

Adani hands over Godda plant to Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka to “handover the Godda power plant” following the full load commencement of power supply to Bangladesh.

“Honoured to have met Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on full load commencement and handover of the 1,600 MW Ultra Super Critical Godda Power Plant. I salute the dedicated teams from India and Bangladesh who braved Covid to commission the plant in a record time of three and-a-half years,” he tweeted after the meeting.

Adani left Dhaka after the meeting, which took place around 11 am, The Daily Star has learnt from power ministry officials informed on the matter. He flew in his chartered flight earlier in the day to meet with Hasina.

On July 12, Adani Power Jharkhand, a wholly owned subsidiary of Adani Power Ltd, completed the dependable capacity test for the Godda plant.

The test was conducted over the stipulated period of six hours to evaluate the simultaneous functioning of both units of the plant after they began supplying electricity.

On June 26, the Adani power plant, located in India’s Godda and dedicated to supplying electricity to Bangladesh, started commercial production in full swing.

Earlier, on April 6, the power plant had started to supply power from the first unit.

Bangladesh is purchasing electricity through a 105km long dedicated 400kV transmission line from the Godda plant under a 25-year contract signed in November 2017.

HECKLING SHAMIM OSMAN IN NY

Ex-JCD leader’s home attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Chhatra League leaders and activists yesterday attacked and vandalised the home of a former local Chhatra Dal leader in Noakhali’s Sonaimuri upazila over “harassing” Narayanganj-4 Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman in New York.

Locals said former Chhatra Dal leader Badal Mirza, 36, who hails from Amki village in Sonaimuri, left Bangladesh eight-10 years ago for the US.

Some 10-15 BCL men vandalised Badal’s home in Sonaimuri around 10:00am yesterday and exploded a few crude bombs. A video of the attack was making the rounds on social media, they added.

Badal and several other people had an altercation with lawmaker Shamim on Little Bangladesh Road in

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In blatant disregard for safety, traders have set up makeshift shops along the rail line in the capital’s Khilgaon. Many of them have also built shanties there to make room for their families. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FLOODS IN THE NORTH

Cries for help getting louder

STAR REPORT

The flood affected people in the north are struggling with limited to no access to food, water, and shelter.

Around 2.5 lakh people have been marooned in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur, according to the local administration and representatives.

The flood situation may begin improving today in some places, said officials of the Bangladesh Water Development Board. “The flood situation in the low-lying areas of Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat may improve in the next 24 hours, while it may remain unchanged in the low-lying areas of Kurigram,” said the weather bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre at 9:00am yesterday.

Although government officials concerned said they were distributing relief materials, flood victims said the aid supply was inadequate.

In Lalmonirhat, the Teesta was flowing 20cm above the danger level at Dalia point at 6:00am yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam, 63, a resident of Char Falimari village in Sadar upazila, along with five members of his family had to shift to a flood shelter on Thursday after their house was submerged.

“Since then, we’ve been only having dry food. We’ve not had a cooked meal in the

last three days,” he said.

“The tube wells in the area have gone underwater. We are facing an acute crisis of drinking water,” said Mohasin Islam, 62, of Dakshin Balapara village of Aditmari upazila.

Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ullah said the distribution of relief materials among the flood-affected was ongoing.

In Kurigram, the Dharla River was flowing 22cm above the danger level at Dharla Bridge Point at 6:00am yesterday.

“I along with my family have been living on the road in a makeshift tent. We don’t have the facility to cook here. We don’t even have enough money to buy dry food here,” said Apiar Rahman, 48, a day labourer from Char Gorokamandal village in Phulbari upazila.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Abdul Hai Sarkar said his office has enough stock of dry food, drinking water, and cash aid to provide relief assistance to the victims, adding that, the distribution of relief items was underway.

In Rangpur, the Teesta River was flowing 0.7cm above the danger level at Kaunia Point at around 6:00pm yesterday.

Many flood victims said they were yet to receive a sufficient amount of relief assistance.

Abdullah Al Hadi, chairman of Laxmitari union in Gangachara upazila,

said, “Around 5,000 people have been marooned in our union. As of now, we’ve been able to send aid to around 1,000 people. We can’t help more people as they’re stranded in remote areas that are currently hard to reach.”

Soleman Ali, of the upazila’s Purba Ischi, said, “All the tube wells in our area are now underwater. Now, we have to collect drinking water from a tube well that is a few kilometres away.”

Contacted, Gangachara UNO Nahid Tamanna said all measures were taken to provide necessary relief assistance to the flood-affected.

In Nilphamari, the Teesta River was flowing 12cm above the danger mark at Dowani Point at 6:00am yesterday.

Nur Islam, of the Uttar Kharibari area in Dimla upazila, said, “I along with my family took shelter on a dyke on Thursday after my house was washed away. We had brought some dry food with us like roti [bread], chira [flat rice], and muri [puffed rice], which all ran out by Friday. We have not had food since.”

Contacted, Dimla UNO Belayet Hossain said “We’ve already started distributing dry food among the affected people. We will soon beef up the relief distribution.”

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, and Nilphamari contributed to the report.]

Fisherman found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police recovered the dead body of a fisherman from a fishing boat in Nizampur village of Patuakhali’s Kalapara upazila yesterday.

The deceased Md Khalil, 40, of Kawar Char village of Dhulasar union.

Mohipur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ferdous Alam Khan said “The body has been sent to Patuakhali Medical College’s morgue for autopsy. But whether it was murder or suicide will be known after getting the autopsy report.”

An unnatural death case was filed in this connection, he added.

Sources said Khalil went fishing with his small wooden boat in the Mohipur canal on Friday evening.

Locals found his body on his fishing boat and informed to police who recovered the body.

Jamaat barred from holding rally in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Jamaat-e-Islami was barred by police to organise the rally pressing their ten-point demand scheduled yesterday afternoon on the ground of possible deterioration of law and order.

Now the organization wants to organise the rally on July 21 at the same ground -- Sylhet Registrar’s Office -- with the permission of the Police.

Being agitated with the decision, Jamaat organised a press conference yesterday afternoon at the organization’s office in the city’s Bandarbar area.

In the press conference, Jamaat’s Ameer of Sylhet city unit Muhammad Fakhru Islam said that the police on Friday night denied permission verbally without showing any reason.

Contacted, Md Elias Sharif, commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, “After Jamaat’s application for permission, we waited for the intelligence report and the report suspected a possible deterioration of the law and order. Based on the report, we denied permission. If they apply again, we will follow the same procedure before granting permission.”

2 children drown in Dhaka, Jamalpur

STAR REPORT

Two children died from drowning in Dhaka and Jamalpur yesterday.

In Dhaka, a schoolboy drowned while bathing with friends in a pond in Bangshal area in the afternoon.

Twelve-year-old Eshan Nandi was a seventh-grader at Pogose Laboratory School. After playing with his friends at a playground in Bangshal, Eshan went to the pond to take a bath around 1:30pm. Soon after getting into the water, the schoolboy, who did not know how to swim, drowned, said his uncle Pijus Karmakar.

In Jamalpur, a three-year-old girl drowned in floodwater in Bilerpar village under Sadhurpara union in Bakshiganj upazila.

Nusrat, daughter of Liton Miah, of the village, suddenly disappeared while playing in the yard at home in the morning, reports our district correspondent quoting Sohela Rana, officer-in-charge of Bakshiganj Police Station.

After two hours, locals recovered her body from a nearby canal next to her house.

Mired in corruption

FROM PAGE 1

and he approved the one for Zakiganj by mistake.

Departmental proceedings have been launched against the DYD officials and employees, he said, adding that the sports ministry had written to the finance ministry, requesting that legal action be taken against Accounts Officer Kamal and Auditor Iqbal.

The Anti-Corruption Commission started investigating the matter after the DYD filed a general diary with Zakiganj Police Station early this year.

Zakiganj Upazila Youth Development Officer Kabir returned Tk 1 crore to the government exchequer during the departmental investigation.

CORRUPTION IS REWARDED

In five separate investigations last year, the DYD found that five assistant upazila youth development officers (AUYDO) misappropriated over Tk 26 lakh meant to provide youths with loans.

The investigations found that AUYDOs Anwarul Kabir misappropriated Tk 17.04 lakh, Golam Faruq Tk 2.38 lakh, Ainul Islam Bhuiyan Tk 1.47 lakh, Dipak Kumar Mondol Tk 3.80 lakh and Rafiqul Islam Sheikh Tk 1.62 lakh.

During the departmental proceedings that followed, all of them

admitted that they had committed financial crimes. But the DYD only lowered their salaries and decided to recover the embezzled money from their pension benefits, according to documents.

Except Anwarul, all of them were given the current charge of upazila youth development officer (UYDO) in November 2021. Some of them got the blessing even after multiple departmental cases punished them.

In May last year, a ministry probe found that this was done ignoring the ministry directive of picking the most competent, honest, and experienced officers.

The probe report said large sums might have changed hands when this was done.

Requesting anonymity, several DYD officials said had the corrupt individuals been terminated in line with the Government Employee (discipline and appeal) Rules 2018, such incidents might have not occurred.

