

Mining with a vision for people's benefit, ecology unharmed

Bangladesh can learn a lot from German open pit coal extraction

SHARIER KHAN, back from Cologne, Germany

There is a lot that Bangladesh can learn from German experience in maximum utilisation of coal resources through maintaining environmental balance, efficiently handling human displacements, agricultural land replacement and maintaining political soundness.

With a tradition of more than 100 years of open pit coal mining, Germany produces 33,000 megawatt or one third of its power from lignite coal and another 25,000 megawatt from hard coal ensuring minimum damage to the environment, thanks to strict monitoring by the government and pressure groups.

A visit to the mines and coal-fired power plants in the North Rhine Westfalia zone around the German city of Cologne demonstrates that mining is just not a profit making business for a company, rather it is a national affair.

Mining in Germany is based on sensible politics and a vision to ensure benefit for its people and entrepreneurs, and minimise environmental hazards. A mining company cannot just do whatever it wishes but when it has a government nod, its mining plan cannot be hindered.

The Daily Star correspondent visited the mines and coal power plant installations near Cologne at the invitation of Asia Energy Bangladesh between July 25 and 28. The Daily Star covered the travel and hotel costs of its correspondent while Asia Energy that has stakes in the Phulbari Coal Mine facilitated the visit in collaboration with Germany's biggest mining and power company RWE.

Also one of the top European power and gas companies, RWE is a consultant company for Asia Energy for handling Phulbari project's most sensitive area - water table.

Germany's vast "lignite" coal mines are mainly located in agricultural lands and villages near Cologne, and therefore, the home-grown mining companies work with the government and communities to ensure fair resettlement and compensation, according to executives of Germany's leading coal mine and power developer RWE GmbH.

From the fifties, about 50,000 people have been resettled to facilitate large scale open-pit mining. Of them, 10 per cent resisted resettlement. But relevant German laws demand that

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PHOTO: STAR

Pay arrear salaries now, if govt can't pay all dues

Distressed Khulna jute workers demand

EMRAN HOSSAIN, from Khulna

At least 300 workers of a foreign garment factory at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) fell sick after taking "poisonous food" yesterday.

Police and factory sources said a catering firm had supplied the food for the workers of Leni Fashion for their lunch.

The workers fell sick after having the lunch.

The sick workers were admitted to Bepza Hospital, Ganashaytha Kendra at Nayarhat and other local clinics.

The workers said they started feeling stomachache after having the lunch and then vomited. Many of the workers fell unconscious.

The factory authorities allowed medial leave to the workers following the incident.

Employees of the catering firm went into hiding. Physicians said the food supplied for the workers were contaminated.

Police and medical treatment," said Mamun, a former PJML worker to whom the factory owes Tk 2.5 lakh.

The laid off workers, on average, have unpaid salaries of 11-28 weeks.

As the workers were not getting their salaries, most of them are in debt, from Tk 1000 to Tk 20,000, to different shops, individuals, banks, landlords and NGOs.

"We cannot even leave for home or for other places as we do not have money," said Jashim, a laid off worker of Crescent Jute Mills Ltd (CJML), to whom the mill owes Tk 3.5 lakh.

Meanwhile, the joint forces as part of their routine programme visited the PJML yesterday and inquired the employees about their condition. Two joint forces patrol teams reached the mill around 8:30am and talked to

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security guards and former employees.

A source in the joint forces said three other state-owned jute mills closed in April and partially resumed operations in June. The source requesting anonymity said they provided the mill authorities with a "new formula" by which they can partially operate using their own money since the government has stopped giving funds to it. They are operating by hiring workers on daily basis, the source added.

"The PJML was plagued with so many problems that we could do nothing," said the source. CJML and Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills Ltd (PJML) are now operating using this "new formula".

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PHOTO: STAR

Damage to the approach road to Dhaleshwari Bridge-1 on Dhaka-Mawa road poses risk of accident any time.

3 held on charge of cheating in guise of anti-graft men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested three people in front of Radisson Hotel in the city on charge of cheating a number of former lawmakers, businessmen, top government officials and business executives identifying themselves as members of the anti-graft taskforce.

The crime busters also seized over Tk 3.97 lakh and four cellphone sets from the arrestees - Aminul Islam alias Liton, Shahjahan Kabir alias Shiplu and Ahsan Habib.

