DOWN TO EARTH

Gas billing system elevates consumers' woes

By Khalilur Rahman

Anomalies in gas billing are causing sufferings to a large section of the consumers in the Dhaka metropolitan area The Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd. a subsidiary company of Petrobangia, follows a dual policy in preparing bills for the domestic consumers, a good number of customers complained to The Daily Star.

The Titas Gas Company, an enterprise in the public sector, has two categories of consumers, those having meters and those without meters in the metropolitan city. The company realises monthly bills at a flat rate from the meterless domestic consumers. The fixed rate for a single burner is Taka 115 and for a double burner Taka 195 per month. The customers having meters for their domestic gas supply lines are also generally required to pay on the basis of monthly flat rates similar to the meterless connections in the absence of bills prepared on meter readings. The subscribers with metered connections continue to pay monthly bills at flat rates till many of them suddenly receive fresh bills showing huge sums of money for gas consumption as recorded in the meters.

A senior government official said that he had always paid monthly gas bills at a flat rate in the absence of billing on the meter reading for his domestic connection. When a complaint is made to the Titas authorities about (fresh) bills they ask for payment after deducting the amount already paid at monthly flat rates, he added. 'But it does not help me escape the penalty for having a meter. I have to pay an excess amount of about Taka 80 including Taka 20 as meter rent per month, shown in the fresh bill said to be prepared on meter reading. This is a gross discrimination and contrary to social justice. Why should a citizen with a metered connection pay an excess amount for gas consumption while another

Strike at Ctg

Port withdrawn

From Staff Correspondent

employees of Chittagong Port

resumed work from 8 pm on

Thursday following an assur-

ance of the State Minister for

Environment and Forestry that

their demands would be met

started work abstention from

Wednesday to realise their 35-

point demands which mainly

includes removal of anomalies

in salary and time scale bene-

Authority M A Mannan told the

Daily Star Thursday night that

"normalcy was restored at the

port after about two days of

ployees started work following

a fruitful meeting with the

State Minister for Environ-

ment and Forestry, Fisheries

and Livestock Abdullah Al-

Noman at Port Rest House

served work abstention from 8

am to 7 pm Thursday after 12

hours' gap to discuss issues

anchored at the port but due

to the work abstention, the

cargo handling was largely

Trials of Anis,

Amjad held

illegal

A Division Bench of the

High Court Division in separate

judgements on Thursday held

that the trials of former

Foreign Minister Anisul Islam

Mahmud and former Minister

Sardar Amjad Hossain were il-

legal and without lawful

the special tribunal No 3 and 2

Dhaka. The Bench comprised

Justice Tazle Hussain

Mohammad Habibur Rahman

peared for the petitioners

while Deputy Attorney General

Hasan Arif and Assistant

Attorney General Obaidur

Rahman Mostafa appeared for

Rokonuddin Mahmood ap-

The trials are pending in

authority, reports BSS.

and Justice K M Hassan.

the state.

hampered, sources said.

On Thursday, 17 ships were

Earlier, the employees ob-

He also said that the em-

dislocation.

Thursday evening.

with the authorities.

Secretary of Chittagong Port

About 7,000 employees had

CHITTAGONG, Aug 29: The

customer enjoying the same benefit pays less ? the official resented. He further said that he did not request for installing any meter in his domestic line. 'Moreover I appealed to the authorities to take away the meter as I never saw anybody visiting my house for taking meter reading, he added.

Another gas subscriber in the city complained that since the installation of meter in his house in 1987 there was no reading recorded by the Titas staff. When he approached the company for taking record he was told that the management had a small number of meter readers. He was advised to take record himself and report to the company for preparing bills. There was acute shortage equipment in addition to staff members at the disposal of the Titas gas for proper functioning of the meter system, he added. The subscriber also alleged that there were instance when the meter readings were used to pres surise a consumer. In his rela tives' house a gas bill showing a huge amount of money was sent for payment several months ago. The Titas staff allegedly made a deal with the consumer to pay less in exchange of 'tips', the subscriber

Some other subscribers also alleged that the meters installed in their respective premises were faulty. they have found the small disks in their meters moving even when the ovens remained off. The rotating disks were showing the consumption of gas though the burners were put off, the sub-, scribers stated.

