

Zia Fertiliser makes loss for frequent mechanical faults

SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM, B'baria

The Ashuganj Zia Fertilizer Company Limited (ZFLC) has turned into a losing concern, mainly due to frequent interruption in production resulting from mechanical breakdown.

As per preliminary estimate, the factory has incurred Tk 10 crore loss so far this financial year, its Managing Director Md Rashidun Nabi told this correspondent. The factory, owned by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), had earned Tk 2.5 crore profit last year.

Besides production loss, inflated payments for overtime bills are adding to the loss, he said.

The factory went out of production since May 16, when its cooling tower was damaged by a storm.

There are also faults in its urea reactor and ammonia pipeline. At least 10 coolers at the ammonia plant are

out of order now due to leakage in cooler tubes and in the ammonia plant that forced the authorities to stop production.

It was gathered from other sources there that production was interrupted at least 20 times so far in the current financial year. There were 13 major shutdowns when production remained stopped for seven to 12 days.

The frequent shutdowns were due to technical fault and old machinery, the MD said.

He said the factory is now stopped as the cooling tower was tore down by the may 16 storm. Besides, there are technical faults in the ammonia pipeline.

"Our engineers are working hard to repair the faults and production may resume within three-four days", the MD said.

The factory was set up on 194.9 acres of land on the eastern side of

the Meghna along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in 1981. It started commercial production on July 1, 1983.

Italy, Germany, UK, USA, Japan, Holland, France, Austria, Switzerland, India and Canada supplied major equipment under funding by donors.

According to office record, durability of the major equipment is 20 years.

Sources said the factory is supposed to undergo major overhaul after every 18 months.

The last overhaul was done in 2003 at a cost of Tk 76 crore. Another overhaul is overdue, but will be done next year, the MD said.

Overhaul is getting costlier with passage of time as the machinery have become old, he said. The overhaul is done with the factory's own funds.

Its production capacity is also

decreasing day by day. It now produces 1250 tonnes of Urea a day against 1600 tonnes earlier, which will leave this fiscal's production target of 4,50,000 tonnes unfulfilled, sources said. The production so far is around 3,55,000 tonnes, they said.

The factory has 1079 officials, 366 employees and 383 workers.

The sources said that the company pays overtime to a large number of employees and workers, ranging up to 70 per cent of their basic salary, even when the factory remains closed. The overtime is realised for maintenance and repair work, the sources said. Many of the employees are working in the factory for 12-15 years, they said.

Arrested UPDF men sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The 15 leaders and activists of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), arrested in Khagrachhari town on Monday in connection with shooting an activist of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), were sent to jail after a Magistrate Court rejected their bail prayer, police there said.

The arrested persons included Khagrachhari district UPDF Co-ordinator Prodipan Khisa, 34.

Police had also recovered a foreign-made revolver with six bullets from one of the arrested persons.

Khagrachhari Sadar thana police yesterday told this correspondent that they were arrested following filing of two cases by Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity.

Meanwhile, the district unit of UPDF, pro-UPDF women's platform Hill Womens Federation and Ganatantrik Jubo Forum in separate press statements in Khagrachhari

yesterday condemned the arrest and demanded their immediate and unconditional release.

Railway engineer arrested for Tk1.5 cr 'forgery'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

An Assistant Engineer of Bangladesh Railway has been arrested on charge of drawing Tk 1.5 crore from Bangladesh Krishi Bank by producing forged savings bonds.

Police of Daulatpur thana in Kusthia, with the

help of Lamonirhat police, nabbed Sharif Salauddin, Assistant Engineer of Lalmonirhat Railway Divisional Office Sunday night from his residence in Lalmonirhat railway quarters.

He was sent to Daulatpur on Monday, Lalmonirhat police told this correspondent over phone yesterday.

The Officer-in-Charge of

Lalmonirhat Sadar Police station said that Sharif Salauddin had drawn Tk 1.50 crore from Krishi Bank at Doulotpur upzila head-quarter one year back when he was posted at Rajshahi Divisional Railway Office.

The Bank authorities recently detected the forgery and lodged a case with Daulatpur police station.

A police team led by Sub-inspector Moniruzzaman came from Doulotpur. With the help of Lalmonirhat police, they raided his quarter at dead of night and arrested him.

The engineer was transferred to Lalmonirhat Divisional Railway Office from Rajshahi about a year back.

7-year boy abducted for ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira.

A seven year-old boy was abducted for ransom on Sunday from Dhankhali in Munshigonj union under Shyamnagar upazila.

The abductors have demanded Tk 5 lakh ransom for his release and set three days' time for payment.

Quoting villagers, Shyamnagar police said Victor Haldar, son of Dinabandhu Haldar of the village was playing in front of his house when a gang of youths riding two motorcycles caught and took him away.

While speeding away, they hung a letter in a tree asking the child's father to pay them Tk five lakh in three days to get back his son alive.

The victim's father has filed a General Diary with Shyamnagar thana.

On contact, Shyamnagar thana OC Kanchan Mahmud confirming the incident said, they are trying to rescue the victim.

Hundreds collect fish eggs from Halda

Natural spawning increases several times this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Halda river wore a festive look on Sunday night when hundreds of fishermen collected fertilised eggs released by carps including Ruhi, Katla, Mrigel and Kalaboush.

Halda river in Chittagong is the only natural spawning and breeding centre of fishes in the country.

The fishermen collected eggs for about three hours from 11 pm in about one kilometre stretch of the river from Noahat to Garrduara in bordering Hathazari and Raozan upazilas, a press release of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI) here said on Monday.

A five-member team from BFRI in Chandpur led by Principal Scientific Officer Dr. Md. Khalilur Rahman witnessed the egg collection.

The BFRI team observed that the boats collected at least two buckets of eggs each, which would produce about 35 kgs of spawns. Release of eggs is many times more than last year's, it said.

Following last year's poor release of eggs, BFRI took up a project titled, 'Investigation on Spawning of Major Carps in Halda' at the directive of Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman to increase availability of naturally released eggs.

A five-member team led by Dr. Khalilur Rahman earlier identified some reasons behind decline in spawning.

The reasons included unplanned construction of sluice gates on connecting canals, illegal netting of Broad Fishes (mother fisher) and operation of mechanised boats along the breeding and spawning centre of the river.

The team recommended eight points to ensure proper spawning



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Fishermen keeping spawns collected from Halda river in ditches dug on homesteads. Natural production of spawns increased manifold this year following measures by authorities.

and breeding in the Halda river.

As per its recommendation, the government declared the river from Nazirhat bridge to Burishchar a fish sanctuary and took some measures.

These included keeping passage open for migration of spawning fishes, patrol by law enforcers along Sattarghat, Garrduara and Madunaghat to check illegal netting of mother fishes during spawning season (March 15 to June 30), restriction on operation of mechanised boats along the spawning points during the period, setting up of hatcheries at Garrduara and

Noahat for proper hatching of spawns, said Dr. Khalilur Rahman while talking to this correspondent.

If illegal netting of broad fishes can be stopped, fishes worth over Tk 3000 crore could be produced from the eggs collected only from the Haldariver, fishery officials and local fishermen said.

During Bangla months of Baishakh and Jaishta (April and May), different species of fishes like Rui, Katala, Mrigel and Kalaboush from Kamaphuli, Matamuhuri and Sangu rivers start migrating to the spawning center at Halda.

At a particular time, mostly

during the first shower of the monsoon, they start releasing spawns (eggs) in the river stretching from Sartterghat in Raozan to Madunaghat in Hathazari upazila.

The spawns are released in two to three phases. Each phase continues for around 12 hours.

The fishermen preserve the collected spawns in small ditches dug on homesteads and get the fries hatched out within four days. The 4-day old fries are sold at Tk 12000 to 14,000 per kilogram to fish farmers coming from different parts of the country.

Nazrul's birthday programme at Trishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The Cultural Affairs Ministry and local administration have jointly organised a three-day national programme at Kazir Shimla and Darirampur in Trishal to mark the 106th birth anniversary of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

Jatiya Sangsad speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar is expected to inaugurate the function as chief guest while State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman will preside over the function.

The three-day programme includes discussion on life and works of Nazrul, cultural function and recitation from his poems.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Nazrul Institute, Dhaka and various cultural organisations from greater Mymensingh will participate in the programme.

Nazrul spent a few years at Kazir Shimla and Darirampur during his boyhood.

Death threat to newsman

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A journalist received death threats from unidentified telephone callers during the last few days.

The Daily Ajker Protiva editor Abu Sayeed Ahmed told newsmen at a press conference that he received death threats for publishing a series of corruption stories on Dinajpur Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University in his newspaper.

Meanwhile, local journalists and members of Dinajpur Union of Journalists held a protest meeting at the press club condemning attack on him by 12 unidentified men in his newspaper office on Saturday.

Continue road projects for ultra-poor women in CHT

Larma, Dewan urge visiting WFP officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) Chairman Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma and Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Dr Maniklal Dewan have urged visiting officials of World Food Programme (WFP) to continue its ongoing projects for ultra-poor women in the CHT for improvement of their condition and to help remove gender discrimination.

The projects are scheduled to be closed this month.

They made the appeal when a team of WFP officials from its headquarter in Rome called on them at their offices in Rangamati separately on Monday, according to official sources here yesterday.

The WFP officials including Nutrition Specialist Flora S Muider

and Specialist for Vulnerable Analysts on Moping Samir Wanmali discussed with the indigenous leaders issues related to food security for ultra-poor women in CHT and outcome of ongoing Rural Road Maintenance Project (RRMP). The WFP officials earlier visited some villages under its projects in Rangamati.

The officials arrived here on May 22 to evaluate the RRMP, aimed at redesigning the scheme prior to its renewal.

The WFP projects were implemented by government agencies in the three hill districts in two phases from 1999 to 2001 and from July 2002 to May 2005 to ensure food security to the ultra-poor women.

The WFP projects were implemented by government agencies in the three hill districts in two phases from 1999 to 2001 and from July

2002 to May 2005 to ensure food security to the ultra-poor women.

The RRMP covered a total of 9,100 women; 2,780 in Khagrachhari, 2,380 in Bandarban and 3,940 in Rangamati. Each woman got Tk 20 and one and a half kilograms of rice daily.

The project played a tremendous positive role in improving the lifestyle of once ultra-poor women in the hills.

The indigenous leaders told the officials that WFP took a 'good initiative' that helped the ultra-poor women in gaining confidence and developing leadership at grassroots level.

Special Field Operation Manager of CHT and Project Officer Siddiqul Islam Khan from Dhaka office accompanied the WFP team during their visit. They left Rangamati for Dhaka yesterday morning.



Some of the students of Amana Baki Residential School in Dinajpur who got primary scholarship in examinations held last year.

15x3