

GAS BLOCKS
3rd bidding within present govt's tenure

UNB, Gazipur

Energy Ministry Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday said the government will complete the 3rd round bidding of gas blocks within its tenure.

He said steps have already been taken to expedite the process of the international bidding.

The energy adviser disclosed the plan while inaugurating the newly installed Dhanua-Ashulia gas transmission pipeline at Dhanua in Gazipur.

The 20-inch diameter 47-kilometre gas transmission line from Dhanua (Gazipur) to Ashulia was built at a cost of Tk 240 crore with Asian Development Bank (ADB) providing Tk 140 crore.

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Bombers deal blow to Iraqi peace hope

Suicide bombings kill 64

AFP, Baghdad

Bombers struck a bloody blow against Iraq's fledgling hopes for peace yesterday, killing at least 64 people just one day after the government launched national reconciliation talks.

A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden minibus amid a crowd of day labourers seeking work in a crowded market in Baghdad's mainly-Shia district of Sadr City at 9:20 am (0520 GMT), killing at least 34 people.

This was followed by a bomb

attack in front of the area's town hall, which killed eight, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office said in a statement.

Three hours later a car exploded outside a courthouse in the mixed, northern city of Kirkuk, leaving at least 22 dead and 92 injured, 18 of them needing surgery, according to medical sources at two city hospitals.

It was not initially clear whether the second attack was a suicide bombing or whether the vehicle had been abandoned before the blast.

In Sadr City, a police officer said:

"A man parked a minibus in a busy street next to a police station, where day labourers were waiting for work. He wasn't aiming for police - he wanted to kill as many people as possible."

Maliki's statement said that 34 people had been killed and 73 injured, with eight more killed in the follow-up bomb and 20 more injured.

The bomber has not yet been identified, but suspicion will fall on Sunni extremists who have been identified as suspects who have been abandoned before the blast.

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3 yrs in jail, waiting for start of trial

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Sheer negligence and incompetence of court staff in Dhaka shed three years of youth from a 22-year-old person's life, as he was not produced before court.

Mostafa Miah, son of Yakub Miah of Joydevpur under Gazipur district, was arrested with a loaded gun by Savar police on February 17, 2003 from the vicinity of Gorat Government Primary School under Savar in Dhaka district.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Firoz Talukder filed an arms case with Savar Police Station the same day and the investigation officer (IO) SI Golam Morshed pressed charge against Mostafa on March 1, 2003.

On July 15, 2003, the case was transferred to the Third Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court for its quick disposal.

After receipt of the case, the trial court directed the jail authorities to produce Mostafa before the court on six consecutive dates, but the court order was not complied with. Moreover, both the prosecution and the defence were not informed of the case.

On October 27, 2003, the trial court directed jail authorities to produce Mostafa before it on November 30 the same year.

But the case file was not placed before the court on November 30 and no date was set up for the next

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Tk 2.36 lakh looted from Kurigram bank

UNB, Kurigram

Robbers looted Tk 2.36 lakh from Agrani Bank Bhurungamari branch sometimes between Friday and Saturday night.

Manager Rafiqul Islam said after the two-day weekend he arrived at office yesterday morning and found the vault broken and the money missing.

The robbers had entered the bank by breaking the grill and back doors, he said.

Peon Delwar Hossain and night-guard Montaz Ali were on duty during the holidays. Police detained Montaz and were interrogating him. But Delwar went into hiding.



PHOTO: STAR

Islami Chhatra Shibir blocks all streets converging on Zero Point in the capital yesterday as they hold a two-hour rally creating traffic jam in the surrounding areas.

Govt fears subversive activities in pre-poll political programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government apprehends that Bangladeshi criminals who are hiding by crossing the border may carry out subversive activities when there will be more political programmes of the ruling and opposition parties with the nearing of general elections.

Intelligence agencies also have submitted reports to the government on the possibility of such acts, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar said yesterday.

"We expect more political programmes during the next three and a half months and it will be a big challenge to ensure security for those because there is apprehension, as you see in newspaper reports, of subversive acts," he said after a special meeting on law and order.

Referring to the opposition's July 25-30 foot-march programme in the capital and its outskirts, Babar said, "There are intelligence reports on the possibility of such attacks during the programme."

The minister ordered police,

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies to maintain highest alert to check such move by the criminals, said sources present in the meeting.

The minister ordered the law enforcers to identify those who may cause trouble during the foot-march programme and said he expects to receive the list of criminals active in the country in a week.

Police and intelligence agencies will conduct body search on every individual, especially at the entry points of the city, to ensure that no one enters with anything suspicious. Rab dog squad will also join them.