Against the backdrop of such experience the Titas gas authority is learnt to have stopped installing new meters. The company is also actively considering a scheme to phase out the meters gradually in view of the public complaints and operational costs, Titas sources said.

An official of the Titas Gas

Rab's bail

petition

rejected

former Leader of the

Opposition in Parliament, ASM

Abdur Rab was rejected

Thursday by a Division Bench

of the High Court Division, re-

The Court comprised Mr

Earlier the bail petition of

Justice Anwarul Hug

Chowdhury and Mr Justice

the accused had been rejected

Muhammad Abdul Mannan.

ports BSS.

The bail petition of the

Transmission said that the objective of installing meters was to check wastage of this vital energy. In our country most of the people do not behave responsibly and to save a matchstick many consumers keep their gas burners burning and in the process huge volume of fuel is simply wasted. he observed. But the official admitted that the plan to install gas meters was hastily carried out and proper arrangement for their smooth functioning was simply ig-

The number of domestic consumers in the Titas gas system is over three lakhs. The commercial and industrial users are about 3,500 and 600 respectively in and outside the metropolis. About half a decade ago the government of ousted President HM Ershad decided to import gas meters. The meters were brought hurriedly even without maintaining requisite formalities. This was done to the benefit of a handful of favoured businessmen, sources told the Star. The number of metered connections is about 1,20,000.

Of late the Titas Gas author ities have launched a special drive to realise arrear gas bills from the defaulting domestic consumers in the metropolitan area. The company says that a huge amount of arrear gas bills of staff quarters of government, autonomous and private organisations remains unpaid. The amount in arrears is increasing at an alarming rate. The biggest defaulters are public sector enterprises. The Power Development Board (PDB) alone owes Titas gas about Taka 100 crore as gas bills. The Adamjee Jute Mills

has an arrear of Taka four crore. Initial result of the spe-

cial drive by Titas gas is encouraging, a company official said. But the realisation of arrear bills is not an easy job, he added.

SSMC reopens Sept 4 By SSMCH Correspondent

Sir Salimullah Medical College will re-open on September 4 after closure of fifty days. The hostels will also re-open on September 2.

From Page 1 Col. 3

He said, "It is the Court to sustain or reject the objec-

Following are the excerpts of the cross-examination and to relate the 'pina' with drink the altercations between the ing of alcohol. two sides that took place in the court yesterday.

your main duty now? Atiqur Rahman Munshi (ARM): I am still working as

the assistant to the Military SH: What is the function of the Assistant Military Secretary?

ARM: To prepare tour programmes of the President on advice of the Military Secretary and look after the day-to-day administration of the

Bangabhavan. S H : Do you know all the personal goods of the President ?

ARM: I am not supposed to know that. SH: As a member of the in-

ventory Committee did you fix the price of any item? ARM: No. I did not.

SH: Did you help the committee, in identifying what was government property and what were personal belong ARM: Yes. There is no item

in the list that belongs to gov-SH : Have you signed the ARM: No. I did not.

SH: Where do you hold banquets? ARM: At the Bangabhavan

MSP organises it and I assist Sif: Would the foreign dig-

nitaries call on President at

the Sena Bhaban? ARM: Yes. SH: Is there any arrangement to hold a reception there

(Sena Bhaban)? ARM: Yes. Big parties would be held at the Bangabhavan

while in the Sena Bhaban small parties could be organised.

SH: Did you hold any party there —(khana pina)? intervening at this stage the Attorney General sarcastically said that 'khana pina' meant food and drinks and drinks meant alcohol.

The accused in the dock promptly said 'khana pina' is very much used in Bangla and it does not relate to drinks.

