

PHULBARI COAL MINE

'Tk 9,000cr loss if AEC extracts coal'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will count a total loss of Tk 9,000 crore excluding the loss of life and damage to environment if it allows Asia Energy Corporation (AEC) to extract coal from Phulbari mine.

This was stated by Prof Anu Muhammad, a noted economist of Jahangirnagar University (JU), in a cost-benefit study on Phulbari coal mine at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar titled 'Open pit mining: Its consequences on environment and economy' was organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon at the National Press Club in the city.

Prof Anu Muhammad said during 30 years of coal extraction by the AEC, the country would incur a damage of Tk 54,000 crore, while according to the calculation of the AEC, the country would receive only Tk 45,000 crore in royalty and tax.

Dr Mushfiqur Rahman of AEC however said the information that the JU professor presented in the study is not correct which is why it led to such conclusion of loss on Bangladesh's part.

But Prof Anu Muhammad said 95 percent information was gathered from the AEC documents.

The AEC has already completed the feasibility and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) of Phulbari coal mine and is now asking the government for giving approval to open pit mining.

If approved, the company can go for coal production in 2009.

Prof Anu Muhammad said Asia Energy would make a profit of Tk 141,000 crore from the sale of 572 million tonnes of coal against an investment of Tk 79,200 crore.

The company will make yearly profit of Tk 5,000 crore while Bangladesh will count yearly loss of Tk 300 crore, he said.

Going even further the JU professor said the loss from Phulbari coal mine will be equal to total loss caused by the disasters in Tengratila and Magurchhara gas fields and Kaptai Hydroelectric Project.

"If Asia Energy gets government approval, it will leave the country with a huge amount of profit turning the green and lively Phulbari into a barren land. The fate of the

people of the area will be uncertain," he added.

He also alleged that Asia energy in its first document said it will invest Tk 9250 crore, but a few days later it said it has to invest Tk 79,200 crore, which is 856 percent more from the first amount.

Prof Anu Muhammad said about 50,000 people will have to be removed from 10,000 hectares of agricultural land in Phulbari and another one lakh people will be affected, as the underground water above the coal layer will have to be pumped out causing damage to agricultural land in the area.

Mushfiqur Rahman justified the coal extraction saying that an additional 500MW electricity could be produced using the coal, which will help reduce poverty in a big way.

Besides, it would create 3000 employment opportunities in 30 years, he added.

Prof Anu Muhammad said the AEC documents did not mention how many people will lose their livelihood, rather these just showed the prospects, as the projects very profitable for them.

Prof Nazrul Islam of Dhaka University suggested the AEC to

respond properly to the claims of Prof Anu Muhammad and said the government should seriously look into the issue before signing any production contract.

Earlier in another session of the seminar on the prospect of Bangladesh's energy sector and alternatives, the economists and energy experts suggested the government to prepare a comprehensive energy policy for the country, go for more exploration, develop energy technology, and extract coal to meet the extensive energy demands.

Prof Nurul Islam of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, former chairman of Power Development Board Nuruddin M Kamal, Fellow of American Nuclear Society Dr Ahmed Badruzzaman, Dr Badrul Imam and Dr Mahbuba Nasrin of UD, Dr Khalequzzaman of Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, Communist Party of Bangladesh leader Manjular Hsain Khan and Workers' Party leader Haider Akbar Khan Rono also spoke at the seminar moderated by Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud.

Mirpur mosque khadem arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested the khadem (caretaker) of a Mirpur mosque in the capital and seized a pistol from the mosque's safe.

Raiding the Rinekhola Mosque at around 1:30pm, Rab members seized a USA-made pistol and seven bullets, and arrested khadem Ekramul Islam Milon.

Following information from Ebaidul and Quaiyum, arrested in connection with the murder of businessman Aftab Uddin in Mirpur, a Rab team seized the firearm from the safe of the mosque, Lt Col Badrul Hsain of Rab-4 said.

Fish trader succumbs to injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The injured fish trader, who was chopped by his son and divorced wife on Tuesday in the city, succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Momin Ullah, 45, went to East Islambagh to bring furniture from the residence of Banu Begum, 35, who was divorced nearly one and a half years ago.

