

BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE

Affected villagers reject compensation scheme

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

The land subsidence affected people around Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) yesterday rejected the Tk 19 crore compensation scheme that was okayed by the Ecnc on Wednesday.

At a press conference held at Dinajpur Press Club, the villagers under the banner of 'Barapukuria Bhumi O Sampad Rakkha Committee', a breakaway faction of Barapukuria Jibon O Sampad Rakkha Committee, said the allocated fund is not enough for their compensation while

the scheme does not have any resettlement proposal for the affected villagers.

Md Ibrahim Khalil, convener of Jibon O Sampad Rakkha Committee, however, hailed the government decision for allocating Tk 19 crore for the affected people.

At yesterday's press conference, Md Bulbul Ahmed, adviser of Barapukuria Bhumi O Sampad Rakkha Committee, read out the keynote in presence of other members of the committee and a good number of affected villagers.

Rejecting compensation of Tk 20 lakh for per acre of farmland and Tk 25 lakh for per

acre of home and commercial lands, speakers at the conference demanded compensation of Tk 35 lakh for per acre of farmland and Tk 1 crore for home and commercial land.

Besides, proposed compensation of Tk 2 lakh for each of over three hundred landless, poor and vulnerable marginal farmers of the affected area is not enough for their resettlement, they said.

The villagers said at least 3,000 people of seven villages including Kalupara, Patigram, Jigari, Moupukur, Barapukuria, Bashpukur, and Balarampur have been badly affected due to land subsidence

following the coal production.

They said Petrobrangla, the parent organisation of BCMCL, at its 116th board meeting held in the capital on July 16 in 2009 decided to take a Tk 312 crore project for resettlement and compensation of the affected villagers.

But mysteriously the Tk 19 crore compensation project has been approved, they alleged.

Demanding compensation according to 'international standard', the affected people warned of greater movement if their demand for compensation of 35 lakh for per acre of farmland Tk 1 crore for each acre of home and commercial lands is not met.

The land subsidence was first detected in May 2006, coalmine sources said.

The villagers have been agitating since early last year demanding compensation.

"Under the project of Relocation and Rehabilitation of the Villagers' within the zone of influence of Barapukuria Coal Mine, 406 affected families of eight villages will receive Tk 20 and 25 lakh for per acre of farming and home lands respectively. At least 646 acres of land will come under the compensation programme," said BCMCL Managing Director Engineer Md Quamruzzaman.



Remnants of the palace of Chakma Circle Chief Raja Debashish Roy after a mysterious fire ravaged the site in Rangamati town on Wednesday night. Inset, a locker recovered from the fire-damaged rubbles.

PHOTO: STAR

234 workers threaten strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

The 238 contractual workers of Barapukuria 250 MW Power Plant yesterday threatened to go for indefinite strike from November 15 if their jobs are not regularised within November 13.

The 238 workers, appointed through an outsourcing company, yesterday handed over a memorandum to the chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board through

Biswanath Halder, chief engineer of the plant.

The power plant authorities did not make any positive response despite repeated movements for job regularisation of the workers, goes the memorandum.

"If the demand is not met within November 13, the workers will observe a daylong strike the next day. It will be followed by an indefinite strike from November 15," it adds.

After a procession inside

the power plant complex to press the authority to meet their demands, the workers held a rally in front of the power plant gate.

Barapukuria Power Plant Workers Union President Nuruzzaman Sarker and General Secretary Shakhawat Hossain spoke, among others.

When contacted, Biswanath Halder, chief engineer of the power plant, said he wrote to his higher authority about the matter.

Criminals take away arms injuring four policemen

Snatch arrestee in another incident

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Criminals took away a firearm and a wireless set injuring four policemen in Brahmanbaria and accomplices injured seven policemen while trying to snatch criminals from law enforcers in Jamalpur yesterday.

In Brahmanbaria, criminals injured four policemen when they went to arrest an accused in north Mourail area of the town and took away a firearm and a wireless set.

The injured were identified as ASI Rezaul Karim, constables Golam Nabi, Nuruzzaman and Mujibur. They were rushed to the district General Hospital, reports UNB.

Later, Golam Nabi and Nuruzzaman were sent to Dhaka as their condition deteriorated.

Police said a team of Sadar police, led by ASI Rezaul, raided the house of one Robin to arrest him in a case late at night.

