

BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE Tk 324 cr plan to rehabilitate affected people

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) has taken a Tk 324 crore master plan to rehabilitate and compensate villagers affected due to frequent land subsidence caused by underground geological faults in and round the coal mine area.

BCMCL authorities prepared a Development Project Proposal (DPP) and placed it to the government to allocate Tk 260 crore in the coming Annual Development Project (ADP) of 2010-11 fiscal year, official sources said.

The master plan includes preparing resettlement framework (RF), land acquisition plan (LAP) and resettlement action plan (RAP), and distributing compensation money and rehabilitate the affected villagers after developing a 'mining city'.

It also proposed improvement of lifestyle of the affected villagers free of cost.

Considering the scale of damage including infrastructure, land and natural resources, BCMCL authorities prepared the resettlement framework (RF) with the help of independent consultant Dr Khurshed Alam and placed it to Petrobangla on October 4 last year, sources said.

BCMCL authorities identified at least 646 acres of land as 'possible land subsidence area' according to the international standard of mining project, sources said.

Appointed by BCMCL, Bangladesh Consultant Ltd (BCL) began its field level survey on December 1 last year to prepare the RAP and LAP database.

"We will start the land acquisition after getting all the three database and government approval with proposed

fund," said BCMCL Managing Director Md Quamruzzaman.

BCMCL also submitted a proposal to the deputy commissioner urging the district administration to acquire the proposed 646 acres of land and the district administration is preparing to acquire the proposed land with market prices, sources said.

BCL, which is about to end its survey, will prepare a proposal to acquire land for the 'mining city', BCMCL officials said.

The villagers around Barapukuria coalmine have been demanding compensation for damage of houses and arable lands caused by land subsidence due to the geographical faults.

BCMCL authorities gave about Tk 2 crore 10 lakh as compensation to the affected villagers since 2005-06 FY, sources said.

Science Olympiad in Sylhet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Sylhet

National Science Olympiad 2010 for the Sylhet region will be held at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) today.

Sust vice-chancellor Prof Md Saleh Uddin will formally inaugurate the event at 9:00 am.

About 500 students from different primary and secondary schools in the division will participate in the daylong event.

Students from class V to class VIII will participate in 'Ka' group while students from class IX and class X will participate in 'Kha' group.

The written competition for the participants will be held in MCQ system between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon. Quiz contest, discussion on science and question-answer session will be held later to select the winners in the regional level Olympiad.

Final round of the National Science Olympiad 2010, arranged by the Bangladesh Science Academy, will be held in Dhaka with participation of the contestants selected from 10 regions across the country.



A file photo of Tengratila Gas Field explosion in June 2005. It occurred in the relief well that was dug to permanently close another well of the gas field that saw a devastating blow-out in January 7 the same year.

FIVE YEARS INTO TENGRATILA BLOW-OUT Locals cry for compensation

Rally also demands resumption of gas field activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Sylhet

Tengratila Dabi Aday Bastobayon Parishad yesterday formed a human chain and held a rally in front of the central Shahid Minar in Sylhet city demanding payment of arrear compensation from Canadian company Niko for the blow-out at Tengratila Gas Field five years ago.

As the foreign company was engaged in drilling a well, it exploded with a big bang in the night of January 7 in 2005, causing destruction to huge gas and leaving a trail of devastation in the surrounding area.

The huge gas field location now gives a deserted look, except a few guards.

Nurul Amin, joint convener of Tengratila Dabi Aday

Bastobayon Parishad, and others addressed a brief rally during yesterday's programme in Sylhet city to press their 'legitimate' demands.

The speakers at the rally said they will continue pressing the Niko to fulfil their commitments as it is a life and death matter for the poor inhabitants around.

The demanded that the government take immediate and effective measures to realise 'due arrear compensation' from the Canadian company, especially for the villagers around.

They also demanded resumption of activities in the gas field and establishment of a 50 MW power plant at a nearby location.

The two committees

formed by the government after the incident mentioned that the explosion caused a loss of Tk 746 crore including Tk 85 crore environmental losses.

But things have remained unsettled still. The foreign company did not even pay the total amount of their agreed compensation to 616 poor families, who were forced out from their ancestral homes for months due to the gas well explosion.

Located nearby, the Tengratila High School building, which had to be abandoned after the incident, is yet to be reconstructed although the company had committed in writing for it.

Another serious blow-out took place on the night of June 24 in 2005 as the Canadian company Niko was running a

relief well drilling at the remote location in Doarabazar upazila of Sunamganj district. It was being drilled to seal the original one, which had suffered a huge blow-out on January 7 that year.

Trees got burnt, croplands damaged and thousands of people had to be shifted from their homesteads. The huge fireball leapt 150 feet over the gas field and forced thousands to flee their homesteads.

The raging flames at Tengratila Gas Field, which were visible from even 30 kilometres away, took about two months to go down totally.

Yet bubbles of gas emission are marked on the water bodies around and fish in the ponds often die due to the gas leakage, several locals said yesterday.



Fire fighters try to douse blaze at the huge stack of jute sticks on the premises of MRS Particle Board Factory at BSCIC Industrial Estate in Kushtia yesterday.

Raw materials at Kushtia particle board factory gutted

A CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A huge stack of jute sticks, used as raw material for producing particle board, was gutted in a fire at MRS Industries of BRB Group in BSCIC industrial estate yesterday afternoon.