As Momin went to her house, Banu and her son Jony, 20, beat him severely with stick and chopped him with machete, police said.

The injured Momin was taken to DMCH where he was undergoing treatment.

Abul Hossain, elder brother of Momin, filed a case against Banu and her son with Lalbagh Police Station.

Police arrested Banu while Jony was absconding.

3 JMB men on 14-day remand in two cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants arrested by the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Uttara on Thursday night and Friday were placed on 14-day remand in two cases.

Uttara police produced Wahidul Islam alias Habib of Gopalganj, Shaiful Islam alias Russell of Tangail and Hafez alias Ibrahim of Tangail before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka with a petition for 10-day remand for each in each case.

The court, however, granted a seven-day remand in each of the two cases filed with Uttara Police Station on Friday night under Arms Act and Explosive Substance Act.

The Rab members arrested Wahidul and Russell busting three militant dens at Moinerteak and Ashkona on Thursday night and Friday and recovered huge firearms and bomb and grenade-making materials.

Besides, the Rab members raided several places yesterday, but could not arrest anyone or recover any arms and ammunition.

5 agitating CUFL workers injured in police action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least five people were injured yesterday morning at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) area as police clubbed a demonstration of workers who were demanding wages and other benefits from their contractor.

A police havidler was also injured at the time and angry workers set fire to a police motor-bike.

Sources said hundreds of casual workers started gathering from early morning yesterday in front of the CUFL gate and staged a sit-in demanding wages, bonuses and other dues from their contractor M/S Nabi Hossain & Company, which supplies labourers on contract-basis to the CUFL.

Taking side with the contractor, the on-duty police tried to disperse the workers and at one stage charged baton on them indiscriminately, they said.

The agitating workers became furious following the police action, pelted bricks on them and set a motorbike ablaze. Police fired four blank shots at the time.

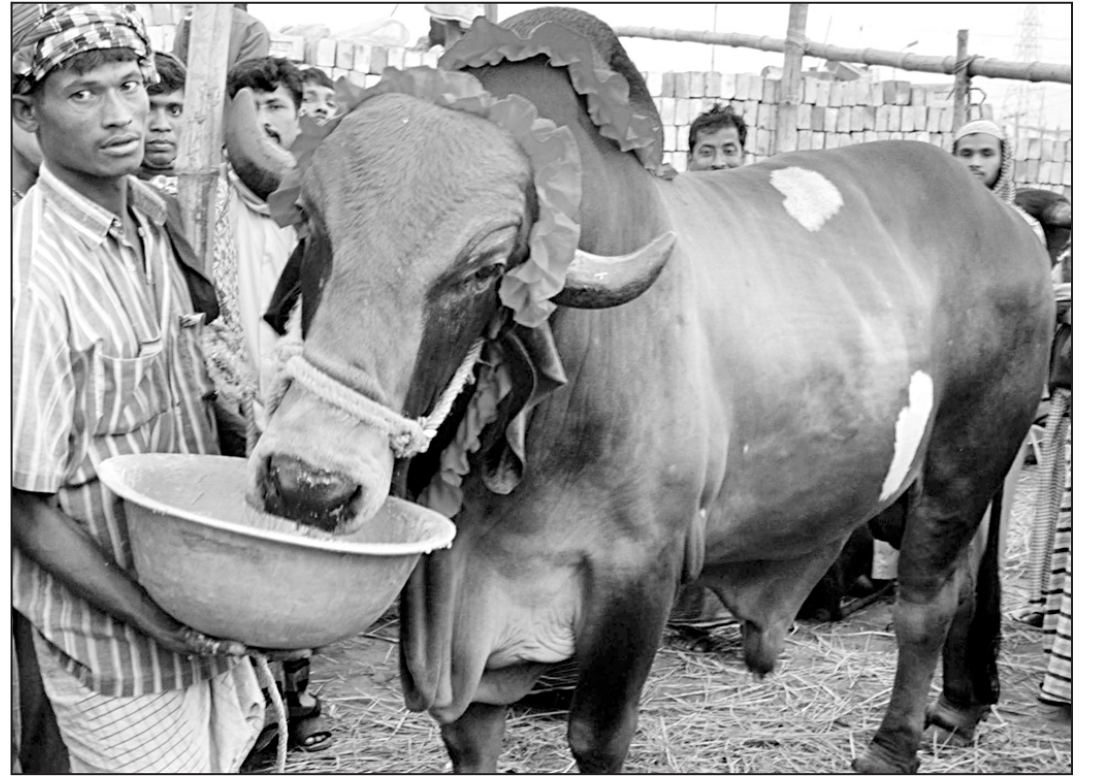
Workers Imon, Nizam and Khokan, and Havidler Abdus Sattar were slightly injured in the incident.