A restaurant near BDR auditorium at Peelkhana drawing water illegally from a public tap through a plastic pipe. - Star photo

Water transport strike continues, talks today

By Staff Correspondent

The government and the striking private motorised riverine transport owners held three-hour talks on the second day Thursday but failed to resolve the crisis.

Talks will resume today. The indefinite strike, demanding lowering of fuel prices to pre-Gulf war level, entered its sixth day Thursday.

Pleading fund constraint and donor's disapproval, Shipping Minister Keramat Ali said no fuel price cut was possible and urged them to withdraw the strike. But they said they could not operate at loss.

Shipping Secretary, Chairmen of BIWTC and BIWTA were also at the talks held at the conference room of the Shipping Ministry.

Group Capt (Retd) Shamsul Haq, of Bangladesh Jute and Jute Goods Water Transportation Association, M. Mah-

Launch Owners' Association Abul Kalam, Convenor of the Diesel Price Reduction Materalisation Committee, Golam Mohiuddin, and Badiuzzaman Vice-Presidents of Inland Wa ter Transport (passenger carriers) Owners Association, Bad iuzzaman, represented the transport owners side.

mudur Rahman of Bangladesh

Meanwhile, vessels of BIWTA and BIWTC started plying but sufferings of the people using river transport especially those in the country's southern region continued because the public sector transports were too inadequate to the need. Government owned vessels started plying following withdrawal of barricades by the private following removal of barricades on di ferent rivers by the transports

on river routes Wednesday. Cross-examination stopped

continue came when the pros-

ecution witness was clarifying the transfer of some of Ershad's personal belongings to the Bangabhaban and replying to questions about the 66 bottles of whisky kept in the Sirajul Haque (S.H.): What is Bangabhavan.

Beyond the answers to the questions by the Desence Counsel the prosecution witness voluntarily that Begum Raushan Ershad had asked him to keep those goods in the Bangabhavan. At this stage the Attorney General asked the Court to record the explana-

Then Ershad immediately stood up in the dock and told his Defence Counsel "this is too much. Leave it - there is no need for further question-

Earlier Defence Counsel A.R. Mollah also raised objections against the Attorney General

Later, at around 12 noon, Defence Counsel Strajul Haque put the papers he had in his hands on the peshker's table and told the court that he was disturbed by repeated prosecu tion lawyer's interruptions and hence would not continue the cross-examination.

He later told reporters outside the Court that he lost his Khalada Hagina | trend in continuing the questions as the Attorney General was repeatedly interrupting

> He said that Attorney General had the right to raise objections on any issue or guide the Court but he should not interrupt the Defence lawyers during cross-examina-

> He said that conducting a cross - examination was a difficult thing and it had to be done with extreme care.

He however said he might again recall prosecution witness Atigur Rahman Munshi if his client asked to do so. He also told a questioner

that they would most probably produce defence witnesses in this case, to give an account of the money recovered from Sena Bhaban.

Attorney General Amina Haque however told reporters that under the Evidence Act he had every right to intervene or raise objections to irrelevant questions by the Defence.

At this stage Strajul Haque also asked the Attorney General to say whatever he wanted later, after he finished the questions. He also said not

> Then he continued the questions. SH: (looking at the list what is Maoti for Maotail?

ARM: Drinks or the name of an alcohol. SH: Do you know where and when the drinks were

procured? ARM: No. I don't. SH: Was there any room in the Bangabhavan to keep

drinks? ARM: Those were kept in a room near my office on the

first floor. SH: Were your ignorant 12th Amendment Bill by the about the drinks being there? Jatiya Sangsad, she said the

people had a great role to play ARM: No. I knew that Raushan Ershad asked me over in giving their verdict in the telephone. (Turning to the coming referendum. judge) I have an explanation on them to elect patriotic and na-Attorney General: The ex

tionalist forces in the by-election to maintain the tempo of planation should be recorded. development initiated by the AR: Mollah, a Defence Counsel suddenly raise to his government feet and angrily said "Why is he Earlier on the day addressing a public meeting at interrupting? he is also sup-Chapainawbganj Government plementing the answers of the witness. This is really intoler College ground the Prime Minister said the government was determined to combat the

Attorney General : | am | talking to your senior. Please exercise restrain. Sirajul Haque : If I am not

allowed to continue the cross examination by way of interruptions form the Prosecution will have to leave the court. (Pointing to the A.G.) You are always interrupting.

