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# The Daily Star

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## Govt goes to fight gas crisis with Tk 2,500cr

### Export issues set aside for discussion later

**SHARIF KHAN**

The government yesterday decided to pump as much as Tk 2,500 crore till 2007 from internal resources into the gas sector to improve the current ominous production and supply.

The decision followed a top level meeting between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and nine ministers in the wake of the ongoing gas crisis that calls for urgent investment in the sector.

The issue of gas export was widely speculated to be discussed, but some ministers present at the meetings said it was not.

The meeting was attended by ministers for finance, LGRD, commerce, foreign affairs, health, agriculture, industries and state ministers for power and energy. Later, ministers for finance, LGRD, commerce and the two state ministers held another round of discussion on political and other issues.

The meeting was supposed to be joined by nine secretaries and high officials from Petrobangla but they were asked in the last minute not to participate.

But sources close to the ministers said they briefed the prime minister on the gas sector scenario before-

hand.

Bangladesh is going to face the real crisis from 2015 when the existing gas fields will not be able to meet the projected demand even considering optimum production, forecasts an energy ministry paper on future projection of gas demands and supply.

"Even with the Bibiyana gas field in production, the projected gas supply would not exceed 2663 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) in 2015 whereas the demand should shoot up to 2862mmcf by then," said a source.

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**Members of Chittagong Hill Tracts Hills Students' Council and the Hill Women's Federation rally in Dhaka yesterday, protesting attacks on indigenous people by plains people at Mahalchhari in Khagrachhari.**

PHOTO: STAR



## Panic stalks businesses

### Six trade bodies demand special anticrime drive

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Expressing deep concern over deteriorating law and order, six trade bodies in a joint statement yesterday urged the government to launch a special drive to improve the situation.

"Businessmen have become targets in most places and daily incidents of extortion, mugging, kidnapping and murders have created widespread panic among businessmen," the statement said.

The statement coincided with the media reports on 358 killings in August and 337 in July and an alarming rise in abduction of business-

men and schoolchildren across the country, especially in Chittagong.

According to the media reports, the wave of killings in the southern region also went up, reflecting the failure of law-enforcement agencies to curb crime.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and

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## BNP celebrates party's silver jubilee today

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The 25th founding anniversary of ruling BNP will be celebrated across the country today.

The BNP was formally launched on this day in 1978 with late president Ziaur Rahman at the helm.

Silver jubilee special on page 5

Within a span of 25 years, the BNP came to power several times. Moreover, in the most recent general election, the BNP came to power with an overwhelming support, bagging nearly 200 seats. Thus, the BNP resumed office yet again under Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's leadership.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina waves to the crowd at a rally at Paltan Maidan yesterday.

## Hill tracts turn volatile

### Army fights terrorists, hills people protest attack on villages

**STAR REPORT**

The situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has turned volatile with the army fighting gumbattles with terrorists in Rangamati. Indigenous people staged demonstrations in Dhaka and Khagrachhari yesterday to protest attacks on their villages.

In Bandarban, army raided a village and arrested four criminals.

Troops fought a half-an-hour firefight with terrorists at Betchhari under Barkal upazila in Rangamati yesterday and caught a terrorist, Sumon Chakma, 20, with one light gun, one .22 bore rifle and 97 rounds of bullets.

When the army team reached the remote area of Betchhari on a tip-off, the terrorists opened fire on the army men, prompting them to

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## JS body to probe slide in order in CHT

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs yesterday decided to find the reasons behind the law and order slide in the CHT.

Expressing deep concern at the situation, the committee meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban decided to review the peace accord and recommend amendments to the provisions, if necessary. It also decided to investigate irregularities in project implementation in the region.

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## Least interest in less interest

### BB efforts hardly inspire banks to lower lending rate

**INAM AHMED and REJAUL KARIM BYRON**

Even after a six-month vigorous monetary effort by the Bangladesh Bank (BB) to bring down lending rate, the result has been negligible with banks still charging as high as 14 per cent.

In the last six months, the BB has brought down its interest charge on treasury bills by 2 per cent, from 10 per cent to 8 per cent. The one-

month bill rate was brought down from 8.5 per cent to 6.5 per cent and one-year rate from 10 per cent to 8 per cent.

The aim was to discourage banks from investing in high rate bearing instruments and rather channelise the funds into the market at lower rates. At the same time, it was a signal to the banks that they should not go charging high.

One of the inspirations for the BB

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## Another raid, another flop

### Abducted Jamal remains untraced

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

A combined raid of law enforcers in a remote area of Lakkhichhari upazila in Khagrachhari to rescue abducted billionaire businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury went up in smoke yesterday.

On a tip-off, a large contingent of police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) launched the predawn raid on the hideout of kidnapers in the deep forest of the hills district but returned empty-handed, demon

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## Rise up to resist gas export

### Hasina calls hartal for Sept 25 from Paltan Maidan

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to put up a strong resistance against any move to export natural gas, saying the sale would make Bangladesh bankrupt.

"The BNP-Jamaat-led four-party

alliance government is planning to export gas, the country's most valuable natural resources," Hasina said.

Addressing a rally at Paltan Maidan, organised by the Dhaka city unit of the AL as part of its month-long programme demanding execu-

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## SHAZNEEN CASE

## Judgement tomorrow

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

Judgement on the Shazneen rape case will be given tomorrow.

Kazi Rahamat Ullah, judge of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, will pronounce the verdict at 11:30am, court sources said.

Both the prosecution and defence had completed their arguments on August 24. The tribunal recorded statements of 22 out of the 74 prosecution witnesses.

The trial of the case began on July 9, 2000 and took 126 working days to finish.

Fifteen-year-old Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Limited, was raped and killed at their Gulshan residence in the city on April 23, 1998.

Rahman filed a murder case with

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## Suspected thief beaten to death by DU students

**DU CORRESPONDENT**

A suspected thief was beaten to death by residents of Dhaka University (DU)'s Amar Ekushey Hall yesterday.

Mohammad Sohel, 30, who was rescued by the hall authorities and taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition at about 11:30am, died after about two hours.

Sohel had entered the Shaheed Rafique Bhaban of the hall saying that he had come to visit his brother Shipon at room 304 of the dormitory, from where, the hall staff said, 21 cellphones were stolen over the last month.

As Sohel was moving about suspiciously falling to enter the locked room, hall security stopped

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**Notice**

The full page LETTERS scheduled for today has been held up for tomorrow under unavoidable circumstances.

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August 2003



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