"We work at different CUFL projects on the basis of Tk 60 wage per day but our contractor has been depriving us of our salaries and other dues for last two months," alleged workers.

They alleged that police has picked up some workers from the scene.

An official of the CUFL said they had nothing to do with the incident. "It is a matter that lies solely between the contractor and the casual workers," he said.

Police filed a case in this connection.



This bull brought from Kushtia has drawn attention of many buyers at Gabtoli cattle market in the city. Its owner has set a price of Tk 5 lakh for the bull.

AL to probe irregularities in health sector if voted to power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Accusing the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government of damaging the country's health sector through massive political

appointment, leaders of the main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said they would investigate all irregularities and ensure justice to them who were deprived of their rights, if voted to power again.

"Doctors and medical staffs who did not get justice under the alliance government, would be given promotion and other facilities," said Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, former health minister, at a press conference at Dhanmondi AL office.

Selim, also a presidium member of the AL, said the alliance government has politicised the health sector and this is why the countrymen are not getting proper healthcare facilities.

"Medical officers have been promoted to the rank of professor politically in last four years of the coalition government," he added.

Selim also accused the prime minister of making the countrymen confused by telling lies about the development in health sector at the council meeting of Bangladesh Medical Association recently.

All the developments in the health sector were done during the AL regime, he said, adding that the alliance government is only implementing the earlier projects and proposals of the AL government.

Selim also ruled out the possibility of fulfilling the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in health sector due to alliance government's malpractice.

He said the AL government had introduced the first ever national health policy on the basis of the opinion of people from all walks of life with a view to making the

health sector people-oriented.

But the present government is dilly-dallying in the name of reviewing instead of implementing the policy, he alleged and demanded of the government to accept and implement the policy immediately.

Selim also accused the government of damaging the healthcare facilities at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) by appointing as well as posting doctors on the basis of political ground.

"Now the number of doctors at BSMMU is more than the patients," he added.

AL leaders Syeda Zahora Tajuddin, Obaidul Quader, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdur Rahman, BM Mozammel Haque, Abdul Mannan Khan, Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad President Dr Ruhul Haq and General Secretary Dr Iqbal Arslan were present at the press conference.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD TO IO

Asma Kibria stunned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, widow of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, was stunned yesterday after hearing the news that two investigation officers of Kibria murder case have been rewarded with President Police Award.

In a statement she said, "We all have observed how the police, administration and judiciary were used to hide the killers of Kibria."

The police officers have been given the award for 'so called' investigation whose ultimate result was zero, she added.

"So, are these awards given only for fulfilling the desire of the government?" asked Asma.

She said the awards have once again proved that the government is making farce with the Kibria murder case.

She also condemned the government decision.

Bangladesh grateful to Sheikh Maktoum

Saifur tells UAE leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman Friday visited Dubai to convey the condolences of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the sad demise of Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the vice president and prime minister of UAE and ruler of Dubai.

Saifur Rahman, who reached Dubai from Dhaka early on the day, met Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the newly appointed vice president and prime minister of UAE and the ruler of Dubai and the members of the Royal family in the afternoon.

During the meeting, the finance minister expressed to him his heartfelt condolences at the sad demise of Sheikh Maktoum.

He said Sheikh Maktoum, the late ruler of Dubai, was literally the father of the Emirate of Dubai. "It was he who transformed Dubai into a very modern and vibrant Emirate."

He also said that Bangladesh is enormously grateful to late Sheikh Maktoum for his compassionate outlook, especially on the employment of a large number of Bangladeshis for the development of Dubai.

Saifur Rahman congratulated Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, for his appointment as the vice president and prime minister of UAE and ruler of Dubai.

