

## Govt approves price for 40MW power import from Nepal

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh has agreed to buy 40 megawatts of electricity from Nepal at Tk 8.17 per unit, including transmission cost, under a five-year agreement.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase yesterday approved the price, ending a long negotiation over hydropower import from the Himalayan nation via India.

Mahmudul Hossain Khan, secretary (coordination and reforms) of Cabinet Division, said Nepal will get \$0.640 per unit while India will receive 0.0595 rupee as trade margin.

He said the transmission cost that India would get has not been mentioned in the summary of the meeting.

However, a Power Division official said Bangladesh will pay \$0.697 per unit (Tk 8.17), including power price, transmission charge, and trade margin.

He said the transmission charge would vary from time to time.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A 200-metre long queue of students in front of the Sonali Bank branch on Dhaka University campus. The photo was taken on Monday.

## A gruelling 3-day for DU freshers

FROM PAGE 1

Sonali Bank's branch on campus.

Imran went to the branch at the administrative building around 12:30pm, only to find a queue of over 300 people. He could not pay the fee until four hours later.

"I did not even have lunch for fear of failing to make the payment," he said.

Imran then went to his department to submit the pay slip and other documents, but was told to come back the next day "because the documents that I submitted require signatures from the department chair."

Around 9:30am yesterday, he went to the department and collected the papers. He was then asked to submit the papers to the dormitory office.

Upon submitting the papers at the Muktiyodha Ziaur Rahman Hall, he got another pay slip for depositing Tk 2,500 to Janata Bank.

Imran went to the bank's TSC branch around 10:30am and saw a queue stretching to the Bangla Academy gate, around 300 metres from the bank.

After several hours, he deposited the money and rushed back to his dorm and submitted the payment slip, but hundreds of others were still in the queue.

"The dorm office told me to leave the slip and other papers and come back the next day. I spent two days shuttling

between the dorm, faculty, and bank, and hopefully, the process will end tomorrow.

Imran is one of around 6,000 freshers who have been suffering because of the lack of coordination among different offices on campus.

Besides, the mere three-day window, starting Monday, for the admission of such a large number of students is causing the long queue.

The admission committee had earlier requested the department heads to make sure students could pay the dorm and development fees online, but the department heads did not show interest, said a member of the committee.

But three department heads from the social sciences and arts faculties said they were not informed of the matter.

This correspondent talked to at least 50 freshers and their guardians, and all of them expressed disappointment that the payments could not be made online.

A man who came to the campus from Rajshahi for the admission of his daughter said he had been staying at a relative's home for the last few days and spending hours on campus.

"Almost everything is done online these days. But we are having to queue under the sun. The process is

slow, complex and bureaucratic and it is because the officials involved are not too eager to make it simple and fast," said the father who works at a government department and is not willing to disclose his identity.

Nur Jahan, who was in a queue near the administrative building in the afternoon, said it was difficult for her and her daughter to spend hours under the glaring sun. "I let her stand in line and went to get some water for her. We could become sick from this ordeal."

Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, who teaches international relations, said, "When we got admitted in the early 90s, we faced such hassles. But it's 2024, and the admission process has not changed much. It means the university has not progressed institutionally."

Moreover, the administrative officers and employees do not behave well with the students, he said.

Contacted, DU Vice Chancellor Prof ASM Maksud Kamal said there is a lack of coordination between the admission authorities and heads of departments and institutes.

"The university has started making the process online, but I am not sure why the entire system is not online. I took charge a few months ago and I hope that this problem will not be there next year," he said.

## Hunter Biden found guilty on gun charges

FROM PAGE 1

Trump, convicted on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to cover up a sex scandal, accuses Democrats of pursuing that case and three other criminal prosecutions to prevent him from regaining power in his rematch with Joe Biden.

Congressional Democrats have pointed to cases including the Hunter Biden prosecution as evidence that Joe Biden is not using the justice system for political or personal ends, having said last week he would not pardon his son if convicted.

The Hunter Biden case was brought by US Department of Justice Special Counsel David Weiss, a Trump appointee.

Weiss has also charged Hunter Biden

with three felony and six misdemeanor tax offenses in California, alleging he failed to pay \$1.4 million in taxes between 2016 and 2019 while spending millions on drugs, escorts, exotic cars and other high-ticket items.

Hunter Biden has pleaded not guilty to those charges. A trial is scheduled for September 5 in Los Angeles.

The Delaware trial included prosecution testimony by Hunter Biden's ex-wife, former girlfriend and sister-in-law, who gave firsthand accounts of his spiraling addiction in the weeks before and after he bought the gun in October 2018.

