

Ashuganj power plant may come to a grinding halt

Frequent technical fault due to old equipment: 7 out of 8 units not overhauled since installation: Generation falling drastically

SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM, B'baria

Ashuganj Power Station, the second largest generation unit in the country, may cease to operate any moment because of lack of overhauling.

Its generating capacity has come down to 400-500 MW from 724 MW and it may grind to a halt anytime as all the eight units have become old. Its generation is decreasing day by day. Disruption in generation is almost regular but its engineers keep those running anyhow, officials said.

Mandatory overhauling, which was due long ago, has not been done. But higher authorities in Power Development Board have not taken any comprehensive plan though reminders were given several times, the officials told this correspondent.

The plant was set up in May 1966 on 80 acres of land on the bank of Maghna in Brahmanbaria district with financial assistance from West Germany. It started operation with two steam turbine units in 1970.

Three other steam turbine units were added between 1986 and 1988 with assistance from the World Bank. Later, a CC unit and a gas turbine unit were installed.

All eight units started functioning in full swing in 1988 and were generating 714 to 724 MW power.

Now, at least one unit remains idle due to mechanical problem and

the rest produce power far less than their capacities, the officials said.

The time for overhauling of all units passed two to three years ago. Only one unit has undergone overhauling.

Equipment in most of the units have become old and worn out, but kept operating anyhow.

The officials said they remain in tension, fearing suspension of operation of any unit any moment.

They said they can not take any major decision as overhauling involves a huge amount of money.

Three months back, five units stopped operation at a time. Its engineers restored their operation. Few days later, some other units stopped functioning. Such abrupt dislocation is now a regular feature, they said.

Due to frequent dislocation, its engineers took an initiative to do some major overhauling work. With permission from higher authorities, they successfully overhauled the Gas Turbine-1 unit in June this year and saved at least Tk 10 crore in foreign exchange, otherwise payable to foreign engineers.

According to sources, overhauling of a unit must be done after every 500,000 hours' operation. But all the units operated for 80,000 to 15,000 hours without overhauling.

The last overhauling of Unit-1 was done in 1989, Unit-2 in 1994 and Unit-3 in 2003.

Unit-4 and Unit-5 have not been



PHOTO: STAR

Worn out equipment inside giant structures...A partial view of Ashuganj Power Station.

overhauled since their installation in 1987 and 1988 respectively. There has been leakage in condense tube and boiler tube in Unit-4 and Unit-5.

Unit-6 (Gas Turbine-2) is now stopped due to technical fault. It underwent repair in 1997.

Unit-7 has not been overhauled since its installation in 1984. It is now generating only 20 MW power against its capacity of 34 MW.

Unit-8 (Gas Turbine-1) was

installed in November 1982. It was overhauled for the last time in 1992 by foreign engineers. As it stopped functioning, local engineers overhauled it in June this year.

The power station should be thoroughly overhauled immediately to keep it running. Otherwise, a disaster in power supply may take place any moment, they said.

BSF snatches cattle in B'Baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) entered Bangladesh territory in Ragarampur village in Koshba upazila in the district and snatched 14 cows and 7 goats on Thursday.

According to local people and BDR sources, farmers were grazing cattle in the field inside Bangladesh territory near the border pillar no. 2020.

Some BSF men entered the village, chased away the farmers and snatched the cows and goats. Those are yet to be returned.

BSF sources said they are trying to make correspondence with BSF in this regard.

70 km roads damaged in Patuakhali town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Most of the roads in Patuakhali town and adjoining areas, badly damaged by the recent flood and recurring high tide, are now unfit for use.

The pourasabha authorities estimated that about 70 km pucca roads have been damaged, which will cost about Tk two crore for repair.

The worst damaged roads are Fire Service Road, Stadium Road, Lake Road, Oil Mill Road, Munse Para Road, Shimul Bag Road, Chawk Bazar Road, Puran Bazar Road, Sonali Bank Road.

Pourasabha chairman Mostaq Ahmed said he sent a letter to the local government ministry for allocation of Tk two crore for repair damaged roads.

He said the repair work will begin after disbursement of funds.

Body recovered from Barisal hotel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The body of a boarder was recovered from a residential hotel in the city on Friday.

According to the hotel register, the body was of Sadekul Alam, 45, of Barisal Sadar upazila. But police and other sources suspect that the name and address are fake.

Hotel sources and police said, Sadekul Alam rented room no. 409 of Hotel Imperial at K B Hemayetuddin Road Thursday afternoon.

On Friday in the morning, the hotel sweeper knocked the room for cleaning but did not get any response. He informed the manager. The manager opened the door with a duplicate key and found the naked body of the boarder on the bed.

A mobile phone, a bag and Tk 217 were recovered from the room.

Police sent the body to hospital for autopsy.

Police suspect that the death could be from excessive drinking or poison.

Some sources claimed that the victim was a motor parts trader in the city.

People hostage to launch owners on risky routes

BIWTC sea truck service in Meghna estuary stopped: Dhaka-Khulna Rocket service reduced to four days a week

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

BIWTC's Rocket steamer service on the Dhaka-Barisal-Khulna route has been reduced to four days a week from seven days and its sea truck service on the risky Mirzakhal-Aleksander route through the Meghna estuary has been suspended.

BIWTC steamers will now sail from Dhaka on Saturday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and from Khulna on Saturday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. This was made effective from yesterday, BIWTC sources said.

BIWTC sea truck ST Khizir-6 was leased to Bhabanipur Construction and Navigation Company two months back for service on the Mirzakhal-Aleksander route. The company is owned by an influential man in Daulat Khan in Bholia, who also owns several launches.

