

Shut down Rampal plant: speakers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Protesters in Bagerhat's Mongla yesterday demanded the closure of the Rampal Thermal Power Plant, citing its devastating impact on the Sundarbans and the nearby Pashur River.

The rally, organised by Dhriti Rokhha Amra (Dhara) and Pashur River Waterkeeper, was held at Narikel Tala at 3:00pm. Environmental activist Mohammad Noor Alam Sheikh, coordinator of Sundarban Rokhkhay Amra, presided over the event.

Chief guest Prof Abdullah Harun Chowdhury of Khulna University's environmental science department highlighted alarming pollution levels in the Pashur. "Government studies show mercury levels in the river are 10 times the permissible limit, endangering aquatic life and livelihoods," he said.

He warned that the power plant, even before full operation, has caused significant damage to the ecosystem. "Toxic chemicals will irreparably harm water, fish, and human health. Transitioning to solar energy is the only sustainable solution," he added.

Sharif Jamil, member secretary of Dhara, urged the government to prioritise public interest, citing declining fish stocks and struggling fishermen.

Other speakers, including activists Abdur Rashid Howlader and Chhobi Hazra, stressed the importance of renewable energy to protect biodiversity and combat climate change.

Noor Alam said utilising just 10 percent of Bangladesh's 5,76,000 acres of unused government land could generate 25,000 megawatts of solar energy.

Critics argue the Rampal plant threatens the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with irreversible ecological and socio-economic damage. Protesters called on the government to prioritise environmental preservation over fossil fuels.

Do not use fireworks

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issues, including hearing and memory loss, sleep disturbances, anxiety, aggression, high blood pressure, tinnitus, dizziness, increased risk of heart disease, mental instability, stroke, and heart attacks.

It is noteworthy that unauthorised fireworks and firecrackers during New Year celebrations violate Rule 7 of the Noise Pollution (Control) Rules, 2006. Such actions are considered punishable offences under Rule 18 of the same regulations.

As per the law, violations of these rules may result in a penalty of up to one month of imprisonment or a fine of up to Tk 5,000, or both, for the first offence.

For subsequent violations, penalties may increase to up to six months of imprisonment, or a fine of up to Tk 10,000, or both.

The plight of tea garden workers was also highlighted. Leaders criticised the lack of land ownership among tea workers, which restricts their children's access to government jobs and passports. They

Former Brig Gen Azmi's dismissal order revoked

UNB, Dhaka

The dismissal order of former Brigadier General Abdullahil Aman Azmi, son of the late Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Ghulam Azam, has been revoked, according to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate yesterday.

The press release said the dismissal order was annulled and a pardon was granted on Tuesday (December 24).

Instead of dismissal, he was placed on "premature (compulsory) retirement" retroactively, effective from June 24, 2009, with all applicable financial and other benefits.

Additionally, the Ministry of Defence's dismissal notification, issued on June 23, 2009, has also been cancelled, it added.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN
Abu Naser Bypass Link Road, stretching nearly 2.5km, in Khulna has been in a dilapidated state for 14 years. The road has become almost unusable, with the bitumen surface worn away and numerous potholes forming. Vehicles often get stuck in these ditches, causing suffering to commuters. The photo was taken yesterday.

Stop leasing Ctg port

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Rajequzzaman Ratan, Shakil Akhter Chowdhury, Taslima Akhter, and Jatiyatobadi Shramik Dal Chattogram Division President AM Nazim Uddin, among others.

Concerns were raised over the exploitation of outsourced workers, who are often denied basic labour rights. The leaders urged an end to outsourcing practices and called for all workers to be treated equally under a unified labour law, including those in Export Processing Zones.

The meeting called for all workers to be provided with appointment letters, identity cards, service books, and paid holidays, alongside greater transparency and capacity-building initiatives in labour administration.

Trade union leaders urged the government to address these pressing issues to ensure fair treatment and rights for workers across all sectors.

demanded land allocation and opportunities for workers' children in public employment.

Shipbreaking workers' occupational health and safety issues were underscored, along with demands for strengthened oversight by the Labour Department and the Department of Factory and Establishment Inspection.

"Without this, simply saying 'he/she was a fascist' is nothing more than a slogan. You must produce exceptional academic work. If you do this, you will see many voices fall silent out of shame for their actions. We don't need protests like 'shut it down' or similar events. Instead, we need to document their misdeeds. If possible, involve Western academics in this work," he advised.

Shafiqul also urged approaching this task respectfully. "Avoid starting with insults. Acknowledge their stature in the society but research their wrongdoings. Present your findings directly to them, saying, 'We've conducted research on you, and this is the result.'"

At the beginning of the seminar, activist Md Ashraf Aziz Ishrak Fahim, known as Mohammad Ishrak, analysed the news coverage of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

His presentation highlighted how the media legitimised fabricated narratives, marginalised certain political groups, and provided undue advantages to others.

"During the

In-depth analysis of the media

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editors and newspapers, the legitimacy of the 2018 election, the BDR carnage trial, and the cases against Khaleda Zia.

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The police's oppression and killings of BNP and Jamaat activists during the elections were presented by these two newspapers as if the protesters were disrupting public movement by blocking roads and creating chaos. They even pressured the government through their reporting, questioning why law enforcement wasn't more aggressive and repressive towards the BNP and Jamaat activists, he said.

Samantha Sharmin, spokesperson for Jatiya Nagarik Committee, said, "During the Awami League's rule, a narrative was created that without them in power, there would be no cultural or artistic development in the country. From children to adults, everyone was compelled to worship Sheikh Mujib."

Mojibur Rahman Monju, member secretary of the Amar Bangladesh Party, remarked, "When Prothom Alo recently faced trouble, they sought support from us and various political parties. But during the shutdown of Amar Desh and Diganta Television, such unity was not seen."

