

Barapukuria coal mine Repeated extension of project period to cost add Tk 500cr

UNB, Dinajpur

Frequent extension of project period will evidently cost the government an additional Tk 500 crore in implementing the Barapukuria Coal Mine Project in the district.

A senior official of the project said repeated devaluation of the taka against the dollar in last few years would also raise the project cost.

To extract coal from the Barapukuria coal mine, the government signed an agreement of 227.52 million US dollars with three Chinese companies -- China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation, China Overseas Coal Development and China Machine Building International Corporation -- in June 1994.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had inaugurated the project work in that year.

According to a preliminary estimate, coal worth Tk 22,400 crore could be extracted from the mine

helping the government save foreign currency amounting to Tk 203 crore a year.

The project was scheduled to be completed in June 2000, but its implementation period was extended thrice due to financial constraint. However, the project work is now progressing fairly well and likely to be completed in two years.

Upon completion of the project, some 3,300 metric tons of bituminous coal can be extracted from the mine every day for the next 70 years.

According to officials concerned, 83 per cent of the extracted coal will be used in a proposed power plant near the mine while the rest 17 per cent for industrial and household purposes.

Although the Tk 1,633 crore power plant project could not yet be kicked off, construction of dormitories for its employees is nearing completion.

School girl raped in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A school girl was raped by a young man at Kshimala village under Mohonpur Upazila in the district on Thursday night.

Police quoting statement of the victim said one Rafiqul Islam, 26, of the same village, entered the girl's room at about 9:30 pm when she was alone. Rafiqul raped her at gunpoint.

As the girl raised an alarm, her family members caught the alleged rapist. But later, his relatives snatched him away.

A case was filed with Mohonpur police in this connection.

Two hacked to death in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A gang of armed terrorists hacked two persons to death at Muladuli under Ishwardi thana in Pabna late Thursday night.

The victims were identified as Mannan, 32, and Tazim, 35.

Police said an unidentified gang took both men to Muladuli rail line late Thursday night and injured them seriously using sharp weapons. They died on their way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Police suspected 'Joinal Group' to have committed the murders of previous enmity, adding that both victims were accused in a dacoity case.

None could be arrested in this connection.

Hasina: US

FROM PAGE 1

and meet party workers and supporters.

Hasina will undertake a trip to Washington from Miami at a convenient time to meet some US officials, the source said.

Her assistant private secretary Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury and special assistant Najib Ahmed are accompanying the Awami League president and former PM, who is scheduled to return home on January 3.

Contagious TB

FROM PAGE 1

(HPSP)," added Baki.

The World Health Organisation recommends the Directly Observed Treatment Strategy (DOTS) to control TB and prevent multi-drug resistance. The DOTS strategy entails increased commitment, effective diagnosis, standard treatment, secure drug supply and systematic monitoring and supervision.

"One of the main reasons for our failure to reach the target is (lack of) monitoring and supervision. As eight national consultants are missing since last June, so the rate may further decline in the coming months," said a source at the Directorate of Health on condition of anonymity yesterday.

He also said, "The key to success lies with the civil surgeons but they don't hold regular meeting to discuss the constraints and so the lapse. At field level, health workers are not educating people about the spread of TB and no case reporting is recorded."

Considering its seriousness, Bangladesh launched the National TB Control Programme (NTP) in 1993 and by 2000 nearly 95 per cent of the population is brought under its coverage. To facilitate the detection, fully equipped laboratory has been set up in almost each of the 460 upazilas.

AL concerned at 'infringement' on people's rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders yesterday expressed deep concern at the "unabated infringement" on peoples' democratic rights in the country.

Talking to newsmen at an Iftar party at the party's election office in the city, the leaders feared that the normal political environment would be disturbed if the situation does not improve.

AL Presidium member Abdul Jaill said, no matter what had happened in the last parliamentary polls, people expect that the new government would at least show restraint and democratic attitude.

