

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 ardently 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.



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

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."

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.

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

lightings in different social programmes, community centres, shopping malls, shops, offices, and houses across the country to save power.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources in a statement on Tuesday night gave some reassurances, but it is unlikely that those will come to fruition in the near future.

The state minister had said electricity from the coal-based Rampal power plant, second unit of Payra power plant and 1,600MW imported from India will be added to the national grid by this year.

"Hopefully, the current situation will not last long," he said.

He said that at present, daily gas production in the country is 2,300 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) and around 1,600-1,700 mmcf is required for electricity generation. Only 900 mmcf gas is being supplied to power plants as agriculture and industrial sectors are prioritised.

Since the country's gas demand was greater than its gas production, the problem was being solved by importing LNG. However, if LNG is imported at the current prices from the international spot market, the nation's economy might be under stress.

He also said the government is importing as much LNG as it can under the long-term agreements with Qatar and Oman.

Government statistics showed how LNG supply to the national gas grid decreased significantly,

which was the major reason behind the less power generation.

According to Petrobangla data, at least 854mmcf (million cubic feet per day) of LNG was supplied to the national gas grid on June 29 and it had dropped to 500 mmcf by yesterday.

About 250-300 mmcf of LNG demand was fulfilled from the international spot market, but after the recent price hike, the government decided not to buy LNG from the spot market until prices came down.

According to energy ministry data, on average 3,100-3,200 mmcf of natural gas was distributed across the country since the beginning of the year, but since June 30, the average supply stood at 2,800-2,900 mmcf.

Power production accounts for around 70 percent of the country's total gas consumption, according to energy division data.

Ministries not doing their bit

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after a few incidents of attacking teachers took place in the country.

Yett said, "Teachers play a critical role in ensuring children's right to education. But to do their job -- to teach students to think critically, grow to their fullest potential and be good human beings -- they need to be able to teach without fear."

"Attacks on teachers are attacks on education. If we fail to protect teachers from violence, it will be children who ultimately suffer."

Unicef voices

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Both buyers and sellers have to wear masks at shops, shopping malls, markets, hotels and restaurants. Otherwise, they have to face penalties," said a Cabinet Division circular.

Meanwhile, the transmission of Covid continued rising in the country as the positivity rate rose to 16.89 percent yesterday from 16.78 percent the previous day.

Yesterday, the DGHS reported 1,728 Covid cases and four deaths.

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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

Staring at a grim Eid

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between February 2020 and February 2022, the price of coarse rice increased by 32 percent, fine rice by 28 percent, and coarse lentils by 63 percent. Sugar was up by 32 percent, bottled soybean oil by 55 percent, and loose soybean oil by 83 percent.

Even the prices of detergents, toothpaste, bakery products and noodles/pasta went up.

The surging inflation in Bangladesh has sent living costs to such an extent that many families are grappling to maintain a decent life with limited budgets, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) last month in a media briefing.

"Apart from the higher price of basic food items, the high price of non-food items is putting a huge burden on households," said CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun.

Mohammad Tapan, of Paikar Para in Bogura, runs a grocery store with his brother. They run their joint family of nine with their incomes.

"Every year we are affected by floods," he said, adding, "People of all classes and professions come to our shop. Now middle class and lower-income shoppers are cutting down on things."

Mostly, customers paid in cash before but more and more people are buying things on credit, he said, adding that many these days cannot pay the amount back in full at the start of the month.

Tapan said those who used to spend Tk 8,000 a month on essentials at his store now spend Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000.

"I used to buy new clothes for everyone in the family ahead of Eid. Now I am

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.

€2b underground

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canton of Valais.

Six pump turbines send water from the lower reservoir of Emossion to the upper reservoir of Emossion Vieux during times of overproduction.

With a capacity of 25 million m³, the water battery has a power output large enough to power as many as 900,000 homes.

"Faced with the rise of new renewable energies, such as wind and solar, whose production is intermittent, such flexibility is needed to compensate for variations in the electricity network and permanently maintain the balance between production and consumption of electricity," stated a press release from the hydroelectric plant Nant de Drance.

"Nant de Drance works like a gigantic battery which, in the short term, allows you to quickly store excess electricity on the grid, or produce the necessary energy when demand exceeds production."

Water batteries have become a popular way to store energy, with figures from the US Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy revealing that 93 percent of energy storage in the country coming from pumped storage hydropower.