



Map showing distance of important features from proposed power plant

Govt goes ahead

FROM PAGE 1
It appeared to Bela that price of the land had been a major factor for selecting Rampal over Labanchhara where per decimal of land costs between Tk 25,000 and Tk 30,000 compared to Rampal's Tk 8,000 and Tk 10,000.

In response to Bela's concerns, the government said the NTPC ranked 337th largest power company in the world according to Forbes and the biggest company in India.

It said the site selection was not motivated only by the land cost. The major indicators were number of settlements to be rehabilitated, population density, cropping area, amount of khas land, maximum allowable draught of the river and cities at downwind direction.

The approved EIA showed that the density of people in Labanchhara was 647 per square-kilometre whereas it was 121 persons per sq-km in Rampal. The net cultivable land in Labanchhara, located just 2km off the Khulna city, was nearly four times more than that of Rampal. Besides, the

Struggle not over yet

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Ale Noor, 35, is one of those who jumped off the third floor of the building, having found no safe exit on the day after the fire broke out. She received injuries to her head and chest and broke her right leg in four places from the fall.

The money she got from BGMEA ran out because of her treatment four months ago and she still needs medication worth about Tk 6,000 every month, Ale Noor told The Daily Star correspondent at her rented house at Nishchintapur, Ashulia.

She also complained that her eyes often overflowed with tears.

Her husband Md Hamiduzzaman has prepared a list of 42 seriously injured workers who live in Nishchintapur.

On the list are 16 workers who did not get any compensation from the trade body.

Hamiduzzaman used to work at a garment factory as well but could not continue with his job because his wife needed someone to take care of her all the time.

He said he had mortgaged a small piece of land he owned in Rangpur to finance the treatment of his wife.

"I don't know how I will continue her treatment as my house rent is due for two months."

Another Tazreen worker, Sumaiya, has not received compensation from BGMEA as her mother, panicked after looking at her injuries, rushed her to Mymensingh when the factory was still on fire and so she was not there when the authorities prepared the list of injured workers.

"We raised the fund after the disaster and disbursed all of it to workers, but Sumaiya was not there at the time," said Jaglu Haidar, additional secretary (health) of BGMEA, when asked about the case of Sumaiya.

She had lost vision in one eye and suffered blunt head trauma. Seeing no improvement in her condition, her mother brought her back to Dhaka five months later.

Running from one hospital to another for three months, Sumaiya finally went to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors identified something of deeper concern -- a cancerous tumour that should have been removed earlier.

She is now undergoing treatment at United Hospital in the capital with donations from different individuals.

A study on the health condition of Tazreen workers needs to be conducted to see if there is a connection between the chemical fumes caused by the fire and the numerous complications that the workers are now suffering from, said Saydia Gulrukh, a labour rights activist, who has been working at Nishchintapur since the fire.

Expressing a similar view, Shakeel Akhtar, general secretary of Doctors for Health and Environment, said a medical team comprising specialists in different branches should be formed to monitor the pattern of ailments in the survivors.

"People can develop a diverse range of symptoms from disasters like the 'Tazreen fire,'" he noted.

Politicians must find

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1996 government didn't last long because people had disagreed with it," said eminent jurist and Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain.

Termining the country's present constitution "a self-contradictory document" in the aspect of secularism, Prof Syed Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University said finding a solution to the present political crisis from such a constitution was tough.

He suggested that a national referendum could be held to decide about the polls-time government.

Former election commissioner M Shakhawat Hossain said political parties had been fearful of handing over power as whoever assumed power had tried to demean the opposition.

He bemoaned the fact that the practice of politics in the country over the years has turned into a politics of vengeance. He expressed concern that holding a national election unilaterally would only mount the sufferings of common people.

Shakhawat thought that changes to the Election Commission were required.

In his keynote speech, Shujan secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar proposed two options to form an elected and effective polls-time government.

The first option could be a 11-member body comprised of non-partisan members, while the other could be a 15-member body comprised of five members each from the present ruling and opposition parties and the rest would be non-partisan.

In both the options, the non-partisan members should have to be elected.

"None of the polls-time government members would be eligible for contesting the 10th parliamentary election. Their role, during a 90-day period, would be helping the Election Commission," mentioned Badiul.

A search committee, comprised of retired chief justices and headed by the senior most among them, could nominate the members.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud urged the two major parties to make their statements on national polls more clear. For this, he demanded the parties hold executive committee meetings and later make their decisions public.

Presiding over the meeting, Shujan president M Hafizuddin Khan said members of both the political parties were busy with ignoring the rule of law and satisfying the defence forces.

He thought that the country's political system needed a major change.

Hawaiian

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love my Hawaiian name. It is an honour and has been quite a journey to carry the names I carry," Keihanaikukauakahihulihe ekahaunaale, whose maiden name was Worth, told AFP.

For years she has carried two forms of identification: her driving license, which only has room for 34 characters, and her official Hawaii state ID card which in the past had room for all 35 letters.

But the problem came after Keihanaikukauakahihulihe ekahaunaale's state ID was renewed in May -- and came back the same as her driver's license, with the last letter missing, and with no first name.

Then a traffic cop pulled her over. "The policeman looked at my license and saw I had no first name. I told him it is not my fault that my license and state ID are not correct and I am trying to get it corrected."

"He then told me 'Well, you can always change your name back to your maiden name.' This hurt my heart," said Keihanaikukauakahihulihe ekahaunaale, who was originally

from New York and worked on Wall Street until 1991.

"Over the last 22 years I have seen Hawaii is being bulldozed and the culture of Hawaii being trampled upon and this policeman treated my name as if it is some mumbo-jumbo," added Keihanaikukauakahihulihe ekahaunaale, whose friends call her "Loke."

Exasperated, she took her case to a local TV station, KHON-2, who publicized the problem, putting pressure on the Hawaii Department of Transportation (DoT).

Within days, authorities, who had previously told her it would take two years to change and the surname character limit would remain at 35, had decided they could act more quickly.

"We understand how she feels and are working to correct the situation," Hawaii's DoT spokeswoman Caroline Sluyter told AFP.

"By the end of the year, we should have the new character limits in place which will be 40 characters for the first and last names, 35 characters for the middle, and 5 for the suffix," she said.

Human traits

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scientists that advance trip planning and social networking aren't just human traits.

A new study of 15 wild male orangutans finds that they routinely plot out their next day treks and share their plans in long calls, so females can come by or track them, and competitive males can steer clear.

The researchers closely followed the males as they travelled on 320 days during the 1990s. The results were published this week in the journal PLoS One.

Typically, an orangutan would turn and face in the direction of his route and let out a whoop, sometimes for as long as four minutes.

"This guy basically thinks ahead," van Schaik said. "They're continuously updating their Google Maps so to speak. Based on that, they're planning what to do next."

The apes didn't just call once, but they keep at it, calling more than 1,100 times over the 320 days.

"This shows they are very much like us in this respect," van Schaik said. "Our earliest hominid

ancestor must have done the same thing."

Scientists had seen such planning in zoos and controlled experiments, but this study provides solid evidence of travel planning in the wild, said Frans de Waal of Atlanta's Emory University, who was not part of the study.

Van Schaik said he and colleagues happened upon the trip calls by accident nearly 20 years ago, first with the dominant male Arno, who they followed more than the other 14 males.

They waited to publish the results because he thought few people would believe orangutans could do such planning. But in recent years, the lab and captivity studies have all shown such planning.

Based on previous studies and monitoring, van Schaik figured the male lets the world know his plans so females can come to him or stay close.

Some females may want to stay within earshot in case they are harassed by other males and need protection. Others can come to mate.

Russell tells

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In the statement, Russell, a management student at Barisal University, claimed he was not afraid of punishment for killing Saoda, a first-year student of accounting at the same institution.

His judicial statement was similar to the one he had made to the police earlier, said Barisal Kotwali Police Station's Officer-in-Charge and investigation officer Shakhwat Hossain.

Russell tried to justify the killing as an act of revenge for being cheated.

He said he had bought a machete from Bazaar Road in the city on September 4. The following day, he forced Saoda to take a rickshaw ride

with him away from the campus. As Saoda resisted, Russell hacked her in the neck and back and fled the scene.

Fatally injured, Saoda was taken to the capital by air ambulance, but she died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On September 6, Russell had fled to Dhaka through Mawa on a local bus and spent the night with his friend Apurba. He later went to Gazipur and worked as a labourer at a construction site on September 7 and 8.

On September 9, he fled to Chittagong. He was in contact with his family all along. Police arrested him at Kalsi Dighir Par in the port city on September 12.

Sangsad to observe

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The AL-led government is making preparations for the general polls staying in power, while the BNP-led opposition threatens to resist the election unless it is held under a non-partisan election-time government.

When the House holds the discussion today, the opposition bench will remain vacant like in 2009 when the current parliament first observed the day with a discussion.

"There is very little possibility that we will join the House today," senior BNP leader Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He said they would discuss the issue of returning to parliament on Wednesday upon the BNP chairperson's return to Dhaka from north Bengal on Tuesday.