Prosecutors also showed text messages, photos and bank records that they said showed Biden was deep in the throes of addiction when he bought the

gun and knowingly broke the law by answering "no" to being a drug user on a government screening form.

Biden's lawyers sought to show he was not using drugs when he bought the gun and did not intend to deceive because he didn't consider himself a drug user when he filled out the form.

The defense called Hunter Biden's daughter, Naomi Biden, who testified that her father seemed to be doing well when she saw him shortly before and after he bought the gun.

The sentencing guidelines for the gun-related charges against Biden are 15 to 21 months, but legal experts say defendants in similar cases often get shorter sentences and are less likely to be incarcerated if they abide by the terms of their pretrial release.

## Not all is lost for Tigers

FROM PAGE 12

event came 17 years ago when they beat hosts West Indies in their tournament opener – the only time they beat a Test-playing nation before the Sri Lanka win in this edition – in the inaugural edition of the T20 World Cup in 2007.

However, things are looking positive for the Tigers this time around. The Najmul Hossain Shantol-led Bangladesh, who were rocked just ahead of the T20 World Cup as they hit the nadir in the shortest format following a shocking 2-1 series defeat against the USA, have made a

commendable turnaround result-wise. Thanks to a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their tournament opener and a closely fought game against the Proteas, Bangladesh are now second in the five-team group. With two points in two matches, Bangladesh remain just behind group leaders South Africa, who have all but confirmed their spot in the Super Eight with six points from three wins in as many games.

Bangladesh, who also have a positive net run rate of 0.075, will now need to do what is expected of them in the final two group games – beat associate

nations the Netherlands and Nepal. Meanwhile, things could get a bit tricky for Bangladesh if they go on to lose any one of their last two group-stage games as then the Tigers will have to depend on the results of some other fixtures going in their favour.

Shrugging off the close defeat they suffered against the Proteas, the Tigers will now need to grind harder and adapt to the different conditions in the Caribbean in order to avert any upset in their upcoming matches and have a smooth sailing into the Super Eight.

## 1 dies, 40 fall ill after inhaling toxic gas

FROM PAGE 1

struggled to tackle the situation. We gave first aid to many while some were admitted. Four are still undergoing treatment at the hospital," said a hospital staff.

Imran Ali, manager of Shyamoli Housing (2nd Project), said, "My wife, two children and I were sleeping in our tin-roofed home when suddenly, we started having difficulty breathing and our eyes started burning."

"We rushed to the lane in front of our home where many people had already gathered. Many were vomiting while some complained of palpitations," said Imran, who along with his family, had treatment at SSMCH.

Abdur Rahman Tuhin, deputy manager of Smart Technology BD Ltd, said all 20 staff members of their firm lived near the scrap shop, and they all fell ill.

"Deceased Kabir is a cousin of one of the staffer. Kabir stayed with him on Monday night. He fell seriously ill and later died," Tuhin added.

Adabar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman, said Kalu, the owner of the metal scrap shop, had fled the area after the incident, but police detained him in the morning.

"Kalu told police that he bought a very old gas cylinder a few days ago. When workers were trying to break open the cylinder at the shop early yesterday, it leaked, causing the gas inside to spread to the surrounding area."

The OC said experts at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) were examining the cylinder to determine the type of gas.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Fakhruddin, senior station officer at the Mohammadpur Fire Service and

Civil Defence, said they reached the spot around 4:00am when the gas was still leaking from the 25-30kg cylinder.

"It was ammonia gas," said the officer, who has training and experience in working with toxic gases.

### PM likely to visit

FROM PAGE 1

Her China visit was underscored after Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen met her recently. Wen reiterated China's commitment to boosting investment in Bangladesh and enhancing bilateral relations.

Hasina is likely to join the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, which will begin on September 10. She is also likely to attend the BIMSTEC summit in Thailand in October, according to diplomatic sources.

## Fear forced Hindus to sell their land to ex-IGP

FROM PAGE 1

"About four years ago, Taimur asked us to sell the land. As we refused, he said that Benazir had already acquired all the surrounding land and would make sure that we cannot access our land," Swarup told The Daily Star.

Eventually, they had to sell their three bighas of land for Tk 3.8 lakh per bigha, nearly half the market price. With the little money shared among his three brothers, there was no way they could buy any farmland elsewhere.

Another victim of Benazir's allegedly forceful land acquisition is Swarasi Roy, 60, from Borokhola village in Rajoir of Madaripur. Having forced to give up her 31 decimals of land, her only livelihood means, she now works at other people's homes to earn a living.

