

TENGRATILA BLOWOUTS

Niko agrees to compensate govt's share of burned gas

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Canadian Niko Resources Limited agrees to compensate government's share in the gas that was burnt in the two blowouts in Chhatak gas field, known as Tengratila.

It accepts the Petrobranga's claim of proven three billion cubic feet (BCF) gas burnt in the accidents and says the company will compensate the government's share in the lost gas, which is 20 percent of the claimed magnitude.

"Niko will commit to continue development and commence production of gas from Chhatak and will deliver 20 percent of such volumetric produced gas to

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20-YR HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Politics by teachers, students discouraged

Single legislation for all public universities

ASHIQR RAHMAN

University Grants Commission (UGC) has prepared a 20-year strategic plan for higher education that aims to discourage direct involvement of the university teachers and students with party politics, developing a single legislation for all public universities, and increasing the universities' internal resources.

The UGC plan titled 'Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2005-2025' is supposed to be submitted to the prime

minister in the next week, the UGC sources said.

While the plan is to undergo a graduated process of implementation over four phases in 20 years, most policy issues including urgent reforms are concentrated in the immediate phase.

It also proposes setting up 22 more public universities in 20 years to meet the growing demand for higher education.

The strategy plan's immediate phase from 2006 to 2007 includes review of legislation for both public and private universities, enact-

ment of umbrella legislation for public universities, setting up an Accreditation Council, restructuring UGC, operationalising all the universities for which laws have been passed, improving logistic support for teaching, developing curricula to address PRSP, restructuring the National University (NU), initiating action for setting up six regional operation centres of the NU in the divisional headquarters.

The short term phase from 2008 to 2013 includes accelerating

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CEC's 'MISCONDUCT'

SC Bar asks president to form Supreme Judicial Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday demanded resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice MA Aziz and asked the president to form the Supreme Judicial Council for hearing the 'misconduct' of the CEC.

"The controversial preparation of the ongoing voter list by the CEC with controversial persons is a violation of High Court order, and tantamount to contempt of court," SCBA Secretary Advocate M Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star last evening.

The High Court also asked the CEC to take decisions through meetings and discussions, not by

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks to newly appointed Kuwaiti Premier Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Zaber Al-Sabah at the Bayan Palace in Kuwait City on Monday.



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Workers shoulder an entire house as the senior most fellow of them leads the way on the Hatikamrul-Bonpara Highway near Chalan Beel in Natore.

AUG 17 BLAST CASE

APP removed for defending Mufti Hannan

COURT CORRESPONDENT

An assistant public prosecutor (APP) was relieved of his post for defending Mufti Abdul Hannan, the operations commander of the banned Harkatul-Jihad (Huji), in connection with an August 17 bomb blast case.

An order signed by deputy solicitor Syed Enayet Hossain of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs relieved the APP, Emdadul Haque Lal, of the charge on Sunday.

The letter said the APP has been relieved of his responsibilities in public interest and that he has been directed to hand over the charge to the Metropolitan PP upon receiving it.

On January 4, APP Emdadul Haque along with two other lawyers submitted a petition with vokalatnama for conducting the case filed against Hannan in connection with the explosion on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Shahbagh on August 17.

They prayed for cancellation of the remand saying the IO could not gather any clues to the August 17 blasts even though Hannan was in police custody since his arrest on October 1 last year.

6 former, serving PDB officials accused in ACC's first-ever case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Monday filed a case against six retired and serving officials of the Power Development Board (PDB) and the Ashuganj Power Station Company (APSC) for wasting Tk 10 crore of the national exchequer in implementing the overhauling of the third unit of Ashuganj power plant.

These officials forced a decision on the government for their personal monetary gains between 2002 and 2003, the ACC said following an investigation.

This is the first case ever filed by the ACC since its formation on November 21, 2004.

The accused officials are: former PDB chairman (now retired) Syed Abdul Mayeed, ex-member, generation (now retired) Dr Engineer MAK Azad, retired joint chief of Power Wing of the Planning Commission Md Golam Rasul, former deputy secretary of power ministry Golam Mostafa Kamal

(now serving as member of the Rural Electrification Board), technical director of APSC Aatur Rahman and former director, finance of APSC Syed Abu Yusuf.