Ershad from the dock Leave it. Don't continue the cross examination.

During cross-examination

PW 43 said that good carpets

are manufactured in Japan

and Korea and the best carpets

are produced in England, and

that he did not see any carpet

The PW 44 a crockery mer-

produced in Iran or Peshawar.

chant was also cross-exam-

was cross-examined.

ined.

The Prime Minister today also visited the 66th Infantry At this stage Sirajul Haque Division at Rangpur Cantosat down and told the Court that he was instructed by his client not to proceed with the On arrival, she was received cross examination.

by the GOC Major General **Earlier Prosecution Witness** Asma Amin. No 43 a furniture merchant,

Begum Khaleda thanked the army personnel for their services alongwith the members of public, NGOs, Government Officials, Police, Ansar and BDR in the relief operations during the devastating cyclone. She also planted a sapling

there. The Prime Minister was presented with a crest by the GOC.

The Midnight File

Khaleda likely

to address

UNGA session

Khaleda Zia is likely to address

the 46th session of the UN

General Assembly (UNGA) on

October 2, Foreign Ministry of

ficials said Thursday, reports

The session is due to begin

Begum Zia will be the

Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman addressed the

29th session of the General

Assembly on September 25,

Late President Ziaur

Deposed President HM

Diplomatic sources here

indicated that the forthcoming

UNGA session would be fea-

tured by a series of exciting

debate on a number of global

and regional issues in the

backdrop of the changed global

Candidates for JS

polls to state fund

sources in 7 days

the election to Jatiya Sangsad

shall be required to submit a

statement to the Returning

Officer concerned within

seven days next following the

last day for withdrawal of can-

didature in the prescribed

form of the probable sources of

fund to meet his election ex-

penses, an Election Commi-

ssion Secretariat press release

said in Dhaka Thursday

assessee, a copy of the income

tax return last submitted by

other papers, attached with

the statement are to be sent to

the Election Commission also

by the contesting candidate

under registered post at the

time of their submission to the

also be applicable to the con-

testing candidates for bye-

election to the 11 vacant seats

of Jatiya Sangsad scheduled to

contesting candidate in Jatiya

Sangsad election, excluding

the personal expenditure in-

curred by such candidate, shall

not exceed Taka three lakh

The personal expenditure of a

candidate in connection with

his election has been limited

the above provision of law in

connection with his election

expenditure, shall be punish-

able with rigorous imprison-

ment for a term which may

extend to seven years and shall

not be less than two years and

also with fine, the press re-

Khaleda

The Prime Minister urged

vices of corruption, crimes and

development of the country.

smuggling for overall economic

predicament except curbing

the vices to achieve economic

emancipation of the masses al-

ready groaning under the

scourges of poverty and unem-

Visits cantonment

ployment," she said.

There is no way out of the

From Page 1 Col. 7

Any candidate who violates

to Taka five thousand.

ease added.

The election expenses of a

be held on September 11.

This provision of law shall

Returning Officer.

A copy of the statement and

The statement will be made

reports BSS.

press release.

Every candidate contesting

political and economic sce-

Rahman made a speech at its

11th special session on August

Ershad also spoke at the spe-

cial sessions of the world body

in 1982 and 1988.

at the UN headquarters in New

fourth head of the government

of Bangladesh to address the

York on September 17,

1974.

20, 1980.