Two to three years ago, Taimur said she was not the real owner of the land and threatened that Benazir would take it anyway. Eventually, she caved, and had to accept only Tk 2 lakh for the land she bought 20 years ago with loan money and the proceeds from the sale of a cow.

She and her day labourer son now live on a five-decimal homestead, their last remaining piece of land.

Others, including Apurba Maitra of Patikelbari village of Gopalganj, were targeted with clever tactics.

The man had 10 kathas of farmland in two plots, growing rice on one plot and watermelon on the other.

Suddenly one day, Benazir's men laid large pipes through his land to sand-fill the ex-IGP's Savanna Eco Resort and Natural Park project site. The plot

lakh after Benazir's men filled it up with sand. What would I do back home? So I came to India," he told The Daily Star by phone from Thakurnagar, West Bengal.

**RAB POLICE MEMBERS AT RESORT** Benazir engaged members of the police and Rab for his personal project as well. Locals said that until he went into retirement in 2022, several police and Rab officials were tasked with supervising the construction work of the resort.

Two sub-inspectors – Bachchu Miah and Shahjalal – were seen at the site most of the time by locals.

Benazir's then staff officer Masud Alam, who later became Madaripur police super, also visited the site frequently, sometimes even negotiating the land purchase, locals said.

Rab Additional SP Shaheda Sultana would also visit the site.

**NO ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE** Savanna Eco Resort and Natural Park was built on a portion of the purchased land at Machkandi and Bairagitul villages. There are several upscale cottages having architecture replicating the Masai houses of the African Savanna.

For land development at the site, Benazir's men dug up a huge pond spanning about 30 bighas of land in Bairagitul and brought the sand and soil from there, locals said.

According to its website, there is a farm within the resort, several ponds, a swimming pool, boat ride facilities, play zones for children, a country club, a helipad and other facilities.

Masud Alam denied his involvement in the project.

"Never in my life did I commit any misdemeanor. After joining as the SP of Madaripur, I never visited the area where Benazir sir's project is located. I did not go there even if it was necessary," he said.

Rab Additional SP Shaheda did not respond to our calls and text messages over the last one week.

**AN OFFENCE** Former IGP Nur Mohammad said senior police officials cannot engage members of the police for their personal or business work.

"That would be an offence," he told The Daily Star.

Government officials can buy land, but in keeping with the regulations and with legitimate income. In Benazir's case, it must be seen whether this was followed and what is the source of the money, said Nur, who was an Awami League lawmaker in the previous term.

Benazir did not respond to our calls and text messages on WhatsApp.

In a Facebook live on April 20, Benazir refuted the allegations of buying land through intimidation.

"Purchasing land through coercion and intimidation is impractical as it is Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's home district and the project area is adjacent to her constituency," he said.

In addition to his land, the ACC has so far discovered that Benazir and his family have shares in 19 companies, two savings certificates, 22 bank accounts and 10 BO accounts.

All his bank accounts have since been frozen, although ACC investigators say a large sum of money has been withdrawn by the time the freeze order could take effect.

## Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman

FROM PAGE 1

brigade, School of Infantry and Tactics and Army Headquarters.

He commanded an infantry battalion, the only independent infantry brigade of Bangladesh Army, and an infantry division.

Waker was a distinguished instructor at School of Infantry and Tactics, Non-commissioned Officers' Academy and Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations Training. He also served as the military secretary at the Army Headquarters.

Prior to taking over as the CGS of Bangladesh Army, Waker had been the principal staff officer of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Armed Forces Division under the Prime Minister's Office.

He is an alumnus of the Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur and Joint Services Command and Staff College, UK.

He has a master's degree in defence studies from National University of Bangladesh. He also completed Master of Arts in defence studies from King's College, University of London.

As the head of the Armed Forces Division, Waker was directly involved in the UN Peacekeeping Affairs of Bangladesh Armed Forces.

He was also nominated as a Gender Champion and Gender Advocate of Bangladesh for UN Peacekeeping Affairs.

As the principal staff officer, he also headed the Bangladesh National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention as chairman.

Under the Blue Helmet, Waker completed two tours of duty as observer and staff in UNAVEM (Angola) and UNMIL (Liberia) respectively.

He had the rare privilege of commanding the National Victory Day Parade for three consecutive times.

He was awarded the coveted "Army Medal of Glory" (SGP) and "Extraordinary Service Medal" (OSP) for his remarkable contributions to the modernisation of the army.

Waker was a keynote speaker in different seminars and symposiums at home and abroad.



Swarup Maitra Swaraswati Roy Biplob Baul Tarun Baul