

BARAPUKURIA POWER PLANT

Villagers forced to drink contaminated water, exposed to waterborne diseases



(Left) Local residents use contaminated water of a pond in a village near Barapukuria Power Plant. (Right) The villagers also suffer from various skin diseases for using such contaminated water.



PHOTO: STAR

KONGON KARMAKER, Dinajpur
People of 15 villages around Barapukuria Power Plant have been forced to use and consume contaminated water since the 250MW plant started power generation four years ago.

Nirmal Ronjit Roy, a resident of Mohindrapara, complained that as there is no alternative to this muddy water he had health and skin problems after using and consuming this contaminated water.

Hasina Banu, a resident of the area, said she never witnessed such water crisis in her 56 years of life. She has also serious skin diseases with her nails developing funguses.

Hasina said she had consulted a doctor who advised her to use and consume fresh water only.

It is unfortunate that in a democratic country, there is nobody to address our problems," said an elderly woman Janahara Begum expressing her frustration.

According to tests carried out by geology and mining department of Rajshahi University, untreated waste water from Barapukuria Coal Mine and Power Plant contains poisonous coal dust (carbon), rock dust, sulphur, phosphorus, arsenic and magnesium.

The water is creating health hazards for local people spreading skin diseases, said officials of Dinajpur public health department.

This correspondent also found that most of the villagers are using the water drained out from the plant.

The authorities concerned, however, claim that they pump out the water after treating it inside the plant.

Barapukuria Coal Mining Co Limited (BMCML) and Barapukuria Power Plant are jointly pumping out about 2500 tonnes of water per hour

every day. The power plant alone installed 24 deep tubewells sinking 350 to 450-foot long pipes at West Sherpur village, and its water is being pumped out to nearby Karatola river after using at the plant.

These deep tubewells are also affecting the level of ground water at the villages. All wells and hand-pumped tubewells of the villages remain dry for nine months a year as the ground-water level has gone down 150 to 200 feet from previous 50 to 60 feet.

To mitigate the water crisis Palli Unnayan Sangstha, an NGO of Bogra, began to supply water through pipelines from its own reservoir to effected villagers of Mohindrapara about five months back taking Tk 200 from

each family although the water supply is not regular due to lack of electricity.

"We are therefore forced to use and consume contaminated water," said Fuleswari, 70, of Hamidpur village.

Officials of district agriculture and livestock department also agree that water pumped out by the coal mine and power plant is too polluted to use for farming and consumption by human and livestock.

Mining experts at Barapukuria coal mine admitted that the mine and power plant authorities should have jointly installed one set of water pumps and a high-powered water treatment plant to avoid huge wastage of water and consequent water crisis.

But it is impossible now due to faulty design of the plant, they added.

PSC circular on 30th BCS exams next Jan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) will publish the circular of the 30th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations within January 5-15 next year, PSC Chairman Dr Saadat Hossain said recently.

He also said the commission would publish the final results of the 28th BCS examinations by December this year and would try to hold BCS examinations every year.

Dr Saadat was speaking at a press conference at the PSC office in the city.

The press conference was organised to inform the press about the successful completion of the written exams of the 28th BCS.

The PSC chairman, however, did not say anything about the recommendation of the parliamentary sub-committee and the Prime Minister's Office to recruit 1,022 BCS candidates, who had qualified in the first phase of the 27th BCS.

He handed over a written statement of the PSC in this regard, which was neither signed by the PSC chairman nor any PSC official.

The statement read, "As the High Court dismissed the writ filed by some candidates against the decision of cancelling the first phase viva voce of 27th BCS for corruption, there is no legal validity of the first phase of the 27th BCS viva voce."

The Public Service Commission has placed related information and data to the authorities concerned and it has no new version on the issue," the statement said which means the PSC sticks to the earlier stance of not recruiting the successful candidates of the first phase viva voce of 27th BCS.

The PSC chairman said the preliminary test of 29th BCS would be held soon but it could take more than one month from now as the commission is screening around 1.25 lakh applications.

