

Ashuganj power plant needs urgent overhaul

Production sometimes dips below 350MW because of run-down units

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Brahmanbaria

Ashuganj Power Station Company Limited (APSC) can not produce power to the capacity while the power station, one of the largest in the country, sees gradual fall in production due to run-down machinery.

Although the capacity of eight power-generating units is 724 megawatt (MW), the station can now produce around 618 MW, sources at the power station said.

Out of eight units, GT-1, GT-2 and ST (combined cycle) units are incurring heavy losses and the authorities have a plan to set up a 150 MW power unit soon by replacing the three units, said a reliable source.

As several units are not functioning well, the authorities have lowered its production capacity to 678 MW. But it has failed to generate the said amount of electricity regularly. Even sometimes power production goes

below 350 MW. Sources said most of the units of the station are in a dilapidated condition and two or three units often remain out of order. The units also become inoperative due to technical faults and lack of proper maintenance.

Unit-1 of 64 MW and unit2 of 64 MW went into operation in 1970 while unit3 of 150 MW, unit4 of 150 MW, unit5 of 150 MW, gas turbine (GT)-1 unit of 56 MW, GT-2 unit of 56 MW and combined cycle steam turbine (ST) of 34 MW started production between the years 1982 and 1988.

According to official record of APSC, authorities cannot fully depend on any unit of the station. The power generation of the units is not up to the mark in view of the production cost, the record says.

All units, excepting unit5, have exceeded the time limit of 50,000 working hours long ago but the authorities have not taken any initiative yet for overhauling, sources said.

However, a high official of APSC on

condition of anonymity said it would be better to repair the faults of the units again and again instead of doing overhauling work spending crores of taka as the units are obsolete.

Another source said spare parts of the units are not available in the market. In order to get spare parts, the APSC authorities will have to give order to respective firms at least one year ago.

Contacted, Abdul Khaleque, managing director of APSC, said six units of the station need overhauling. "It is not possible to do overhauling work of all the units at a time. We are going to take a plan to perform overhauling gradually," he said.

The MD added that they have a plan to set up a 150 MW unit replacing GT1, GT2 and ST units while another 450 MW unit replacing unit-1 and unit-2.

A feasibility study of the replacement project is going on at the station. APSC is trying to get financial support from various development partners, he added.



Ashuganj power station now limps with run-down machinery.

PHOTO: STAR

Cold wave comes only to tell on the poor

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The second spell of the cold wave this season has come as an added misery for the poor and disadvantaged people, especially in the northern districts.

The fresh cold wave from Sunday has disrupted normal life in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

As people are forced to stay indoors, business and official activities are hampered while students' attendance in schools and colleges fell.

The minimum temperature recorded in Thakurgaon was 10 degrees Celsius while it was nine degrees in Panchagarh district yesterday, local met office sources said.

The sun remained invisible during the last two days. Only a couple of days before, the region faced a two-week long cold wave that started in mid-December last year.

Although different government and non-government organisations are distributing warm clothes among the poor people but it is too inadequate for the demand.

"I wrote to the higher authorities for more blankets and warm clothes for distribution among the poor cold-hit people. We have also requested solvent people to help the poor. The district administration has distributed several hundred blankets," Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner Munshi Shahabuddin Ahmed said.

Agricultural activities are being disturbed as farmers cannot work in crop fields due to the chilling cold, said Daliluddin, deputy director of Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension.

Increasing number of patients, especially children and elderly people, are coming to hospitals with cold-related diseases, said Dr Khairul Kabir, acting civil surgeon of Thakurgaon.

Seventeen people died of cold related diseases during last spell of cold wave in Thakurgaon district, family



Septuagenarian Rozina having meal beside a fire at a slum in Dinajpur as the second spell of cold wave appeared as a source of added suffering to the poor people who can hardly afford warm clothes.

70 more Rohingyas held on charge of intrusion

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Law enforcers raided different areas of Cox's Bazar town over the last three days and arrested 70 more Rohingyas who entered the country illegally.