"But they (government) are not allowing Awami League to hold rallies. They have established a reign of terror in the country. The number of rape incidents in the last one and half months has already surpassed that during the War of Liberation," said Jaill.

He noted that terrorists belonging to the ruling alliance are continuing repression on members of the minority community, forcing many of them to leave their motherland.

Jaill referred to the incidents of attack on police stations and residences of AL lawmakers just for filing general diaries after the government repealed the special law that gave security to AL President Sheikh Hasina.

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury and Abdul Mannan also spoke at the Iftar party, largely attended by party leaders and newsmen.

Left-leaning 11-party alliance has expressed deep concern over violence and price hike of essentials.

The government has totally failed to ensure security of the people, leaders of the alliance told a meeting here yesterday with Rashed Khan Menon in the chair.

Among others, Alhaj Abdus Samad, Monjurul Ahsan Khan, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Dilip Barua, Bazlur Rashid Firoj and Mahmudur Rahman Babu were present in the meeting.

The leftist leaders said the government did not take necessary steps to bring back confidence in the minds of the minority Hindus and to stop torture and repression on them.

They also criticised the government for its move to increase the price of gas and electricity when the prices of other essentials were on the rise.

Referring to the government's repressive action against its political rivals they said the country is being pushed into an anarchic situation.

The 11-party leaders leave here for Chittagong today on a two-day visit to oversee sufferings of the Hindu people who came under attack in different areas.

Heavy rush

FROM PAGE 1

Chawk market.

Meanwhile, about a dozen female security guards have been deployed at Eastern Plaza market for the first time this year because of increasing number of women pick pockets.

"Every day, some women pick-pockets are caught at the market. They move wearing 'borqa' (veil) and try to pickpocket women shoppers, said one security guard.

Gangsters fight

FROM PAGE 1

A member of a terrorist gang said, "Police always get money from rival groups in different areas of the city. So they can not go against us".

Babul Miah, 35, was killed in a crossfire during a clash between two rival gangs of drug peddlers at Agargaon on November 4.

On the following day, a garage employee -- Mohammad Rakib -- was killed in a stray bullet at Ring Road at Mohammadpur when terrorists shot at the owner of the garage as he refused to pay them toll.

A couple was killed in a crossfire at Khilji Road at Mohammadpur on November 18. Kamal Hossain, 55, a Customs employee and his wife Sultani Begum, 48, were killed during a gunfight between two local gangs led by Nabi and Razzak. The couple was returning home after visiting their ailing relative at the Suhrawardi hospital.

Vendor Moklesur Rahman and former garments factory employee Mesher Ali were killed when terrorist gangs exchanged shots at Shyampur and Maddy Badda respectively.

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 12

General Hospital.

UNB Manikganj correspondent adds: One person was killed and 15 others injured in a road mishap at Bathli on the Dhaka-Aricha highway.

The accident occurred at dawn when two trucks collided head-on in dense fog covering the highway. The injured were hospitalised.

Lankan polls

FROM PAGE 12

ernment's defeat.

The election commissioner and political parties agreed there will be no repolling in areas where blockades, shootings, explosions and ballot stealing had kept voters from the polls, and 61 people had died since the campaign began Oct 21. Independent Sri Lankan monitors had demanded revoting.

"There were serious incidents of violence that curtailed the freedom of the people to vote," said John Cushman, head of a European Union observer mission.

He criticised the army's decision to close roads in the northeast that prevented up to 130,000 minority Tamils from casting their ballots. The military said it feared Tamil rebels would infiltrate with the would-be voters and disrupt the elections.

"It would seem there is no justification for this action and serious questions have to be raised about the political motivation behind it," Cushman told a news conference. He said there was open ballot stuffing by people who identified themselves as members of the governing Peoples' Alliance.

"The culture of violence must stop for democracy to flourish in Sri Lanka," he said.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offering munajat at an iftar party at Razarbagh Police Lines yesterday.