Robin aided by his relatives branded the law enforcers as 'robbers' and attacked and beat them leaving four of them critically injured.

At one stage they snatched away a shot-gun and a wireless set from the policemen.

Later, police recovered the shot gun from a pond in the area but they could not recover the wireless set. They also nabbed Robin and his

accomplices Jony, Yasmin and Helal.

In Jamalpur, at least 13 people including seven policemen were injured in a clash between law enforcers and accomplices of criminals who tried to snatch two arrestees in Melandah upazila early yesterday.

Melandah police chief Bellal Hossain told our Tangail correspondent that the accomplices of criminals and villagers armed with lethal weapons swooped on them when he with a team of 20 police personnel raided Kajikata char area of the upazila to arrest a few criminals accused in a number of cases around 1.15am and arrested two of them--Babul Miah and Amzad Hossain.

When they were trying to return to the police station with the arrestees the criminals attacked them with sharp weapons, prompting the law enforcers to open blank fire, said the OC.

At one stage, the villagers snatched Amzad, compelling policemen to fire 18 rounds of bullets in self-defence. Six villagers including a woman sustained bullet injuries in the incident while seven policemen were also injured in the attack on them, the OC claimed.

Injured Assistant Sub-Inspector Shuvro Saha and constable Chand Miah were admitted to Jamalpur Police Line Hospital and the injured villagers taken to Jamalpur General Hospital.

5 more bombs recovered in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Kushthia

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday recovered five bombs from Bhorat village in Gangni upazila in Meherpur.

According to Rab-6, a team led by Assistant Police Super (ASP) Sheikh Jahidul Islam raided the village at about 10:30pm and found the bombs in front of the house of one Ruhul Amin.

Ruhul is a businessman, sources said adding extortionists were threatening Ruhul for last several days in demanding of Tk 2 lakh.

"We rushed to the spot getting information from Ruhul Amin who saw a polythene bag just in front of his house," said a Rab official.

Earlier, on Monday police recovered three more bombs from Tetulbaria field in Gangni upazila of Meherpur.

Police said local people informed them seeing a black polythene bag under a culvert at nearby Tetulbaria bazar at about 4:30pm.

Sub-Inspector Osman Gani, in-charge of Bamandi police camp rushed to the spot and recovered the bombs. On Thursday, five farmers were injured in a bomb blast at the same Tetulbaria field.

Police said the bomb went off when they were digging soil there.

Police later recovered two bombs from the spot.

On Saturday, police recovered two bombs from Baliaghat field, adjacent to Tetulbaria field in Gangni upazila of the district.

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangamati

The fire on Wednesday night totally destroyed the palace of Chakma Circle Chief Raja Debashish Roy.

The fire fighters could save nothing as the fire burnt the palace to ashes within half an hour.

A five-member inquiry committee headed by additional deputy magistrate (ADM) Md Nurul Alam Chowdhury, was formed soon after the incident.

The probe body was asked to submit report within three days.

No member of the royal family was present during the fire. Raja Debashish Roy was in

Bangkok and his daughter was in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, no staff of Raja Debashish Roy could say from where the fire originated. They could not say the extent of damage. Also nobody could say what precious assets were burnt.

Fire Brigade officials also did not give any report about how much property of the Chakma dynasty was burnt in the fire.

"No staff at Chakma Rajbari could estimate the extent of damage. Only Raja Debashish himself would be able to give exact information about the loss," Abul Hossain, an official of district fire station told this correspondent.

However, he said that at

least half of the valuable royal assets could be saved if a fire boat and two divers were at the fire station.

Subrata Chakma, personal secretary of Raja Debashish also said that he did not know how the fire was originated and what types of properties were burnt and how much loss was caused.

He said some valuable assets including a chair which was used by Queen Kalindi Rani, books, documents and some important papers on 'Raj Punnah' were there when the fire broke out.

The palace almost remain vacant when Raja Debashish goes out, he added.

"One thing astonished me that the fire engulfed the

palace from all directions and burnt it within a few minutes", Bitu Chakma, councilor of Rangamati municipality said.

"We could not identify the reasons behind the fire as nobody could say anything," Babul Uddin Sarder, officer in-charge (OC) of Kotwali police station, said.