He extended an invitation to Sheikh Mohammad to visit Bangladesh and handed him a letter from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

While receiving the letter of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mohammad said Bangladesh and UAE enjoy excellent brotherly and friendly relations, which have steadily grown over the years.

He thanked Saifur Rahman for visiting his family at a time of great distress.

Sheikh Mohammad asked Saifur Rahman to convey his thanks and appreciation to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for her letter and concern at the sad demise of his older brother.

The Finance Minister returned home Saturday morning.

Share experiences, expertise to tackle disaster

Speakers urge nations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh successfully handled a number of devastating natural disasters in recent years and became a model for other disaster-prone countries, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

They also underscored the need to share experiences and expertise among the nations in order to effectively tackle such natural calamities as Katrina, tsunami and major earthquake.

They observed that even the USA, the richest country in the world, failed to respond properly to Hurricane Katrina due to lack of coordination and communication facilities.

Lack of community feeling and racial perception are responsible for the suffering of the people affected by Katrina, they pointed out.

On the other hand, people in Bangladesh are community-spirited and homogeneous and they do not hesitate to help each other during any disaster, they observed.

They said community feeling, cyclone centres and readiness of volunteers in evacuating people, particularly in coastal areas, helped minimise the loss of life and property in Bangladesh.

Other disaster-prone countries can share Bangladesh's experience in this regard and use the expertise in handling the aftermath of any disaster, they said.

"We must learn from each other's experience and make concerted efforts to deal with post-disaster situation," said Foreign Minister M Morshed



Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan speaks at a seminar on 'Disaster Management in Comparative Perspective: The Katrina Experience' at the WVA auditorium in the city yesterday.

Khan while speaking as the chief guest.

"Our cyclone preparedness programme, post-flood rehabilitation activities and early warning system in coastal areas based on community participation are important lessons for those in a comparative milieu," he said.

CDRB Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly presided over the seminar while former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hsain Chowdhury, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof M Asaduzzaman, President of American Institute of Bangladesh Studies Dr Guy Welbon, Prof Khasruzzaman Chowdhury, Bimal Kanti Pal, Ashrafuddin and Shamsul Alam took part in the discussion.

programme," he added.

The Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) organised the daylong seminar at the Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) auditorium in the city.

CDRB Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly presided over the seminar while former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hsain Chowdhury, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof M Asaduzzaman, President of American Institute of Bangladesh Studies Dr Guy Welbon, Prof Khasruzzaman Chowdhury, Bimal Kanti Pal, Ashrafuddin and Shamsul Alam took part in the discussion.

"A global networking system dedicated to sharing of information and common resource pool in the form of trained manpower or equipment could be a good answer to a global or regional disaster management

'Take steps to remove waterlogging in S-region'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a conference yesterday urged the government to take necessary steps to remove waterlogging from villages in the southern region of the country.

Nearly 100 villages remain submerged as the Water Development Board has built some embankments without considering the long-term environmental impacts, they said and blamed the wrong policy and whimsical decision of some engineers for it.