Kandahar falls, Omar flees

FROM PAGE 1

spokesman for the militarily dominant Northern Alliance, told Reuters.

"Osama was not in Tora Bora during the past days of fighting and if he had been, he has probably slipped into Pakistan."

Habeel said Arab family members, including women, had been captured, along with weapons and vehicles.

In the desert around Kandahar, US Marines searched for Taliban stragglers. On Thursday night, one "hunter-killer" Marine patrol confronted a three-car enemy convoy and responded by calling in air and ground attacks, according to AP.

Seven Taliban and al-Qaida fighters were killed in what was the Marines' first offensive ground action in Afghanistan, said a Marine spokesman, Cat. David Romley. No US personnel were injured.

From a camp outside of Kandahar, Karzai confirmed that chaos had broken out in several areas within Kandahar as a result of Taliban flight. He said there was no fighting between rival forces.

However, frightened residents reported skirmishes among armed gangs. Speaking by satellite telephone from the city, one resident said armed unidentified men had set up checkpoints on some main roads.

"It's quite chaotic," said the resident, who requested anonymity. "We are scared that the situation could really get out of hand."

Karzai accused Taliban fighters of backing out of a deal to hand in weapons to another opposition tribal leader.

"The Taliban ran away with their weapons," he said. "Basically they have just run away. The leaders and the soldiers. They have all run away from the city."

"All of last night they were fleeing the city. Just running away. I thought they were coming here to attack us. But they weren't. They were running away."

Some residents, however, maintained that weapons were handed in by departing Taliban fighters.

Karzai said Omar's whereabouts were unknown.

"But, of course, I want to arrest him," he said. "I have given him every chance to denounce terrorism and now the time has run out. He is an absconder, a fugitive from justice."

After a surrender deal had been reached with the Taliban on Thursday, Karzai refused to say what would happen to Omar. That drew a sharp response from US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who said the United States would oppose any deal allowing Omar to go free.

"If you're asking, would an arrangement with Omar, where he could, 'live in dignity' in the Kandahar area or some place in Afghanistan be consistent with what I have said, the answer is no," Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference Thursday.

Rumsfeld said Washington was prepared to re-evaluate its relationship with anti-Taliban groups who allowed Omar to escape punishment.

"At some point in the reasonable future ... he will be in in the hands of

the opposition. And, at that point, we hope to be able to cooperate to bringing him to justice," said Kenton Keith, a spokesman for the US-led coalition in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital.

Karzai said yesterday he has set up a tribal commission that will go to Kandahar to take control of the city with a day or so.

Taliban personnel were returning to their homes, said Mullah Mohammed Khaqzar, who defected from the Taliban to join the opposition northern alliance.

He said the Arabs of al-Qaida, as well as Chechens and Pakistanis who have been fighting with the Taliban, would likely try to escape north to Zabul province and into neighbouring Pakistan or northwest toward Bagram in neighbouring Helmand province where they could hide in the towering mountain peaks.

Meanwhile, there were rising tensions among rival opposition factions, some of which complain that they have been sidelined by Karzai.

Forces loyal to former Kandahar governor Gul Agha remained southeast of Kandahar and had not decided whether to enter the city or withdraw toward Pakistan so as to avoid a possible confrontation with Karzai supporters.

"We've been deceived by Hamid Karzai, who didn't consult with us," said Khalid Pashtun, a spokesman for the Agha faction.

Three murdered in city

FROM PAGE 1

would be back after meeting his friend Babu who stays nearby. But he did not return.

His body was later found in a pool of blood at the Bangladesh Math nearby, with the throat slit. Kotwali police recovered it and sent it to Milford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Being informed, the victim's family went to the hospital morgue in the following morning and identified the body.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately. The victim's father Abdul Halim Dewan filed a case with Kotwali police.

