

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.

KONGKON 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.

The worst affected villages are Kalupara, Gopalpara, Baidynathpur, Balarampur, Chowhati, Dhulaulaz, Patigram, Mou Pukur, Ziagari, Bansh Pukur, Shak Gram, Durgapur, Rasulpur and Hamidpur.

The villagers face serious dearth of fresh water in the area for about nine months a year starting from October to June.

Due to use and taking of contaminated water being pumped out by the power plant through a long tunnel, they are suffering from various waterborne and skin diseases.

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 fungus.

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 Jahanara Begum expressing her frustration.

According to tests carried out by geology and mining depart-

ment 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 (BCMCL) 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 Karatoa 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 Pally 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 being 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 their 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 Abdullah Abu Sayeed, president of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, would be formed immediately to review some provisions of the draft act.

Chaired by Md Sharful 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 Ahsania 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 (ret'd) Shawkat Ali, columnist Syed Abul Maksud and academic Dr Ajoy 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.

'Ensure rights of women in non-formal sectors'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called on the government to ensure the rights of women working in non-formal sectors.

Woman labourers who are out of purview 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.



PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDAR

Spills of burnt fuel oil from a vessel pollute river water, as it along with other vessels of Chittagong Port Authority takes part in a rally in the Karnaphuli river in Chittagong yesterday. The port authority organised the rally to mark the Maritime Safety Week.

MARITIME SAFETY WEEK BEGINS

Call to free river from pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) organised a vessel rally on the river Karnaphuli yesterday in observance of Maritime Safety Week-2009 that aims at ensuring safe journey on riverine and sea routes and creating awareness among the owners and crews of coasters, launches, fishing trawlers, lighter and other vessels.

Five vessels led by rescue ship Kandari-7 with port officials and a group of journalists cruised for about an hour from jetty No-1 to Sadarghat jetty.

Crews of the Kandari through a megaphone called upon all vessels anchored on the sides of the river to follow strictly the maritime rules and regulations. They also urged the vessel owners not to discharge oily or solid wastes in the river Karnaphuli and sought their cooperation in keeping the river free from pollution.

Prior to the cruise, CPA Chairman Commodore RU Ahmed briefed about the objective of the week that kicked off yesterday.

"Despite many advantages to make the shipping sector as one of the most exciting and attractive one, it has unfortunately remained neglected for long. Journey on river or sea is cheapest, safe and most adventurous in comparison to others. Besides, the sector is most environment-friendly," he said.

He said the government has taken a number of initiatives to make the sector exciting.

"Drive against encroachment, pollution and unfit vessels is a major task that the government has already started in Dhaka and elsewhere," he added.

Ahmed said the CPA has finalised to procure two new vessels, one for oily waste collection and the other for solid waste collection to fight pollution of the Karnaphuli.

"One of the ships would arrive by December this year and another by August next year. He said they will be able to monitor regularly the everyday state of pollution and check the pollution effectively.

CPA Member (Finance) Harun Chowdhury, Deputy Conservator Captain Nazmul Alam and Secretary Syed Farhaduddin Ahmed were present.



Ms Sarah Hatton, Marketing Manager, Macquarie City Campus, will interview students for Macquarie City Campus and SIBT in Dhaka on Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th June, 2009.

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ADMISSION

Admission Exam July 9, 2009

Fall Semester Academic year 2009-10

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