

WATER CRISIS AROUND BARAPUKURIA POWER PLANT

# Affected villagers warn of agitation from Oct 26

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Affected people of 10 villages around Barapukuria 250MW Power Plant in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur district yesterday warned of launching a tough programme on October 26 if their three-point demand is not met within October 25.

Demanding solution to the water crisis caused due to installation of the power plant, the villagers under the banner of Dudhipukur Pani O Bidyut Sangram Committee organised a press conference at Phulbari Press Club yesterday noon.

Md Anwarul Haque, a freedom fighter and convener of the committee, read out the keynote in presence of other members of the committee and

affected villagers.

Urging the authorities to meet their three-point demand including solving water and power crisis in the 10 affected villages within October 25, the speakers at the press conference said otherwise the affected villagers would suspend water supply through the 14 high-power water pumps installed at the plant.

As the authorities set up at least 14 pumps at Sherpur village near Barapukuria Power Plant which pump out at least 1200 tonnes of water an hour to generate power from the plant, people of 10 surrounding villages are facing problem as the water table went down, said the affected villagers.

The tube-wells of 10 affected villagers have remained inoperative for

the last 4/5 years, they said at the press conference.

Due to water crisis, the affected villagers need to fetch water from 2 to 5km away to meet their daily needs. Besides, they are being forced to use the contaminated water of power plant drained through a tunnel and it is causing skin problems to the villagers.

Earlier, last month the affected villagers laid siege to the power plant for an hour demanding solution to the problems.

Biswanath Haldar, chief engineer of the power plant, said that he sent a report to his higher authority in this regard.

The residents of these areas now rely on reserved water to quench their thirst.

Excessive water lifting by the 14 water pumps of the power plant, especially

during the summer, has aggravated the problem. Most natural water sources that support the water supply in the area have partially dried up and that in turn has led to the lowering of the water level, causing problem in getting water from tube-wells, speakers said at the press conference.

The arable fields near the power plant are also facing irrigation problem due to the situation, speakers said, adding that several families have left the villages due to water crisis.

Shafiqul Islam, Md Abdur Rahman, Md Abdul Kalam Azad, Samidul Islam, Md Ashraf Alam, Shahidul Islam Bachchu, Mofizul Islam Badsha, Md Masud Rana, Md Moslem Uddin, Md Mazedur Rahman, Yousuf Ali and Abdul Kayum spoke at the press conference.



PHOTO: STAR

A dredger lifts sand from Atai River in Digholia upazila of Khulna district, leading to river erosion, much to the fear of adjacent villagers.

# Sand lifting from river in Khulna goes unabated

AL leader allegedly involved, locals fear erosion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sand lifting from the Atai River in Digholia upazila of Khulna district threatens homesteads in the area.

Since October 4, three dredgers have continued sand lifting under the supervision of a ruling party leader, who has even ignored the warning of stern action given by the upazila administration in a recent meeting of law and order committee.

Locals alleged that they did not get any response from authorities concerned despite submitting a written petition for stopping sand lifting from the river.

A syndicate of sand lifters headed by a leader of Khulna district Awami League is doing the unscrupulous act, several locals said, adding that sand-laden cargo vessels are transported to Khulna Skidghat from where it is sold to customers for wholesale prices.

A young man of Hajigram village told this correspondent that Chairman of Senhati Union Parishad of Digholia upazila Gazi Abdul Halim, who is also publicity secretary of Khulna district Awami League, is ringleader of the syndicate of sand lifters.

The young man earnestly requested not to disclose his

name as he fears reprisal from muslemen of the UP chairman.

Several residents of Hajigram and Senhati villages including Siddique Sheikh, Tabbar Rahman, Hasan Gazi and Rahmat Sheikh said river erosion caused by random sand lifting is threatening their homesteads.

Villagers, however, are not in a position to make any protest as some influential leaders of the ruling party are involved in the 'dangerous business'.

When contacted, Gazi Abdul Halim flatly denied the allegation of sand lifting against him, saying that it was done during the rule of previ-

ous four-party alliance government.

"Sand lifting does not cause erosion by river. It happens due to high tides and strong crosscurrents. Experts can say if there is any connection between sand lifting and river erosion," he said.

Admitting the incidents of sand lifting, Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Digholia upazila Md Khairuzzaman said, "Nobody was given permission to lift sand from the Atai River. I have asked the police to arrest the alleged sand lifters and seize the dredgers for taking legal action."

