

# Hundreds of brick kilns stop operation for want of coal

## Barapukuria stops fuel supply to 16 dists in peak season

STAR COUNTRY DESK  
Hundreds of brickfields in Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Bogra and several other northern districts could not start firing their kilns for acute shortage of coal supply in peak season.

Brickfield owners and operators in Dinajpur told our correspondent they were sitting idle with their raw bricks while counting losses everyday.

Usually the operators set their stoves on fire between November and December 15 and continue to burn bricks till April next year.

"During the Boishakh month of Bangla calendar, we cannot continue work

for adverse weather", said Chanchal Sengupta, manager of RNB Brickfield at Bohola village under Biral upazila of Dinajpur.

This has become a matter of concern as we are yet to start our kilns just for shortage of coal, he said.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), there are around 1340 brickfields in 16 northern districts. These brickfields are completely dependant on coal supplied by Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) and fuel imported from India.

However, sources said that the BCMCL is now avoiding coal sale to

brickfields across the country as the production at the mine remained suspended for six months. Production stopped in May for a sudden surge of water in the underground, authorities said.

In May, there were 5 lakh tonnes of coal at the coalyard. The 250MW coal fired power plant consumed around 2,000 metric tonnes of coal daily, creating the crisis.

Meanwhile, coal production resumed on November 13 and the BCMCL started producing more than 4,500 metric tonnes of coal daily since 23 November, officials said.

"We are now raising our coal stock. After a stock of 1.5 lakh tonnes, we will start selling coal to brickfield

operators", BCMCL managing director Md. Aminuzzaman told this correspondent.

On the other hand, the situation turned 'terrible' for the brickfield operators as the neighbouring India also stopped exporting coal to Bangladesh on the plea of coal shortage, said several brickfield operators.

During a visit to the brickfields in Sadar, Biral, Chirbandar and Nawabganj upazilas of Dinajpur, this correspondent found that the brickfield operators completed all their tasks but were sitting idle for want of fuel.

Rafiqul Islam, President of Dinajpur Brickfields

Owners Association, said they would face huge losses if coal supply was not resumed within 10 to 15 days.

Otherwise, we have to look for alternative means including logs, he said.

Our Nilphamari correspondent adds: All kinds of construction work have almost come to a halt while about 10 thousand brick kiln workers are on the verge of becoming unemployed, as most of the kilns in the district could not burn raw bricks due to acute crisis of coal.

District brick kiln owners association sources said, most of the 40 kilns in six upazilas of the district, that usually manufacture 16 crore bricks annually to meet the local demand had been sitting idle in the peak time.

Harun ur Rashid, general secretary of district unit of the association, said only three kilns out of 40 could ignite their furnaces for manufacturing bricks as they had a small stock of coal of last year and could continue the job for only 15 days.

"Two months of the season are almost over but still we are worried as each brick kiln owner spent at least Tk 30-40 lakh for purchasing soil for making raw bricks, labour payment and transport", he said.

In Bogra, at least 160 kilns were yet to start firing bricks due to lack of coal.

A number of brickfield owners said they were counting losses in the peak season, reports our correspondent.

Owner of Bogra Bricks, Fazlur Rahman Paikar, said that his factory was about to be closed due to acute shortage of coal.

Moreover, the raw bricks, which have already been prepared with mud, would be a big loss for the owners, he said.

Even if we get the coal after two months from the BCMCL, we cannot recoup the losses, said another owner.



PHOTO: STAR  
Locals dry paddy on the premises of memorial on 'Jahazmara battle' beside the Jamuna River at Sirajkandi under Bhuapur upazila of Tangail, taking advantage of the authorities' indifference to its proper care and preservation.

# Indifference dims glory of a war memorial

## Locals now use it for paddy drying

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The Liberation War memorial reminiscing the glorious victory in 'Jahazmara battle' at Sirajkandi in Bhuapur upazila under the district has remained uncared for one and a half years of its construction.

The Public Works Department (PWD) constructed the memorial beside the Jamuna River, four kilometres to the north of the Bangabandhu Bridge east end, and eight kilometres to the south-west of Bhuapur upazila headquarters, at a cost of Tk 1 crore 64 lakh last year.

But it is yet to be inaugurated as PWD could not hand it over to the authorities concerned despite sending letters.

Meanwhile, a portion of the structure got damaged due to heavy rain several months ago.

On August 10 in 1971, valiant freedom fighters belonging to Kader Bahini in Tangail attacked two arms, ammunition and fuel-laden ships of the Pakistan occupation army -- ST Razan and SU Engineers LC-3, on the confluence of the Jamuna and Dhaleswari rivers at Sirajkandi.

Defeating the enemy, they captured huge amount of modern arms and ammunition worth around Tk 21 crore (at that time) from the ships and burnt those up, causing a blow to the supply chain of the Pakistani army to the northern region.

Locals started calling the place Jahajmara (destroyer of ships) and commander of the daring operation Habibur Rahman Bir

Protik (now late) became famous as 'Jahazmara Habib'.

Visiting the memorial a few days ago, this correspondent saw it covered with thick dust while paddy was spread on its floor for drying.

The lightings of the memorial remained out of order.

The memorial was constructed on a filled up pond of Bangladesh Bridge Authorities and regular plying of sand-laden trucks to and from local sand ghats is causing damage to the structure, locals said.

"Jahajmara battle is a glorious event in the history of our Liberation War and the new generation should be made aware of it. But the memorial has remained uncared after its construction," said Mohammad Abdul Mazid, commander of Bhuapur upazila unit of Muktijoddha Sangsad.

Bijoy Kumar Mondol, executive engineer of PWD in Tangail, said after completion of the memorial one and a half years ago, letters were sent to the authorities concerned to take over its responsibility.

"I visited the memorial recently and examined the minor damage that was caused by removal of soil due to heavy rain. I have directed the contractor to repair the damage immediately. The memorial will be handed over to the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs as soon as possible and they will take care of it," he added.



PHOTO: STAR  
The coalyard at Barapukuria Coalmine in Dinajpur remains empty as production was suspended in May for a sudden surge of water in the underground. Although the authorities resumed mining in November, they were yet to restart supply to the brickfields 'for raising coal stock'. Inset, a brickfield sits idle and counts losses for want of coal in its peak season in Bogra.



# TWO SUGAR MILLS IN N-DISTS Cane crushing to go ahead despite huge unsold stocks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two sugar mills in Joypurhat and Dianjpur districts are going to start their cane crushing season next week in spite of large stocks of unsold sugar in their warehouses.

Joypurhat Sugar Mill, probably the country's largest and burdened with 9,109 metric tonnes of unsold sugar, will start its operation on December 12.

Meanwhile, Setabganj Sugar Mill in Dinajpur will also start its operation on December 19 with 8,417 MT unsold sugar.

The authorities of the two mills have been facing acute space crisis due to the previous year's stock of unsold sugar worth Tk 68.66 crore, said officials.

This year, our production target is 7,975 metric tonnes, which is less than that of last year's, said the officials of Joypurhat Sugar Mill.

The situation will further deteriorate during the upcoming cane crushing season as the authorities are already facing trouble with huge quantity of unsold sugar, they said.

Abdus Salam, managing director of Joypurhat Sugar Mill, said sugar worth Tk 35 crore remained unsold as the dealers did not draw their allotment. However, he declined to make any further statement on the matter.

Salary disbursement and payment to cane growers become irregular as the unsold sugar led to the mill's fund crisis, he said.

Afzal Hossain, president of Joypurhat Sugar Mill Workers' Union, said mechanical upgradation and other modernisation are needed to cope with the consumers' demands.

He also urged the government to take initiatives for marketing the sugar.

On the other hand, officials of Setabganj Sugar Mill in Dinajpur said this year's sugar production target was set at 4,000 metric tonnes.

Shahid Ullah, managing director of the mill, said there will be an acute accommodation crisis at the end of cane crushing season.

The mill incurred around Tk 200 crore loss since its starting in 1933, said sources.

# 4 bombs recovered at BRUR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police yesterday recovered four crude bombs from Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) campus.

Md Abdul Qader Jilani, officer in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said being tipped-off, a team of the law enforcers led by Sub-inspector Shafiqul Islam seized the bombs in an abandoned condition from near the administrative building of the university around 9:00am.