In another incident, an alleged mugger was killed and one of his accomplices was injured in a cracker explosion they made to escape mob beating at Basiruddin road at Dhahmond. The fatally injured alleged mugger -- Kamal Hossain -- died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 11 pm, hospital sources said. The other -- Humayun -- is being treated there.

Dhanmondi police confirmed the incident but could not identify the

victims.

Following the incident, three others of gang went to the spot at 11:30 pm to take revenge. They exploded crackers. Several hundred people came out of their residences and beat them. They were sent to a local clinic in critical condition, local people said.

Mentionably, at least four alleged muggers were killed by mobs in and around Basiruddin Road in separate incidents in the last two weeks.

Local people said muggers choose the Katabagan area in Dhanmondi for snatching as passengers disembark from long distance buses there. The muggers attack passengers mainly at the Boubazar crossing nearby as they can run away safely through the alleys.

Despite recurrence of mugging incidents in the area, police have not taken any step to stop those, local people alleged.

In another incident on Thursday night, a young man was beaten to death and another severely injured when they allegedly attempted at snatch valuables from a rickshaw passenger at Rayerbazar in Dhanmondi area.

Police rescued the victims and sent them to DMCH. One of them was declared dead when taken there. Hospital sources identified the dead as Rajib Hossain, 25 and the injured as Rajib, now under treatment.

Dhanmondi police however could not identify the victims.

Sec 144 at Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

District administration yesterday imposed Section 144 in the town as Awami League and BNP called meetings at the same venue the same time.

Awami League convened a meeting at Shaheed Minar protesting the killing of Jubo League leader Swapan Joarder who was shot dead in November 28.

BNP also called a meeting at the same venue to protest the murder of Khalaijuri Jubo Dal leader Murad Chowdhury. Murad was killed allegedly by his rival party activists on Thursday.

Afghan minister criticises Pakistan for past interference

AP, New Delhi

The interior minister of Afghanistan's interim regime criticised Pakistan yesterday for its past interference in Afghan affairs, and said the new regime would not grant an amnesty to Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

Younus Qanooni, the chief delegate of the northern alliance at the Bonn talks, flew in from Germany on Friday to India a longtime supporter of the northern alliance on a four-day visit. This is the first minister-level contact between the Indian government and the new Afghan administration.

"I hope the government of Pakistan knows that their policy of interference has failed in Afghanistan this is the time that we should review the strategy of the past," he said after meetings with Jaswant Singh, the foreign minister, and Lal Krishna Advani, the home minister.

India enjoys good relations with the northern alliance. It has already pledged \$100 million in aid for the

reconstruction of Afghanistan and has sent thousands of tonnes of wheat and relief material for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

While the Pakistani government backed the Taliban for years, India reportedly provided help, including weapons, to the northern alliance. Indian media reports said earlier this year that northern alliance military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, who died from wounds in a suicide attack against him, was in India in May for secret talks. The government then denied comment.

"For the small people of the Taliban, there will be general amnesty but for the leader of the Taliban, there will be no general amnesty," Qanooni said. "For the people who have on their hands the blood of the Afghan people, there is no general amnesty."

Qanooni said he had held "crucial, friendly and candid" discussions.

"It is very good news for the people of Afghanistan that India, as our close friend, has offered help for reconstruction," he said

Japan's baby princess named 'Love Child'

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's new baby princess, born one week ago, has been named Aiko, literally meaning "Love Child."

The infant was also given the official royal name Toshinomiya, to be used during the princess' youth, said Hirofumi Oka, head of the general affairs division of the Imperial Household Agency.

"Toshi" means "respect," while the suffix "miya" denotes an imperial prince or princess. The suffix "ko" in Aiko, means "child" and is only used for girls' names.

In line with tradition, the characters for both names were selected from Chinese classical poetry, a statement from the agency said.

The Chinese characters and their phonetics were written in fine calligraphy brush strokes on a parchment scroll revealed at a press conference addressed by Oka.

The agency said the names had been selected from a poem in the fourth century BC Chinese work "Discourses of Mencius," part of which reads: "A person who loves others will be loved by others. A person who respects others will be respected by others."

