

Gas crisis

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From the annual development project (ADP) for this scheme that will help increase gas supply from upstream gas fields. But this year's budget turned a blind eye to the scheme.

"A gas pipeline project needs no less than two years to complete. That means even if the government funds this vital project now, our problems will not be solved immediately," the source points out.

"We are getting funds for smaller and not-so-urgent pipeline projects. Again, in these projects political interventions are forcing us to award contracts to inappropriate companies."

Over a dozen of gas pipeline projects is waiting to be financed for the last two years, he said.

A similar scenario prevails over gas field development schemes. Petrobrangla, which contributes Tk 2,000 crore to the national exchequer a year, has been asking for funds for drilling gas wells in its existing gas fields. Two wells have been proposed at Kailastila, two in Titas, one in Narsingdi and one in Habiganj.

Experts had suggested years back that without two new pipelines in Ashuganj -Monohardi point and Bakhrabad- Meghnaghat point, gas

crisis is inevitable during this summer. But only the last week's crisis forced the authorities to take some measures to keep the crisis under control for the next one year.

From December, US company Unocal will augment gas production from the Jalalabad Gas Field by 30 mmcf.

The government will provide funds for new drilling of a development gas well and undertake a work-over of an existing well in the Fenchuganj gas field. This will add 50 mmcf of gas from 2005. Besides, BAPEX will begin drilling of an exploratory gas well in Srikkail soon. If it is successful, it will also ease off demand pressure.

Petrobrangla is discussing with Shell Oil over re-perforating the Sangu gas field to improve gas pressure from Sangu and augment the production. Sangu is supplying 160 mmcf of gas but its gas pressure in the well has started to fall recently.

Body of girl found at Patiya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The body of a young girl allegedly killed by her boy friend was recovered at Patiya yesterday morning.

Sources said Monowara Begum, 17, daughter of Fakir Mohammad of Dakshin (south) Maliara in Patiya, had an affair with Wasim, 23, of a neighbouring house. She gave Wasim a gold necklace, which belonged to her sister-in-law.

Under family pressure, Monowara asked Wasim to return the necklace on Thursday. He took her to a nearby canal and allegedly killed her and dumped the body into the canal.

Patiya police arrested Wasim and a case was filed against him.

Body of young man recovered in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the decomposed body of a youth from Barurar Beel in Uttara.

Uttara police recovered the body floating in the water at about 11:00am and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

No mark of injury was found on the body, police said.

A police investigation is reportedly on.

Fugitive gets life for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A court in Barisal awarded a youth rigorous imprisonment (RI) for life yesterday for rape of a girl.

Judge Nural Huq of the special tribunal for the prevention of torture against women and children sentenced Russell Howlader to life term RI with a fine of Tk 5,000 or one year more RI if he fails to pay the fine.

Russell has been absconding since he got bail.

Russell, a neighbouring youth, raped Lily Begum, 13, daughter of Abul Kalam Howlader of Sholna village under Barisal sadar upazila at her residence on May 14, 2002 when there was none in the house.

Kalam filed a rape case with Kotwali Police Station on May 18. The case was transferred to the special tribunal on July 12 this year.

Schoolboy

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On information from Hossain, a team of Keraniganj police went to Bhaluka and caught Badsha when he was receiving the money at around 2:30am yesterday.

Police produced him in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and he was placed on a three-day remand.

Meanwhile, a team of Lalbagh and Sonargaon police rescued from Sonapur village three youths - Kabir, Ripon and Matiz -- abducted on the plea of sending them to Malaysia and arrested the alleged abductor, Shahadat Ali.

The youths, who lived in the city's Islambagh area, were missing for the last six months after they met Shahadat of the same area, who had allured them of being sent to Malaysia.

The three were first taken to a hotel in Sutrapur and then to different laces in Chandpur, Comilla, Siddhirganj and Sonargaon.

Kabir's father Afsar Ahmed filed an abduction case with Lalbagh Police Station on July 8, saying his son had been missing after meeting one Billal Hossain for going to Malaysia. When arrested last month, Billal told police Kabir had already been sent to Malaysia.