The drive started at 7:00am on Saturday and continued until yesterday afternoon.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Cox's Bazar Model Police Station Proddip Kumar Das said several thousand Myanmar Rohingyas, who illegally entered the country, are now staying in the town and getting involved in different professions.

They pull rickshaws and work at hotels and restaurants and also as day labourers, the OC

said, adding that most of them are involved in criminal activities in the town.

The OC further said drive will continue and action will also be taken against those who are sheltering the Rohingyas.

Separate cases have been filed with Model Police Station against the arrested Rohingyas on charges of entering Bangladesh illegally.

On January 5 and 6, the law enforcers arrested 39 Rohingyas, raiding different places including Tekpara, Burmese Market, bus terminal and the town's main road.

They also recovered 30 rickshaws from the arrested Rohingyas and later produced them in Cox's Bazar Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent them to jail.

Bail prayer of 2 JMB militants rejected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The chief judicial magistrate's court of Dinajpur yesterday rejected the bail plea of two members of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and sent them to jail.

The court also fixed the next date of hearing of the case on February 28.

Court sources said, police produced Rafiqul Islam alias Zobayer alias Russel alias Jasim, 28, 'military commander' of JMB Rajshahi region and Shahidul Islam, 55, an Ehsar member of the outfit, to the court amid tight security.

Sources said, there are about 12 cases pending against the two JMB arrestees with different police stations of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Gaibandha and Nilphamari.

Rab-5 on December 3 last year raided the residence of Shahidul Islam, 55, son of Korban Ali of Kashigari village under Ghoraghat upazila of Dinajpur and arrested him along with bomb making materials and leaflets.

On the basis of Shahidul's statement, police arrested Rafiqul Islam after a few days from Chapainawabganj.

'71 KILLING IN BAGERHAT Jamaat leader sued again

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A case was filed with a Bagerhat court yesterday against naye-b-e-ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Abul Kalam Muhammad Yusuf and 29 others on charge of killing a freedom fighter during Liberation War in 1971.

The accused include former lawmaker and Moredganj upazila BNP president Dr Miah Abbas Uddin.

Martyred freedom fighter Zainal Fakir's wife Achhia Khatun of Sonatola village under Sharankhola upazila filed the case with Bagerhat additional chief judicial magistrate court yesterday noon.

Achhia in her complaint said, a gang, led by Yusuf, picked up freedom fighter Zainul from Tafalbari bazaar on June 9 in 1971. The accused hacked Zainul, shot him dead and threw his body into the nearby canal, she alleged.

The court ordered the OC of Sharankhola police station to record the allegation.

Earlier on December 4 last year, Yusuf and 35 others were sued on charges of killing freedom fighters, setting fire to a house and looting valuables from it during Liberation

War in 1971.

Khadija Begum of Dakkhin Rajoir village under Sharankhola upazila of Bagerhat filed the case with the additional chief judicial magistrate's court.

The court ordered the officer-in-charge of Sharankhola police station to record the case as an ejarah.

The plaintiff in her statement said, the accused led by Jamaat leader AKM Yusuf and Miah Abbas Uddin set up a camp on the first floor of the building that houses police station at Rayenda Bazar of the upazila in 1971 and killed a number of freedom fighters at the camp.

On June 7, 1971, a group of freedom fighters, including her husband Ismail Hossain Hawlader and Asmat Munshi of Khuriakhali village, attacked the camp, she said.

Both sides traded bullets and at one stage the accused caught the freedom fighters, including Ismail and Asmat Munshi, and beat them dead, she added.

The plaintiff alleged that the accused on June 8, 1971 attacked her house, looted rice, cash, gold ornaments and other valuables and set the house afire.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

'Jatka' seized in Chandpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Coastguards in a raid on a passenger launch on the Meghna in Chandpur seized 30 maunds of jatka (hilsa fry) early yesterday. Kept in five baskets, the jatka were found in abandoned condition in "MV Bandhan" coming to Dhaka from Bhola via Chandpur. Chandpur Coastguard station commander Lt Khawja Masum led the drive. Khawja Masum said, the value of the seized jatka would be about Tk 2 lakh. The fish would be given away to orphanages, he added.