Police and fire brigade sources said the fire started around 3:30pm at four huge stacks of jute sticks kept side by side in open spaces behind the factory.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the fire after fighting about three and a half hours. However, no casualty was reported.

The authorities of MRS Industries claimed that the value of jute sticks put on about two acres of land would be Tk 1 crore.

Mujibur Rahman, chairman of BRB group that produces particle and melamine boards, said no one was injured and all the machines remained intact.

OWNERS, WORKERS PROTEST EXTORTION Gabtoli-Dhubaria bus service halted for 7 hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Manikganj

Owners and workers yesterday suspended bus service on Gabtoli-Dhubaria route via Manikganj for seven hours protesting toll collection and assault on bus workers by ruling party men.

The transport workers gathered on Ghior DN High School playground in the morning and held a protest rally against toll collection and beating up bus workers.

Mortaza Ali, secretary of Village Line Bus Workers' Association, alleged that Daulatpur Upazila Awami League Secretary Farid Ahmed and some others obstructed a bus at

Daulatpur bus stand in Manikganj Wednesday evening and forced the bus driver to move its direction. They also beat up driver Abbas when he protested the incident.

Mizanur Rahman Kudrat, joint convener of Village Line Bus Owners' Association, also alleged that a group of ruling party youths and Farid Ahmed frequently ransacked the buses operating on the route and beat up bus workers to realise toll money.

The bus owners and workers decided to resume bus operation on the route at about 2:00pm yesterday after getting assurance from the AL leaders of Ghior and Daulatpur upazilas regard-

ing taking lawful action against the persons responsible for Wednesday's incident.

When contacted, Daulatpur Upazila AL Secretary Farid Ahmed denied his involvement in the incidents and said buses are running on the road without route permit.

Member of Parliament from Nagarpur and veteran freedom fighter Abdul Baten inaugurated the bus service on the route before the last Eid-ul-Fitr for the greater interest of people of Daulatpur of Manikganj and Nagarpur of Tangail district. Thirty-two buses are now operating on the route.

Dense fog disrupts ferry, launch services

A CORRESPONDENT,
Chandpur

Ferry service on Chandpur-Shariatpur route remained suspended for 14 hours due to dense fog in river Meghna, causing immense sufferings to passengers.

Md Zahir Uddin Ahmed, assistant manager (marketing) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in Chandpur, said ferry movement on the route was suspended till 10:00am yesterday from 8:00pm Wednesday.

Besides, launch and steamer services were also disrupted in Chandpur because of heavy fog in river Meghna.

Md Wahidur Rahman, BIWTA traffic inspector at

Chandpur, said launch Coco-3 that left southern region was scheduled to reach Chandpur terminal at 1:30pm Wednesday but it reached there at 9:00am yesterday.

Another launch New Sun-4, which left the same region, reached Chandpur around 10:30am yesterday while it was scheduled to arrive at 1:00am. Yet another launch Zahid-4 which left Dhaka for southern parts of the country was scheduled to reach Chandpur at 11:30pm Wednesday but it arrived at about 9:45am yesterday.

Zahir Uddin Ahmed of BIWTA also said that two steamers got stuck up in Harina area of Chandpur and a good number launches reached Chandpur terminal well behind schedule.

Three schoolboys rescued from trafficker

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Sathkha

Three primary schoolboys, who were abducted by a trafficker on their way to school Monday morning, were rescued from Murali intersection under Kotwali police station in Jessore later in the night.

Police also arrested trafficker Tariqul Islam, son of Fazlu Dalal of Jugikhal village under Kalaroa upazila of Sathkha.

The rescued children are Emran, 10, son of Abdul Hai, Mintu Hasan, 11, son of

Rafiqul Islam, and Ramjan Ali, 11, son of Sakatullah of the same Jugikhal village.

Police quoting local people said the children were going to Jugikhal Government Primary School but the trafficker tricked them to follow him to Jessore for sweetmeats.

As the children did not return home, their guardians started searching for them and rescued them with the help of police and local people, police said.

A case was filed with Kalaroa police.

Clash over burial of schoolteacher in Gopalganj: 30 injured

A CORRESPONDENT,
Gopalganj

At least 30 people including a union parishad (UP) chairman have been injured in a clash over burial of a schoolteacher at Karpara here.

Locals said, Enjal Haque, a retired schoolteacher of the village died on Tuesday. When everything was ready at noon for burial of the body, Karpara UP chairman Barkat Jahan Sikder obstructed the move claiming the dead owed him Tk 70,000. The incident triggered a clash, resulting in injuries to 30 people.

Ten of the injured including the chairman were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital for treatment. Other injured are Abdul Mannan Sikder, 65, Ulu Sikder, 40, Alam Sikder, 35, Zakir Majumder, 45, Hafizur Majumder, 35, Bakkar Majumder, 25, Abu Sayeed Majumder, 25, Bashir Majumder, 22, and Mizanur Mollah, 40.

Police later brought the situation under control.

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PHOTO: STAR

Passenger buses lie idle at Ghior BN High School ground as bus owners and workers stopped plying of their vehicles on Gabtoli-Dhubaria Road for seven hours yesterday demanding an end to extortion and vandalism of transports. The agitation programme was later withdrawn as authorities assured them of proper action within a short time.