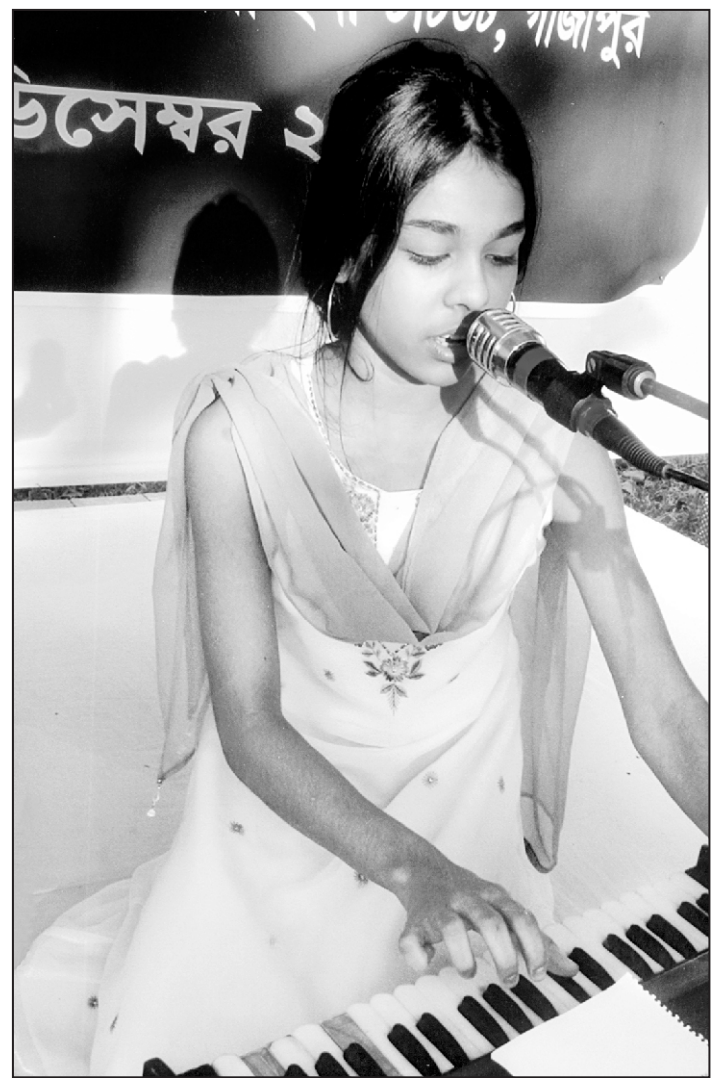
The Biodiversity Research Group of Bangladesh (BRBG) organised the conference on 'Impact of waterlogging on the biodiversity' at a city hotel.

The speakers said the government's wrong decision to build the embankments have caused enormous suffering to local people.

They called on the government agencies to talk with the local people about how to improve the situation in the southern region.

Prof Dr AM Faruque, vice-chancellor of Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University, attended the conference as the chief guest while Maolana Md Shakhawat Hossain, chairman of Masud Foundation, was present as special guest.

BRBG Chairman Prof Badrul Amin Bhuiyan presided over the session.



Proma, an amateur singer, performs Rabindra Sangeet at a cultural function of Bangladesh Public Relations Association at Gazipur recently. The Association organised the function at its annual picnic. About 100 public relations professionals working in government, semi-government and private organisations, attended the picnic.

Apollo Hospitals hygiene standard satisfactory: Mobile court

A team of mobile court headed by Magistrate Md Abul Hasan along with Dhaka City Corporation officials suddenly visited Apollo Hospitals Dhaka yesterday, says a press release.

The team inspected the whole hospital including its kitchen and cleanliness system and expressed satisfaction over the hygiene standard of the hospital.

DHAKA TODAY

Human chain

Bangla Bhasha Surakkha Andolon, a movement to protect Bangla language, will form a human chain demanding not to write Bangla in Roman letters and to stop use of distorted Bangla in advertisements. Venue: Section 10 Circle, Mirpur. Time: 11:00am.

Memorial book

Ivy Rahman Parishad will unveil the cover of a memorial book titled 'Ivy Rahman in hearts'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Obituary

Amena Nazreen Lipl, daughter of Haider Ali Sardar, assistant secretary (Retd) for Ministry of Establishment, passed away on Friday at the age of 33, says a press release.

Nazreen, wife of Shahin Miah, manager BETS, left behind her husband and two infants.

Qurankhwani will be held at her house at 23/3 Shukrabad, Dhanmondi after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Relatives and friends have been requested to attend the Qurankhwani to pray for her departed soul.

Sarkar Hasanul Islam

Dr Squadron Leader Sarkar Hasanul Islam died of heart attack at his work place in Chittagong yesterday, says a press release.

He left behind his wife and two sons. He will be buried at the Air Force Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at old Air Force Jama mosque after Asr prayers today.



Noted singer Kiron Chandra sings baul song at the Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Light to moderate fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said, predicting night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 28.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.1 degree Celsius at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:28pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.4	14.0	80	71
Chittagong	27.9	15.3	69	77
Rajshahi	20.7	10.7	95	85
Khulna	24.0	13.5	87	78
Barisal	25.0	12.0	89	79
Sylhet	26.1	14.0	70	68
Cox's Bazar	28.0	17.5	79	72