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More power plants than needed

Consumers ultimately bear the brunt for excess capacity, experts say

ASIFUR RAHMAN

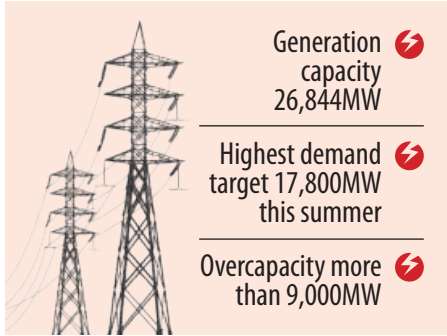
The government is continuing to ramp up the power generation capacity even though the electricity demand did not increase as per projection, putting an additional price burden on consumers, said energy experts.

In the Power System Master Plan (PSMP) 2016, the electricity demand in 2024 was forecasted to be 20,129 megawatts. In reality, the highest projected demand for electricity this year is 17,800MW.

The power generation capacity at present is 26,844 megawatts.

It means there is an overcapacity of over 9,000 MW excluding the captive power generation capacity (electricity generated at the industries by themselves) and off-grid renewable energy that accounted for another 3,223 MW, according to data from the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

Due to the increased generation capacity, the government needs to spend more than the necessary amount



for generation, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

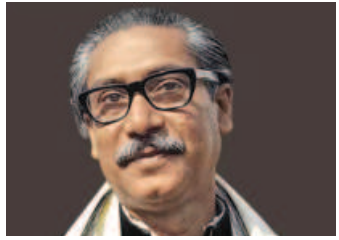
"To meet the higher generation cost, the government needs to adjust the electricity prices repeatedly -- the consumers are not at fault here," he said.

The higher generation cost is due to capacity payments, a fee that must be paid to the power producers for every idle hour.

Globally, the target for reserve margin, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Three labourers work with a strainer to separate large particles from the waste of re-rolling mills, putting their health at risk. The particles would be used in iron factories. The photo was taken outside a re-rolling mill in Narayanganj's Pagla area yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Ever at ease among the masses

Bangabandhu's 104th birthday today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

It was as early as 6:30am on the sunny spring morning of March 17, 1975.

Thousands of people gathered in front of the Dhanmondi 32 residence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Earlier, people would flock to this exact spot to seek the father of the nation's directives during the movements for the country's liberation. But this time, they were all present for their beloved leader's birthday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Govt's overdependence on loans hurting private sector

Says CPD in pre-budget analysis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since the government's annual development programme (ADP) is mostly reliant on loans, the private sector often finds it difficult to borrow from the banking system, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"This dependency is a major structural problem of the budget," said Prof Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the think-tank.

Besides, a significant part of the government spending goes into interest payments, he said.

For years, the government has not been able to finance the ADP without borrowing because of the low revenue collection, he told a media briefing on the budget for the upcoming fiscal year of 2024-25 at the CPD office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

As per a CPD projection, the total revenue collected this fiscal year, 2023-2024, will be Tk 82,000 crore less than the target.

In 2022-23, the revenue collection was

"If anyone manipulates the market and makes money, they should not be just fined. Rather, they should be punished as per laws."
Prof Mustafizur Rahman

Tk 366,000 crore and expenditure Tk 362,000 crore.

That year, the ADP spending was Tk 250,000 crore. Of the sum, only Tk 4,000 crore came from the fiscal surplus while the rest was mobilised in the form of loans the government secured from internal or external sources.

"The government needs to raise revenue collections by expanding the tax net," Prof Mustafizur said. Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

CPD PRESCRIBES 3-POINT RECIPE TO FIX ECONOMY - SEE B1

JAN 7 POLLS

If not for India, others would have interfered

Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said no powerful country could interfere in the January 7 national election as India stood beside Bangladesh.

India did not interfere in Bangladesh's polls but many powerful countries tried to influence the election, he said while addressing the biennial conference of Bangladesh Puja Ujapan Parishad at Dhakeshwari National Temple in the after afternoon.

"We conducted our elections. India didn't interfere. They [India] said let Bangladesh decide on Bangladesh's election. Many powers in the world wanted to play an evil game here. India stood strongly by our side," said Quader, also the road transport and SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

HIJACKING OF MV ABDULLAH

Team engaged to resolve crisis

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

The pirates who hijacked the Bangladeshi bulk career MV Abdullah were yet to contact the ship's owning firm or any third party for ransom as of yesterday.

However, shipping and security experts have said it is not unusual as the pirates may take time to fix the ransom amount and assess the situation.

Two reliable sources told The Daily Star that soon after the hijacking, the ship's UK-based insurer P&I (protection and indemnity) Club engaged a global crisis management firm called Crisis 24 to analyse the situation and chalk out the necessary plans.

Crisis 24 sent a team to Bangladesh immediately after the hijacking, the sources said.

A senior official of the ship's owning firm SR Shipping said the team is doing an assessment and making all necessary preparations regarding the rescue of the ship and the crew.

Mizatul Islam, media adviser of KSRM Group, the parent organisation of SR Shipping, however, said they are not aware of such a team. He said P&I Club is dealing with the whole issue.

He said the pirates were yet to make any contact with the firm or any third party.

"Our firm has taken all required measures to respond as soon as the pirates communicate," he said.

No crew member made contact with the company since Thursday evening either, he added.

Families of several crew members expressed concern over depleting stock of food and drinking water in the ship as pirates are also sharing those with the crew.

The ship had 25 days of food and water when it started its journey from Maputo in Mozambique to Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Students of Jagannath University stage a protest on the campus yesterday demanding justice for fellow student Fairuz Abontika, whose body was found hanging at her house in Cumilla on Friday. PHOTO: STAR

JNU STUDENT'S SUICIDE

Protests rage as asst proctor, classmate held

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday arrested a student of Jagannath University and the institution's assistant proctor in a case filed over instigating the death by suicide of law student Fairuz Sadaf Abontika, whose body was found hanging in her Cumilla home on Friday night.

A team of Kotwali Police Station of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Lalbagh division arrested her classmate Raihan Siddique Amman and Assistant Proctor Din Islam in the capital last night, Badrul Hasan, additional deputy commissioner (Kotwali zone), told The Daily Star.

The arrests were made hours after SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR PARTNERING LOCALLY WITH INTERNATIONAL FIRMS FOR 1,000,000 SQUARE FEET OF EXQUISITE ACADEMIC SPACE

Asian University for Women has engaged an internationally prominent architectural firm to design its next set of academic buildings which will encompass approximately 1,000,000 square feet of exquisite academic space in the middle of a tranquil and heavily-wooded area. It now seeks an executive firm from within Bangladesh to support this significant architectural work.

Interested firms may register their interest by writing to: jessica.klees@asian-university.org

Selected firms will be interviewed at their respective studios on March 25 and 26, 2024.