Nat'l policy on libraries soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Public Libraries has drafted the 'Bangladesh Public Libraries Act' with a view to formulating a national policy to ensure proper management of the libraries across the country.

The national policy is needed to monitor and develop the libraries and facilitate the practice of literature, culture and knowledge in the country.

Md Zillur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Public Libraries, said this at a workshop on 'Bangladesh Public Libraries Act' organised by the department at its conference room in the city yesterday.

Speaking as the chief guest, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said, "Every institutions should have specific rules and regulations. But it is a matter of great regret that there is no law to properly manage the libraries even after 38 years of independence."

He stressed the need to formulate a time-befitting law to run and protect the libraries across the country and to expand the scope of study for the countrymen.

He also said that hi-tech park, software technology park, ICT incubator and computer village would be set up in the country in order to build a Digital Bangladesh.

According to the draft act, an advisory council will be formed to supervise the management service of the libraries and to improve the standards of the libraries. The minister of the ministry concerned will be the chairman of the 11-members committee.

According to a provision of the Act, there will be five levels of public libraries across the country. They are central public libraries, divisional

public libraries, city public libraries, district public libraries and non-government public libraries.

According to another provision, the government would set up a 'Public Libraries Fund' to provide all kinds of financial assistance.

Talking to The Daily Star, an official of the Department of Public Libraries said a seven-member committee headed by Prof Abdurrahman Abu Sayeed, president of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, would be formed immediately to review some provisions of the draft act.

Chaired by Md Shariful Alam, secretary to the cultural affairs ministry, the workshop was also addressed by Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Nur Hossain Talukdar, director (joint secretary) of Department of Public Libraries, and M Samsul Islam Khan, head of Publications unit of ICDDR, B.

EDN EXCHANGE
Agreement with AIBS signed

UNB, Dhaka

An agreement to establish an educational exchange programme was signed between the government of Bangladesh and American Institute of Bangladesh Study (AIBS) at a simple ceremony at Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC on Friday.

The purpose of the agreement will contribute to a better and scholarly understanding of Bangladesh in the US.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Humayun Kabir and Shelly Feldman, a professor of Cornell University and current President of AIBS, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

AIBS is an association of universities and institutes interested in Bangladesh studies, said a Bangladesh Embassy release.

World Cancer Survivors' Day today

BSS, Dhaka

World Cancer Survivors' Day 2009 will be observed in the country today like elsewhere across the globe.

In observance of the day Ahsanullah Mission Cancer Hospital will hold a seminar on 'Feelings and expression of cancer survivors' at the Mission Bhaban auditorium, says a press release.

The cancer survivors' day is an annual, worldwide celebration of life' that is held in hundreds of communities across the world.

In most areas, national Cancer Survivors' Day is traditionally observed on the first Sunday in June, although this is not always possible due to scheduling conflicts and time differences.

Call to join fight against militancy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of noted citizens yesterday termed militancy an immediate danger to the country and vowed to launch an awareness campaign across the country soon to help curb it.

As immediate steps against militancy, they urged the government to take steps to restore the democratic spirit of the constitution of 1972, search out and close the sources of militants' funding and complete investigation and trial of all major arms haul and bomb blast incidents.

Addressing a press conference at the Liberation War

Museum in the city, the noted citizens called upon people to join the fight against militancy as it is not possible by the government alone to fight the menace.

Tabarak Hossain of Sammilita Samajik Andolan read out a written statement at the press conference while Deputy Speaker of Parliament Col (retd) Shawkat Ali, columnist Syed Abul Maksud and academic Dr Ajay Roy also addressed the press conference.

They called for all progressive democratic political forces and all social, student and youth organisations to work for creating awareness among people against militancy.

According to a provision of the Labour Law 2006 should be protected, they added.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies organised the discussion at its office in the city.

Advocate Faustina Pereira, Dilruba Sharmin and Syed Sultanuddin Ahmed spoke at the discussion presided over by Fawzia Karim, president of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association.

Museum in the city, the noted citizens called upon people to join the fight against militancy as it is not possible by the government alone to fight the menace.

Woman labourers who are out of purview of the Labour Law 2006 should be protected, they added.

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