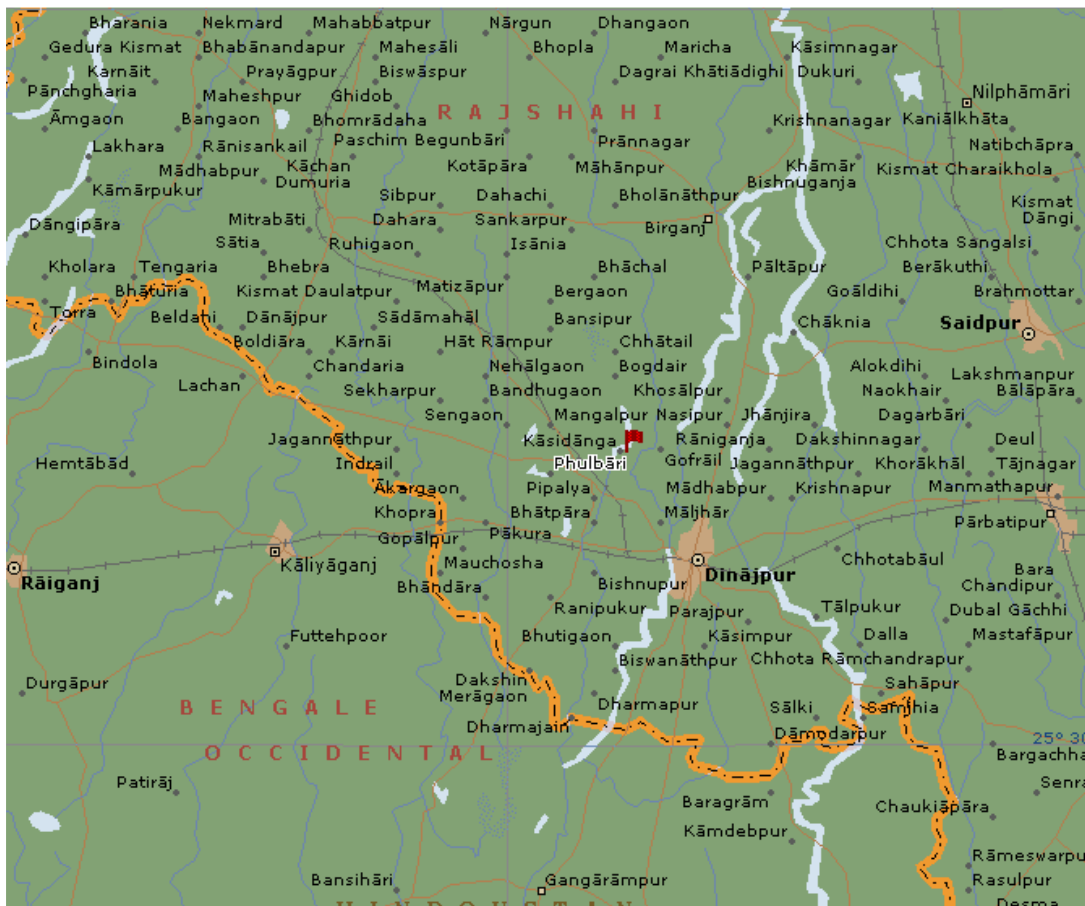


## 06 BAN 7 – 06-08-26 Phulbari

Laboratoire des frondeurs.org



Distance Phulbari - Dhaka  $\approx 90$  km.



Distance Phulbari - Dinajpur  $\approx 10$  km.

## **Five killed, 50 hurt as police fire on protesters: Cops go berserk as 20,000 demonstrators protest against open-pit mining at Phulbari**

Staff Correspondent, NewAge

27th August 2006

Dhaka, Bangladesh, [www.newagebd.co](http://www.newagebd.co)

At least five people were killed and more than 50 injured when the police and the paramilitary BDR opened fire on demonstrators protesting against the plan for open-pit mining at Phulbari coal field in Dinajpur on Saturday, according to police and witnesses.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port on Saturday lays siege to the Asia Energy office at Phulbari in Dinajpur, left, law enforcers go for action on the committee activists, right.

The demonstrators under the banner of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port, laid a siege to the office of Asia Energy, a UK-based multi-national company which signed a deal with the government for mining coal, at Phulbari, 271 kilometre north-west of capital Dhaka, in the afternoon.

Witnesses said the lawmen opened fire on the 20,000-strong demonstrators when they started hurling stones at the police force after being intercepted. The indiscriminate firing left one person dead on the spot and scores of others injured.

Four protesters died in Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

Locals alleged that the paramilitary BDR personnel, who were also deployed to maintain order, took away two bodies.

They confirmed identities of four deceased -Tariqul, 22, Khairul, 10, Ahsan Habib, 25, Chunnu, 28 -while the name of a Rajshahi University student could not be known.

The police and the BDR fired at least 70 gunshots and lobbed 100 tear gas canisters to disperse the angry demonstrators who fought pitched battles with the law enforcers for several hours.

A number of police personnel were also injured in the clash.

A local committee styled 'Phulbari Rakksha Committee' called a dawn-to-dusk shutdown in Phulbari for today to protest against the killings.

The police and locals said several thousand people gathered in front of the GM College ground to join a scheduled protest programme organised by the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources, Power and Port to lay a siege to Asia Energy's Phulbari coal mine project site in Dinajpur.

The committee's programme was to register protest against an open-pit method of mining at the Phulbari coalfield leased to Asian Energy. Such mining could pose a serious threat to the environment and livelihoods of the local people.

At one stage the demonstrators, led by Engineer Sheikh Muhammad Shaheedullah, convener of the committee, Professor Anu Muhammad, its member secretary, Bimal Biwas, general secretary of the Workers Party, Tipu Biswas of the Jatiya Gana Front, and Mosaddek Hossain Labu, co-ordinator of the Dinajpur district committee, marched towards the coal mine site.

As soon as the protesters neared Urbashi cinema the police and the BDR swung into action charging batons indiscriminately to disperse the agitators. The angry demonstrators retaliated by hurling stones at the law enforcers triggering the clash. The police fired at least 100 rounds of tear gas shells on the protesters.

As the whole area turned into a virtual battlefield and the situation deteriorated the police and members of the Bangladesh Rifles fired on the demonstrators, leaving five people killed on the spot and more than 50 others injured.

Nayeem Ahmed, the DIG of Rajshahi division, told New Age that the situation was under control and huge contingents of the police, the armed police, the BDR and members of the RAB were deployed in the area to avoid further troubles.

'I cannot say how many people were killed. Police said three persons were killed, but the media claimed that more than five were killed,' Nayeem added.

Anu Muhammad, the member-secretary of the National Committee and a professor of Jahangirnagar University, who was one of the organisers of the protest programme at Phulbari, told New Age on Sunday evening that the police and the BDR fired on a peaceful demonstration of the National Committee. 'I cannot give the exact number of the dead or injured, but the casualties were high,' he said. He demanded exemplary punishment of the killers.

The Workers Party general secretary, Bimal Biswas, who also took part at the Phulbari protest rally, told New Age that the police and the BDR opened fire without provocation.

Mohammad Khurshid Alam Moti, the principal of Phulbari Women's College, told New Age, 'we condemn such barbarous attack on peaceful demonstrators.'

Tension was prevailing in the area and huge contingents of the police, the armed police, the BDR and the RAB were deployed.

---

<http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press1199.htm>

## **Bangladesh coal mine protest spreads after deaths**

By Serajul Islam Quadir

DHAKA, Aug 27 (Reuters)

Protests erupted across Bangladesh on Sunday over a British company's plan to develop a coal mine, a day after six people were killed, when police opened fire during a demonstration.

At least 20 people were injured in fresh clashes with police after the protesters gathered near the offices of Asia Energy Plc in Phulbari in the northwest, where the mine is being developed, demanding its immediate closure.

Asia Energy wants to develop open pit mining at Phulbari in Dinajpur district, 350 km (220 miles) northwest of Dhaka.

Local residents and rights groups say the mine would displace hundreds of families and damage the environment.

Police evicted a group of protesters who blocked a highway bridge linking the northern districts with Dhaka.

In the capital, students staged demonstrations demanding the resignation of the government's energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman and state minister for home affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar for the deaths of the six protesters on Saturday.

A rights group called Alliance for Economic Justice staged a protest in Dhaka, accusing the British miner of being responsible for the Phulbari deaths.

"Killer Asia Energy get off Bangladesh", "How much blood do you need?" read placards carried by the alliance members.

Asia Energy's chief executive officer in Bangladesh, Gary Lye, on Sunday met energy adviser Mahmudur and discussed the situation in Phulbari and elsewhere. He voiced concern for Asia Energy personnel in Phulbari.

"I have got 40 people and their families living out there at the moment and I am concerned about their security. They are being intimidated and it's not fair, not fair to anybody," Lye told reporters after meeting the adviser.

## **SYMPATHIES**

Officials and witnesses said more than 100 people were also wounded during Saturday's clashes, when police and paramilitary troops fired hundreds of bullets and at least 50 tear gas shells to disperse about 20,000 demonstrators.

Police said the violence had erupted when the protesters, some armed with bows and arrows, tried to storm the office of the British firm.

Students have called for a nationwide strike in educational institutions on Monday to protest about the protesters' deaths.

Lye issued a statement on Saturday denying the project would harm the environment and said it would benefit local people.

In another statement on Sunday, Lye said Asia Energy deeply regretted the protesters' deaths and sent its sympathies to the families of the dead and injured.

He said Asia Energy arranged water supply and health care for the poor villagers in Phulbari and recently offered them televisions to watch the World Cup soccer.

"We are not enemies," he told reporters. "A section of people trying to derive political benefits out of conflicts ... are fuelling the Phulbari violence."

Energy adviser Mahmudur said: "the victims of the violence were guinea pigs in the hands of vested quarters. This is really unfortunate for every one of us."

"This incident has sent the wrong message to foreign investors, which we cannot afford at all when we are struggling hard to woo more and more investment."

---

## **A deadly deal, indeed!**

Aminul Islam

NewAge, August 27, 2006. Dhaka, Bangladesh

Not long ago the energy and mineral resources adviser, Mahmudur Rahman, termed the agreement with the Asia Energy for the Phulbari coalfield to be running 'against the interest of Bangladesh.'

It was proved on Saturday when law enforcers fired to kill five demonstrators who were laying siege the office of the company, protesting at its activities before going for the proposed open-pit mining.

The controversial agreement was initially signed with the Australian BHP during the previous BNP government in 1994.

The subsequent Awami League government signed the agreement with the Asia Energy in 1998 after the BHP handed over the licence for the field to the Asia Energy in 1997.

The controversy over the agreement has been raging for few months after the Asia Energy early this year submitted a scheme to the government for the development of the field and extraction of coal. The company proposed to follow open-pit mining at the field that would result in displacing about 50,000 people at Phulbari and turn 5,000 hectare of cultivable land into coalfield.

The local people, however, began agitating against the company's move and experts also started questioning the agreement with the company that would allow the government only 6 per cent of royalty when it starts exporting coal.

Mahmudur Rahman on March 16 at meet-the-press said the previous two governments were responsible for the agreement, which was 'against the interest of the country'. He said 'those who signed the agreement should be tried.'

Mahmud told New Age on Saturday night the incident at Phulbari was very sad. Asked if the incident proved the agreement with the company was against the country, Mahmud passed over the responsibility for the agreement to the previous Awami League government. 'We did not sign it. The Awami League government signed the agreement.'

He, however, blasted the national committee to protect oil, gas, power and port for organising the programme of siege at a time when the government suspended all activities regarding the Asia Energy.

'The government has not yet signed the mining agreement with the company. The government has not taken any steps to allow it to mine coal from the field. So why was there the programme of siege of the company office?' he said.

'The committee should not mobilise people to attack the office of a foreign investor. The committee has shown irresponsible attitude,' he said.