State minister for CHT affairs ministry Dipankar Talukder, Chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council Nikhil Kumar Chakma, Rangamati Region Commander and Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Souendra Nath Chakrabarty visited the spot yesterday.

Additional police and army were deployed around the palace after the fire.

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Mobile Phone has changed the life of Mango Traders

Mango costs around Taka 2000 per 40kg in Sylhet, but the wholesalers were used to buying the same amount for Taka 1200 from us. Again when price falls in Sylhet, unaware traders sometimes failed to even recover the transportation cost. That was a time when the farmers and the traders were victims of unpredictable markets. Now the time has changed. "Traders and farmers use mobile phone to check market price before they sell Mango" - said Shawkat Ali Bulbul, Chairman of Vayalaxmipur Union Parishad. Bulbul has been using Grameenphone mobile since the beginning.

Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj produce plenty of Mangos during the season. In the past, farmers and traders had no ways to know about the price in other markets and often experienced financial losses.

Farmers were cheated by the traders. Now it has become so easy to know external market price and mango marketing became far more profitable. Nazrul Islam, a trader of Rajshahi's biggest mango bazaar, Baneshwar haat, said '5 years ago traders were used to selling mangoes depending on local market price. But the situation has changed a lot now'.

The traders are learning the market prices of different bazaars around the country through mobile phone before selling their mangoes. This has reduced the chance of financial loss for the farmers and the traders. Another mango trader of Rajshahi's Biraldoh - Babu said in his leased garden, Himshagor, Lengra and Fazli mangos ripen in the very beginning of the season. As the mangos started rotting, he checked with Dhaka's Karwan

Bazar and sold his product to different wholesalers and eventually reduced loss. Mobile phone network is helping the huge mango business in Rajshahi region to flourish. The mango farmers of very remote locations of Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj remain busy during the season. The long distribution channel starts from those remote areas. According to businessmen, as there was no easy communication option available before, they were cheated in many ways. But now, using mobile phones, they easily can access any information on market price and trading related issues. As Grameenphone network covers the most remote locations in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj, the farmers and traders are opting for Grameenphone's connections to conduct their business.



PHOTO: STAR

Government appointed dealers resume withdrawal of boro seeds from BADC godown in Rajshahi yesterday. The dealers had refrained from withdrawing their allocated seeds since November 7 to protest alleged bribery of an official.

10-day ban on hilsa netting not enough for fingerlings to grow

Expert suggests month-long restriction

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Experts and fisheries officials have suggested that the government extend the yearly ban on hilsa catching at least for one month to get desired result to boost hilsa production, especially in the Bay and adjoining rivers.

The government-imposed 10-day ban on hilsa catching from October 15 to 24 every year is not sufficient as all mother hilsa fishes do not lay egg at a time, says Dr Sultan Ahmed, chairman of aquaculture department in Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU).

Besides, more time should be given before and after laying egg in the rivers to enable fingerlings of hilsa to go to the sea and grow into matured fish, he said.

As local fishermen start catching hilsa in rivers with different nets like bada, gher and behundi just after the end of ban period, huge fingerlings are caught in nets with others species of fishes and it leaves negative impact on the growth of the popular fish, he said.

"If the government extends the ban period for minimum one month, the fingerlings would be saved from being netted and we can earn huge quantities of foreign currency by exporting hilsa," Dr Sultan

said. Alongside extending the ban period, he emphasised its proper implementation for the greater interest of national economy.

"We have already sent a proposal to our higher authorities for extending the ban period for one month to save the delicious fish," said Iqbal Hossain, Patuakhali district fisheries officer.

Every year from October 15 to 24, fisheries department imposes ban on catching hilsa in four areas of the coastal region -- Latachapple point near Kuakata beach under Kalapara upazila in Patuakhali district, Sherkali to Haitkandi point under Mirersarai

upazila in Chittagong district, North Kutubdia to Gandamara point in Cox's Bazar district and North Tajumuddin to West Syed Aulia point under Bhola district.

The department selected these four areas covering 7,000 square kilometres as the 'best places' for breeding of hilsa as mother hilsa in large numbers come to these areas to lay egg during the breeding period, said the fisheries officer.

Local fisheries offices also impose ban in some rivers outside the above-mentioned areas to save mother hilsa during the reproduction season but a section of greedy fishermen often ignore it.