Political analyst M Hafizuddin Khan said the absence of opposition lawmakers from today's discussion shows the fragility of the country's democracy.

"Democracy must be participatory. But it is difficult to find it in our country," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury urged the opposition lawmakers to join today's discussion and participate in the House proceedings.

"Parliament is the heart of the parliamentary democracy. It is an opportunity for us that we can hold a discussion to observe the International Day of Democracy, as the parliament is now in session," she said.

Chief Whip Abdus Mojid is expected to place a motion in parliament to start the discussion, said officials at the parliament secretariat.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a global organisation of national parliaments, decided to observe September 15 as the International Day of Democracy every year following the adoption of a resolution by the UN in 2007.

The day was first observed in 2008 but Bangladesh couldn't observe it as an unelected caretaker government was in power at that time.

Bangladesh parliament held a discussion on September 15, 2009 to observe the day without the participation of the BNP-led opposition lawmakers. However, no discussion was held in parliament to mark the day in the last four years.

"Countries around the world are too often stifling political opposition instead of embracing it as a tangible and natural sign of a healthy democracy," said the IPU on the eve of the day.

No real democracy is possible without strong political opposition, it said.

"Inclusive politics based on a healthy respect for differences is the solution to the many conflicts and crises the world is facing today," said IPU President Abdelwahad Radi.

In his message on the occasion, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called "on leaders to hear, respect and respond appropriately to the voices of the people, whether expressed directly or through elected representatives."

US, Russia strike Syria deal

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"The inspectors must be on the ground no later than November... and the goal is to establish the removal by halfway through next year," Kerry told reporters at a joint press conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Echoing a warning from President Barack Obama that military action by the US and its allies remained an option if diplomacy fails, Kerry warned that there must be "no games, no room for avoidance of anything less than full compliance by the Assad regime."

Earlier, during his weekly address, President Barack Obama said he was willing to give diplomacy a chance to help resolve the Syrian crisis, but warned the military option was still on the table.

Kerry said the steps agreed yesterday would be encapsulated in a UN Security Council resolution drawn up under Chapter Seven of the organisation's charter, which provides for

enforcement through sanctions including the possible use of military force.

But with Russia strongly opposed to the use of military threats and wielding a veto on the Security Council, Kerry acknowledged it was "impossible to have a pre-agreement" on what would happen in the event of non-compliance.

Lavrov signalled that Moscow would back some form of sanction, saying the Security Council would act under Chapter Seven if Syria fails to meet its demands.

Kerry said that Syria's bloody civil war, which has resulted in more than 110,000 deaths in two and a half years, could only be ended through negotiations.

That was another nod to Russia's opposition to any form of military intervention and could be interpreted as the United States backing away from providing support for the rebels to help them force Assad from power.

"There is no military solution to the conflict in Syria, it has to be political," Kerry said. "And we together remain committed to getting there."

Lavrov hailed the accord as an "excellent" agreement "whose significance is hard to overestimate."

The accord was greeted with dismay by the Syrian opposition coalition, who have spent two years appealing to the west to give them the weapons needed to tilt the balance of the civil war in their favour.

"We cannot accept any part of this initiative," General Selim Idriss, the head of the Free Syrian Army, told reporters in Istanbul.

"Are we Syrians supposed to wait until mid-2014, to continue being killed every day, and to accept (the deal) just because the chemical arms will be destroyed in 2014?"

Kerry and Lavrov will meet again in a few weeks on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New

York, with the hope of setting a date for the stalled peace conference.

Russia's surprise announcement that Syria could hand over its chemical arsenal prompted Obama to put on hold military strikes the United States and France had threatened to unleash in response to an August chemical attack near Damascus, which Washington blames on the regime and says killed about 1,400 people.

France yesterday welcomed the Geneva deal as a breakthrough. "The plan is a significant step forward," Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague also welcomed the deal to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons and said the priority now was the "full and prompt implementation" of the agreement.

The United States has estimated that Syria possesses around 1,000 metric tonnes of various chemical

agents, including mustard and sarin gas, sulfur and VX.

The Russian estimates had been initially much lower, according to US officials, but Kerry said that the two countries had reconciled their different assessments.

US officials said there were around 45 sites that inspectors would have to check out and Kerry said it would be feasible to do that, despite the fighting.

Despite the upbeat tone of yesterday's press conference, Kerry acknowledged that "a hard road" lies ahead amid widespread scepticism about Assad's good faith.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon has accused Assad of multiple crimes against humanity and said that a UN inspectors' report due to be published tomorrow would provide "overwhelming" confirmation that chemical weapons were used on August 21.

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