In the case filed with the Ashuganj Police Station, ACC Assistant Director Mohammad Zahirul Huda said that the authorities gave a turnkey contract worth Tk 98.51 crore to a consortium comprising Mitsui and HHI of Japan and Alstom Power of Germany for the overhauling of the third power unit.

The contract was split into two components: one for installing turbo generator and the other for installing a boiler. After awarding Alstom the task of installing the turbo generator, the accused illegally issued a variation order worth Tk 9.92 crore for their personal gains, causing monetary loss to the government.

The ACC in its investigation found that there was no scope for these officials to issue any variation

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Natore arms loot suspect dies in Rab 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An alleged outlaw and suspect of Bamihal police killing and arms loot incident was killed in 'crossfire' between the members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices in Singra upazila of Natore early yesterday.

Rab members arrested Nazrul Islam of Bias Union in Singra upazila at Amin Bazar in Dhaka on the night of January 16 and took him to a Rab camp in Natore, said a Rab press release yesterday evening.

On his confessional statement, a Rab team set out for Bias Union at about 2:30am yesterday, taking

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Prayer Timing

January 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-44
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

More bird flu deaths as experts meet on crisis

REUTERS, Beijing

Bird flu experts meeting in Beijing said yesterday the world urgently needed to amass a war chest to fight bird flu and prepare nations should a pandemic strain emerge.

Underscoring that urgency, Indonesia's health ministry said a toddler who died on Tuesday was being tested for bird flu days after his 13-year-old sister died of the H5N1 virus, according to local tests. A surviving sister is also being tested.

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Cold claims 19 more lives in three districts

STAR REPORT

Biting cold and cold-related diseases claimed 19 more lives over the past 24 hours in Gaibandha, Thakurgaon and Kurigram districts.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reported that five more people died from shivering cold in the last two days and over three thousands people, mostly aged and children, in the remote shoal areas of the Brahmaputra basin are suffering from cold-related diseases.

The dead are Abdul Ghani Sarker, 70, of Hasanerpara of Palashbari upazila, Moifulnessa, 65, of Kalapani of Shaghata upazila, Kazem Akanda, 68, of Ulipur, Naimuddin, 75 and Asironnessa, 60, of Chawgharia of Gobindganj upazila.

Meanwhile, intercity bus and trains are failing to maintain their schedule due to dense fog. Lalmonirhat Intercity Express and Ekota Express reached their destinations seven to nine hours late yesterday.

In Thakurgaon, three people

died of severe cold and cold-related diseases, raising the death toll to 30 in the district, reports BDNEWS.

The dead are Bisho Bewa, 70, of Shashar village under Sadar upazila, Dinai Mohammad, 80, of the same village and Abdul Ali, 70, of Senihari village.

Eleven more people perished from shivering cold in Kurigram district, raising the death toll to 36. The dead are Sabuj Miah, 23, of Powerhouse Para under Kurigram

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Indo-Pak peace talks begin

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mubhammad Khan began their two-day talks at the Hyderabad House yesterday where they reviewed the progress made in the previous two meetings and discussed key issues of peace and security, including confidence building measures and Kashmir issue.

During the talks, the two sides are scheduled to agree on a set of dates for the remaining six issues which include boundary demarcation along the Siachen Glacier in

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Dhaka to seek \$100m aid to fight bird flu

AFP, Dhaka

Bangladesh will seek more than \$100 million to help fight bird flu at a two-day international donors' conference in Beijing, a senior government official said yesterday.

"We are looking for over \$100 million in assistance to get prepared for any outbreak of avian influenza," Abdul Motalib, a director at the Department of Livestock, told the news agency.

The two-day conference, which started yesterday, aims to raise

\$1.5 billion to help prevent a potential bird flu pandemic.

"We have a team now in Beijing to attend the international conference and they will make the request to donors and development partners," he added.

Motalib, also a member of national bird flu taskforce, said despite a ban on poultry imports from 17 bird flu-affected nations, the country was not prepared to deal with an outbreak of the disease.

The funds will be used to

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