

BARAPUKURIA PLANT

Shortage of coal may halt power generation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

The Barapukuria 525MW coal-fired power plant may be mothballed once its current stock of coal is depleted later this month due to uncertainty over the resumption of coal supply from the nearby mine for underground development works.

Coal production at the mine has been suspended since April. The power plant, which is located at Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila, is fired entirely by the coal supplied by the mine.

At present, the power plant's third unit, which is of 275 MW, is operational, while the other two units -- of 125MW each -- are in recess for insufficient coal supply.

There are about 60,000 tonnes of coal in stock, which is enough to run the third unit for the next 20 days at the current rate.

About 3,200 to 3,500 tonnes of coal are needed in a day to keep the unit fully operational.

In the last couple of days, 300MW of power has been generated, which is beyond the unit's capacity to ease the rising load shedding around the country.

If coal supply is not resumed by early next month, power generation will either be halted or the plant will be operated at minimum production capacity, said officials of the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

"It is unlikely that coal supply will resume in early August as the development works are still going on," said a top official of BPDB.

Those development works require at least four months, so as per schedule, it should wrap up at the end of August.

Everyone is working ardously to complete the work as early as possible, according to Md Kamruzzaman Khan, managing director of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited.

Production is supposed to start in the middle of August, he told The Daily Star.

Bankrupt Sri Lanka asks Putin for fuel, tourists

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka has asked Russia to provide fuel and resume tourist flights to help the country weather its unprecedented economic crisis, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said yesterday.

The island nation has suffered months of blackouts, rampant inflation and critical shortages of food and petrol after running out of foreign currency to finance imports.

No sign of relief now

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While inaugurating the country's first campus-based business incubator "Sheikh Kamal IT Business Incubator", Sheikh Jamal Dormitory and Rosy Jamal Dormitory at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET) virtually from the Gonobhaban, Hasina said the government has had to resort to load-shedding and cut down power generation to ease the burden of subsidies.

She said the government has allocated Tk 84,000 crore for subsidies across all sectors in this fiscal year.

"How long will we be able to provide such a huge amount of subsidies? We have to provide food, medical care and homes for the homeless people," she said, reports UNB.

"If we do not reduce subsidies, from where will the government get money?" she questioned.

"We have only one option, I have already directed to impose area-based load shedding and prepare a routine for that to inform people earlier so that they can take preparation and suffer less," she continued.

Hasina also said another hurdle is that there are sanctions on SWIFT transactions with Russia, which is why Bangladesh cannot purchase anything from the country with US dollars.

She said the countries that hold Russian currency can purchase goods from Russia, but as Bangladesh does not have a reserve of the Russian currency

it has very limited scope to do that. "But we are continuing our efforts."

During her address, the PM compared the prices of fuel and other materials used for power generation before and after the Russia-Ukraine war.

She said the price of furnace oil was only \$708 per tonne, which became \$1,080 per tonne after the war began -- a 52 percent hike; LNG was \$10 MMbtu, which is now \$38 -- a 280 percent hike; coal rose 61 percent from \$187 per tonne to \$278; and diesel price rose around 63 percent from \$80 per barrel to \$130.

"We are hearing that the price of diesel would become \$300 [per barrel]; the edible oil price is also increasing. The prices of products that we have to import have increased excessively," she said.

The PM also detailed the difference between the cost of producing power using different fuels and the subsidised price at which it is sold to consumers.

She said renewable energy power production costs Tk 12.84 per KW, but the government is charging Tk 5.08 per KW. The cost of power production with furnace oil is Tk 17.41 per KW, diesel Tk 36.85, coal Tk 12.37, whereas the subsidised price for consumers is Tk 5.08 for all.

The PM also urged all to practise austerity in consumption, especially in power.

According to BSS, the PM in another programme at the Gono Bhaban called upon people to stop using decorative



PHOTO: AFP

A rescuer works among ruins of an administrative building destroyed by Russian missiles in Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

TRUCKS CARRYING SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS

Police chief irked over failure to curb extortion

Warns officials of stern action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over the failure of officers to save cattle-carrying trucks from being extorted.

Stern actions will be taken against such policemen, he said.

Extortion on highways will not be tolerated, he told the concluding session of crime conference at Bangladesh Police Auditorium at Rajarbagh.

The IGP said the district superintendents of police were not performing their duties properly as they are often seen at different departments in Dhaka, leaving their stations. "It must stop."

Other high officials of police said the superintendents of police (SP) in districts should "leave their posts" if they fail to stop extortion.

Benazir then asked SPs to visit cattle markets regularly. "I do not want police to be in headlines."

No cattle-carrying truck should be stopped or checked without a specific reason, said the police chief.

Several high officials, who attended the closed-door conference, disclosed the statements to The Daily Star.

On the first day of the two-day

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conference, the officers discussed the last three months' data on crime. It was found out that robberies had increased during the period.

YM Belalur Rahman, deputy inspector general (crime management) of Police Headquarters, presented the data on crime.