BIWTC sources said the company stopped the sea truck service to

however said this is a temporary arrangement and the service would be restored to seven days a week when the Lepcha and the Ostrich would be ready for operation after repair.

Hundreds of passengers are now compelled to undertake risky journey in the Dhaka-Barisal-Khulna route on small private launches in the current season of storms.

On other hand, BIWTC's sea truck service on the rough and risky Mirzakhal-Aleksander route through the Meghna estuary has been stopped by the lessee.

BIWTC sea truck ST Khizir-6 was leased to Bhabanipur Construction and Navigation Company two months back for service on the Mirzakhal-Aleksander route. The company is owned by an influential man in Daulat Khan in Bholia, who also owns several launches.

Hundreds of passengers are now compelled to avail risky journeys on small launches, trollers and mechanised boats in the route.

More than 600 people died in seven launch accidents in the Meghna estuary in last four years.

Abduction bid foiled: 5 bullet-hit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least five villagers were injured when a gang opened fire on them after they failed to abduct a school student at Dukhipur village in Daulatpur upazila on Thursday night.

According to police, the gang had demanded Tk 50,000 toll from the boy's father, Amirul Islam, a fertiliser trader, but was refused.

On the night, the gang stormed into Amirul's house and demanded Tk one lakh.

When Amirul refused, the gang held his 14 year-old son Senty on gunpoint and attempted to take him away forcibly.

As the inmates cried for help, neighbours rushed there. The criminals escaped firing shots, leaving five injured. They have been admitted to local health complex.

A small loan helps a lot

Micro-credit changes life of ultrapoor in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 20 persons including two women were injured in a clash between two factions of ruling BNP at Mahisundari village in Daulatpur upazila on Thursday.

The clash erupted between groups led by local BNP leader Nazrul Islam and Sirajul Islam over supremacy in the area, police said. They are rivals for long. Eleven of the injured have been admitted to a Kushtia Hospital.

Fake revenue stamps recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Brahmanbaria police arrested one Billal Hossain from Kamalnura village in the sadar thana and recovered huge quantities of fake revenue stamps and non-judicial stamps worth Tk 62,282 from his house on Friday. The racket was detected when he tried to sell fake revenue stamps to local postmaster Md Osman Goni. Police raided his house after being tipped-off. Police said a case has been filed.

Another beneficiary-- Shahada-- said she now owns a milch cow and four cows. She is fattening

her four cows for sale during ensuing Eid. She expects to earn at least Tk 40,000. She bought the cows with a loan from ASA.

Subada and Rabeya have also started beef fattening with loans from the NGO.

Once a house maid, she is now self-reliant and earns a profit of at least Tk 2000 a month from a grocery at Garidaho village in Mazira upazila in the district.

She also bought two cows with the profit and is planning to buy a piece of land to build a house for her four-member family.

Villagers say Shakimon's success has encouraged others like her. Poor Julekha, Rabeya, Subada and many others are trying to become self-reliant like Shakimon with financial assistance from the Association for Social Advance-ment (ASA).

ASA Bogra district manager Mohammed Anowar Hossain said, Shakimon is depositing small amounts in her savings account in a local bank.

ASA distributed about Tk 40.43 crore loans among 46,793 people in the district till June this year he said.

Another beneficiary-- Shahada-- said she now owns a milch cow and four cows. She is fattening



PHOTO: STAR

Ignoring social barriers, self-reliant Shakimon manages her shop alone at Garidaho village.

Tk 1.5 crore drawn on 'fake' bills

Repair of health complexes in Bogra, Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Some construction companies including one owned by an influential local BNP leader have drawn about Tk one crore and a half from the Construction and Maintenance Management Unit (CMMU) of Health Ministry by producing "fake" bills.

They have drawn the amounts in the name of renovation of health service establishments and related work in Bogra and Joypurhat districts, sources said.

In some cases, no work was done. At least Tk 20 lakh was drawn in one such work by showing a fake bill in construction of Gobtoli Health Complex.

"We were under pressure to approve the bill", an Assistant

Engineer of CMMU in Bogra told this correspondent seeking anonymity. He said he was the Executive Engineer in-charge when the bill was approved at the fag end of the financial year.

Another firm--Kitway Pac--drew about Tk 15 lakh by submitting "fake" bills in the name of earth-filling work, sources said.

The firm was selected for installing a power sub-station and a deep tubewell at the Nursing Training Centre on the outskirts of Bogra town. The work involved Tk 86 lakh.

Another bill, submitted by Shati Traders is still held up.

They said the irregularities were done in repair of health complexes in Khaloo, Shaibgong and Sonatola in Bogra and Kalai upazila in Jaypurhat.

"We were under pressure to approve the bill", an Assistant

6 bombs recovered from Patuakhali cinema

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Police recovered six live cocktails (hand bombs) from a cinema hall at Kalai Bandar in Baufal upazila in Patuakhali district on Friday.

Police arrested Rabiu Islam Robin, president of Kalai union JCD (Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal), student front of ruling BNP, as suspect.

Tipped-off, police led by Md Yasin of Kalai Bandar river police outpost searched the Sundari

Cinema Hall at about 2 PM Friday noon and recovered the bombs from the manager's room on the first floor of the cinema.

Police suspected that the cocktails were kept there for use in JCD factional clash.

Mozammel Huq, manager of the cinema, is absconding since the incident.

A case has been lodged with Baufal police station under the Explosives Act, police said.

7x3

7x3