The people of the north, however, said the people at Phulbari joined the programme spontaneously as the entire northern people were angry at the presence of the company.

Ronnie, a business administration student at Stamford University in Dhaka, who is from Dinajpur,

said, 'You cannot believe how people in the north feel about the company which wants to displace thousands of people.'

There will be more agitation programmes if the Asia Energy continues its activities in Dinajpur, he said.

'The situation will worsen if it is allowed coal production.'

Sajib, a second-year student of Rangpur Medical College, said, 'In Rangpur, everyone knows about the company. The Rangpur people feel the same way the people of Dinajpur feel.'

The Asia Energy chief executive officer, Gary Lye, however, claimed, 'It is most unfortunate that an unrepresentative outside group has come to Phulbari to cause trouble in our community.'

He said the company has been operating lawfully at Phulbari for several years in accordance with a 'legally binding contract' with the government.

'The company is confident that it has the overwhelming support of our community at Phulbari and the adjacent upazilas. We have achieved this by being open, helpful and supportive of many local causes,' he said.

---

## **Phulbari killings condemned**

Staff Correspondent, NewAge, August 27, 2006. Dhaka, Bangladesh

Different political parties and their front organisations condemned the killing of five persons in the police firing at Phulbari in Dinajpur on Saturday.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port condemned the killing and extended its support to the dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the Phulbari Rakkha Committee at Phulbari today protesting against the killing.

The committee will also hold a protest rally at Muktangan in the capital city today from where fresh action programmes will be announced.

The 14-party opposition combine led the Awami League also condemned the killing and extended their support to the hartal programme.

The opposition alliance will also demonstrate across the country today in protest against the BDR-police firing.

The 11-Party Alliance, a combine of the left and democratic political parties, demanded immediate arrest of the killers, formation of judicial inquiry committee, and punishment for the killers. The coordinator of the combine, Abdus Samad, said the police and BDR personnel opened fire on the innocent people at the provocation of the Asia Energy Corporation officials.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh condemned the killing and decided to hold a protest rally at Paltan crossing today. It also extended support to the hartal called by the Phulbari Rakkha Committee.

Panch Bam Dal, a combine of the five left leaning political parties, will hold another protest rally at Muktangan in Dhaka. The combine coordinator, Zonayed Saki, called upon the people to make the protest rally a success.

The Workers Party president, Rashed Khan Menon, and general secretary, Bimal Biswas, condemned the killing and demanded exemplary punishment for the killers.

Garments Sramik O Shilpa Rakkha Jatiya Mancha, Bangladesh Juba Moitri, Jatiya Sramik Federation Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation also condemned the killing.

---

<http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/08/27/d6082701011.htm>

## **Asia Energy Coal Mine Protest**

*7 killed, 60 bullet-hit as cops, BDR open fire  
Indefinite hartal called*

Kongkon Karmaker, from Phulbari, Dinajpur

At least seven people were killed and about 300 injured as police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) opened fire on demonstrators advancing towards the office of Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd in Dinajpur yesterday.

Thousands of demonstrators, mainly farmers and indigenous people including women armed with bows and arrows and sticks, joined the protest apprehending massive eviction and loss of farmland that might be caused by the implementation of the Phulbari Coalmine Project. The protesters enforced an indefinite hartal at Phulbari starting today in protest of the police action.

The Asia Energy yesterday said in a statement that "unrepresentative" outsiders created trouble at the Phulbari coalmine site, UNB reported.

The dead include Tariqul Islam, 24, son of Mokhlesur Rahman of Chandpara, Ahsan Habib, 35, Osman, 24, Raju, 8, and Chunnu. The identity of two others could not be confirmed. Hospital sources said 60 of the injured, including eight policemen, were bullet-hit and many of them are in a critical condition.

The injured were taken to local Upazila Health Complex by vans and rickshaws as the roads had been made off-limits to all kinds of motorised vehicles since morning for the demonstration programme.

Witnesses said the protesters under the banner of National Committee to Protect Oil and Gas, a platform of different rights groups and leftist parties, marched towards the Asia Energy office around 4:30pm after a huge rally at the Dhaka intersection.

They chanted slogans against the British company that is operating the Phulbari project. The police had put up a barricade near the bridge over the Chhoto Jamuna river about 1.5km off the Asia Energy office. This led to a scuffle between the leaders of the demonstrators and the law enforcers.

The police lobbed around 100 rounds of teargas shells to disperse the demonstrators trying to break the barricade.

The protesters regrouped a little later and attacked the law enforcers from different directions. Admitting the death of two people in the firing, district Superintendent of Police (SP) Delwar

Hossain Mia said, "The police were forced to open fire after being attacked by the demonstrators equipped with lethal weapons." Deputy Commissioner Tahsinur Rahman said additional forces were deployed at Phulbari and other places.

As the news of killing spread, the crowd damaged the information centre of Asia Energy at Phultali about 3.2km from the coalmine office.

The fight was continuing at the time of filing this report at 8:00pm last night. Angry locals were also chanting slogans against local MP Mostafizur Rahman Fizar calling him an agent of the Asia Energy for supporting the project.

Earlier, addressing the rally the protesters said at least 4,70,000 locals including 50,000 indigenous people will have to be relocated if the Phulbari Coalmine Project is implemented. Extraction of coal through the open pit method will also affect half of the Phulbari town, they added.

The speakers said according to the agreement the Asia Energy will extract coal for 30 years and export two-thirds of it. The foreign company will hold the ownership of the project during this period while Bangladesh will receive a royalty of only six per cent, they said.

"The proposed open pit system will cause more damage to the ecology than what the economy will get from the coalmine," Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University told the rally.

UNB adds: Immediately after the incident, Asia Energy Chief Executive Officer Gary Lye said in a statement, "It is most unfortunate that unrepresentative outsiders have come to Phulbari to cause trouble in our community."

Lye noted that the Asia Energy has been operating at the site for several years in accordance with a legally binding contract with the government of Bangladesh.

He said the coal project is an open and transparent business that will bring far-reaching benefits to both the local community and the people of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, leaders of different socio-political organisations yesterday condemned the police firing on the demonstrators and demanded proper investigation and immediate trial of the law enforcers involved. They also demanded compensation to the victims' families and proper treatment of the injured.

The Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine will stage countrywide demonstrations today to protest the killings at Phulbari.

The 14-party also extended its support to the indefinite hartal called at Phulbari by the demonstrators, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh and a leader of the opposition combine, told The Daily Star last night.

---

<http://www.cyberpresse.ca/article/20060828/CPMONDE/608280793/5024/CPDMINUTE>

Le lundi 28 août 2006

## **Violentes manifestations au Bangladesh**

Agence France-Presse



## Phulbari, Bangladesh

De nouveaux incidents violents ont éclaté dans le nord du Bangladesh où quelque 20 000 personnes, selon la police, ont défilé lundi contre l'ouverture d'une mine de charbon britannique.

Au moins 5 personnes avaient été tuées par balles, samedi, lorsque les forces de l'ordre bangladaises avaient fait feu sur les protestataires dans la ville de Phulbari (350 km au nord de la capitale Dacca), selon les deux agences de presse bangladaises, BDNEWS 24 et UNB.

Lundi, une foule en colère a incendié la maison d'un responsable de la société Asia Energy Plc, basée à Londres, selon la police. Les manifestants réclament au gouvernement la fermeture du bureau de la société, prélude à l'ouverture d'un mine à ciel ouvert qui, selon eux, entraînera le déplacement de plus de 100 000 personnes et menacerait l'environnement.

«Les manifestants sont hors de tout contrôle. Ils ont incendié la maison d'un responsable de l'Asia Energy à Phulbari. C'est le chaos absolu. La foule a fait des descentes contre les maisons de gens qui avaient collaboré avec la société», a déclaré Fazlul Haq chef de la police locale.

Environ 300 policiers ont été déployés pour protéger les locaux de la société britannique qui avait préventivement transféré ses personnels dans une ville voisine, selon la même source.

Le développement du bassin minier de Phulbari, dans le nord-ouest du Bangladesh, constitue la principale activité de l'Asia Energy qui prévoit d'y investir 1,4 milliard de dollars pour en extraire un charbon de très haute qualité.

---

<http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press1199.htm>

## **BANGLA NAGAR: August 26 2006**

28th August 2006

Shocking news came out of Bangladesh last weekend, with the announcement that up to seven people, including a 14-year old boy, were shot dead and perhaps a hundred injured on Saturday (August 26) as they called for the abandonment of a proposed UK-owned coal mine at Phulbari in Dinajpur province. In the three days since, figures for the number of victims have varied. However, it seems clear that this is the worst such attack in the country over recent years, aimed at opponents of a so-called "development" project.

Peoples' protests continued into Sunday and Monday, while more actions are planned elsewhere in Bangladesh over the coming weeks. Blame continues to be traded between many parties in the country but Asia Energy's project leader, Gary Lye (who prides himself on having offered poor Phulbari villagers TV sets to watch the recent World Cup), surely took the biscuit for hypocrisy. Flatly condemning the demonstrators for triggering the violence, he expressed his 'deepest condolence' to the people who had lost their children, since they would not be around to enjoy the "benefits" of this "wonderful project", adding: "And that is a real tragedy".

In an disturbing echo of the justifications made by the Orissa authorities following India's Kalinganagar massacre last January [see, the police and Bangladesh Rifles (paramilitary) maintain that the violence at Phulbari was initiated by the demonstrators, some of whom (probably local Indigenous Santals) were "armed with bows and arrows." The company has blamed the initial

attack on "outsiders": mirroring an identical accusation, offered up by government of Orissa, soon after thirteen people were mown down by police at alinganganar on January 6th. It was quickly disproved.

## **Ground Zero**

As director of Nostromo Research, I traveled to the Asia Energy (AEC, listed on London AIM) project site during April, spending two and a half days in Phulbari and meeting with five communities - two of which were Santal) - in the main lease area. (At least 9% of residents of the area are Indigenous). I was told by three of these groups that the company - despite its claims - had paid only a few visits to assess villagers' opinions of the project and had offered them small gifts (which they refused) - something which struck me as tantamount to bribery. Only one community - a Christian mission station - seemed diffident about expressing opposition to the mine.

I was also asked to address a two hour meeting in Phulbari with some thirty representatives of the protection (dacha) committee of Phulbari and answer their numerous questions which I attempted to do, base on several field experiences of coal mines in India and Indonesia. I can attest that the allegation (cited below) by the UK project director, Gary Lye, is at the least misguided and, in one respect, mendacious. Those agitating for the abandonment of this vast and potentially hugely devastating open-pit mine (it would be the biggest Bangladesh has ever confronted) are predominantly local citizens, representing a large body of opinion. They come from almost all political parties, including the ruling BNP. If they are not united it is in one respect only: some are prepared to endorse an underground mine along the lines of the Araucaria coal mine which currently operates on the fringes of Phulbari town.

## **Giving the Lye**

Together with a Dhaka-based journalist and two residents on the third day of my trip I attended the Asia Energy "information office" at Phulbari - - actually little more than a hastily-converted shop with a small back room. We inspected the visitor's book which, the company says, shows that eighty per cent of townspeople support the project. In fact, the majority of names in the book were those of people from outside Phulbari, or whose signatures could not be verified.

So much for Mr. Lye's reported assertion that "an unrepresentative outside group has come to Phulbari to cause trouble in our community". If anyone is unrepresentative, it is the company operated by Mr. Lye, his associates and its backers within the BNP government (as well as some from outside, such as the Did - see below). For Lye to dismiss the strength of Sunday's protest on the grounds that some participants came from outside the immediate town should be transparently untenable. As one demonstrator told the New Age newspaper on Saturday night: "You cannot believe how people in the north feel about the company which wants to displace thousands of people."