"It is a good name, I thought it was going to be a difficult (sounding) one," said Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

"But it is made up of love and respect -- things that are easy to understand. I hope she will grow up as a child who is charming and will be adored."

40 killed as ethnic groups clash in Kenya

AFP, Tana River (Kenya)

Forty people were killed on Thursday in clashes over land and water between two ethnic groups in southeast Kenya, police said yesterday.

Thursday was the deadliest day yet in a prolonged, sporadically violent feud over land and river access between the Orma and Pokoma tribes, who tend respectively to be pastoralists and settled agricultural farmers.

The latest violence brought to 131 the number of people killed in fighting between the two groups this year. Since last week, around 60 people have been killed, police said.

More armed security forces were deployed to the Tana River area today.

"We have tried our best ... but it seems we can't stop the clashes as yet," the area's police commander Peter Muthike told AFP.

Commissioner of Coast Province Smuel Limo travelled to the affected area today with a team of high-ranking security officials.

"It is a mess that has to be cleaned up sooner than later," said Muthike.

He said Thursday's deaths occurred during three different raids on various locations.

"The first raid at Chewani, Milalalu, Mwanza and Ng'ombeni villages left nineteen people dead," he said.

Twenty other people were killed in the second raid, among them 18 members of the pastoralist Wardei community and two Pokomas.

Police said scores more were hurt in the incident.

AL-BNP clash in Magura: 20 injured

UNB, Magura

At least 20 people were injured in a clash between BNP and Awami League at village Jodgal in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the clash took place between the supporters of BNP leader Sultan Bakshshi and AL leader Hares Biswas at about 7 am to establish supremacy in the area.

Of the injured, Sultan Bakshshi, Syed Bakshshi, Shariful Bakshi, Sufia Begum and Akbar were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. They arrested one Khabir Uddin from the spot. A case was filed with local police station.

AL-BNP clash in Magura: 20 injured

UNB, Magura

Miscreants attacked a Chhatra League worker and severed tendons of his hand and leg here yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the BCL worker Sumon, son of Suleman Mia of Mirpara area in the town, came under attack by a group of miscreants while he was returning home at noon.

Local people took Sumon to Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

The cause behind the attack could not be known immediately.

PM: Nab terrorists

FROM PAGE 1

being involved in crimes like terrorism, hijacking, kidnapping, corruption, rape and murder in custody.

These reports, she said, not only appeared in the local press but were also highlighted by foreign media and international human rights organisations.

The prime minister, however, admitted that a small portion of the police force was involved in such unwanted activities. She hoped that the situation would improve following some steps taken by her government.

In this context, she recalled that Shaheed President Zia had taken a number of steps to modernise the police and boost their image. She mentioned the formation of the armed police battalion in that regard.

Khaleda Zia cited, as an instance of good work, the distribution of clothes among the poor during Eid in the past by the members of police, which had brought them closer to the masses.

She also appreciated the performance of the police in the UN missions and their laudable role in the last parliamentary elections and called upon them to work now for the welfare of common people.

She assured awards from the government for good work.

"The government will do all possible for building up the police force according to the needs of the 21st century," she said, adding that the government will take all measures to remove various problems facing the police.

The prime minister announced a raise in the allocation for the family members of policemen killed in the line of duty, from Tk 100,000 to Tk 200,000.

Khaleda recalled with respect the armed resistance put up by police against the occupation Pak Army on the very night of March 25, 1971 and paid homage to the martyrs.

Home Minister Air Vice Marshall (Retd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, State Minister for Home Luffuzzaman Babar and IGP Mudabbir Hossain Chowdhury also addressed the function.

Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, cabinet members, Deputy Speaker Aktar Hamid Siddiqui and senior police officials attended the iftar.



Hundreds of devotees offered Juma prayers at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday, the crowds spilling onto the roads in front of the mosque.