"Many Bangladeshi criminals, who are hiding outside the border, may creep into the country and commit subversive acts taking the opportunity of rise in political activities and slip out through the border," the meeting was told.

The meeting attended by the home secretary, inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka

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No move yet to negotiate with striking teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four representatives of the government, entrusted by the prime minister to negotiate with the teachers on strike, are not initiating any move in this regard to resolve the crisis.

Agitating teachers of non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas yesterday vowed not to sit for negotiations with the government unless they get letters inviting all the factions of teachers to the table.

They also said they would continue their street demonstrations including holding rallies, forming human chains, and bringing out processions along with their indefinite strike until their demand for 100 per cent basic salary from the government coffers is met.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia called on Minister for Education Osman Farruk, State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon, Education Secretary Momtazul Islam and Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury in her office on July 17 and entrusted them to end the teachers' strike through negotiations.

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

A RARE SIGHT ... a vintage 1933 Austin makes its way through latest model cars at Nayapalitan in the capital yesterday.

Quake triggers tsunami alert in Sulawesi

Indonesia starts Java clean-up

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia yesterday started a massive operation to clear debris from the tsunami-hit south coast of Java, as a strong earthquake rattled Sulawesi island, triggering a fresh tsunami alert.

Some 3,000 soldiers, police, local officials, volunteers and residents laboured to clean up homes and streets in Java, especially in the hard-hit sleepy seaside resort town of Pangandaran, following last week's disaster.

Television reports showed masses of debris being burned in Pangandaran, as well as residents clearing up their destroyed homes

and businesses.

A 7.7-magnitude undersea earthquake struck off Java on Monday, unleashing giant waves that swept away homes and businesses along the densely-populated coast, sparking memories of the devastating 2004 Asian tsunami.

The national disaster agency on Sunday revised the death toll down to 596, saying 439 people were killed in West Java province, 154 in Central Java and three in Yogyakarta.

Another 73 were still missing, more than 9,500 others injured and some 74,000 displaced following

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Hunger-striking Saddam hospitalised

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's former leader Saddam Hussein was hospitalised yesterday due to the effects of a hunger-strike and will not be able attend the next stage of his trial, chief prosecutor Jaafar al-Musawi told AFP.

"Saddam Hussein has just been admitted to hospital because of his hunger strike. A medical report has established that he cannot appear tomorrow, because his condition needs medical attention," he said.

Saddam had been due to appear Monday before judges at the latest hearing in his prosecution for the alleged massacre of 148 members of Iraq's Shia community in 1982 following an attempt on his life.

He and his co-defendants have reportedly been refusing food since July 7.

Land phone fee halved

STAR REPORT

The government has decided to slash land phone connection fees by 40 per cent in Dhaka, Chittagong and by 50 per cent in other parts of the country with effect from August 1.

The fixed phone installation fee has been reduced to Tk 6,000 from Tk 10,000 for Dhaka and Chittagong multi-exchange areas while it will be reduced to Tk 4,000 from the existing Tk 8,000 in the divisional and district towns.

Subscribers at the upazila and growth centres will be able to get a fixed phone connection at Tk 2,500, which is now Tk 5,000.

"Some private land phone compa-

nies are now operating across the country, apart from Dhaka zone, and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) service is facing serious competition from them. Moves are on to allow private operators in Dhaka zone," explained a BTTB official.

However, a subscriber will have to pay an additional Tk 1,900 in case of receiving a telephone set with the new connection.

The new connection fees will not be applicable for already issued demand notes. "The new fees will not be applicable for those who already have submitted applications for a phone but did not

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'US will give Israel another week for Lebanon attacks'

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli officials believe they have approval from the United States to keep up attacks on Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon for at least another week, an Israeli newspaper said yesterday.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is due to leave for the Middle East on Sunday for talks on resolving the crisis, but Israel's main ally has resisted growing calls for a ceasefire.

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PHOTO: STAR

A worker with no protective gear against toxic gases clearing sewer clogs through a manhole at Sobhanbagh on Mirpur Road in the capital yesterday, risking his life.

8 suspected Maoists shot dead in Andhra

REUTERS, Hyderabad

Eight suspected Maoist rebels, including four women, were killed by security forces in a shootout yesterday in Andhra Pradesh, police said.

Police commandos led the operation after discovering a meeting of around 25 Maoists in the forests of the state's Prakasam district, around 440 km southeast of the capital Hyderabad, police superintendent N. Balasubramanyam said.

A senior Maoist leader was among those killed while another escaped. State police chief Swarnjit Sen said a search was on, backed by helicopters, to capture the escaped Maoists.

The incident comes six days after at least 25 people were killed in a raid by Maoists on a government camp housing a state-backed

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Prayer Timing		
July 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation