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## TENGRATILA BLOWOUTS

# Niko to get gas deal skirting compensation

SHARIEF KHAN

Petrobangla is finally signing the gas purchase and sales agreement (GPSA) on July 31 with Canadian company Niko Resources for supply of gas from the Fenil Gas Field, without ensuring compensation for hundreds of crores of taka worth of gas loss from the Tengratila gas field.

The GPSA outlines a price of 1.75 dollar per thousand cubic feet (mcf), as was prescribed by Petrobangla and which Niko had been refusing to accept from November 2004. However, Niko had accepted this price back in April and then delaying signing of the GPSA due to various reasons.

One of the reasons include the

government's claim of 8.9 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas and a Tk 250 crore bank guarantee from Niko as part of a three-stage compensation for the Tengratila gas field blowout. While Niko is unwilling to pay this compensation, the adviser for the energy ministry had been saying that loss of 8.9 bcf gas from the Tengratila field will be compensated from the Fenil field.

It was expected that the compensation issue will be tagged with the GPSA in some way. But now it appears that the GPSA stands alone.

Niko in a study of the Tengratila gas field claimed that this field has only 110 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas. However, a 1996-97 study of Petrobangla had identified a

resource base of 1.9 trillion cubic feet (tcf) there, of which 1.1 tcf can be commercially produced.

The compensation claims were made as per the findings of several probe committees on the two Tengratila blowouts. The probe committees entirely faulted Niko's poor planning and operation for the two rounds of blowouts in January and another in June 2005.

The compensation claim was sent to Niko back in December and strangely, issued by the Petrobangla which is not a party to Niko's deal in this regard. Niko has recently come to the conclusion that the claim should have come from the government, represented by the energy ministry and

## PRESIDENT'S HEALTH Doctors advise light work for 4 more weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed, who resumed his duties on July 6 after a long absence for heart condition, was advised yesterday to continue light work for another four weeks.

The medical board formed to monitor the president's health after a post-operative checkup yesterday observed that his condition remains steady but he is still not fit to begin full work.

The president should not start

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## Rivals slay 4 outlaws

UNB, Pabna

Four members of an underground outfit were slaughtered by their rivals at Tirahati village in Ataikula upazila on Friday night.

The victims were identified as Lal Mia, 35, Majed, 36, and Abdur Rouf, 35, of Terokhada village in Santhia upazila of Pabna district, and Abbas Ali, 32, of Mongal village in Faridpur district.

Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-janajuddho) told local newsmen over cellphone that they murdered the four at dead of night

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## First batch of Bangladeshis returns from Lebanon today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 139 Bangladeshis will arrive at Zia International Airport today, reported BBC radio in its evening programme yesterday. The Bangladeshis were stranded in Lebanon following the Israeli attacks on Hezbollah.

The government in assistance with International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is bringing them home from Damascus where they have been gathered from different parts of Lebanon.

Two aircraft -- one from Qatar Airlines and the other Itihad Airways, carrying them already left Damascus yesterday and they are scheduled to land at 7:20am and 8:00am today.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Jordan Golam Mohammad told the

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## Power boss falls from PMO grace for his anti-graft stance

STAR REPORT

State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder, who has taken a strong stance against corruption in the power sector, has become a target of the 'alternative power-house' and some senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), who have become desperate to push ahead with some grossly flawed power deals.

The vested interest group, who previously influenced the prime minister to remove Iqbal Hossain Mahmud from the position of the state minister for power two months ago, almost had Talukder removed from the cabinet on Thursday.

This group had the prime minister almost convinced that the

restructuring initiated by Talukder and his scrutiny of several power deals were seriously hindering 'development' in the sector. The group said Talukder is running the ministry like a 'martial law administrator' and that if he is not removed immediately, it will go against BNP in the next election.

The real reason behind this move is Talukder's stance to follow rules and regulations in the decision making process regarding the recent Meghnaghat-3 450 megawatt (mw) unsolicited power project, tendering process for Sirajganj 450 mw project, tender finalisation for Siddhirganj 240 mw power project and some other new schemes. In all these schemes, the vested interest lobbies are pushing

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## Prices of edible oil go up by Tk 6 in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of edible oil in the kitchen markets in the capital have increased by Tk 6 per litre in one week.

Soya bean oil sold at Tk 58 per litre in different retail markets yesterday, which was Tk 52 last week.

Traders of Moulvi Bazar wholesale market said the edible oil refiners have formed an informal cartel to raise the prices of edible oil.

If the situation continues, the price will further increase. So, the

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Hundreds of opposition activists take part in 14-party's road march at Naya Bazar in Old Dhaka yesterday, the fifth day of the programme. The march started from Babu Bazar.

## Opposition road march ends today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand demonstrators braving torrential rain walked over the two-kilometre street from Nayabazar (second Buriganga Bridge) to Muktangan in the capital yesterday, the fifth day of the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine's ongoing road march programme.