Liton has been demanding bribe from the high profile and moneyed people over phone, identifying himself as Lt Col Humayun or Lt Col Zakaria. In some cases, Liton and his two other arrested associates, who used to identify themselves as taskforce members, have extorted money from the people, says a Rab press release.

The release said the gang also made phone calls demanding tolls from former lawmakers Talukder Abdul Khaleq, Golam Morshed and SA Khaleq, businessman Mizanur Rahman Sinha, superintendent engineer of fisheries department AKM Brahamman and businessman Shaieruzzaman Mortuza.

Khulna power plant out of order again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The 110-megawatt (MW) power plant in Khulna went out of order early Thursday for the third time since June due to leakages in boiler tubes plunging 21 districts of the region into acute power shortages.

The 110MW plant was shut down in April for overhauling.

The power situation in 21 districts of greater Faridpur, and Khulna and Barisal divisions under the West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd (WZPDC) deteriorated Thursday as only 233MW of electricity was supplied against a daily demand of 558MW.

A 60MW power plant in Khulna has been out of order for the last 13 months.

With these two power plants of Khulna, a total of four plants in the south-western region are now out of order. The seven other plants in the region are supplying only 77MW of electricity, WZPDC sources said.

According to a reliable source of Khulna Power Station (KPS), the 110MW plant is likely to be operational by Sunday or Monday.

Low over Bay likely to intensify

UNB, Dhaka

A low that developed over north Bay and its adjoining area is likely to intensify further and moved in a northwesterly direction.

Under its influence, deep convection is taking place over north Bay. Squally weather may affect the ports, said a special bulletin of the Met Office.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay and deep sea have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution until further notice.

Prayer Timing

August 4

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Dhaka, Delhi to strengthen joint fight against terrorism

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh yesterday strongly condemned terrorism and extremism and Dhaka agreed to expedite its approval of a draft extradition treaty in criminal matters and the bilateral agreement on combating international terrorism, organised crime and illegal drug trafficking.

A joint statement issued at the end of two-day home secretary level talks between the two countries underlined the need to strengthen existing bilateral arrangements by instituting new institutional mechanisms for enhanced cooperation and regular exchange of information to combat terrorism.

Both sides also agreed to revive the mechanism of the Joint Working Group (JWG) at the level of joint

secretaries in the ministries of home affairs and decided that the meetings could be held at regular intervals alternately in India and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh agreed to expedite their inter-ministerial consultations on the drafts of extradition treaty, mutual legal assistance treaty in criminal matters, the statement said.

India favoured finalisation of the draft extradition treaty before the forthcoming Saarc home ministers' conference in October this year, it added.

The draft of the extradition treaty was handed over by India to Bangladesh last year.

Briefing reporters jointly after signing the minutes of the talks, Indian Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta and his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohd Abdul Karim said both

sides also decided to step up riverine patrolling and counter drug peddling, besides dealing with matters related to trafficking in women and children.

Gupta and Karim described the discussions as "very, very positive and constructive" and said the talks were held in an atmosphere of "utmost friendship and cordiality".

Gupta said Karim has brought a "clear message" from Bangladesh government that it would like to move in a spirit of mutual "trust and understanding".

During the meeting, both sides approached all issues on the basis of mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's position and sensitivities on the basis of

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Pak opposition leader freed in new blow to Musharraf

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday ordered the release of a senior opposition leader who was jailed in 2004 on treason charges for criticising the army, party and legal officials said.

Javed Hashmi, from the Pakistan Muslim League of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, had been sentenced to 23 years imprisonment for distributing a letter which he said was from army officers against President Pervez Musharraf.

Jubilant supporters chanted "Go Musharraf, Go!" and shook their fists

outside the court after the ruling, the latest in a series of setbacks for the embattled military ruler with elections looming.

"A three-judge bench accepted the bail application of Javed Hashmi," party spokesman Siddiqui Farooq told AFP. "The court has passed an order for his release on bail."

Court officials quoted by state media said the bench was headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry -- who himself won a landmark case last month overturning his suspension in March by Musharraf.

Hashmi, 58, had been ordered to submit a bail bond of 50,000 rupees (830 dollars), a court spokesman said. Hashmi's appeal against his conviction is still pending, the spokesman added.

Coming so soon after the politically sensitive reinstatement of Chaudhry by the Supreme Court on July 20, the ruling reinforces what analysts say is the growing independence of Pakistan's once-compliant judiciary.

General Musharraf faces a growing n u m b e r o f legal challenges.

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