Last weekend's demonstration was not an upstart, ill-conceived and politically-motivated manifestation by a small group of agitators, but the culmination of a democratically-organised campaign which has been mounting over the past two years. Opposition to the Asia Energy mine is backed by a raft of prominent and knowledgeable Bangaldeshi citizens [see postings on the MAC site from 2005]. The fact that a reported 20,000 people could turn out to back the protection committee is hardly surprising, considering that a government decision to back the project looked earlier this month to be imminent (Bangladesh government environmental clearance was given in September 2006).

## **The roles of DfID and ADB**

It is well known in Bangladesh - and among some NGOs and industry "watchers" outside the country - that the UK's department for international development (DfID) has backed Asia Energy from the outset, projecting the Phulbari mine as an essential means by which the country can bridge its "energy gap". due to a dearth of natural gas. This is despite the signal fact that, on the company's own projections, of the 15 million tonnes of coal a year which the mine will be delivered at full output, more than half (8 million tonnes) will be sent out of the country. [Environmental Assessment Report: Summary EIA, submitted by Asia Energy Corp (Bangladesh) Pty Ltd to the Asian Development Bank, project No. 39933, August 2006 ( hereinafter known as "EAR 8/2006"), paragraph 7 and para. 198 page 41].

While in Dhaka I was informed by highly reliable sources that the DfID had applied exceptional pressure (it struck me as nothing less than a threat) on a leading Bangladesh-based development NGO, to modify, if not abandon, its opposition to the Phulbari mine or jeopardise its UK-government funding.

The World Bank has so far refrained from investing in the mine (no doubt keenly aware of the disastrous failures of backing for Coal India in the 1990s). However, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is already committed to partial funding of a "railway component" to speed the export of much of Phulbari's output to international markets - despite the company's own admission that "only a basic EIA [on the export proposal] has been carried out [to date]" [EAR 8/2006, page 34].

### **No safe port in a storm?**

The company's recently-released project Environmental Assessment Report [EAR 8/2006], aimed at the ADB, outlines modalities of the mine and proposed implementation standards. However it concentrates on trying to evaluate the impacts of transporting coal from Phulbari to the point of export at a terminal in Khulna port, 330 km south of the minesite. The Report concludes that:

\* 3,200 people "will be removed from Khulna port area" [EAR 8/2006: para. 188, page 46] This is in addition to the 40,000 villagers the company acknowledges will have to be shifted from the mine project area itself.

\* Barges will carry the coal from Khulna, a distance of 107 km to Akram point. [EAR 8/2006: para.135 page 36].

(It should be noted that, while the company states that it will employ a range of safety measures and adopt best international standards in operating these barges, the EAR does not address "sudden disaster" events, such as a mid-river accident or collision resulting in loss of most or all of the cargo. According to US data on collisions affecting inland coal barge transportation, safety standards have not measurably improved over the last decade. [See: [www.mainland.cctt.org/istf2006/accidents.asp](http://www.mainland.cctt.org/istf2006/accidents.asp)] ).

\* The offloading facility will be situated in a deep-water anchorage at Akram Point which, acknowledges Asia Energy, is "within the Sundarbans". This is not only a World Heritage site, but the "world's largest marine area" - and (adds the company somewhat gratuitously) "is very sensitive. " Somewhat contradictorily the company claims that "the deep water anchorage at Akram Point will be at least 1.3km [!] from the nearest shoreline which itself is 16 km north of the Sundarbans World Heritage site" while shipping channels "...will pass at least 1.5 km from these protected areas." [EAR 8/2006: page 15].

(NB. Indian legislation states that no industrial facility should be sited less than 25km from a marine site of biological significance).

## **Focus on India**

Integral to exportation of product from Phulbari is an upgrading of the rail link to India. The EAR states that "as many (sic) as eleven trains a day will transport coal from Phulbari...to domestic markets throughout Bangladesh, Indian markets via Darsam and international markets...via Khulna" [EAR 8/2006, para.117 page 34].

This places the project firmly within a major debate, currently ensuing in India, over the first use of the country's own mineral resources, as against permitting increased substitution by imports or allowing. A grandiose US\$ 3 billion-plus scheme by India's largest private company, Tata, to construct steel foundries within Bangladesh, while gaining control of the country's energy reserves (including coal) has currently been suspended by the Bangladesh government. Although Tata says it is interested in construction of another coal mine at Barapukuria, it would be naive to assume that Tata has not also got its eyes on Phulbari with its huge, 572 million tonnes, deposits (according to Asia Energy) of high quality bituminous thermal and semi-soft coking coal.

On Monday (August 28 2006) a Tata spokesperson claimed the company was digesting lessons from the weekend's killings. What he did not point out was that it was his company's proposed steel plant in Orissa that prompted the protests that led to the Kalinganagar massacre last January.

### **We shall not be moved!**

At this point, I am not offering a detailed critique of the EAR which the ADB - and no doubt DfID and potential project funders - will be mulling over in the coming weeks. However, it is worth taking Asia Energy at its words (or lack of them) in respect of two major consequences should the Phulbari coal mine be allowed to proceed:

\* The company (as pointed out) estimates that some 40,000 people will be "relocated" to make way for the mine. In fact, the number is likely to be much greater (other estimates in Bangladesh have ranged between 100,000 and 400,000) as the excavation proceeds, albeit with promised backfilling and site reclamation/revegetation. "[A]t any one stage", according to the EAR, the mine will occupy some 2,189 hectares [EAR: 8/2006, page 15]

Such major dislocation is supposedly offset by an estimated "0.7% - 1%" increase in Bangladesh's GDP, and the promise of "more than 20,000 new and indirect jobs" [EAR page 14]. However, the mine itself will only employ "1,200 to 2,100" full-time workers [EAR 8/2006, para 276], while the company "allow[s] for a multiple for 10 additional jobs for every direct job" [EAR 8/2006, para.268]: an allowance which is not based on any firmly researched evidence. Also highly speculative is Asia Energy's claim that, since "more than 80% of agricultural land will be restored", the net loss of productive land is "only [sic] USD57 million" [EAR 8/2006 para. 276] .

It is obvious that the company is deliberately under-estimating, or even ignoring altogether, the loss of productive capacity in the short-term.

In a moment of rare candidness, Asia Energy agrees with opponents that "a significant reduction in land acquisition and population displacement is not possible [my emphasis] without compromising the economic and technical viability of the project" [EAR 8/2006, page 33].

\* Apart from land and income loss, the many people I interviewed in April at or close to the project area were most concerned about potential impacts on water supplies: their availability, quality and the prospect of flooding. While Asia Energy claims it will institute a number of de-watering and water treatment controls, its' discussion of these critical aspects is speculative and based on

hydrological/climactic projections which it does not convincingly anticipate [EAR 8/2006 pages 28-29] .

In regard to potential flooding, Asia Energy claims that "[t]he mine and the Phulbari town-ship will be protected against even the most extreme flooding by embankments constructed of material from the mine overburden. " At the same time, i t concedes that the mine de-watering systems, to be initially be installed as a "ring of dewatering bores around the box cut footprint "will have "potential impacts on local hydrology. Dewatering activities will cause groundwater drawdown of approximately 25 m [sic] at a distance of 4 km from the mine pit, and 15 m at a distance of 6 km."

Says the company: "This may result in reduced groundwater availability to the local farming community. However, various mitigation procedures, including injection of water back into the aquifer and a reticulated water supply for irrigation and for affected townships and villages, will ensure that the Project in reality will have a positive effect on the surrounding area. Clean water from the dewatering bores will not require treatment before being released to watercourses and/or directed to irrigation systems, aquifer injection systems, the regional water supply, and the construction camp. Surface-water runoff from rain falling on areas disturbed by the mine will be directed to retention and/or sedimentation ponds. " [EAR 8/2006 page 299].

For comparison it may be pointed out that one of India's largest mines (Neyveli), which has been producing since the country's independence, has experienced considerable problems of pit flooding and water draw-down that are still not being adequately addressed after sixty years of mine operation, while one of India's newer coal mines, at Asansol in West Bengal (not far from Phulbari) exhibits similar problems as the underground aquifers are exposed. And, while Neyveli's annual production is "only" 6.5 million tonnes/year, the projected output from Phulbari, at the height of its operations, will reach more than double this.

At the very least, development agencies, such as the ADB and DfID, should withdraw any further support for this project and call for an immediate moratorium until a fully independent EIA has been performed (adhering at its minimum to the World Bank/IFC's policy and performance standards on social and environmental sustainability and the IFC's disclosure policy). Apart from any other considerations, Asia Energy is a company whose leadership is dubious (see: <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/Action/press1101.htm>) and which has no pre-existing operational record. It is unacceptable that such a company should be admitted to control of such a massive and potentially damaging undertaking - where the World Bank itself has so far feared to tread. From now on, any permitting process must be informed by far more comprehensive social, human rights, environmental (including regional hydrological and climate studies) than have so far been performed - along with a full range of public hearings (not only in Phulbari but along the coal export route). There must be done without any intimidation, or whiff of corruption, as has already been alleged.

But, in the final event, it is the people of Phulbari who will carry the greatest burden if this mine (and indeed Tata's coal project in the same area) proceeds. They have already made their wishes known, and last weekend these were written literally in blood). If Asia Energy's mine proceeds it will not only bring further conflict to northwestern Bangladesh but enormous social repercussions will be felt elsewhere in Bangladesh and across the Indian border.

Roger Moody, Nostromo Research, London, August 28 2006

---

## **Phulbari Coalmine Killing: Thousands defy ban, stage protest**

Daily Star

28th August 2006

Thousands of locals took to the streets in Phulbari yesterday violating section 144 during a daylong shutdown protesting Saturday's police firing on demonstrators against an open-pit coal mine project that left seven killed and around 300 injured. The agitators vowed to continue their ongoing indefinite strike until Asia Energy (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd, the British company operating the Phulbari coalmine project, leaves the town.

Hundreds of members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police swooped on the demonstrators since morning. Over ten thousand people participated in a namaz-e-janaza of the deceased at Nimtali crossing in Phulbari at 5:30pm.

Shops, offices and schools remained closed during the hartal while communication from Phulbari to nearby Birampur, Nawabganj, Hakimpur and Ghoraghat upazilas has remained snapped since Saturday.

The protesters organised a protest rally at about 8:00am.

The law enforcers obstructed the rally at different places. The BDR and police dispersed the agitators whenever they tried to regroup and join the rally.

An agitator claimed that the BDR men also attacked their houses on Friday and looted valuables. The demonstrators set fire to tyres in front of a hotel at noontime and threw brickbats at the police. Additional BDR and police forces have been deployed in the area to contain further violence. Meanwhile, Shahjahan Ali Sarkar Putu, Phulbari Pourasabha chairman and convenor of Phulbari Protection Committee, said they had no involvement in Saturday's programme.

He said he had lodged a general diary (GD) with the Phulbari Police Station on August 2 saying the Phulbari Protection Committee will not be responsible for any untoward incident during the programme.

Phulbari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Hasan Sarwar said what happened on Saturday was totally beyond their control. The BDR fired 70 rounds while the police shot 30, he said.

Syed Saiful Islam Jewel, Phulbari unit convener of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources and Electricity-Port, severely condemned Saturday's incident and said the administration opened fire on the common people to protect the interest of the looters.

However, the police superintendent of Phulbari told him that the police did not shoot. Meantime, leaders of the committee demanded judicial inquiry into the matter and punitive measures against the responsible. They also demanded compensation to the families of Saturday's victims.

The hartal in Phulbari will continue until stoppage of all activities of Asia Energy and its removal, Saiful said. Claiming that at least 10 were killed in Saturday's shootout, he alleged that the BDR dumped the rest of the dead bodies.

"The police have prevented the people of Phulbari from seeing the dead bodies of their relatives. They are also not saying clearly if the dead bodies will be returned," he said.

Our correspondent in Dinajpur adds: Two more of the seven killed were identified yesterday: they are Amin, 14, son of Abdul Hamid of Barokona village, and Salekin, 24, son of Abdul Hashem of Jharapara village of Nawabganj upazila.