Later, they defused the bombs after bringing those at the police station, the OC added. None was arrested in this connection till filing of this report around 8:00pm.

Contacted, Dr Nazmul Haque, proctor of the university, said after investigation the university authorities will take stern action against the culprits involve with the incident.

# Housewife 'commits suicide'

UNB, Sylhet

A housewife allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan of her room in Bhatkhola area of Dakshin Surma upazila on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Hazera Begum, 28, wife of Foysol Miah of the area. Quoting family members, police said Hazera killed herself by hanging from the ceiling fan of her room around 8:00am.

Police recovered the body around 10.00am and sent it to Osmani Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

# Five JCD men arrested over violence in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police arrested five local leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student body of BNP, at Jagannathpur village in Sadar upazila on Monday afternoon over violence.

Police said when a group of JCD leaders and activists brought out a jubilant procession on the Moulvibazar-Sreemangal Road following release of Jakir Hossain Uzzal, convenor of the district unit JCD, from jail, police obstructed the

procession.

The JCD men then swooped on the policemen, triggering a clash that left three assistant sub-inspectors of police injured.

At one stage, police fired three blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Later, they arrested five leaders and activists of JCD from the spot, said M Abul Hossain, sub-inspector of Sadar Police Station.

A case was filed in this connection, said police.

# Freedom fighter stabbed to death in Naogaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Naogaon

A freedom fighter was hacked to death and another man injured as a gang attacked them at Ayapur village in Potnitala upazila on Tuesday midnight.

The deceased was identified as Nazimuddin, 65, son of late Mofizuddin of Meroha village in the upazila.

Police said a gang attacked Nazim and his aide Belal Hossain, 45, in the area and stabbed them indiscriminately with sharp weapons at Usti while they were returning home from a picnic at about

12.05 am, leaving Nazim dead on the spot and Belal seriously injured.

Hearing the hue and cry, local people rescued Belal and took him to Potnitala upazila health complex where the attending doctors referred him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Abdur Rafique, officer in-charge of Potnitala police station, said Nazim might have been killed over previous enmity.

Police picked up eight people suspecting their involvement in the killing.



The photos of historic Karapur Mian Bari Mosque at Uttar Karapur in Barisal Sadar before and after renovation easily show the differences in their colours.



PHOTO: STAR

# When face-lift causes defacement

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

Historic Karapur Mian Bari Mosque at Uttar Karapur village in Karapur union under Barisal Sadar upazila is getting its original colour changed during repair, thanks to the callousness of the people concerned.

The 300-year-old mosque got listed with the Department of Archaeology in 1984.

"Following permission from the archaeology department, we started repairing the mosque at our own cost in last March. It may cost approximately 12 lakh taka," said Babul Mian, who claimed to be belonging to the sixth generation of the founders of the mosque.

"Mahmud Hayat and Jahid Hayat came from Persia to preach Islam here and built the mosque," he added.

The mosque was once repaired 125 years ago, said Sagar Mian, one of the surviving descendants of the mosque founders.

To look after the repair work, archaeology department engaged an engineer this year.

"Engineer Yusuf was to look after the work. Before retirement he submitted a report on June 24 this year, mentioning some discrepancies in the work, including change of the colour of the mosque. After his retirement there is no one to look after the work on behalf of the archaeology

department," said Alimuzzaman, regional director of the department in Khulna.

The two-storied mosque has three doors at the front side and nine rooms on the ground floor. There are semi-round domes on the roof.

Archaeologists said the mosque with some unique features might be built during the Mughal era.

Locals have urged keeping the mosque in its original form.

If the mosque is repaired keeping its original form and colour, it will attract more visitors, said Mizanur Rahman, secretary of Sangskritik Sangathan Samannay Parishad in Barisal.

# CHEHLUM



The Chehlum of Advocate Maheda Islam of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, wife of Late Majidul Islam, mother of Late Maidul Islam and Mazruq Islam, daughter of Dr. Matiul Islam and Rokeya Begum, will be held after Asr prayer around 4.00pm on Friday December 12th at her residence, Road-6, House-26, Dhanmondi. Friends, family and well-wishers are requested to attend.