

BARAPUKURIA COAL SCAM

Trial production resumes Sept 10

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

The technical committee formed by Petrobangla to assess the technical losses of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL) arrived at the mine site in the district's Parbatipur upazila on a two-day visit yesterday.

Meanwhile, coal production of BCMCL on trial basis is now set to start on September 10, said the company's newly appointed Managing Director (MD) Fazlur Rahman.

Formed on August 28, the seven-member body headed by Mahbub Sarwar, director (Production Sharing Contract) of Petrobangla, will assess the system losses from the production to piling at the stockyard and submit their findings to the chairman of Petrobangla within 10 office days.

The committee members, except one, arrived at the coalmine site yesterday morning, and talked with mine officials and miners and visited the stockyard, BCMCL officials said.

They will leave the site after a two-day visit today, said Falzur Rahman, managing director (MD) of BCMCL.

Earlier on Monday, a six-member team of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) led by columnist Syed Abul Moksud visited the mine site, talked with the officials of BCMCL and Barapukuria Power Plant and held a meeting with local stakeholders in the coalmine area.

Coal production of the mine remained suspended since June 16 this year for developing fresh coal pocket in underground.

Barapukuria 525MW Coal Fired Power Plant was shut down on July 22, following the July 16 detection of the disappearance of 1.45 lakh tonnes of coal worth Tk 230 crore from stockyard of BCMCL.

Later, Petrobangla suspended four officials including its MD Habib Uddin Ahmed.

Brining corruption accusation against 19 officials including Habib Uddin, Anisur Rahman, manager (Admin) of BCMCL, filed a case with Parbatipur Police Station on July 24.

During an interrogation by the Anti-Corruption Commission in Dhaka on August 29, the immediate past MD claimed that the missing of coal was due to system losses, which were not adjusted before.

RAPE OF CHALLENGED WOMAN

Bus supervisor on four-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A Tangail court yesterday placed bus supervisor Md Ershad on a four-day remand in a case for raping a mentally challenged woman on the bus at Bangabandhu Bridge's east end in the district on Thursday.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Ashikuzzaman passed the order following a petition filed by Sub-Inspector Kabirul Haque, also investigation officer of the case, seeking his five-day remand on Monday, said Bangladesh Manobadhikar Bastobayon Sangstha district unit General Secretary Ataur Rahman Azad. The organisation is assisting the state in the case.

Police arrested Ershad, 40, from his house at Benukushia village in Kalihati upazila early Monday, he said.

Earlier, police arrested bus helper Nazmul, 22, immediately after the incident. Nazmul in his confessional statement on Friday told the court that the driver and the supervisor raped the woman on the bus and he was standing outside as watcher, he added.

Police, however, could not arrest driver Alam Khandakar, 45, yet.



The deserted Jagotee railway station in Kushtia. *Inset*, the abandoned window through which passengers once bought tickets and later the money was dropped into the nearby locker. The lamps on the locker were used to signal trains at the time. Those are now only memories.

PHOTO: AMANUR AMAN

Tears of a 156-yr-old rly station

AMANUR AMAN with MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

Now it is afternoon. There's sunshine and everything is glowing. The beauty of nature shines in every nook and cranny in the entire area, except a nearby railway station lying in an uncared state for years. Where once flowers and leaves were swaying in the wind, there is now the kingdom of weed and grass. The brick-built red building is the lone witness to the decay of the railway depot. With passing of time, what remains of it now are piles of dust turning into a haunted area but there were times when it was full of life. This is Jagotee railway station, a place of fading memory.

The 156-year-old station is just three kilometres from Kushtia town. Jagotee is now only the name to remember as the guard does not blow his whistle to stop any train or it's not overwhelmed by crowds either. Gradually it has lost all its glamour. One of the country's maiden railway platforms is now struggling for existence.

gling for existence.

Built in the British period, the first floor of the two-storied red building has been abandoned. The big-sized overhead tank, which was used to pour water into steam engine, is also deserted.

"No passenger is seen on the platform like before but at one time, there was a lot of activities in the station. From betel leaf to rice and fertiliser—all the goods were brought here by train but those are now only memories," said 80-year-old Atahar Ali Mollah with a sigh.

Lack of timely renovation and a sharp decline in passengers are the main causes behind the gradual decay of the station, thanks to the indifference of the authorities concerned.

The station is still bearing the saga of many things of the British era.

Eastern Bengal Railway Authority set a 73 km broad-gauge line between Sealadah to Ranaghat on September 29 in 1862. After two months, Eastern Bengal set up 53.11 km of broad-gauge line between Darshana

of Chuadanga and Jagotee of Kushtia.

This was the first railway route in Bangladesh.

After nine years, the line expanded from Jagotee to Goalondo, to set up communication between Dhaka and Kolkata, on January 1 in 1871.

On a visit, it was seen that at least eight trains passed through the station but none stopped there. A few stone-laden wagons stopped on demand.

Stationmaster Muslim Uddin Mollah said the station gradually became non-operational in 2000 when passenger trains avoided stopping due to unavailability of commuters.

Now roads and highways have developed where transport facilities have increased. At present, there's a sign of development almost everywhere, except the century-old station, repents Muslim Uddin.

People can go to Kushtia town in 15-20 minutes by road. On the other hand, one has to wait here several hours for a train, said the stationmaster.

The railway station has a stationmaster, two pointsmen and two gatemen. There is no security guard. As a result, valuable assets of the station are pilfered every day. Around 200 bighas of railway land has been occupied by some vested quarters, said a staff of the station.

They are thinking of increasing use of this traditional station, preserving it as a heritage, said Nazmul Ahsan, divisional railway manager in Pakshey.

A renovation plan of the station has been sent to the higher authority. The decision has been taken to arrange stoppage of a few local trains at the station, he said.

Pabna district headquarters recently got train service. The then British rulers connected East Bengal and West Bengal with railway over the mighty Padma through Hardinge Bridge at Pakshey in early 1915.

"If it is possible, why can't we bring back the lost glory of Jagotee?" said senior citizen Atahar Ali who still visits the station every-day to feel the essence of the golden days.



Many farmers at Tangrakhali village in Bagerhat's Kachua upazila are now engaged in farming Khaki Campbell variety of ducks along local water bodies. The photo was taken about two weeks ago.

PHOTO: PARTHA CHAKRABORTY

Ducks drive away poverty

Many Bagerhat farmers rear the birds in Baleswar river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bagerhat*

Farming of ducks along the Baleswar river has brought financial solvency for many poverty stricken families of Tangrakhali village in Kachua upazila of the district.

Locals said nearly 40 farmers of Tangrakhali village and its adjacent villages are now engaged in duck farming as they can rear their birds in the nearby Baleswar river and other marshlands and canals.

During a visit to the village this correspondent saw a youth was keeping a watch on some 400 ducks of Khaki Campbell variety in a local canal.

The youth, Hasib Sheikh, son of Gias Sheikh of the village, said, "We bring the ducks to the canal every morning and then to the marshlands along the Baleswar river where they

eat fishes, oysters, snails and insects."

"We start for home around 2:00pm and reach there in the evening," Hasib added.

Gias Sheik, a duck farmer, said, "Most of the people do not know that ducks can lay more eggs than hens."

"Farming of ducks can bring more profit than hens as ducks take 60 percent of their food outside the farm or home," Gias added.

Farmers purchase each duckling for Tk 26 or so and feed the bird for the next seven weeks, he said.

The Khaki Campbell variety of ducks starts laying eggs in 18 to 21 week and it continues till the ducks turn one and a half years, Gias said, adding that after that they sell each duck for Tk 350 in local markets.

"I get 150 to 175 eggs daily and

sell those to wholesalers for Tk 750 per 100 eggs. In this way, I earn Tk 40,000 every month, whereas I have to spend Tk 12,000 to Tk 13,000 for their food and vaccination purpose, Gias said.

Jannati Akter, a madrasa student, said, "Gias uncle's success has encouraged many farmers of the village and they are also planning to start duck farming business."

Bagerhat Livestock Officer (DLO) Dr Saifuzzaman Khan said the ducks of Khaki Campbell variety came from Indian Runner and Ruel Kagua variety and they are able to lay eggs more than the local ones.

"We have provided training on duck farming to about 40 farmers. Besides, we are also supplying necessary vaccines for a token amount of money," the DLO said.

Missing teenager killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Brahmanbaria*

Snatchers killed a rickshaw-puller in Talshahar area of Ashuganj upazila.

Police recovered the body from a roadside canal in the area on Monday night. The body, which bore injury marks, was sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Deceased Shamim Miah, 15, son of Shahjahan Mia of Durgapur village, went out of house with his rented rickshaw on Saturday and since then he remained missing.

Police suspect that criminals strangled Shamim and took away the rickshaw.

One killed, 15 injured in AL internal clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

A man was killed, 10 people were injured and 12 houses were damaged and looted as two factions of Awami League (AL) supporters locked in a series of clash at Atghar union in the district's Saltha upazila on Monday.

The deceased was Sakhawat Hossain alias Saku Mohuri, 45, son of Khalek Mohuri of Khoar village in the upazila.

There is a longstanding conflict between Odud Matabbor, general secretary of Gatti union AL, and Fazlul Matin Badsha, vice-president of upazila AL and Sohridul Hasan Khan alias Sohag Khan, chairman of Atghar Union Parishad, also joint secretary of upazila AL, over establishing supremacy in the area, locals said.

Five people were injured as the supporters of Odud Matabbor and Fazlul

Matin locked in a clash at Singa Pratap village around 11:00am on Monday.

In the afternoon, supporters of Sohag Khan and Odud locked in clashes at Goalpara and Bhabuldia villages, which left six people including Sakhawat Hossain injured.

Later, Sakhawat died at Faridpur Medical College Hospital around 8:00pm.

After hearing the death news, Odud's supporters attacked Sohag's supporters at Khoar village and damaged 12 houses and looted cattle from there around 10:00pm on Monday, said locals.

"On information police rushed to the spot. They shot teargas shells and five rounds of bullets to bring the situation under control. Seven people were arrested in connection with the incident," said Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Saltha Police Station.

Policemen were deployed in the area, he said.



A huge quantity of hilsa arrive at Chandpur's Boro Station Machhghat, a wholesale fish market in the town. Noakhali traders bring hilsa to the market with the hope of getting good price.

PHOTO: STAFF