# Internal feud in Satkhira BNP over formation of committees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira.

Internal feud in Satkhira BNP has surfaced anew over formation of the committees of Sadar upazila and pourasava units.

Aggrieved leaders and activists of the two units at a press conference here yesterday demanded cancellation of the newly formed committees, alleging that opportunistic leaders have been included in the two committees instead of the dedicated ones.

Satkhira Pourasava BNP General Secretary Masum Billah Shahin read out a written statement, which was also signed by Sadar upazila BNP Vice-President Yusuf Ali.

He said the biennial conference of Satkhira Pourasava and Sadar upazila BNP was jointly held at Satkhira pourasava auditorium on November 9 last year.

In the conference Abdul Alim, Yusuf Ali, Shahidul Islam and Abdul Mazid were

elected president, senior vice-president, general secretary, and organising secretary of Sadar upazila BNP, while Habibur Rahman Habib and Masum Billah Shahin were elected president and general secretary of pourasava BNP, he said.

Though a decision was taken at the conference to form full-fledged committees of the two units within a month, the decision was not implemented within the period due to conspiracy hatched by the central BNP Vice-President Syeda Razia Foyez, Shahin alleged.

Razia Foyez formed the committees of the two units, misleading the party secretary general, Shahin said, adding that she is conspiring to weaken the BNP in the district.

Aggrieved leaders and activists of the two units were present at the press conference at pourasava BNP office in the town. The demanded that central BNP take steps to save the two units from the grip of opportunists and form new committees with the dedicated leaders.

They also threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme if their demand is not met immediately.

Contacted, BNP central Vice-President Syeda Razia Foyez denied the allegation and said the party high command approved the committees. She said district BNP General Secretary Syed Iftekhar Ali and Organising Secretary Taskin Ahmed Chisti sent the list of the leaders of the two units. "I had nothing to do," she added.

District BNP leader Sirajul Islam, Mahila Dal Vice-President Ayesha hatun, General Secretary Farida Akhtar Beuty and Organising Secretary Khurshida Jahan Shila, district Jubo Dal General Secretary Abul Hasan Hadi, Krishak Dal General Secretary Abu Zahid Dablu, Tanti Dal President and General Secretary Rafiqul Islam and Sheikh Tariqul Islam, and district Chhatra Dal President Hafizur Rahman were present, among others.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) conducts a drive to demolish an unauthorised structure at Sadar Hospital intersection in the city yesterday as the RCC has continued the initiative to free the city streets from encroachers.

BDR MUTINY TRIAL IN SYLHET

# Charge framing against 61 accused on Dec 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A special court yesterday fixed December 27 for framing charges against 61 mutineers of Sylhet BDR sector headquarters.

Prosecutor Major AKM Aurangajeb, also acting commanding officer of Sylhet sector, gave a detailed description of February 26 incident at the sector headquarters, in Sylhet as the court began at about 8:00am and continued till 9:15am.

The special court-14, headed by Comilla Sector Commander-Col SM Farhad,

heard the description and adjourned the trial proceedings until 8:30am on December 27.

The other panel members are Lt Colonel Akhtaruzzaman and Major Md Masudul Haque. Deputy Attorney General Farhad Ahmed and Special Public Prosecutors Gazi Zillur Rahman and Dewan Mohiuddin were also present.

The court asked the complainant to supply copies of the charges and other documents to the accused so that they can take preparation to

defend themselves. The complainant, Subedar Abdul Gani, read out the allegations against the accused on Wednesday.

The then officer-in-charge of Sylhet Kotwali Police Station filed three separate cases with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on May 17 last year against the BDR mutineers. They were arrested the same day and produced in the court that sent them to jail hajat.

On February 26, 2009, the BDR men took control of the Sylhet sector and two battalions in the city's Akhalia area.

They set fire to some vehicles, including three private vehicles, of BDR officials in front of the battalion headquarters. They also put up barricades on the main road in front of the 21 Battalion headquarters' and fired at least 200 blank shots.

Judgment in the Sylhet region's first case for February 26 mutiny was given on August 2 this year. The special court-3 sentenced 14 BDR men of 8 Rifles Battalion, Sunamganj, to different terms of rigorous imprisonments for their involvement in the mutiny.

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