The identity of another deceased could not be known as of 9:30pm yesterday. At least seven to eight people of Janpara, Barokona and Jholapara, including SSC candidate Ekramul, son of Mokbul Hossain, have been missing since Saturday.

Meanwhile, the BDR raided and ransacked several houses in Jholapara, Dhanapara and Sajalpukur on August 26 night. They even assaulted some women, sources alleged.

The designated magistrate snatched the film of a local photojournalist when the latter tried to take his snaps in Nimtali area. Sources said the BDR asked for the approval from the Phulbari UNO for shooting. The UNO, however, denied it.

---

## **People defy ban, agitate at Phulbari: Law enforcers conduct house-to-house search, hartal observed**

Staff Correspondent, NewAge

28th August 2006

[www.newagebd.com](http://www.newagebd.com)

Phulbari and surroundings are simmering with tension following the death of five people in police firing on a protest demonstration against a coal mine project which locals fear would displace the farmers and threaten the environment.

The first day of the indefinite hartal [strike] enforced by the people of Phulbari passed off on Sunday amid mounting tension while a half-day hartal was observed peacefully in Dinajpur town. The local administration has slapped a ban on gatherings in Phulbari.

The government has formed a committee to probe the bloody incident. The state minister for home affairs, Lutfozzaman Babar, told reporters that the deputy commissioner of Dinajpur, Tahsinur Rahman, had been directed to investigate the incident.

Besides, he said, he had requested the energy adviser, Mahmudur Rahman, to find out why the people had turned 'violent' in Phulbari.

During the strike on Sunday, several hundred people took to the streets at Phulbari defying the restrictions on gatherings and staged agitation all day.

They shouted slogans condemning the unprovoked firing by the police and the paramilitary BDR on demonstrators.

The demonstrators vowed to continue their movement until the Asia Energy, a British multinational company with which the government signed a mining agreement, was ousted from the country.

The protesters blocked the main roads with stones, bricks, logs and electric poles. At about 9:00am, the BDR personnel charged batons on a procession in the Phulbari municipal area.

They also snatched cameras from two photojournalists and returned those after the on-duty magistrate, Sudipta Roy removed the rolls of film, witnesses said.

The demonstrators and the law enforcers also chased each other at different places including Sujapur Road, TT Mor, Dhaka Mor and Gouripur Road.

During the hartal, all shops, even the kitchen markets, offices and educational institutions remained closed. There was no traffic on roads snapping the tiny northern town from the rest of the country.

Earlier, the law enforcers conducted a house-to-house search on Saturday night forcing the residents to stay indoors putting out lights.

The locals alleged that the law enforcers had tortured innocent people during the overnight raids. The law enforcers also looted sweetmeat and cigarette shops, they alleged.

The Phulbari upazila nirbahi officer, Hasan Sarwar, told the media that the activities of Asia Energy would be stopped if the people did not want it.

‘Nothing will be done here against the people’s will,’ he said.

The deputy commissioner of Dinajpur, Tahsinur Rahman, admitted that five people had been killed in Saturday’s incident. However, the police superintendent, Delwar Hossain Miah, denied the law enforcers had opened fire. He claimed that the police lobbed tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets.

The Phulbari unit convener of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port, Syed Saiful Islam Jewel, alleged that the law enforcers had opened fire on demonstrators without provocation on Saturday.

He demanded an inquiry into Saturday’s police firing and suspension of the activities of Asia Energy. ‘We’ll continue movement until the persons responsible for Saturday’s incident are punished,’ he said.

The Phulbari municipality chairman, Shahjahan Ali Sarkar Putu, demanded compensation for the dead and injured in Saturday’s incident.

The bodies of the victims were not handed over to their relatives. Three of the bodies were lying at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital morgue while the rest two at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue till the evening.

At least five people were killed and more than 50 injured when the police and the paramilitary BDR opened fire on demonstrators protesting against the plan for open-pit mining at Phulbari coalfield in Dinajpur on Saturday.



---

## Countrywide daylong hartal Wednesday

Staff Correspondent, NewAge

28th August 2006

The opposition combine led by the Awami League and the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port on Sunday announced separate programmes including a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal on August 30 protesting at Saturday's killing at Phulbari.

The combine decided on the programme of hartal at a meeting at the Awami League chief's Dhanmondi office in the afternoon where the leaders reviewed the situation at Phulbari where five people were killed, and other political situation.

'We condemn the attack on the people which was nothing but the continuation of repression by the BNP-led alliance government,' said the Awami League chief, Sheikh Hasina, after the meeting.

The opposition alliance will observe 'protest day' on September 7. Sunday's meeting also decided to send teams of the alliance and a parliamentary delegation of the Awami League to Phulbari on Tuesday.

A rally will be held on September 18 as part of the alliance's ongoing movement against the government. Sheikh Hasina later had an exclusive meeting with the Gana Forum president, Dr Kamal Hossain, in the Awami League office.

The two leaders discussed the latest political situations and Kamal gave his opinion on dialogue with the government and reform proposals of the opposition, the meeting source said.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port also called a half-day countrywide hartal for the same day to protest at the killings and demanding scrapping of the Phulbari coal project and expulsion of the Asia Energy.

The committee announced the programmes at a briefing in the Communist Party office in Dhaka. The committee also planned to observe mourning day today and to hold a rally at the Central Shahid Minar at 5:00pm. The committee will observe 'demonstration day' on Tuesday.

The opposition-leaning student organisations have called a strike in all educational institutions for today. The Dhaka University has suspended all the examinations scheduled for the day.

Political parties, student organisations, and cultural and green groups on Sunday came down heavily on the government for killing five people and injuring scores who were protesting against at open-pit mining at Phulbari in Dinajpur.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port held a rally at Muktangan. The committee convener, Sheikh Muhammad Shaheedullah, said the multinational company Asia Energy was trying to plunder national property with the help of the alliance government.

‘If coal is mined through open-pit method, thousands of people will lose their homesteads,’ Anu Muhammd, the member secretary of the committee said at the rally. The opposition combine held went out on demonstration across the country and held a rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka.

The combine coordinator, Awami League general secretary, Abdul Jalil, said the people had no security of their lives.

Awami League presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said the alliance government wanted to snatch away people’s rights.

Chaired by the Dhaka city combine coordinator Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, the rally was also addressed by Awami League presidium member Matia Chowdhury, Workers Party politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha, central leader Quamrul Ahsan and Samyabadi Dal leader Harun Chowdhury.

The Bikalpadhara Bangladesh president, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, in a statement demanded judicial investigation of the killing. Badruddoza said a perfect analysis of the people’s demand incorporating politicians, economists, geologists and entrepreneurs is required to solve the crisis over coal mining in the region.

The Ganamukti O Jatiya Sampad Rakkha Jatiya Committee, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party and Ganasanghati Andolan held rallies at Muktangan.

The Progressive Students’ Alliance, a group of eight left-leaning student bodies, brought out a procession at Dhaka University, denouncing the killing and demanding immediate cancellation of the agreement with the Asia Energy.

Green groups such as Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan, Green Voice, and Green Force, condemned the killing.

The top executives of seven non-governmental organisations in a statement demanded an immediate end to coal mining by the Asia Energy.

The statement said the government made the agreements without taking into consideration people’s view. Sultana Kamal Shamsul Huda, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Taslimur Rahman, Mahfuzullah, Maheen Sultana and Khushi Kabir signed the statement.

The rights watchdog, Odikar, Bangladesh Farm Workers’ Association, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Garments Sramik O Shilpa Rakkha Jatiya Mancha, Bangladesh Juba Moitri, Jatiya Sramik Federation Bangladesh, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation also condemned the killing.

---

## **Agreement with Asia Energy: Option open for govt to make pro-people deal**

Sharier Khan, The Daily Star

28th August 2006

The 1998 deal with Asia Energy dictates that the company must accept whatever rules and regulations related to mining are changed anytime, says former chief of the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD). This means, the government can practically change or modify the Mines and Minerals Rules, 1968 to address the needs of modern times and change other policy issues to make the coalmine deal more acceptable to the people, experts say.

As per the law, Bangladesh can also cancel or revise the deal. The nation can penalise the contractor for its faults or violation of any mining rules and regulation.

The deal with Asia Energy gives Bangladesh only six percent royalty for production of coal, and a nine-year tax holiday for Asia Energy -- the first nine years of production -- to be followed by 45 percent corporate tax.

Since the contractor is bound to accept changes of rules and regulations, the finalised draft-new coal policy can immensely benefit Bangladesh if adopted. However, for mysterious reasons, this policy remains shelved since early July when it was about to be sent to the cabinet for approval.

The new policy asks the coalmine developer to pay the government the existing low royalty rate of six percent if they sell the coal in the domestic market. However if it exports the coal at a per ton price above US \$25, the royalty rate will increase as per a formula. At the present international rate of coal, which is being sold around \$50 per ton, the royalty will be 16 per cent. The policy seeks to export 60 percent of the country's coal, leaving the rest 40 percent for domestic consumption.

Asia Energy has been objecting to these aspects of the coal policy.

Asia Energy entered the coal mining scenario in 1998 by buying the mining contract originally awarded to international coal giant BHP on August 20, 1994. During the 1998 transfer of the agreement in the shape of Assignment Agreement of Exploration Licences under the Mines and Minerals Rules, 1968 a number of clauses were added that made the deal better than the original agreement with BHP.

According to former chief of BMD M Muminullah, the BHP deal was unsolicited. However, there was a national negotiation committee headed by Sajedul Karim, who retired as secretary recently. This committee comprised of members from the Petrobangla, Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB), the BMD and other departments.

"The negotiations with BHP were thorough. We tailored the deal as per the international practice. On April 12, 1994, we signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BHP. Then we followed all the processes required for such an agreement which was signed in August of that year. There was legal vetting and then the gazette notifications," Muminullah said brushing aside allegations of a hush-hush deal.

BHP was interested in Bangladesh following the discovery of coal in Barapukuria by the GSB in the 80's. "The Barapukuria discovery was never announced by the government," Muminullah said adding that by the time he took over the BMD as its director in April 1994, the government had already finalised the Barapukuria coalmine deal with China.

Petrobangla sources on the other hand say the exercises on Barapukuria negotiation suffered heavily due to linguistic problems and much of the decisions about the deal was rather imposed by the then energy minister.

In contrast, the BHP deal saw better negotiations. From the beginning, the BHP was interested in open-pit mining. However, within a couple of years, the BHP said that it would not be interested to develop a coalmine if the coal is found at a depth lower than 130 meters. It said BHP does not find it economically attractive. Then the BHP got heavily involved in mining in Malaysia. That's when it struck a deal with Asia Energy," said Muminullah, who ran the BMD for eight years until 2002.

The Barapukuria mine's coal deposit is located 191 meters below ground while Phulbari's coal is situated 151 meters below.

Muminullah sees nothing wrong in open-pit mining, even though majority of geologists of the country oppose this as an environmentally hazardous and anti-people operation. Muminullah says, "You must accept some environmental damage for greater gains. To minimise the damage, you have to implement the project systematically. In the US, 60 percent of power is generated by coal from open-pit mines. Open-pit mines are present in other western countries as well," he said.

Muminullah added that the agreement with Asia Energy is far from anti-state as the government can change or modify the concerned laws to suit its needs.

The 1998 clauses clearly state that the government holds the first option to purchase the coal. Plus, Asia Energy shall comply with the provisions of the Mines and Minerals Rule 1968, as amended from time to time, and other applicable laws of the land.

Besides, the government can stop the mining if the lessee is found involved in mining activities that jeopardise the conservation of the mineral wealth.

Asia Energy gave its \$2 billion scheme of development last year for government approval upon getting environmental clearance. However, as the open-pit mining scheme suggests resettlement of more than 50,000 people, resistance has been brewing in the country against the deal. This has stopped the government from approving the deal before the elections.

