barrier to holding a credible election? How can it be solved? This can only be resolved through discussions. There is no alternative path."

Addressing the BNP and recalling the visit of the then UN assistant secretary general for political affairs Oscar

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS

7 banks asked to clear dues with foreign airlines

Bangladesh Bank yesterday ordered seven banks to adjust their dues with foreign airlines in the quickest possible time.

It was reported previously that foreign airlines had their \$214 million stuck with the banks as they did not remit the funds generated mainly through ticket sales, owing to the foreign exchange crisis in Bangladesh.

But the central bank found the amount to be \$177.79 million and the banks in question are capable of settling the payments.

STORY ON B1



Double parkers leave only one lane for traffic on the capital's Dhanmondi-27 and even that lane is used by rickshaws going the wrong way. Such disregard for traffic rules increases congestion and wastes people's time especially during rush hours.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP won't take part in elections under AL govt

Fakhrul tells Haas; US envoy discusses labour rights with law minister

STAR REPORT

US Ambassador Peter Haas yesterday discussed free and fair elections, the campaign processes, and "additional important priorities the US and Bangladesh share" when he met BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, said the US embassy.

He also discussed labour law reforms during his meeting with Law Minister Anisul Huq and Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman at the latter's office.

The US embassy tweeted about the meeting with Fakhrul, but did not elaborate further.

The meetings are being held at a time when the US is consistently calling for free and fair polls slated for December this year or January next year.

On May 24, the US announced a visa policy for Bangladesh, saying it will restrict visas for those who will be found involved in vote rigging, intimidation or preventing free media. Anyone in the government, opposition, bureaucracy, law enforcement or even judiciary may come under the purview of the new visa policy, it said.

Besides, six US Congressmen on May 25 also wrote to President Joe Biden to take measures for stopping human rights violations and help ensure free and fair polls in Bangladesh.

Contacted, Fakhrul said he told the US ambassador that the BNP will not take part in any polls under the incumbent government as "free and fair election is not possible under its regime."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1