Mokhlesur Rahman, a deputy director of the DYD at the time, picked 70 officers, including the four corrupt ones, to give the charge of UYDO from a list of 1,175 AUYDOs. The 70 officers chosen by Mokhlesur were near the bottom of the list which means they were less eligible than those at the top.

The probe committee found several suspicious transactions at the bank account of the wife of one of the 70 officers. The committee also found the screenshot of a message in which an AUYDO asked a colleague to send money to the account.

An Administrative Tribunal in Dhaka in a judgement on July 25 last year said the order giving the 70 AUYDOs bigger roles was illegal.

The parliamentary standing committee on youth and sports ministry in different meetings also ordered cancelling the order.

But the DYD has yet to cancel it because there was bribery behind the order, DYD officials said.

Meanwhile, the public service commission approved a list of 118 AUYDOs prepared for promotion to UYDO. The decision of promotion is pending with State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel since March 6.

Mokhlesur told a probe committee that he only executed the directives of the director (administration) and the DG of DYD.

Asked about the matter, DYD Director General Azahrul did not give a direct answer and said it is not possible for him to see the details in all the files that are usually placed before him.

The order giving them bigger roles

has not been cancelled because a court stayed the judgement. But, DYD officers said the authorities could cancel the “current charge” order as the judgement was stayed nine months after the tribunal verdict.

The probe committee also recommended further inquiry into the suspected financial transactions and a separate investigation committee to find out the roles of higher authorities. None of these have been done yet.

Majbah Uddin, who was the secretary of the ministry at the time, framed charges against Mokhlesur, but in December last year he acquitted Mokhlesur.

Contacted, Mejbah Uddin said he acquitted Mokhlesur because the allegation of financial corruption was “not proved”.

Asked why he did not form committees to investigate whether there was a shady financial transaction and the roles of DYD director and DG, he said, “I will talk to the current secretary about forming the committees.”

Mokhlesur was transferred to Narsingdi as a deputy director following the allegations. But a number of his colleagues in Narsingdi say he often remains absent and spends the time at the head office.

Mokhlesur, however, maintains that he attends office regularly.

Hasina’s leadership.

The business leaders highlighted the development activities, especially the mega projects implemented by the incumbent government. They observed that this changed the socioeconomic situation in Bangladesh in the last 14 and a half years, which is unprecedented.

Earlier, Hasina unveiled the report on the outcome of Bangladesh Business Summit 2023.

AL, BNP stick to stances on polls-time govt

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Khosru said they informed the EU delegation that the people will not be able to cast their votes and elect their representatives through an election under the current regime.

“These things are as clear as the daylight. Everyone knows these.

“There’s also no democratic environment here ... There is no level-playing field in Bangladesh, where people have no democratic, constitutional, and political rights. So, a proper atmosphere has to be created first and then the question of dialogue will come.”

The BNP leader said they discussed all the issues, including BNP’s position on the election, their demands, and the current political situation with the EU delegation.

The EU delegation met the AL leaders at a Banani hotel at 12:00pm, where the ruling party told them that holding a free, fair and peaceful election is possible under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina without making any changes to the current structure of the government.

“The European Union wants free, fair and peaceful elections in Bangladesh and we have told them that this is also the commitment of the Awami League,” AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, briefing reporters after the meeting.

“The delegation did not discuss the issue of dialogue. The delegation did not even talk about caretaker government or dissolution of parliament,” said Quader, adding that the EU wanted the election to be held in accordance with the constitution, sovereignty and legal system of Bangladesh.

“Like other countries around the world, Bangladesh will form a polls-time government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina. There is no question of dissolving parliament

or resignation of the government or forming a caretaker government,” he said.

During its meeting, the Jatiya Party told the EU delegation that JP and the country’s people want a free, fair, and neutral election.

“The Awami League and BNP both placed their one-point demand. BNP wants the government to resign while Awami League wants the election to be held under Sheikh Hasina. Our one-point demand is a fair election,” party Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun told reporters after its meeting at a party leader’s house in Gulshan.

The JP also told the EU team that the Election Commission and the government need to play the biggest role for holding a credible election.

Chunnun said JP thinks the current political problem can be resolved through talks and the government should initiate the dialogue.

Jamaat-e-Islami stressed the need for a level-playing field during its meeting with the EU team at the office of the European Union.

“We told them [EU] if the election is held under a neutral non-partisan government, then it is welcome, and if the election is held under this government, then it would not be appropriate for the delegates to come [to observe the election],” he said.

Amar Bangladesh Party, which was founded in 2020 with a group of reformists and activists of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (AB Party), also met the EU delegation yesterday. They told them that free, fair, and credible election is not possible without a non-partisan election-time government.

In a statement on the meeting, the party demanded restoration of the caretaker system to ensure a free, fair, participatory, and acceptable elections.