The company in its study shows the mine has 572 million tonnes of high quality coal.

Asia Energy Bangladesh CEO Gary Lye says that in 30 years time, Asia Energy will earn \$7 billion while the government will earn a royalty of \$1.2 billion, another \$2.8 billion as corporate tax. Bangladesh railway, the Mongla port authority, the income tax division and the customs department will make another \$3 billion earnings.

---

<http://www.cyberpresse.ca/article/20060829/CPMONDE/608291209/5024/CPDMINUTE>

Le mardi 29 août 2006

## **Bangladesh: 4e jour de manifestation**

Agence France-Presse  
Phulbari, Bangladesh

Plusieurs milliers de Bangladais ont manifesté mardi pour la quatrième journée consécutive dans le nord du Bangladesh contre l'ouverture d'une mine de charbon britannique qui, selon eux, va entraîner le déplacement de 100 000 personnes.

«Plus de 3500» personnes ont défilé à Phulbari, à 350 km au nord de Dacca, pour protester contre le projet de la société Asia Energy Plc, basée à Londres, d'investir 1,4 milliard de dollars pour la construction d'une mine à ciel ouvert, a indiqué un officier de police.

«Ils ont organisé plusieurs marches dans la ville et érigé des barricades pour faire pression afin que le plan d'ouverture d'une mine à ciel ouvert soit annulé», a dit à l'AFP un haut responsable de la police, Ruhul Amin.

Contrairement aux jours précédents, la manifestation s'est déroulée de manière pacifique, a-t-il ajouté.

Les manifestants réclament du gouvernement l'annulation du projet qui, selon eux, entraînera le déplacement de plus de 100 000 personnes et menacera l'environnement. L'Asia Energy affirme que seules 40 000 personnes seront déplacées sur 30 ans et qu'elles recevront une aide pour s'établir ailleurs.

Au moins 5 personnes avaient été tuées par balles samedi lorsque les forces de l'ordre avaient tiré sur les protestataires. Lundi, une foule en colère avait incendié la maison d'un responsable de la société Asia Energy Plc.

Le développement du bassin minier de Phulbari constitue la principale activité de l'Asia Energy qui prévoit d'y investir pour en extraire un charbon de très haute qualité.

---

[http://rawstory.com/news/2006/Violent\\_protests\\_over\\_coal\\_mine\\_kil\\_08292006.html](http://rawstory.com/news/2006/Violent_protests_over_coal_mine_kil_08292006.html)

## **Violent protests over coal mine killings spread in Bangladesh**

**Deutsche Presse Agentur**

Published: Tuesday August 29, 2006

Dinajpur, Bangladesh- Law enforcers in Dinajpur, northern Bangladesh, banned rallies and demonstrations and called in auxiliary troops on Tuesday as violent protests over the killing of eight pro- environment activists spread, officials said. Witnesses said angry mobs had set fire to offices and residential quarters used the British firm Asia Energy which had won a contract to mine coal in Phulbari.

Angry mobs were seen Tuesday going from house to house seeking out property owned by the mining company for destruction, a local news agency reported.

Authorities in the town, around 410 kilometres north of Dhaka, called for more troops from the border battalion Bangladesh Rifles to help restore order and stop the violence from spreading to nearby districts.

"We are asking for reinforcements so that lawlessness can be curbed quickly in the greater public interest," said district commissioner Tahsinur Rahman.

Local reports claimed angry protesters went on a rampage in suburban areas of Dinajpur on Tuesday.

An official of the Asia Energy said all their staff had been evacuated from Dinajpur under police protection.

Around 30,000 people protested at the weekend, witnesses said after reports by environment groups claimed the mining operation would displace around 10,000 families and destroy some of the most fertile land growing rice, the nation's staple diet.

Asia Energy officials said their mining process would not harm the environment and no large scale displacement of population was required.

The pro-environment activists were shot dead in clashes with riot police and paramilitary border troops on Saturday in what appeared to be one of the bloodiest confrontations in recent years in the relatively poor northern hinterland where environment groups and farming communities demanded the plans to mine the area be scrapped.

© 2006 DPA - Deutsche Presse-Agentur

---

[http://nation.ittefaq.com/artman/publish/article\\_30417.shtml](http://nation.ittefaq.com/artman/publish/article_30417.shtml)

## **Day-long hartal observed amid violence: Cop dies, Huda's car damaged**

By Staff Reporter

Wed, 30 Aug 2006, 10:39:00

Sporadic clashes and chase and counter chase between police and picketers, and exchange of brickbats and police teargas shells marked the daylong countrywide hartal yesterday that left at least one policeman killed and over 50 picketers injured.



Awami League-led 14 party opposition combine enforced the hartal dawn-to-dusk hartal protesting the killings at Phulbari of Dinajpur by police and BDR on Saturday. While the National Committee for Protecting Oil-Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports also called a half-day hartal yesterday over the issue.

Narayan Chandra Barman, 50, a riot police (nayek) as killed being hit with brickbats thrown by pro-hartal supporters during a clash between police and pro-hartal picketers.

Police and eyewitnesses said the clash erupted in Mirpur-12 at about 8:50am when the opposition supporters started throwing stones at police. In response, police retaliated firing several round of tear gas shells. At one stage during the Narayan Chandra Barman was injured as at least two stones hit him severely.

Barman was rushed to the National Heart Foundation with severe injuries on his forehead and chest. Later, on duty doctors declared him dead.

His body was later sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy, hospital sources said.

Barman was a resident of Nandanpur at Shakhipur upazaila under Tangail district.

After the clash, police detained at least six opposition supporters from Mirpur-12.

Police charged batons on the pro-hartal processions at different places in the city, including Dhanmondi, Motijheel, Purana Paltan and Zero Point.

Meanwhile a group of pickets damaged the vehicle of Barrister Nazmul Huda, Minister for Communications near Science Laboratory intersection at around 12:15pm.

However, no one could say whether Huda was in the vehicle as it sped away from the spot quickly. But the vehicle was flying the national standard. The pickets threw brickbats damaging the headlights of the vehicle.

At about 10:45am, police charged batons on a procession led by Mohammad Nasim at Dhanmondi area thrice that left 10 people injured. The procession brought out from in front of Nasim's residence and came under police attack in front of Prince Plaza and Metro Plaza. Police and processionists were also locked in chase and counter chase for half an hour.

Later, the procession met a rally in front of Russel Square. The rally was addressed, among others, by Opposition Chief Whip Vice Principal Abdus Shahid, Col (Retd) Faruq Khan, MP, Dr Abdur Razzak, MP and Mirza Abdul Jalil.

Police charged batons on a procession led by the leaders of National Committee for Protecting Oil-Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports at Purana Paltan intersection at about 6:00am. Police detained at least 6 people from the spot.

At about 6:30 am, police tried to disperse a procession led by city AL general secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya at Zero point. Police picked up some activists and at a stage of the scuffle with Maya and later they were released.

Jatiya Sramik League brought out a procession at Motjheel Shapla Chattar at 11:00am. The procession, led by Roy Romesh, General Secretary of the organisation, came under police attack at Dainik Bangla intersection that left several people injured.

Meanwhile, picketers chased the car of Barrister Nazmul Huda, Minister for Communications near Science Laboratory intersection, while the vehicle was passing a procession led by Chhatra League leaders.

Most of the educational institutions remained closed, while all modes of vehicles, except rickshaws and few mini buses and auto-rickshaws, went off the city streets during the morning.

The government deployed additional law enforcers at different strategic points in the city to maintain law and order during the shut down.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday held the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina responsible for the death of the constable.



"Irresponsible speeches of the opposition leader provoked the opposition supporters to kill police," he said, while talking to reporters during his visit to National Heart Foundation.

The State Minister was accompanied by Inspector General of Police Anwarul Iqbal and Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman.

Babar referred to Sheikh Hasina's recent speeches that police were assisting the four-party coalition government, and if the oppression by police on opposition supporters continues people will also retaliate.

He said legal action would be taken against the responsible.

---

<http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/08/31/d6083101107.htm>

## **Sporadic clashes mark hartal**

*Huda's car attacked*

Staff Correspondent

The Daily Star, Bangladesh - Aug 30, 2006

Sporadic clashes including an impromptu attack by picketers on Communications Minister Nazmul Huda's car with him in it in the capital marked yesterday's dawn to dusk countrywide hartal imposed by major opposition parties.

The clashes between picketing opposition activists and law enforcers left around 50 persons injured including journalists and policemen. A police constable, Narayan Chandra Barman, of riot police



division of western zone of the capital died of a 'cardiac arrest' while he was deployed in Pallabi area of the city to maintain law and order during the hartal hours.

Police arrested 24 opposition activists from different parts of the capital while the picketers damaged at least 25 vehicles mostly on Airport Road and in Mohakhali area including the communications minister's car near Science Laboratory in Dhanmondi.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda's official car came under attack at about 11:30am while it was moving towards the Bangladesh Secretariat. As the picketers, who were going towards Russel Square, saw the minister's car coming out of Road No 3 in Dhanmondi at the Science Laboratory traffic signal, they obstructed the car and began throwing brickbats at it. Windshields, windows, and sideview mirrors of the car were damaged, sources said adding that Barrister Nazmul Huda was in the car during the attack but not harmed.

The opposition coalition enforced the 6:00am to 6:00pm countrywide hartal to protest the killings of seven people by law enforcers at Phulbari in Dinajpur on August 26. The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Port Resources also called for a half-day hartal yesterday to protest the killings. At least twelve persons, including five journalists, were injured during a clash between police and picketers in front of Metro Shopping Mall near Russel Square in Dhanmondi. Police picked up three persons including Hafiz and Sumon, employees of Onnyo Mela and Agora, from the spot.

The clash erupted at about 10:30am as police obstructed an Awami League procession led by Mohammad Nasim in front of the shopping mall prompting the picketers to throw brickbats at the law enforcers. Earlier, a Jubo Mohila League procession also came under police baton charge in front of Prince Plaza near Road No 27 of Dhanmondi.

Police beat up the picketers indiscriminately. During the clash The Daily Star Photojournalist Amran Hossain, BTV Videographer Shah Noor Alam, ATN Videographer Mahmud, Channel S Videographer Akash and Staff Reporter Mithun, and opposition leaders MA Sattar Bhuiyan, Abul Bashar and Sabina Islam Tuhin were injured.

An AL parliamentary party procession led by Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, and a Jubo League procession joined a rally at Russel Square while the clash at Road No 27 was on.

Addressing the rally, Nasim accused the government of the killings in Phulbari. He also said without implementation of the opposition proposed electoral reforms, they will not allow any caretaker government to takeover state power. Nasim threatened to enforce an indefinite hartal to compel the government to accept the reform proposals.

AL leaders Rahmat Ullah, Subed Ali Bhuiyan and Kazi Mostak Elen brought out a procession at Mohakhali. But police obstructed the procession and charged batons to disperse it at about 8:30am. Police also charged batons on another procession on a lane near Titumir College.

The opposition activists in retaliation threw brickbats at police. At least 10 persons including four policemen were injured. Police later chased the picketers away. The opposition activists damaged at least 10 to 12 motor vehicles during the clash. The picketers also damaged about 12 vehicles on Airport Road in the morning.

Later, AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed, Mainuddin Khan Badal, Syed Zafar Sazzad, Rahmat Ali, among others, held a road side rally on Mohakhali-Gulshan road.

Dhaka City AL General Secretary Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya brought out a procession from Noor Hossain Square at about 7:00am but police obstructed it before it could get on Bangabandhu Avenue. Later they held a rally in front of Muktiyoddha Club.

A Jubo League procession led by its Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak and General Secretary Mirza Azam also joined the rally there. AL leaders Obaidul Quader, Asaduzzaman Noor, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Nanak, Azam, Dipu Moni and Omar Faruk Chowdhury spoke at the rally.