Jamiat-e-Islami's central publicity secretary,

Matiur Rahman Akanda, added, "Under the Awami League regime, our top leaders were executed based on false allegations. There are still 16,000 cases against our leaders and activists, many of whom remain in prison. Yet, the country's leading media outlets have consistently remained silent on these issues."

Sanjida Islam Tulee, coordinator of Mayer Daak, a platform for the families of enforced disappearance victims, said many of the families are still waiting to hear about the whereabouts of their loved ones even under this government.

Journalist Kazi Jesin also spoke.

Apart from the seminar, a photo exhibition showcasing the news clippings by The Daily Star and Prothom Alo on major events was also held.

While erosion has temporarily subsided, the suffering persists.

Lalmirhat Water Development Board Executive Engineer Shunil Kumar said erosion had been rampant just two weeks ago but is currently under control.

Police and the locals rushed the spot and rescued the victims. The injured were admitted to a local hospital.

Police seized the truck, but its driver fled the scene after the incident.

Tea worker dies in workplace accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A tea worker was killed in a workplace accident in Thakurgaon yesterday afternoon.

The incident occurred at Debirdanga village of Sadar upazila. The deceased – Elias Ali, 21, – was from Mirzapur Jordarpur in Atwary upazila, Panchagarh.

Elias and his cousin Nazmul were pruning tea plants in a field owned by Iskandar Hayat Farukh at the village, said Inspector (Investigation) Suji Kumar Paul of Ruhea Police Station, quoting locals.

While they were working, the blade of the pruning machine broke and struck Elias in the abdomen, killing him on the spot.

Iskandar Hayat said Elias and Nazmul had been working in his tea field for several years.

A Bangladesh

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Jubo Dal, criticised the communal violence under Hasina's rule.

At the rally, student leader Subrata Ballav urged the government to address the plight of minorities by establishing a fast-track tribunal to prosecute cases of minority oppression, enacting a minority protection law, forming a dedicated Ministry for Minority Affairs, upgrading the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust to a Hindu Foundation, and introducing a Debottar Property Recovery and Preservation Law to safeguard temple properties.

360 families

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They have sent a letter to the ministry requesting allocations for their rehabilitation, the office stated.

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Tears, hugs

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port and stepped back onto Bangladeshi soil. The following day, he returned to his family in Dala village. His arrival was met with tears, joy, and disbelief.

Relatives and neighbours gathered in large numbers to welcome him back.

"I hugged him and cried for a long time," said Azizul Haque, Sadequl's younger brother. "It wasn't grief this time – it was joy."

Sadequl, now 42, is the eldest of five siblings. As a child, he left school after the fourth grade to assist his father with farming. In 2000, he married and soon became a father. But in 2001, his mental health began to deteriorate, and by 2007, he had vanished without a trace.

The family expressed gratitude to everyone who made Sadequl's return possible, including Shukla, Advocate Mizanur Rahman, and various organisations. "We pray for their well-being," said Akbar Ali.

The family has sought support from the Department of Social Services to ensure Sadequl receives proper care moving forward. Md Tariqul Islam, the upazila social services officer, assured the family of assistance.

For Sadequl, the past remains a foggy memory, but the present is clear – he is home. For his parents and siblings, the days of despair are over.

Secretariat fire

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Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Yesterday morning, members of the eight-member investigation committee visited the affected building and later held a meeting.

The investigation process is ongoing. The committee will hold another meeting tomorrow (today), Brigadier General Muhammad Zahid Kamal, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence and member secretary of the committee, told The Daily Star.

He said they could not determine whether it was an act of sabotage or an accident during the primary investigation, expressing his unwillingness to comment further until the investigation is complete.

Formed on Thursday, the committee is tasked with identifying the source and cause of the fire, determining any personal or professional responsibility, and providing recommendations to prevent such incidents and improve overall security of the Secretariat.

The committee has been asked to submit a preliminary investigation report by December 30 and a complete report within the following 10 working days.

Nineteen firefighting units extinguished the blaze after 10 hours of intense effort. A firefighter setting

up hose pipes was run over and killed by a truck on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sheikh Md Sajat Ali also visited the damaged building yesterday, accompanied by members of the DMP Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit.

Also, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) continued its forensic investigation for a second day.

CID Inspector Prashanta Kumar Debnath said evidence collected from the site on Thursday was being supplemented with a broader search around Building 7.

A secretary from one of the fire-affected ministries said he sent a representative to assess the situation yesterday, who reported to him that the affected building is currently without electricity and water supply.

He said they are planning to have staff from the affected ministries and divisions continue their work in other departments under his ministry. "We are also considering whether we can use some rooms from other ministries in the Secretariat," he told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

The event was presided over by the Chairman of Debate for Democracy Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron made 10 recommendations to

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No bar for Khaleda

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also said the martyrs of the July uprising will forever be remembered as great heroes in history.

This revolution was driven by the spirit of the Liberation War and the determination to build a Bangladesh free from discrimination.

"Efforts are being made to undermine the achievements of this revolution, but no conspirator will succeed in destroying these gains," he said.

"The revolutionaries will remain united in their commitment to establishing and protecting human rights," he hoped.

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He also said there is no such thing as minority in the country.

He added, "The interim government is trying to activate the economy. We want the economy to be more dynamic. But the

family has sought support from the Department of Social Services to ensure Sadequl receives proper care moving forward. Md Tariqul Islam, the upazila social services officer, assured the family of assistance.

For Sadequl, the past remains a foggy memory, but the present is clear – he is home. For his parents and siblings, the days of despair are over.

Everyone is constitutionally equal. We live in harmony between religions and castes," he said.