Prime Minister Begum

British food credits for USSR

KENNEBUNKPORT, Aug 29: The United States and Great Britain announced plans Thursday to extend additional food credits to the disintegrating Soviet Union and to make a hurry-up"lifeline" study of possible Soviet needs for food. We cannot dictate the ending of what's happening in the Soviet Union, but neither are we mere spectators," British Prime Minister said, reports AP.

US envoy praises Pak initiative

ISLAMABAD, Aug 29: Outgoing US Ambassador Robert B Oakley expressed optimism in an interview published Wednesday that a Pakistani initiative for a nuclear-free South Asia could end the deadlock between the two countries on the issue. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's June 6 proposal "offers a way out" not only from the US-Pakistani dispute over the nuclear issue but from the dangers confronting South Asia, Oakley told the daily The News on the eve of his departure, reports AP.

Indo-Pak fighting ends, says India

NEW DELHI, Aug 29: The Indian Defence Ministry reported today that fighting which erupted four days ago between its troops and Pakistani soldiers along the Kashmir frontier had ended. Fighting has ended between our and Pakistani soldiers in Kashmir, an army spokesman attached to the ministry said amid reports that tension still prevailed in the disputed state's Poonch border sector, reports AFP.

Life term to BCU worker for murder

CHITTAGONG, Aug 29: An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra Union has been convicted in absentia to life term in jail for murdering a Shibir worker in Chittagong, reports UNB.

Additional Sessions Judge Rafigul Islam delivered the judgement Wednesday against Amal Barua, an activist of the CPB student wing.

According to prosecution story, Mahfuzul Haque, an activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir, was seriously injured during an armed clash with Bangladesh Chhatra Union at Rowzarhat in Rangunia thana on January 27,

Mahfuz succumbed to his under Section 44A of The injuries at Chittagong Medical Representation of The People College Hospital the following Order 1972, according to the

Police, after investigation, Each contesting candidate chargesheeted Barua and six under the law, shall also be reother. The Judge, after examquired to attach with the ining witnesses and records, statement in the prescribed punished Barua, hiding since form of his assets, liabilities. the incident. annual income and expendi-Six others were acquitted. ture and, if he is an income tax

Jute From Page 1 Col. 5 Bangladesh Jute Corporation has incurred a loss of Taka 1100 crore, Bangladesh Jute Mills Association — Taka 214 crore and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation Taka 1400 crore. As a result all these three organisations have lost their borrowing capacity from

The Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA) blamed the previous government for its wrong policy which forced it to stockpile a huge quantity of jute thus blocking its cash. The Association used to handle 85 per cent of the total raw jute.

A total of about 10 lakh bales of Jute were left over, and are being carried over for years together.

Public sector From Page 1 Col. 4

diesel price.

"We can't allow our precious, imported diesel to cross the border by reducing the its price," he added. The transport owners have

been mounting pressure on the government to restore the diesel price to the pre-Gulf war level.

Diesel price was last year raised by 105 per cent at one go in the wake of Gulf crisis triggered by August 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Meeting the demand of the transport owners will cost the government about Tk 200 crore, according to official estimates. Related story on Page 6. politics once for all.

Farooq

From Page 1 Col. 8

"If you are a Bengali, you must respect the Shetkh", a BSS report quoted Farooq as saying. But on the AL demand for scrapping the Indemnity Ordinance which blocked the trial of killers of Mujib, a UNB report quoted Farooq as saying

"The Indemnity Bill is the birth certificate of others. Who will try whom? Both the governments of the Jatiya Party and the BNP will lose their legitimacy if the bill is passed in Parliament. Both the agencies said

Farooq demanded that opponents of the 12th Constitution Amendment Bill be given equal opportunity in the electronic media and the governmentowned newspapers to express views in favour of 'no' votes in the upcoming referendum.

Farooq urged people to reject the bill and criticized the political parties for passing it which, he said, would snatch the right of franchise. He did not elaborate.

Mahananda bridge

From Page 1 Col. 8 the project will be started by the end of this year and is expected to be completed within two years.