AL leader Kamal Ahmed Majumder brought out a procession at Mirpur-10 intersection while Ilias Hossain Mollah and Kamal Master brought out a procession at Pallabi. Police charged batons on both the processions prompting the opposition activist to pelt them with brickbats. At least 12 persons were injured while police picked up at least six.

Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin brought out a procession in the city's Lalbag area but police chased and dispersed it.

About 20 other opposition activists were injured during sporadic clashes between picketers and police at Jurain rail crossing, Jatrabari, Uttara, Nababpur and in other parts of the capital when the opposition coalition brought out separate processions supporting the hartal. Police picked up around 10 opposition activists from these areas during the hartal.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Port Resources brought out a procession at Paltan intersection at about 6:00am to come under a police baton charge that left several protesters injured. Leader of the Opposition also AL President Sheikh Hasina demanded immediate release of the opposition leaders and activists arrested during the hartal hours yesterday. She also demanded scrapping of 'false' cases filed against them.

In a statement, Hasina said police arrested around 100 opposition activists and charged batons indiscriminately leaving another 300 injured.

Saying that the people have rejected the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government for its wide-scale corruption, misrule and torture, the AL president thanked the people for making yesterday's hartal 'a success'.

## **COUNTRYWIDE HARTAL**

Ruling BNP cadres attacked a pro-hartal procession at Nawdapara in Rajshahi town leaving two opposition activists injured, reports our staff correspondent from Rajshahi. The opposition coalition staged demonstrations on the city thoroughfare supporting the hartal.

The dawn to dusk hartal of the opposition coalition passed peacefully in the port city of Chittagong yesterday, reports our correspondent from there. The 14-party coalition organised a rally in Darul Fazal Market area around 11:00am with City AL President ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in the chair.

The Chittagong unit of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas and Port Resources also brought out a procession and held a rally on Dost Building premises with Poet Abul Momen in the chair.

---

<http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/08/30/d6083001011.htm>

## **Phulbari protesters block roads, railway**

*Houses looted in the name of flushing out Asia Energy 'collaborators'; Minu, Dulu rush there to reconcile*

Bishawjit Das and Kongkon Karmaker, from Phulbari

Wed. August 30, 2006

The indefinite strike in Phulbari of Dinajpur seeking ouster of the Asia Energy continued for the third consecutive day yesterday while the government has yet to take measures to meet the six-point demand of the locals.

The demonstrators refused to sit with the local administration yesterday. Instead, they opted to wait for the government to send a high-powered body to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu and Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu arrived in Dinajpur last night to find a way of reconciliation with the demonstrators.

However, the demonstrators have yet to respond to the their call for reconciliation as they are trying to figure out whether the mayor and the deputy minister are there as emissaries of the government.

Minu and Dulu had a meeting with the local administration last night after which Minu told journalists that they will meet the leaders of the movement today at Amtoli. The leaders of the movement however said the meeting was not finalised. They said they will have an internal meeting of their own this morning where they will decide whether they will meet the mayor and the deputy minister.

Thousands of women and children yesterday joined the demonstrations for punishment to the persons responsible for the August 26 incident. Bangladesh Rifles and police that day opened fire on the locals agitating against open-pit coalmining in Phulbari leaving at least five dead and scores injured.

Meanwhile, in the name of flushing out 'collaborators' of the British company, some locals yesterday looted houses in Phulbari town and adjoining villages.

### **COMMUNICATIONS STILL DISRUPTED**

The demonstrators kept barricading roads and railways with logs and burning tyres and as a result the town remained isolated from other places for three days in a row.

Four express trains--Rupsha, Titumir, Barendra, and Simanta--could not operate on its regular route via Phulbari yesterday.

Ekata and Drutojan Expresses however continued service by going through Rangpur.

Besides, rail communications between Parbatipur and Birampur and road links between Birampur and Nababganj were still snapped.

### **'BDR UNWANTED'**

The agitating locals yesterday declared that they will not cooperate with the BDR personnel in Phulbari in protest at the Saturday's firing that, according to unconfirmed reports, left seven dead and more than 300 injured.

The declaration came from a rally at Nimtola Crossing. Thousands of people took part in processions culminating into a huge rally yesterday morning.

"We are boycotting the BDR in the town and will not help them in any activities," said Manik Sarker, secretary of Phulbari Banik Samity [traders association]. The rickshaw-van pullers association supported the declaration of non-cooperation with the paramilitary force.

At one stage, thousands of participants raised their hands and vowed not to return home until the government concedes their demands.

### **DEATH COUNT**

The actual number of people died in police-BDR actions on August 26 could not be known even in three days after the incident.

The local administration kept putting the death toll at three while the Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas-Mineral Resources-Port Phulbari unit claimed the number to be seven.

"If they could give me definite names and addresses, and locations of the bodies they claimed to have been dumped, I will do everything necessary to recover those," Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Hossain Sarwar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Since the firing incident, the locals have maintained that the BDR men took away several bodies from the spot.

### **PRESS CONFERENCE**

The Phulbari unit of the Committee yesterday said they will not sit with the local administration for negotiation.

"The government must send a high-powered body to Phulbari for talks with the locals and the Committee leaders," said Zonayed Saki, central coordinator of the five-left party and central member of the national committee for protection of natural resources and port.

The demands include a government declaration banning coalmining in Phulbaria, compensation for the victims' families and medical expenses for the injured, withdrawal of the cases filed so far against the protesters, and punishment to the persons responsible for Saturday's incident.

Later In the evening, the Committee held a rally at Nimtola Crossing. It demanded that the BDR return by the next 24 hours the four bodies that, it alleged, the paramilitary force took away from the scene on August 26.

The speakers at the rally also called for a plaque to be built in memory of those perished.

## LOOTING

A marauding group of locals yesterday morning looted a number of houses in Phulbari and nearby villages.

When asked, one of those looting a house at Uttar Sujapur said, "Almost everyone has taken something, why shouldn't I?"

Sources said some of the demonstrators had threatened to force one Abdul Rahman Kalam out of Patrapara area by yesterday noon. But the police warded off attacks on his house.

The local committee and organisers of the movement however are appealing to the people to refrain from looting and attacking others. One of the organisers admitted that some quarters are out to exploit the situation for personal gains.

---

<http://www.liberation.fr/actualite/economie/201175.FR.php>

**Un projet britannique de mine à ciel ouvert déplacerait près de 200 000 personnes. La contestation prend une ampleur nationale.**

## Bangladesh en terrain miné

Par Christian LOSSON

QUOTIDIEN : Mercredi 30 août 2006 - 06:00

Si l'appétit pour l'accès à l'énergie est planétaire, ces soubresauts sont la plupart du temps régionaux et restent souvent sans écho. Les récits se multiplient où s'opposent intérêts commerciaux nationaux ou internationaux et droits des populations locales, respect de l'environnement et impératifs de développement. Cette histoire-là se passe au nord de Dacca, à 350 kilomètres de la capitale du Bangladesh. A Phulbari, dans le district de Dinajpur. *«Chaque samedi depuis quatorze mois, un comité de paysans, le Phulbari Rashka, prend la rue pacifiquement, raconte Philip Grain, de l'ONG Society for Environment and Human Development, basée à Dacca. Ils arborent des pancartes écrites à la main, lancent des slogans contre la dépossession de leur terre. Ils disent : "Nous ne voulons pas de mine de charbon à ciel ouvert qui va polluer nos rivières, détruire notre biodiversité, ruiner nos sites archéologiques."»* Ils dénoncent le projet d'une houillère britannique, Asia Energy, qui entraînera, selon l'ONG, le déplacement de 40 000 personnes.

**Barricades.** A fil des semaines, la lutte des communautés locales s'est régionalisée, puis nationalisée. A l'appel d'une coalition (National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Power, Port and Mineral Resources), ils étaient près de 50 000 manifestants, samedi. Mais la manifestation, sur fond de blocage de ponts et d'occupation de rues, s'est mal terminée. Les forces de l'ordre ont tiré sur la foule rassemblée devant les bureaux d'Asia Energy. Bilan : 7 morts, plus de 100 blessés. Lundi, les opposants à la mine ont bravé l'interdiction, porté des badges noirs et incendié les locaux de collaborateurs de la firme. Hier, ils ont à nouveau marché, érigé des barricades. Aujourd'hui, ils recommenceront. Rejoints, cette fois, par l'opposition et par des étudiants, qui appellent à une grève nationale.

Voilà huit ans qu'Asia Energy, qui a récupéré un contrat jadis passé avec une houillère australienne, est sur le coup. Avec la flambée du pétrole et la course aux matières premières, elle est sûre d'avoir trouvé un bon filon (lire ci-contre). Elle estime que les sols de Phulbari, entre 120 et 300 mètres sous terre, renferment 572 millions de tonnes de charbon de très haute qualité. De quoi générer 8 000 mégawatts pendant trente ans. Elle espère, pour un investissement total de 3 milliards de dollars, faire pleuvoir 21 milliards de dollars sur le pays tout le temps que durera l'exploitation (15 millions de tonnes en moyenne annuelle). Dont seulement 7 milliards pour le gouvernement, qui

ne devrait percevoir que 6 % des royalties, ainsi que différentes taxes (bénéfices, droits à l'export). Dacca, qui devait donner son feu vert au printemps pour que la mine ouvre en 2007 et livre ses premiers charbons en 2008, tergiverse avec la montée de la contestation. *«C'est un signal négatif pour les investisseurs potentiels»*, a reconnu un conseiller gouvernemental à l'énergie, Mahmudur Rahman.

*«Un signal de plus de la collusion entre les élites du pays, qui, face au silence des institutions internationales comme la Banque mondiale, préfèrent fermer les yeux sur les dommages collatéraux d'un tel projet sur les populations et l'environnement»*, dit Philip Grain. Il a interrogé la firme anglaise et les populations locales sur ce projet de 5 900 hectares qui risque d'entraîner, selon lui, le déplacement de plus de 100 villages et de 150 000 à 200 000 personnes. Bien plus que le chiffre avancé par Asia Energy. *«Les gens ne croient pas aux arguments du groupe britannique*, dit-il. *D'autant qu'il n'y a eu aucune étude indépendante sur l'impact d'un tel chantier dans un des rares coins du pays où il y a des terres cultivables.»* Un rapport de 2 600 pages a bien été réalisé, pendant dix-huit mois, par des experts environnementaux. Il évalue les bénéfices potentiels (infrastructures, eau potable, routes, lignes ferroviaires, allègement de la pauvreté, productivité agricole), sans parler de la création de milliers d'emplois. Mais il a un défaut : *«Il a été payé par Asia Energy, assure Philip Grain. Et publié en anglais, incompréhensible pour les petits paysans et les populations indigènes.»*

**Corruption.** Philip Grain, lui, rapporte l'assèchement programmé des terres, que les pompes à eau distribuées par la firme ne résoudront pas. Il fait parler des experts qui redoutent la pollution attendue du site. Il contredit le feu vert du ministère de l'Environnement en décryptant la menace sur la biodiversité. Il dénonce les tentatives de corruption de leaders locaux. Mais la lutte est difficile. *«Au Bangladesh, beaucoup d'ONG, locales ou internationales, ont des champs d'action délimités par les dons d'institutions financières ou de développement. Et dénoncer de potentielles sources de revenu dans un pays très pauvre est mal vu.»*

---

<http://www.cyberpresse.ca/article/20060831/CPMONDE/608310670/1033/CPMONDE>

Le jeudi 31 août 2006

## **APRÈS DES MANIFESTATIONS**

### **Le Bangladesh renonce à l'ouverture d'une houillère**

Agence France-Presse  
Dacca

Le gouvernement du Bangladesh a annoncé jeudi sa décision de renoncer à un projet d'ouverture d'une mine de charbon britannique dans le nord du pays qui avait entraîné un vaste mouvement de protestation au cours duquel six personnes étaient mortes.