But police, who were on the hunt for Billal's absconding son Shahdat, came to know recently that he was hiding in Sonapur village in Sonargaon. They raided a tin-shed house in the village, arrested alleged abductor Shahadat and rescued the three youths from a locked room.

"Shahadat confessed that he and his father Billal Hossain had been realising huge money from poor people living in slums in the name of sending them to Malaysia," said Investigation Officer of the case Sub-inspector Shah Alam.

He also said, "Keeping the abducted youths confined at unknown places, Shahadat used to give their families some money, to allure other poor people of going to Malaysia." Shahadat is now on a four-day remand.

Khosru blames

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Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury due to their mishandling of the case.

The commerce minister told the BBC Bangla Service last night that the government will adopt some short-, mid- and long-term plans to develop law and order in the country and the home ministry is working on them.

Referring to the investment situation in Chittagong, Khosru said, "No one would invest here if they feel insecure."

Regarding the shifting of offices of the multinational companies, Khosru said the multinational companies started to shift their offices from Chittagong before the abductions cases.

"These companies are only relocating their head offices but their activities will resume in Chittagong," Khosru added.

New Mooring

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from six days," he added.

Chaired by Shamsul Alam, president of Chittagong Jatiyatabadi Port Sramik Dal, the rally was also addressed by Nazrul Islam Khan, president of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, Zafrul Hassan, general secretary, AN Nazimuddin, vice president, Anwar Hossain joint secretary and Sheikh Nurullah Bahar, youth secretary.

Altaf

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General of Police (IGP) Shahudul Haque told a parliamentary committee meeting on August 23 that Jamal would be rescued within 48 hours, a promise that remains unmet even after 170 hours of making the pledge.

The following day, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury told journalists that the government knows the location of Jamal and that he would be rescued soon by the joint forces.

The IGP visited Chittagong to supervise the rescue without any result.

Nazma Akhtar Happy, wife of Jamal, told The Daily Star last night that the government and police are not properly acting even though it is now quite clear who are behind the abduction.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Special Branch) MA Khaleque and Assistant Commissioner (Detective Branch) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Shafique Uddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday that they had no information about Jamal.



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman speaks at a meeting with the managing directors of banks at the secretariat yesterday.

CHT rajas vent woes with PM

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saying it was imperative for massive development in the region.

The ethnic community leaders also assured her of all-out cooperation to give peace and development in the CHT a big push.

The kings asked the premier to take effective measures to resolve land disputes, reserve forests and maintain peace in the region.

They also asked her to consider the establishment of a multi-ethnic police force for peace in the region.

The circle chiefs are currently working voluntarily as administrative advisers and overseeing the activities of headmen and traders in their communities.

They also discharge some legal responsibilities and help collect tax without any government assistance or honorarium.

The tribal chiefs asked the government to provide each of them with some facilities, including an office, a residence, private transportation, additional administrative manpower and an annual allocation for local celebrations.

They also asked the government to give them the status of Very Important Person (VIP) at state institutions.

"The PM has assured us that she will look into the proposals," said Devasish.

The premier accepted another proposal for holding an annual 'exchange of opinion' between the ethnic chiefs and the CHT affairs ministry.

Khalea told the chiefs that apart from the government programmes, the development community including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were carrying out development activities in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts.

The UNDP has already set up its office in the CHT to carry out uplift efforts, she added.

The premier said the CHT boasted not only natural resources, but also an enormous potential for tourism to flourish, saying peace and order were essential to explore the opportunity.

She informed the leaders that a decision had been taken to transfer

some responsibilities to the Hill District Councils to expand their jurisdictions.

The CHT kings congratulated the premier on her government's decision to set up district and sessions judge's courts in the three hill districts.

The cabinet at its last meeting approved the plan, which will be tabled in the next session of parliament.

They also thanked the prime minister for preserving the indigenous people's customary laws and practices in formulating the law for setting up the courts.

They said they believe in Bangladeshi nationality that preserved their individuality, tradition, culture, rituals, customs and practices. "I'm in favour of Bangladeshi nationalism," Devasish told The Daily Star emerging from the meeting.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and CHT Affairs Secretary Syed Mushtak were present.

WTO settles drug pact

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"It isn't a reservation. It isn't a qualification. It's just a clarification of some of the elements that concern us," Custodio said without providing more detail.