Benazir asked police officers to improve probe efficiency. "Investigation into cases should be complete within the shortest time."

The police chief instructed officers to ensure security at shopping malls, banks, financial institutions, and bus, train and launch terminals ahead of Eid.

Ensure smooth traffic during Eid rush, he said, adding that check posts should be set up to keep motorcycles and three-wheelers off the highways.

An additional IG said that the number of Durga Puja mandaps has been increasing every year.

"We have a workforce of 2.12 lakh members and we are able to deploy 75 percent of our strength during the puja. But the increase in puja mandap may create a security concern. So, the number of puja mandap should be limited in the coming years," a source quoted the high official as saying.

The SPs of 64 districts, range deputy inspectors general, metropolitan commissioners, and chiefs of different units attended the conference.

Ministries not Staring at a grim Eid

doing their bit

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commodities are rising," Rashid added.

For years, Ziaur Rahman Bulbul, a phone repair shop owner of Shyamoli, had been sharing sacrificial bulls with a friend.

But this year, the two friends could not afford the animal and had to invite five other people to share the cost.

Bulbul does not earn what he used to in 2019. "The high cost of living is hurting me badly," he said.

Just two months ago, the father of two moved to a smaller home so that he could make rent. Three months ago, he sold his motorbike.

"I used to buy large, medium, and small fish and meat at least four days a week. Now I can buy once a week," he added.

Day by day the situation is worsening, he added.

The Daily Star spoke to a number of people with limited income across the country and they said the Covid-19 situation has improved but not their earnings and that inflation was hurting a lot.

They are cutting expenses and even meals and expenditure for the Eid festival is not a priority at all.

In Bangladesh, inflation has been rising since October owing to the high cost of commodities globally amid lingering supply chain disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war breaking out in late February.

Inflation surged to an eight-year high of 7.42 percent in May, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

State-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) data shows that

20 injured as AL groups clash in remote island

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Clashes between the two groups of local Awami League left at least 20 people injured and properties damaged in Rangabali upazila.

The groups in Charmontaj island began attacking each other around 11:00pm on Tuesday and the intermittent clashes went on until around 2:00am yesterday, police and locals said.

They vandalised one shop and damaged over 10 motorcycles parked in front of the union Awami League unit office.

The groups, one led by Charmontaj Union AL President Monir Hossain Pada and the other by ward AL President Bashir Khan, engaged in the clash over establishing supremacy in the villages, locals said.

None of them could be reached for comments. Additional police have been deployed in the area to avert further violence, said Mizanur Rahman, in-charge of Charmontaj Police Outpost.

3 policemen 'injured during gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Three police officers were hit by pellets during a gunfight with a gang of robbers in a hilly area in Padua union of Rangunia, Chattogram early yesterday, police said.

Officer-in-charge Obaidul Islam, Sub-Inspector Abul Fayeze and Constable Mohammad Zia of South Rangunia Police Station received treatment at Rangunia Upazila Health Complex, Obaidul said.

The incident happened when police raided the area after being tipped off about the presence of robbers.

Police arrested a suspect named Sardar Kamal with two locally made firearms and five bullets while the other gang members managed to flee, he added.

The suspect is an accused in multiple cases including for murder, abduction and extortion, he said.

Electrocution kills farmer in paddy field

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmonirhat*

A farmer died after coming in contact with a live wire while turning on an electric motor to irrigate a seedbed in Shimulbari area of Phulbari, Kurigram.

Isahaq Ali, 57, son of late Moniruzzaman Mia, died on the spot, said police and family members.

22 Malian migrants died in boat disaster off Libya: UN

AFP, Geneva

Twenty-two Malian migrants died in a boat disaster off the Libyan coast, the UN said Tuesday, citing survivors who reported victims drowning and dehydrating with three children reportedly among the dead.

After nine days at sea, 61 survivors, mostly from Mali, were rescued by the Libyan coastguard and brought back to shore, the UN's International Organization for Migration said, with the toll confirmed by Mali's expatriates ministry.

considering new clothes only for the children. The wife will get a sari only ... no new shoes, cosmetics and other items.

"The joy of Eid is no more because of the rising cost of living," Tapan said.

Calls grow

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priorities. That is what we need to do."

Earlier, Javid urged other ministers to resign saying "the problem starts at the top, and I believe that is not going to change".

"And that means that it is for those of us in that position -- who have responsibility -- to make that change."

Cries of "bye, Boris" echoed around the chamber at the end of his speech. Most Tories were conspicuously silent when Johnson attacked the Labour opposition at prime minister's questions. Some shook their heads.

Sunak and Javid quit just minutes after Johnson apologised for appointing a senior Conservative, who quit his post last week after he was accused of drunkenly groping two men.

Former education secretary Nadhim Zahawi was immediately handed the finance brief and acknowledged the uphill task ahead.

UK media said Nadhim Zahawi was one of the ministers who went to 10 Downing Street to ask the PM to resign.

Days of shifting explanations had followed the resignation of deputy chief whip Chris Pincher.