«Nous avons accepté toutes les demandes» des manifestants, a déclaré le sous-secrétaire d'État à l'Alimentation et aux Secours, Asadul Habib Dulu, après une semaine de manifestations et un jour de grève générale mercredi.

Des milliers de personnes ont protesté contre le projet de la société Asia Energy Plc, basée à Londres, d'investir 1,4 milliard de dollars pour la construction d'une mine à ciel ouvert dans le bassin minier de Phulbari, qui selon eux risquait d'entraîner le déplacement de 100 000 personnes et des dégâts écologiques.

«La première demande était que le gouvernement annule tous ses accords avec Asia Energy et nous avons accepté cela», a dit M. Dulu. «La seconde demande était qu'il n'y aurait pas de mine à ciel ouvert à Phulbari ou ailleurs dans le pays», a-t-il ajouté.

«Jusqu'à présent nous avons des accords sur des études de faisabilité avec Asia Energy mais nous n'avons aucun accord commercial pour le développement de la mine», a expliqué le responsable.

«Comme nous avons réalisé que l'ouverture d'une mine à ciel ouvert endommagerait l'environnement et que ce n'était pas bon pour un pays aussi peuplé que le Bangladesh, nous n'allons ouvrir aucune mine à ciel ouvert au Bangladesh», a-t-il poursuivi.

Asia Energy avait affirmé que seules 40 000 personnes seraient déplacées sur 30 ans et qu'elles recevraient une aide pour s'établir ailleurs.

Au moins cinq personnes avaient été tuées par balles samedi lorsque les forces de l'ordre avaient tiré sur les protestataires à Phulbari. Un policier est décédé mercredi à Dacca après avoir été frappé par une pierre lors de manifestations.

Le principal parti d'opposition, la Ligue Awami, s'était emparé du dossier en appelant à la grève générale mercredi. Les prochaines élections générales sont prévues en janvier 2007.

---

<http://www.bangladeshjournal.com/index.php?ID=4037&tim=31-8-2006>

## **Bangladesh strike passes without any major disruption**

**Published On:** August 31, 2006

**Dhaka, Aug 28: Sporadic picket-police clashes in the capital and elsewhere in the country marked Wednesday's dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the Awami League-led opposition alliance that coincided with a half-day general strike called by the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port.**

In Dhaka, over 50 pickets were injured in clashes with police, while a policeman died of a cardiac arrest after being hit by a brickbat during such a skirmishing in Pallabi. In Sylhet, pickets allegedly stabbed a pedestrian when he tried to hold them back from damaging a rickshaw.

Pickets attacked the official car of the communications minister, Nazmul Huda, in the city's Dhanmondi area at noon. However, it could not be ascertained whether the minister was in the vehicle, as its driver hightailed it out of the spot.

The country-wide strike was enforced to protest against the killings of at least five people last Saturday, as the police and Bangladesh Rifles opened fire on peaceful demonstrators against a deal between the government and the UK-based company Asia Energy for coal exploration and extraction at Phulabari in Dinajpur.

Over 100 people were also injured in the police action on the protest programme organised by the committee to protect national resources at northern Phulabari.

In Phulbari an indefinite strike passed its fourth day on Wednesday, with furious locals demanding scrapping of the open-pit mining deal with the Asia Energy and asking the multinational energy

giant to leave the country immediately.

In the capital, Narayan Chandra Barman, a 50-year-old police naik, died reportedly of a cardiac arrest after being hit by a brickbat in the forehead during a clash between the police and pickets at Mirpur Section 12 under Pallabi police station. As a brick hit him square on the forehead at about 8:30am, Narayan fell on the road.

His colleagues first tried to revive him on the spot and later took him to the nearby

Heart Foundation Hospital, where the on-duty physician declared him dead at about 11:00am.

The police-picket fight ensued when police intercepted a pro-hartal procession led by a local AL leader, Ilyas Mollah. The pickets in the procession started pelting stones at the policemen, who in retaliation resorted to baton charge and lobbing teargas shells, leaving more than 20 people wounded.

During the clash, the pickets damaged some vehicles.

The police picked up about half a dozen pickets from the spot, witnesses said.

Similar clashes between the police and pickets also took place in Paltan, Bangabandhu Avenue, Mohakhali, Satrasta, Russell Square, Jurain, and Nawabpur Road during the hartal hours.

Police contingents deployed all over the capital charged batons whenever any group of pickets tried to bring out a procession in those areas. Over 30 people were injured in these police actions.

In Dhanmondi, pickets from a procession threw stones at the passing vehicle of the communications minister in Road No. 3 at about 12:15pm, shattering its headlights.

However, Dhanmondi police said they were not aware of the incident.

Most of the motorised vehicles dared not go out on the roads, though a few buses plied on some routes in the city during the hartal hours. The railway, river and air traffics, however, remained undisrupted, according to official sources at Kamalapur railway station, Sadarghat launch terminal, and Zia International Airport.

The educational institutions, business establishments and shopping malls remained closed, while the banks carried on monetary transactions through the back doors, keeping the front doors under lock and key.

In Sylhet, a pedestrian named Sabuj Miah was allegedly stabbed by some pickets when he tried to stop them

vandalising a rickshaw at Akhalia in the northeastern divisional city at about 11:00am, locals said.

As of last evening, a seriously wounded Sabuj was undergoing treatment at the Sylhet Osmani Medical College and Hospital.

Pickets in Sylhet vandalised a number of rickshaws and a three-wheeler at Zindabazar during the hartal hours.

The hartal, however, passed off without any such untoward incidents and peacefully in Chittagong,

Khulna, Rajshahi, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Manikganj, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Moulvibazar, Jessore, Barisal, Patuakhali, Jhalakati, Barguna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jhenaidah and Kushtia, according to our correspondents.

---

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/FRAASA130072006>

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE**

Index AI : ASA 13/007/2006 (Public)

Bulletin n° : 226

ÉFAI

31 août 2006

**Bangladesh. Une enquête approfondie doit être menée sur les homicides perpétrés par les forces de sécurité**

L'annonce, par le gouvernement bangladais, de sa décision de répondre favorablement aux exigences des manifestants de Phulbari, est encore loin d'un engagement décisif en faveur de sanctions pour abus de pouvoir et homicides par les forces de sécurité, a déclaré Amnesty International ce jeudi 31 août.

Au moins cinq personnes ont été tuées et plus d'une centaine d'autres blessées lorsque des policiers et des membres des *Bangladesh Rifles* (BDR) ont tiré à balles réelles sur la foule à Phulbari le 26 août. Les manifestants protestaient contre le projet d'une société britannique, Asia Energy, qui envisage d'exploiter une mine de charbon à ciel ouvert dans la région. Les opposants à la mine craignent que le projet ne conduise à leur expulsion forcée et ne les prive de leurs moyens de subsistance.

*«Le gouvernement a promis une enquête, mais le bilan passé du pays en la matière démontre que rien ne garantit que les auteurs présumés des homicides seront traduits en justice»,* a déclaré Abbas Faiz, chercheur pour l'Asie du Sud à Amnesty International.

Au moins 17 personnes ont été tuées entre janvier et avril 2006 par des policiers qui ont tiré à balles réelles sur des manifestants qui protestaient contre les coupures d'électricité dans la ville de Kansat, au nord du pays. Aucune enquête indépendante n'a été menée et personne n'a été traduit en justice pour ces homicides.

*«Une enquête devrait être menée par un organisme indépendant, impartial et compétent, ayant le pouvoir de convoquer aux fins d'interrogatoire des membres des Bangladesh Rifles. Les conclusions de cette enquête devraient être rendues publiques et les personnes pour lesquelles il aura été établi qu'elles ont usé de leur pouvoir ou eu recors à une force disproportionnée devraient être traduites en justice sans délai.»*

**Complément d'information**

De nouveaux heurts se sont produits à Phulbari entre les forces de sécurité et des milliers de manifestants lorsque les forces de sécurité ont stoppé le défilé qui se dirigeait vers les bureaux de la société. Certains manifestants avaient, semble-t-il, des bâtons, des arcs et des flèches. Un policier est mort durant les manifestations. Selon les autorités, il serait mort d'une crise cardiaque après avoir été blessé à la tête.



Le 31 août, le gouvernement a annoncé qu'il cédaux exigences des manifestants et annulait le contrat de la société Asia Energy, promettant d'indemniser les victimes ou leurs familles, de consulter la population pour tout nouveau projet d'exploitation minière, d'enquêter sur les homicides et d'abandonner toutes poursuites contre les manifestants.

---

<http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/01/d609011801132.htm>

## **Blood-stained coal of Phulbari**

Nazrul Islam

**Fri. September 01, 2006**

WE will not spare a single particle of our land. We shall protect Phulbari even with our blood. We will not allow anybody to destroy Phulbari in the name of implementing the so-called coalmine project." These were the words, and inscriptions, in the placards carried by thousands of people who demonstrated for the first time in Phulbari on July 9, 2005 to raise their voices against implementation of Asia Energy's coalmine project.

Exactly after 410 days, on August 26, the soil of Phulbari was stained with the blood of more than half a dozen of its sons who wanted to protect their ancestral lands, livelihood and ecology. Police, and para-military BDR, opened fire on a demonstration 1.5 km away from the Asia Energy office which was scheduled to be hemmed in by locals. The firing left a hundred others injured, and some were reported still missing.

But it was altogether a different scene on Wednesday August 30 -- Phulbari people celebrating victory of their agitation. The government ultimately accepted their demands including saying 'no' to Asia Energy and open-pit mining. The government also agree to provide compensation to the families of the victims and the government representative termed the August 26 incident as "very inhumane". And as per the agreement, from now on the government would decide the method of mining on the basis of public opinion.

They did everything but why after so much of bitter experience, why not after the first demonstration last year? The question remains.

Attack on innocent, and unarmed, protesters is not a new incident in our country. About a dozen people were killed in Kansat, Chapainawabganj, early this year in police firing while they were demonstrating against the harassment by the Palli Bidyut Samity officials, and demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity. It was observed that the law-enforcers were increasingly becoming intolerant, and not showing the minimum restraint while dealing with the masses. This is the outcome of widespread politicisation of a disciplined force, many believe.

The people of Phulbari have every right, and every reason, to lodge a protest against the open-pit coalmine project in their area, which they perceive as a threat to their very existence. Not only the locals, but the countrymen, also, have the responsibility to protect their resources from being plundered by foreigners. Allowing extraction of coal from the Phulbari mine by the open-pit system would be tantamount to committing murder, not only of the 6 lakh people of four upazilas of Dinajpur, but also of the two crore people of northern Bangladesh, some observed.

## **Gainers and losers**

Who would be the beneficiaries of the project and who the losers? It was asked time and again and shown that the people of Phulbari would be the first victims losing their ancestral homes, farmlands, water bodies, hundreds of thousands of trees and so on. They would also lose their jobs, livelihood, culture and social setup. Apart from the direct losses, they would have to pay high compensation in the form of health hazards, pollution, waste management and living cost etc.

It was told that the next victims would be the people of the neighbouring districts of the project site. People of at least 12 districts of greater Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna and Rajshahi would be seriously affected by the acid mine drainage (AMD), and ground level ozone contamination which are associated with open-pit mining. AMD is metal rich water formed by the chemical reaction between water and rocks containing sulphur-bearing minerals. The acid runoff dissolves heavy metals such as copper, lead, mercury in ground water and surface water. Environmental effects of AMD include contamination of drinking water, and disrupted growth and reproduction of aquatic plants and animals.

But the authorities did not pay any heed to this.

The subsequent losers would be the country, and its people. Known energy resources, especially fossil fuels, are dwindling fast across the globe. On the other hand the appetite for energy is continuously growing in the West where people are living more luxuriously. The multi-national companies (MNCs) of those countries launched a massive hunt for energy, firstly across Africa, and in recent years in Asia, for meeting the high energy demands of the developed nations, especially of America and Europe.

We know that Bangladesh has only about 3 TCF of known gas reserves, and some coal reserves in the northern districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur. In fact, these two fossil fuels are our only known natural resources. If we make a mistake in handling the exploration, and use, of these two resources the country will have to face dire consequences in future. But these two resources have already caught the eagle eyes of the MNCs. And unfortunately, knowingly or unknowingly, our politicians and technocrats/bureaucrats have already stepped onto the apparently wrong track in many instances, especially in gas exploration, and are now in coal extraction. However, the unequal contract signed with Asia Energy stands scrapped now apparently to the benefit of both the country and the people.

In an earlier article published on July 22, 2005 in The Daily Star, I had furnished a conservative calculation of how much the country will get, and how much the people will lose, after implementation of the project. As far as the existing royalty is concerned, Bangladesh was supposed to get 6 percent from the coal extraction. This means that the country would get 24 million tons of coal (out of 400 million tons), worth Tk 9,072 crore, at the current international market price of \$ 60 per ton. But what price to give to the local people? The total loss would stand at Tk 25,000 crore in the next 50 years. If we include the cost of the environmental damage, and losses of the surrounding districts, the figure would certainly be bigger.

How much Asia Energy was supposed to get? The company would, reportedly, invest \$ 1.5 billion for the next 30 years (Tk 9300 crore), and would get 376 million metric tons of coal worth \$ 22.56 billion (Tk 142,100 crore).

## **Harbinger of development!**

The Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd, in their brochure and website, had been furnishing exaggerated figures on the beneficial effects of the project for the Bangladeshi people, along with mentioning how much labour and resources that would have to be deployed to benefit

the people. They were also ensuring a bright future for the people through implementation of the coalmine. Going through their write-ups, it seemed that they had come here as if to offer missionary services to the people of Bangladesh with little intention to profit from the project!

Asia Energy claimed that the Phulbari coalmine had the potential to transform northwest Bangladesh into a mining and industrial region, and bring new wealth, employment and opportunity to a predominantly poor, subsistence level, agricultural economy. Directly it would create 2,100 jobs during the mine's construction, and provide a long-term average of 1100 jobs.

The MNCs always paint visions of prosperity with more industries coming to the area in due course to provide jobs. But there always remains a gulf of difference between the promises and reality.

But how the people of Phulbari were supposed to be benefited? According to the company, 50,000 people would be resettled (actually victims would not be less than 6 lakh) and the company would be able to provide 2100 jobs initially, and 1100 jobs subsequently. But who would get the highly skilled jobs, obviously not the people of the locality. Being displaced from their homelands and farming professions, and devastated by toxic wastes and other environmental hazards, what benefit would the people of the four upazilas get?

### **Hanging carrot**

The multinational companies hang carrots in front of people, but do not hand them over. People of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, DR Congo and some other African countries were surely shown a dream by the MNCs who were exploring their natural resources. But the fate of the general people of those countries did not change, except for a few individuals having access to the corridors of state power.

Asia Energy was assuring the people that they would be rehabilitated elsewhere. But would it be possible to provide the displaced people with same type of homesteads they would lose? Besides, villages are built over hundreds of years, and people live in their homes generation after generation. The memories of, and the love for, their own homestead can never be compensated.

### **Why foreign company for coal extraction?**

Is it impossible to extract the coal ourselves? How much does it cost to extract the coal? Actually, coal extraction is not at all a very high-tech matter. The investment required for the Phulbari coalmine is not a big one either (only \$ 1.5 billion). The government can, itself, extract the coal by forming a company, or our local investors can come forward, by forming a consortium. In that case our resources will remain in our country and we can endure the losses to be wrought by the mining process.

The bloodshed and the subsequent outrage deterred the government from finally offering the coalmine to a foreign company. History shows the blood of struggling people seldom goes in vain.

**Nazrul Islam is a free-lance journalist and environmentalist.**

---

<http://libcom.org/news/bangladesh-unrest-bhulpari-mining-garment-industry-310806>

### **News from Bangladesh**

Submitted by Ret Marut on Wed, 30/08/2006 - 21:02.

**Unrest continues across Bangladesh, with widespread strikes and the mass revolt against an attempt by a British company to begin destructive open cast mining in Phulbari.**



*Picture - Monday, Phulbari in Dinajpur: protesters set fire to furniture of the British company Asia Energy in protest at the killing of demonstrators by security forces.*

### **News from Bangladesh**

**- garment unrest continues and British company is attacked in mass regional revolt over opencast mine**

In the capital, **Dhaka**, the unrest continues. In the garment industry there are ongoing clashes almost daily; regular walkouts by workers protesting conditions, strikers marching to other factories calling out fellow workers, workplace occupations, employers' lockouts, bosses' property regularly attacked. Workers also often block main roads and clash with police and army. Much of this is fuelled by disputes over unpaid back pay and also the failure by the bosses' federation to implement most of the concessions agreed after the major revolt of May/June, continuing on a lesser scale to the present (see previous libcom news article).

Two weeks ago;

#### **Quote:**

"At least 50 people were injured as police clashed with several thousand garment workers blockading the city's Airport Road yesterday demanding a pay rise and end to 'inhuman treatment'.

The demonstrations by the workers of four garment units of NASA Group went on for three and a half hours at Khilkhet intersection, forcing hundreds of vehicles to be stranded on either direction along the busy thoroughfare during the morning rush hour.

Vehicular movements came to a standstill on the road stretching from Mohakhali to Khilkhet while on the other side, thousands of commuters from Uttara and beyond were stuck in a miles-long tailback from 8:30am till 12 noon.

As the police clubbed the demonstrators to clear the road, a clash broke out between them and the garment workers. At least 10 teargas shells were fired to disperse the agitators who retaliated by throwing stones at the policemen.

The garment workers also damaged around 20 vehicles during the demonstration that escalated into a pitched battle leaving 50 of them injured." (Daily Star, 15/Aug/06)

There have also been struggles elsewhere; strikes in the river transport and sugar and jute mill sectors. Teachers have been on strike over employment conditions and for a living wage. Rumours

circulate around the country; of recent workers' uprisings involving thousands in different areas, but all news has been censored.

In **Phulbari**, 217 miles (350 kilometres) north of the capital, Dhaka, there has been major resistance in the last few days to an opencast mining project that would forcibly resettle up to 100,000 people (though the mining company claims only 40,000). This would include thousands of indigenous people, mainly Santal. At least five people were killed and about 50 injured as police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) opened fire on demonstrators advancing towards the office of the British-owned Asia Energy Corporation (Bangladesh) Pvt Ltd in Dinajpur.

**Quote:**

"Thousands of demonstrators, mainly farmers and indigenous people including women armed with bows and arrows and sticks, joined the protest apprehending massive eviction and loss of farmland that might be caused by the implementation of the Phulbari Coalmine Project." (New Age)

A 14-party opposition coalition are conducting negotiations with the government in an attempt to control the movement, but the mass activity that has seized the town appears to have a strong autonomous element to it. Rail and road links with the rest of the country are blocked. On Monday the troops withdrew, as did Asia Energy staff, and the town fell into the hands of thousands of protesters who ransacked the company offices.

**Quote:**

"Boiling with anger after Saturday's police firing which left 5 people dead and scores injured, the locals carried out arson attacks on at least six houses and business establishments belonging to 'dalals' (collaborators) of the British company, torching and ransacking whatever they found there. The police in riot gear looked on in silence as over 30,000 farmers, indigenous people and petty traders staged demonstrations all day on Monday..." (New Age)

A general strike and regular street demonstrations in the town continue.

The property of those who have collaborated with the mining interests has been extensively targeted;

**Quote:**

"People from different neighbourhoods of Phulbari and surrounding villages started pouring into the town since early in the morning.

They cut off the upazila town from the rest of the country by felling trees, electric poles, putting up barricade on a bridge and burning spent tyres and wood.

A 15,000-strong mob first attacked an oil mill owned by Hamidpur union parishad chairman [i.e. chair of a local administrative council], Anwar Ali, at about 11:00 am, threw everything out on the street and set them on fire. One and a half hours later they attacked the house-cum-office of one Bulbul Chowdhury, burning three motorbikes, two refrigerators, 15 bicycles and other valuables. An information centre of Asian Energy and some other shops in the town were also damaged and set ablaze till 3:00pm. The angry mob turned down the request of deputy commissioner of Dinajpur, Tahsinur Rahman, thana nirbahi officer and police officials to show restraint.

'We would beat them to death if they are captured,' one of the demonstrators yelled. 'These people are helping (Asia Energy) to realise their ill-motive,' the youth said.

Meanwhile, people accused by the locals of helping Asian Energy to go ahead with their plan have fled the town."(New Age)

London-based Asia Energy have agreed a contract with the government to mine the 570 million tons of coal in the area over a 30 year period. 70% of Bangladesh remains without electricity yet the company website says the projected 15 million tons of coal mined per year will be "mostly ... export coal." . They claim on their website to be "Making natural resources work for the people of Bangladesh"; clearly the locals do not see the trashing of their environment or eviction from their lands in such a rosy light and have shown admirable resistance . Offers of compensation, including cash and colour TVs, have been rejected. The indigenous peoples are at a particular disadvantage in this respect, as their relationship to the land means they have no title deeds to prove any private 'ownership'.

The company's latest website statement also claims, in an attempt to reassure investors;

**Quote:**

"Asia Energy PLC said today preparations for its Phulbari Coal Project in Northwest Bangladesh would continue in the aftermath of last weekend's violent protests. "We are continuing to work positively with the Government of Bangladesh to make this project a success," said Asia Energy Chief Executive Steve Bywater. "The Government has assured us that it remains committed to the project." (<http://www.asia-energy.com/index.php>).

This is a major project, with investment of £700 million (\$1.1billion). But the class struggle is proving a tough obstacle. With the present level of resistance, one would expect either an eventual compromise solution negotiated by the politicians claiming to represent the movement (who are using the issue to damage their political rivals but would undoubtedly also grab such foreign investment if they held power) - or a bloody repression. But with the present mood in Bangladesh, the authorities appear to have realised the danger of such a move and, for the moment, have ordered restraint from the security forces.

On Tuesday there was a nationwide strike in solidarity with the Phulbari resistance. Yesterday (Weds) there was rioting in Dhaka, as hundreds of students clashed with cops. One cop died from a heart attack after receiving a head wound from a thrown brick. These protests are reported to have been organised by the main opposition party, the Awami League, who are attempting to use popular protests to destabilise the government to further their own political ambitions. How cynical this is becomes obvious when one bears in mind that it was the Awami League that granted the Phulbari mining licence when it was last in government. It is sometimes hard to measure from this distance the exact meaning of strikes and other events in Bangladesh; some strikes are called by opposition parties simply as a means to damage their political rivals in power, with little motive to advance workers' conditions. But the sheer scale and explosive spontaneity of recent events such as the garment workers' and Phulbari revolts suggest a strong autonomous current of class struggle emerging among workers earning some of the lowest wages in the world.

From the **north east** of the country, there are more *"rumours of trouble, probably at the main University there... where a student was murdered by cops in cold blood and the students blame the Vice Chancellor of the University for it."* Students have repeatedly clashed with senior management and security staff and damaged campus property. *"There are rumours of another worker uprising. Nothing confirmed. Rumours are cheap and plenty these days."*

There is an air of expectation hanging over Bangladesh - many feel that events are moving towards something decisive. Whether a bigger workers uprising and/or a bloody coup, none can tell.

Many thanks to R for the info.

**Quote:**

Those who would like to express their feelings to the mining company can do so here;

Asia Energy

2nd Floor, Foxglove House

166 - 168 Piccadilly

London

W1J 9EF

tel: + 44 (0)20 7290 1630

fax: +44 (0)20 7290 1631

Or can send e-mail from here; <http://www.asia-energy.com/contact.php>