Some developing countries said they would only accept the pact on the understanding that measures to prevent smuggling would not add to the price of the drugs or make it more difficult for needy countries to get them.

The countries also noted that the agreement is supposed to be a short-term fix for a few years. They said they wanted to see work begin quickly to include the deal in the WTO's treaty on intellectual property rights.

On Thursday, the WTO's intellectual property panel adopted a document letting developing countries ignore some patent rules in importing drugs from cheaper generic manufacturers, along with a statement aiming to calm the fears of U.S. drug companies.

Under WTO rules, countries facing public health crises have the right to override patents on vital drugs and order copies from cheaper, generic suppliers.

However, until now they could only order from domestic producers a useless loophole for the huge majority of developing countries that have no domestic pharmaceutical industry.

U.S. pharmaceutical research companies were concerned that a deal allowing countries to import generic drugs would be abused by generics manufacturers and could also lead to drugs being smuggled back into rich countries.

To satisfy those concerns, the document was accompanied by the new statement setting out conditions for using the measure.

The statement says rules allowing countries to override patents "should be used in good faith to protect public health... not be an instrument to pursue industrial or commercial policy objectives."

It calls for special measures to prevent drugs being smuggled back to rich country markets, including special packaging or different colored tablets. Developed countries would agree not to make use of the provision.

Silver jubilee

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For September 2, the BNP has organised a discussion meeting on "25 years of BNP in the development of the country and the nation" at Mahanagar Natya Mancha at 4:00pm. Country's leading personalities are expected to take part.

The celebrations culminate on September 3 in an open concert, Bangladesh Cultural Festival, at the Paltan Maidan.

Besides decorating roads and party offices, the BNP will bring out a two-page special supplement tomorrow, highlighting its endeavours since its birth on September 1, 1978.

Celebration programmes at divisional and district levels will be observed for two days while at thana level for one day.

Sources said the prime minister is likely to meet the family members of the BNP leaders and activists killed or injured during the pro-democratic movements in the past 25 years.

PCJSS alleges

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security personnel in instigating the mob into attacking the villages.

Polash also said an eight-month-old baby named Chikko Chakma, son of Shamiron Chakma, died in his arms as he pressed the child's mouth to prevent him from crying to avert attacks by the mob as he was fleeing his house in Karengal village.

The PCJSS leader alleged a vested quarter is making fresh bids to worsen the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region and the Mohalchhari incident is the latest one.

The rally was chaired by PCJSS' student wing Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) Rangamati district unit president Ashin Chakma and addressed by, among others, PCP central leader Binotamoy Tripura and Tulu Marma.

Earlier, the district unit PCP also brought out a procession that paraded thoroughfares of the town.

Criminal

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Johnny, who also had several other criminal cases against him, had been threatening the complainant and witnesses of the Mamun murder case since his bail last month.

Police recovered his body early yesterday morning and handed it over to his relatives at noon. A revolver and five bullets found on the victim's person were also recovered.

A case under the Arms Act was recorded with Batiaghata Police while a general diary was filed for the murder.

Same old Tigers

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And they reached 165 in 47.3 overs, thanks to a 140-run opening partnership between Mohammad Hafeez and left-handed Taufeeq Umar.

The win inside four days gave Pakistan an unbeatable 2-0 lead before going into the third Test that starts in Multan on September 3. It was also their first series victory at home since 1997 when they beat West Indies 3-0.

Mohammad Hafeez scored an unbeaten 102, his first Test hundred.

The right-hander was however lucky to escape a close call. While on nought, he survived a confident lbw appeal off the first ball of the innings by paceman Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza. Hafeez was also dropped by substitute fielder Sanwar Hossain at silly mid-off on 33.

His maiden century featured 11 boundaries and a six.

Taufeeq on the other hand made 40 before being caught at mid-off by Mashrafe off Khaled Mahmud.

Taufeeq also had his share of fortune as the butter-fingered Bangladesh fielders gifted the southpaw two lives.

Wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud dropped him at 18 and Hannan Sarkar spilled the other chance at forward short leg when he was on 30.

Hero of the Karachi Test, Yasir Hameed, who scored centuries in both innings on debut, was unbeaten with 18 when Pakistan cruised home an hour before scheduled close of play.

Earlier in the morning session, Bangladesh, who needed to bat at least two sessions to make a match of it, got off to a horrible start with a fiery Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, who was at his hostile best, continued the destruction from

Weather

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heat wave, the temperature reached up to 43.4 degrees Celsius in Sathkira. The country's highest ever temperature was recorded at 45.1 degrees Celsius in Rajshahi in May 18, 1972.

Besides, the country experienced an unusual cyclone in May this year. It lasted for 10 days, became severe, then weak and again severe before crossing the Myanmar border. Generally, a cyclone lasts for six to seven days in the Bay. But, the one in May was rather peculiar, Met officials acknowledged.

Frigate case

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Rear Admiral (ret) Nurul Islam, former assistant chief of staff (Operations) of Bangladesh Navy Commodore (ret) AKM Azad, former director (Naval Plan) Commodore (ret) Haroon-or-Rashid and Commodore (ret) M Shahabuddin. Their bails were extended until the next hearing on September 22.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) filed the case against the accused with Tejgaon Police Station on August 7 last year on charges of misappropriation of public money and misuse of power in sealing the deal at a price higher than quoted by the lowest bidder. Bac Inspector Mir Mohammad Jonyal Abedin Shiblee filed the case.

Daewoo, which was the fourth lowest bidder quoting \$99.97 million, was awarded the contract that resulted in a loss of Tk 511.17 crore of public money, the case alleged.

After a yearlong investigation, Bac submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM)'s Court, Dhaka on August 3. Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud moved the bail petition for Sheikh Hasina, aided by Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, senior advocates Rahmat Ali MP, Shahara Khatun, Rezaur Rahman, Mokhlesur Rahman Badal, Abdur Rahman Howladar and former law minister advocate Abdul Matin Khansru.

Rokanuddin told the court that the decision to buy the frigate had

where he had left off the previous evening.

It did not take long for the 'Rawalpindi Express', who took two quick wickets on the third day afternoon, to bag two more on a dead track.

Rajin Saleh was the first to fall on the fourth morning when the right-hander was adjudged lbw. But Rajin could consider himself unlucky as TV replays showed the ball was going down the leg side.

He was Shoaib's 100th Test scalp.

Shoaib also dismissed Khaled Mashud with his very next ball to finish with his first-ever ten-wicket haul in Test cricket.

Captain Khaled Mahmud was next to go after scoring only one run. He was also trapped leg before by leg-spinner Danish Kaneria.

Rajin's overnight partner Alok Kapali was then undone by a quick delivery from Shabbir Ahmed that brushed the edge of his bat into the safe hands of Rashid Latif.

Right-arm seamer Umar Gul then wrapped up the tail sending Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza (14) and Alamgir Kabir's wickets cartwheeling.

Mannan Bhuiyan

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to divert people's attention as well as to protect the identified killers within her party."

Mannan Bhuiyan alleged that while in power, Sheikh Hasina had instigated her party workers to kill people and continues to instigate and support the killers. He also alleged that the countrywide murders and other criminal activities are being committed at Hasina's dictate.

The Local Government (LGRD) and Cooperatives minister also protested Hasina's remark that the present government has looted 70 per cent of national resources in its 22-month tenure.

In a counterattack, he said it was the previous AL government of Sheikh Hasina that squandered national resources through looting and rampant corruption during its five-year rule and cited the cases involving MIG, frigate, gas fields and share market scam in this connection.

"Hasina's falsehood has increased now that she along with her associates finds herself in the dock," Bhuiyan said and called upon the people to build up resistance against the "conspiracies hatched against the country and its people by the Awami League."

been taken in an inter-ministerial committee meeting, presided over by former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

"There was no allegation against her (Sheikh Hasina), either in the first information report (FIR) or the charge sheet, of making any personal gain or taking the decision herself."

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Mahmud Hasan did not object to the bail petition for Hasina.

Advocate ABM Sharafuddin Khan Mukul moved the bail petition for Abdul Awa Mintoo.

After obtaining bail, Hasina told a gathering at the court premises that the government had framed her in the graft case to malign her before the public and to thwart the AL's anti-government movement.

She also dismissed the allegation of loss of public money due to the frigate purchase deal. "We were right in the buying the frigate to safeguard the country's maritime territory and there was no lack of transparency in the purchase.

Rather, we saved public money," she claimed and urged all to unite against the "corrupt" and "tyrant" government.

Senior AL leaders Zillur Rahman, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Obaidul Quader, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Sultan Mohammad Mansur, Ashim Kumar Ukil and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil were present.

Lending rate

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government funds as deposit instead of the current 15 per cent.

All private banks irrespective of their years in operation will get this facility instead of the present restriction on banks yet to complete five years.

They can now also take deposit of up to 25 per cent of annual development programme funds, Saifur told the chief executives. Currently, the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) alone enjoy this facility.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) will refinance banks at a concessional 6 per cent for giving loans to agro-based industries and agriculture. The banks will have to inform the BB about the amount they will give in such loans.

The finance minister also assured the banks of reducing their requirement to maintain statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) with the BB. Currently, the banks have to maintain 16 per cent of their deposit in the SLR in the form of treasury bills.

Once the SLR is reduced, the banks will have more funds available for loans and advances. Saifur said he would review the

track records of the banks and decide the SLR cut on a case-by-case basis.

"The high interest rate is posing a disturbing element for the economy," Saifur told the bankers. "When Nobel winner Stiglitz met me, he also expressed his surprise at the high cost of funds."

"Although the interest rate regime has been opened up, a few banks form cartel to distort the market," the finance minister alleged. "The private sponsors chip Tk 5 crore in a bank and make Tk 10 crore to Tk 20 crore in profits a year."

He felt the urgency of increasing the flow of funds to the rural areas and especially to the agro-based industries.

"We have received over \$600 million from the IMF and the World Bank," he told the bankers. "The money is flowing. We will take a plethora of projects in the next fiscal. This will flow funds to villages. Your duty is to facilitate the flow."

Criticising the NCBs, he asked them to follow the roadmap to be laid out by advisers to be appointed soon.

Photography exhibition
The inaugural ceremony of a photography and poster exhibition will be held with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: National Museum, Shahbagh. Time: 5:00pm. The exhibition will remain open till September 3 from 10:00am to 5:00pm daily.

AL meeting
Dhaka City Awami League organises a public meeting with party president Sheikh Hasina as chief guest. Venue: Paltan Maidan. Time: 3:00pm.

Musical evening
Snjon organises an evening of old Bengali songs with Tagore song exponent Sadi Mohammad as chief guest. Venue: Bishwa Sahitya Kendra auditorium, Kazi Nazrul Islam avenue. Time: 6:30pm.

Sharing session
A sharing session on the film titled 'Matir Maina', organised by Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Anjibibi Samity (BNWLA), will be held. Venue: BNWLA conference room, West Agargaon. Time: 3:00pm.

Launching ceremony
The launching ceremony of the Laurels Extra-Curricular Clubs will be held. Venue: The Laurels, 765 Satmasjid Road. Time: 4:30pm.

Film show
Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'The sum of all fears'. Venue: 21/C, Zigatola. Time: 6:30pm.

Poster exhibition
The inaugural ceremony of the second part of a poster exhibition on graphic design by Pierre Mendell and Klaus Oberer will be held. Venue: Exhibition hall of Goethe Institut, Dhanmondi. Time: The exhibition will remain open till September 11 from 2:00pm to 8:00pm daily.

Discussion
Sonar Bangla Jubo Parishad will hold a discussion on the occasion of the 28th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It will be followed by a musical soiree. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:30pm.

Workshop
A dissemination workshop on the report 'Institutional Mapping on Human Rights and Governance in Bangladesh: An analytical overview', organised by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), will be held. Venue: CIDRAP auditorium, Tophkana Road. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar
A daylong seminar on 'Devolution: Key to organising the local government', organised by Khan Foundation, will be held with Science and Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan as chief guest. Venue: Khan Foundation Democracy Auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

BSSF discussion
Bangladesh Sanjukta Sramik Federation (BSSF) organises a discussion to mark its 34th founding anniversary. Venue: Kendrio Kachi Kanchar Mela, Segun Bagicha. Time: 4:00pm.