Under trial prisoner dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

An under-trial prisoner died in Bogra district jail Saturday noon. Himel, 40, was sent to jail on August 3 last year following arrest in a case filed under Narcotics Control Act. The general diary (GD) filed by Bogra jail authorities with Sadar police station on Saturday said as Himel was admitted to Shahid Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital after he felt chest pain. He died at around 3:00 pm while under treatment. Himel is son of late Nurul Islam of Dargapara village under Panchbibi upazila in Joypurhat district.



Indigenous people join a human chain in front of Bandarban Press Club yesterday to press for stopping construction of Swargchura Parjatan Kendra (tourism centre) on indigenous people's land at Kanapara in the town and acquire of indigenous people's land at Tonkaboti.

PHOTO: STAR

Hundi trader arrested

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Benapole customs authorities on Sunday noon recovered a huge amount of foreign currencies from the bag of an Indian citizen and arrested him on charge of hundi trading. Customs superintendent Abdul Latif said, while searching Rezaul Karim's bag at the check point, the customs officials recovered 1,59,000 Japanese yen, 1,065 US\$, 65,000 Indian rupees, 990 Thai baht, 360 Saudi riyals and Bangladesh Tk 16,784. Rezaul Karim is son of Kazi Shamsul Huda of New Pandopati Complex, Kolkata. A divisional case has been filed in this regard.

Bullets recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police on Sunday afternoon recovered 179 bullets of two types of firearms from Fatamohammadpur village in Ishwardi upazila. Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sheikh Joyen Uddin said, on a tip-off, police went to the spot and recovered two bagful of bullets which were hidden under earth near Al Madina mosque. Of 179 bullets, most of them active, 87 are of rifle and 92 of pistols, the ASP said.

Boy 'commits suicide'

UNB, Sirajganj

A nine-year-old boy allegedly committed suicide in Janpur Bangpara area of the district town early yesterday. Police said Akil Hasan, son of Helal Uddin, killed himself by hanging from the ceiling of his house at about 2:00am. On information, police recovered the body in the morning and sent it to Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy. The reason behind the suicide could not be known immediately.

Body recovered

UNB, Manikganj

Police recovered the body of a young girl from a tobacco field at Bilnalai village in Ghior upazila on Sunday. Victim Shilpi Akter, 18, was a worker at a private clinic at Savar. She hailed from Brahmananga village of the upazila. Locals said, they noticed the body of the girl at the tobacco field in the morning and informed police. Police rushed to the spot and sent the body that bore injury marks, to Sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rival pirates lock in fierce gunfight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two rival groups of pirates traded gunshots at Tambulunia under Sharankhola Police Station of Bagerhat district Sunday evening.

Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) Bipul Chandra Das said the pirates of notorious Raju Bahini and Shohag Bahini of the Sundarbans traded over 200 rounds of bullets during the gunfight that continued for an hour.

At one stage, Shohag Bahini retreated in the face of a fierce attack by Raju Bahini, the ACF said, adding that no one was killed or injured during the fight.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Sharankhola Police Station has requested the higher authorities to provide more forces and logistic support to launch drives against the pirates of the Sundarbans.

Meanwhile, pirates belonging to Ali Bahini of the Sundarbans have threatened reprisal for attacking their ringleader Ali Hossain Jamaddar, 34, on Sunday.

Ali Hossain came under attack by angry mob at Khuriakhali and Chalitabunia villages under Sharankhola upazila of Bagerhat district Sunday morning. The villagers beat him up severely and gouged out his eyes at Boyatirvila near Terobeka forest camp under the same upazila.

Police and forest workers later rescued seriously injured Ali Hossain from the hands of villagers and took him to Sharankhola Upazila Health Complex where he is undergoing treatment under police guard.

The villagers also rescued trader Sanjoy Halder, 28, who was abducted by the member of the gang on Saturday for ransom.



A woman takes care of a shutki khola (centre for drying fish) at Baniar Char village on the Modhumati River in Maksudpur upazila of Gopalganj district. Thousands of people are engaged in seasonal dried fish business in the district.

PHOTO: STAR