When completed the bridge will connect the Shibganj and Bholahat upazilas with the district headquarters.

Communication Minister Oil Ahmed, Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Shahjahan Miah, Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mizanur Rahman Minu and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Chen Songlu

were present on the occasion. The first Bangladesh-China friendship bridge was comstructed in Dhaka over the river Buriganga and the second in Shambhuganj over the Old Brahmaputra on Mymensingh-Kishoregani

Hasina

From Page 1 Col. 7

highway.

cluding Rangpur. She also called for ensuring fair price of agricultural products, including minimum price of jute at Tk 500.

Hasina flayed Jatiya Party candidates Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Shah Moazzem Hossain contesting from Rangpur-5 and Rangpur-6 respectively. "These hired people, being rejected in their * own areas came here only to bluff you."

Referring to Awami Leaguesponsored Indemnity Ordinance (repeal) Bill, she urged the ruling party MPs to support it for eliminating bloodshed and treachery from

Supreme Soviet

From Page 1 Col. 8 Wednesday of Boris Pankin, former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, as new Soviet Foreign Minister.

Pankin took the lead among Soviet diplomats in condemning the coup bid. A Soviet embassy spokesman in London said Wednesday that Zamyatin's recall was "usual diplomatic practice and could be connected with British Prime Minister John Major's visit to the Soviet

Union on Sunday. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, outraged over KGB support for the failed hardline coup, today sacked two senior security officials, including the personnel Director, Tass

news agency said. The official announcement followed Gorbachev's decision on Wednesday to dissolve the KGB's ruling collegium essentially the board of directors of the once-feared cloak-

and-dagger security police. Tass said two separate presidential decrees ordered the sacking of Geniya Ageyev as First Deputy KGB Chairman and the removal of personnel director Vitaly Ponomaryov. Air Force Major-General Nikolai Stolyarov was named to replace Ponomaryov, part of a promised wide-ranging shakeup in the security forces. Gorbachev dissolved the

ruling collegium-made up of departmental heads, Deputy Chairman and the KGB Chairman-as part of efforts to restore his authority after last week's bungled putsch. One of its members, deputy

chairman Viktor Grushkov had been arrested while others may remain at their departmental desks with reduced powers, a KOB spokesman Gorbachev has also ordered

the transfer of hundreds of thousands of KGB troops. formerly controlled by the collegium, to the Ministry of Defence. Former KGB chief Vladimir

Krychkov was one of the eight coup leaders and is under arrest facing trial for treason. The KGB has a huge foreign

espionage service and over the years has poured resources into monitoring its own population. Related stories F 5, 6

Editor : S. M. Ali

Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motifheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhuka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial offices: 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: Editorial & News: 863036. Commercial: 863035. PABX-246023-4. Fax No. 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257 CRAM: DAILY STAR. DHAKA.

by sessions Judge Md Forkanullah, the session Judge Court, Lakshmipur. 40 garment

N'ganj clash From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ, Aug 29: At least 40 workers of a garment

workers hurt in

tory owners over non-payment of arrears today. Five of the injured were admitted to Narayangani hospital. They are: Shirin Akhter (22), Jesmin Akhter (30) Humayun (30), Munir (25) and

factory were injured when they

cashed with the people of fac-

Anwar Hossain (25). It was alleged that 'hired mastans' attacked the workers of Brothers Garments (Bangladesh) Limited at Masdair in the town when they were agitating for payment of three months' arrear salary

and overtime bills.

Khaleda, Hasina

From Page 1 Col. 5 Ironically, while the two protagonists of nine-year anti autocracy movement are stay ing in Rangpur, their common political antagonist — Ershad is in gaol, far away from his hometown.

Two close aides of the deposed President, former Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and ex-Deputy Prime Minister Shah Moazzem Hossain - contesting the byeelections from Rangpur-5 and Rangpur-6 respectively, rented a house at the New Cross Road in the town to try their luck, far away from their own places.