They demanded immediate resignation of the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

The six-day road march ends today with the opposition men marching from Amin Bazar to Russell Square at Dhanmondi in the capital.

As the marchers reached Muktangan yesterday, they rejoiced by singing and dancing, and chanting anti-government slogans while band parties continued playing music to cheer up the participants until 14-party

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

# BNP out to rope in Ershad for grim grassroots feedback?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ruling BNP has become desperate to bring Ershad-led Jatiya Party (JP) into the fold of the four-party alliance led by it ahead of the next parliamentary election. The government has reportedly agreed in principle even to dispose of within a month all cases against the JP chairman to win his support.

The ousted president faces 16 cases filed during the previous BNP

government's tenure in between 1991 and 1996.

The government assurance to dispose of the cases has given rise to questions about the necessity of having the JP (Ershad) with the ruling coalition.

The BNP-led alliance won 216 seats out of 300 in the last parliamentary election without the support of Ershad-led JP. The BNP alone won 193 seats, much more than the required 151 to form a government.

The questions that are now being asked in political as well as other circles are: What happened during the last few years of the present government that the ruling BNP now badly feels the need to induct Ershad-led JP into the alliance before the next election? And what does the BNP high command anticipate about the outcome of the coming polls?

The BNP move does not support the claim of the party chief and

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## ALLIANCE WITH ERSHAD Bhuiyan rules out crisis fear with Jamaat

UNB, Dhaka

BNP's Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday, making his party's position clear about welcoming Ershad as an ally to the four-party coalition, said if Jatiya Party (JP) joined their alliance, it would not create any crisis with Jamaat-e-Islami as JP seats are area-based.

Bhuiyan, also the LGRD minister of the coalition government, made the comment in reply to queries from newsmen on the latest developments in the ruling

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## ASA CENTRAL OFFICE NOW IN ASA TOWER

It is for general information that ASA, the renowned Microfinance Institution (MFI), has shifted its Central Office to its own building 'ASA Tower' at Shyamoli, Dhaka. The Central Office is located in the 13th and 14th floors of the 15 storied building. All are requested to communicate, if necessary to the new address from 29th July 2006.

<b>Old Address</b>	<b>New Address</b>
ASA, Central Office 1/2, Block-A Asad Avenue Road Mohammadpur Dhaka-1207 Bangladesh.	ASA, Central Office ASA Tower (13th and 14th Floors) 23/3, Block-B, Khilji Road Shyamoli, Mohammadpur Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh. Tel: 9116375, 8110934, 8110935 8119828, 8151113 Fax: 88-02-8111175, 9121861 E-mail: asabd@dhaka.net Website: /www.asabd.org



ASA Central Office, ASA Tower, 23/3, Block-B Khilji Road, Shyamoli, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207 Bangladesh. Phone: 9116375, 8119828, 8110934, 8110935 Fax: 880-2-9121861, E-mail: asabd@dhaka.net

## Satellite channels off air over govt order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city dwellers suddenly found the foreign satellite television channels switched off yesterday as some cable network distributors went on a wildcat strike in Dhaka and Chittagong, protesting a government order.

Agents of the distributors said they will not resume the service until the government withdraws its order prohibiting downlink of some popular pay channels without its permission.

Identifying the distributors as unscrupulous ones, the Cable Operators Association of Bangladesh (Coab) said they had

been downloading the pay channels without government permission.

According to reports from various parts of Dhaka, the agitating cable operators snapped off all the foreign channels yesterday afternoon.

In some areas, they broadcast a notice that transmission of the channels was stopped due to government order.

The government on July 24 issued an order not to downlink ESPN, Star Sports, TEN Sports, Set Max, Zee Classic, Zee Action, Zee Trendz, Zee Premier, VH1, Zoom, HBO, Star One, Disney and others.

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## Tigers lose series opener

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe held their nerve to edge a two-wicket victory over Bangladesh in the opening one-day of a five-match series at the Harare Sports Club yesterday.

Stuart Matsikenyeri was the hero for Zimbabwe, top-scoring with 89 in a sixth-wicket stand of 114 with Elton Chigumbira to resurrect the home side's hopes after they had collapsed to 50-4.

Matsikenyeri's performance helped Zimbabwe overhaul Bangladesh's total of 247 with five balls to spare, finishing on 248 for 8. Chigumbira hit the winning

runs for Zimbabwe, smashing Shahadat Hossain over midwicket for boundary to the delight of the home crowd to finish on 70.

Earlier, Bangladesh had overcome a nervous start to reach 246 for 7, with opener Shahrir Nafees top-scoring with 78.

The dreadlocked paceman Tawanda Mupariwa got Zimbabwe off to a flying start by removing Javed Omar for eight and Aftab Ahmed for nought with both men caught by wicketkeeper Brendan Taylor.

But Nafees steadied the ship sharing two fifty-plus stands with

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**Cricket Update**

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