

## Barapukuria lacks

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any payment. In other words, in absence of working capital the mine is gradually becoming a huge liability of the government," he said.

The mine built under a grossly flawed Chinese supplier's credit deal remains shut down since October last year. As a result, the coal-fired 250megawatt power plant at the site is also facing uncertainty. The mine was built under a Tk 1,700 crore credit and the power plant was built under another \$260 million Chinese supplier's credit deal.

The BCMCL intends to resume operation from February 27. "We are importing some mining equipment from China. If these arrive in time, we will resume the mine's operation from February 27. Otherwise this might be delayed by a week or so," said the source.

Right now, the BCMCL is recovering from a financial mess that led to its suspension in October last year.

The mine's Chinese developer, which is a consortium led by CMC, stopped production not only for non-payment of the fifth instalment of the supplier's credit but also for the non-payment of mining equipment supplied outside the purview of the contract.

Sources said the contract, spearheaded by Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, energy minister of the previous BNP government, is full of glitches that did not even say how mining equipment would be supplied. According to Hosaf chief Moazzem Hossain his company promoted the credit scheme. Hosaf has been representing the builder of the mine, power plant and the consultants of both the projects; making it impossible for the government to ensure their quality implementation.

"The mining equipment are mostly Chinese and we can't buy them from any other source. The mine developer is not obliged to supply them. We must buy these separately under separate contract," said a BCMCL source.

As a result, since it started partial commercial operation from 2005, the BCMCL started procuring mining equipment from CMC without making any payment. At the same time, it refrained from paying the fifth instalment of Tk 62 crore which was due in October 2005. The CMC stopped all activities in October last.

The BCMCL paid the fifth instalment in October 2006 and by mid January 2007, it paid another Tk 30 crore for the purchase of mining equipment and \$1.5 million for CMC's annual operation charge.

With these payments done, the company expects to resume its operation. However, the challenge of paying the next instalment is already affecting the spirit of the company.

## Over 1 lakh to get

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officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, labour and employment, civil aviation, home and the Department of Passport and Immigration, Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, and Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL) to resolve problems in sending skilled manpower abroad.

Of the 1,05,000 workers to be recruited, 26,000 workers received clearance from the Malaysian authorities and 18,000 have already left for Kuala Lumpur. The government has fixed Tk 85,000 for each worker who wants to work in Malaysia.

Currently, around 3,00,000 Bangladeshi workers are employed in Malaysia.

The foreign affairs adviser said as the present caretaker government is now engaged in combating corruption, appropriate steps are being taken against unscrupulous manpower agencies who committed forgery and harassed workers while sending them abroad.

Iftekhar said the labour wings in Bangladesh missions abroad are being strengthened while consul generals or honorary consuls would be appointed wherever necessary to boost the export of the country's workforce.

He told newsmen that Bangladesh earns remittance of more than \$ 5 billion annually from the expatriate workers.

Identifying three obstacles--lack of skilled manpower, inadequate coordination among government bodies and procedural problems--in sending manpower in abroad, the adviser said steps have been taken to provide necessary and timely training for the workers to meet the demands of foreign countries.

He said the government has also taken steps to make the BOESL more effective, so that the workforce could be sent with minimum cost and with government supervision.

"We are considering about signing short and long-term agreements with the countries, which are eager to employ workers free of cost," he said adding, "Diplomatic efforts have started to send workforce through BOESL under the 'G to G' system with several

## GOLD SMUGGLING Verdict in case against Ershad today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will deliver today the verdict in the gold smuggling case filed 16 years back against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad.

Judge SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will pronounce the verdict at 11:00am, court sources said.

The judge on February 6 last adjourned the delivery of verdict in the case as he could not complete preparing the judgement.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence had completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of eight prosecution witnesses including the complainant and investigation officer (IO) of the case.

A team of customs officials held four people including two foreign nationals from Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 when they were attempting to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

A smuggling case was filed with the Cantonment Police Station the same day against the four--Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, then manager of the Zia International Airport Major (retd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, an airport security guard.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991.

The trial against Ershad did not start due to a High Court stay order.

Another Dhaka court on January 17 this year freed Ershad from serving out the sentence given by the High Court on December 14 last year in connection with a case concerning purchase of Japanese boats.

He was also acquitted and discharged of four graft cases in August and September last year after his announcement to join the four-party alliance. But he finally joined the grand alliance comprising 14-party and its allies.

## Falu

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police filed the case against Falu and several other unnamed officials and employees of the factory.

On Monday, Falu was shown arrested in the case.

According to the prosecution, the joint forces came to know that Falu, owner and chairman of the Dhaka Shanghai Ceramics Factory, built 40 by 50 feet houses for accommodation of the workers.

The joint forces dismantled six such houses constructed on the factory premises with corrugated iron (CI) sheets. Six hundred and fifty pieces of CI sheets worth around Tk 4 lakh bear inscriptions, "Relief materials of Relief and Rehabilitation Department: Not for sale".

The BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government bought the CI sheets manufactured by PHP Arabian Horse Ltd for rehabilitation of the poor and distressed through government assistance.

Falu, also the owner of private satellite television channels ntv and Rtv and the daily Amar Desh, is now in jail on a 30-day detention. He was charged with anti-state activities, obstructing public safety, and illegally erecting hoardings.

## Railway frees

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The BR authorities also partially knocked down a four-storey house on Tejgaon Station Road, a portion of the Karwan Bazar fish market and other establishments beside the railway tracks.

In another drive, the DCC recovered the three-storey Charuta Market located beside Mahanagar Mohila College at Sutrapur.

Sources said a few politically powerful people of Sutrapur and old Dhaka areas grabbed the market for years.

The DCC officials were reluctant to mention the names of the grabbers. "We did not give importance to who the grabbers were. We just recovered the market," Shamsul Alam, deputy estate officer of DCC, said.

The DCC eviction team also demolished a one-storey structure built on an encroached space for car parking, sources said.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartirippakha (Rajuk) did not conduct any drive yesterday.

PABNA DRIVE

An eviction team recovered 40 decimal (1.25 bigha) land worth Tk 10 crore demolishing the Pabna bus stand illegally built on the land of the local health department about 35 years ago.

Magistrate Arif Ahmed led the drive jointly conducted by the army and police.

Two associations of Pabna motor owners and labourers grabbed the land during the Liberation War, health department sources said.

The district administration tried to demolish the bus stand on several occasions earlier but failed due to protests from the motor owners and labourers.

The government will also launch a fresh drive to detain others on the basis of financial crimes.

## Detention cases

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meeting yesterday, also decided not to allow any political rally, gathering or meeting in any auditorium, community centre or hall, taking advantage of 'indoor politics' meeting sources said.

This decision however will not be applicable to religious functions.

The meeting, chaired by Law Adviser Mainul Hosein at the law ministry,

asked for monitoring the drive to ensure its success.

In this connection, the advisory committee asked the law enforcers to remain careful about cases lodged on political consideration.

Discouraging arrest on suspicion under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the committee said explanation has to be given for such arrests.

"We've asked them (law enforcers) to focus on big criminals, and the nature of cases filed against them since a major objective of the present government is bringing to trial the perpetrators of crimes and corruption," Mainul told reporters after the meeting.

In reply to a question, he said permission must be taken to arrange any programme in the name of cultural function.

From now on, officials will have to inform the committee prior to evacuation of big slums. It will then take decisions so that poor slum dwellers are not victimised, meeting sources said.

The committee rather directed the

law enforcers to arrest influential people who are making money by building large slums.

It asked Rajuk to study whether the evicted poor slum dwellers can be rehabilitated on government lands freed from illegal grabbers. If found feasible, Rajuk will build low cost houses on these lands with the help of members of the armed forces.

On rehabilitation of hawkers evicted from the city pavements and illegally set-up markets, the committee asked the authorities to study allowing hawkers to run their business every day on some open fields like Paltan Maidan, Muktagan and Osman Udayan and on roads after office hours.

Nuruzzaman, who had led people of Phulbari in Dinajpur during their movement against Asia Energy Corporation last year, was handed over to Phulbari police after his arrest.

It also asked the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police to look into this immediately so that the hawkers can resume normal life.

Responding to a question, the law adviser denied that the authorities are arresting leaders of both Awami League and BNP to ensure a balance. "Those who face charges of crime and corruption are being arrested irrespective of their political identities," he said.

Those present at the meeting included members of the committee Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matiullah, Education Adviser Ayub Qadri, and the inspector general of police and top officials of the ministries concerned.

## 5 acid traders jailed

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The mobile court led by Magistrate Rokon-ud-Doula found three acid importers and distributors guilty of storing nitric acid and sulphuric acid in amount more than they are allowed to, not maintaining the buyers' logbook, not having licence from the energy ministry and operating business with an expired licence from the fire department.

At Maya Chemical and Company at Gafur Nagar Lane under Kotwali Police Station, the mobile court found 17 tons of acid stored in its warehouse although its licence permits the storage of 10 tons maximum.

The company also failed to maintain any logbook of buyers, which is mandatory for an acid seller. It was also accused of other aforesaid irregularities.

The court sentenced co-owner of the factory Hannan Bhuiyan, his brother Rafiqul Islam and manager of the company Abdul Hossain to six years imprisonment and fined them Tk 3 lakh each.

The mobile court later handed them over to jail authorities.

The court also issued an arrest warrant against co-owner of the company Sultan Raffia.

The mobile court raided Vanish Chemical and Company in the same area afterwards. The court sentenced owner of the company Niyamat Ali and manager Tarique Hossain to six years imprisonment and fined them Tk 3 lakh. They were accused of all aforesaid irregularities including not having storage from the energy ministry. They were handed over to jail authorities as well.

Rokon-ud-Doula said the BSF of Goborongra camp under Swarupnagar Police Station of 24 Parganas district fired six bullets targeting the Chanduria BDR camp at about 2:30am, forcing the BDR to retaliate by firing over 28 shots.

The court found around 800 containers and 42 barrels of various types of acids, including nitric acid and sulphuric acid, under open sky even though it is mandatory to store acids securely in a warehouse.

The mobile court ordered the local police station to seal off all the three warehouses and arrest the accused people.

"Hundreds of people especially women become victims of acid violence because of such irregularities and carelessness," Rokon-ud-Doula said, adding, "We will take more bold step against such businessmen."

BDR personnel have also been put on alert on the Satkhira border.

When contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding officer (CO), 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the border skirmishes.

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