

Decision to explore alternative to gas

An inter-ministerial meeting to review the proposed national energy policy yesterday decided to give emphasis on the use of gas in economically viable sectors like manufacture of petrochemical products and Urea, reports UNB.

The high level meeting held at the cabinet room of the secretary with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair also decided to explore alternative source of gas for domestic consumption as well as generation of electricity.

It reviewed various aspects of the national energy policy and brought some amendments to the proposed energy policy, said an official handout.

In view of the acute energy shortage and ever increasing pressure on the country's known recoverable gas reserve, it stressed the need for proper and optimum utilisation of gas resource.

The meeting also laid emphasis on more participation of the private sector in exploration, extraction, development and utilisation of gas.

The country's proven recoverable gas reserve was estimated at 10.44 trillion cubic feet (TCF) on June 1993 in 8 gas fields which are in operation. So far 17 gas fields have

been discovered in the country.

The reserve is likely to be exhausted within the next 25 years.

"We have to be very careful in selecting areas where gas resource should be utilised," said Finance Minister Saifur Rahman. He told the meeting that necessary funds would be mobilised for exploration of new gas field on priority basis.

The government will also keep its option open to explore the possibility of using coal in electricity generation if it is found to be economically and commercially viable.

Ctg div BNP confce postponed

Chittagong divisional councillors' conference of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) scheduled to be held on March 23 has been postponed, according to a party press release yesterday, reports BSS.

In a statement, organising secretary and coordinator secretary of Chittagong divisional councillors' conference Haris Chowdhury said next date for the conference will be announced very soon.

Bangabandhu

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pledge to foil all sorts of conspiracy, establish the fundamental and democratic rights of the people and build an exploitation-free society as dreamt by the Bangabandhu," she said.

Hasina said, the Bangabandhu at a crucial juncture of history united the Bangalee nation during the war of Independence that resulted in the emergence of sovereign Bangladesh.

She also gave a brief resume of the life of Bangabandhu and said, Sheikh Mujib was always uncompromising on the fight for the rights of the Bangalee nation.

As part of the programme, the birth day celebration committee under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina will place wreaths at the mazar of Bangabandhu at Tungipara at 9 am today.

Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka yesterday for Tungipara where she will open a two-day programme through a rally of juveniles and children at 9:30 am.

A milad mahfil will be organised at 10 am and a discussion meeting at 3 pm. The programme of the day will be rounded off with a cultural function.

A competition on extempore speeches of children and juveniles will be held at 10 am tomorrow. Sheikh Hasina will distribute prizes among the winners.

There will be poetry recitation at 3 pm and a cultural soiree and drama at 5 pm and 7:30 pm respectively.

In Dhaka, the day's programme includes hoisting of national and party flags atop the AL central office and the Bangabandhu Bhaban.

The AL leaders and workers will assemble at the Bangabandhu Bhaban at 8 am and place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

A milad mahfil will also be held in the city seeking salvation of the departed souls of Bangabandhu, his family members and those who were killed along with him on August 15, 1975.

The Bangabandhu Parishad will arrange an exhibition of paintings at 3 pm at the premises of Bangabandhu Bhaban and a gathering of children and juveniles at 3:30 pm.

Prof Mamtazuddin Ahmed, Golam Akbar Chowdhury, Mahadev Saha and Nima Rahman will speak on the Liberation War. Sufia Kamal will be in the chair.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P) will lay wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in the morning at the Bangabandhu Bhaban and bring out a procession and hold a rally on the Dhaka University Campus.

Zillur Rahman, general secretary of the AL has urged all party units to observe the day in a befitting manner.

2 die, 4 hurt in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons were killed and four others injured in two separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Sources said an unknown male, aged about 30, died when a speedy truck hit a tempo in Mirpur-2 at about 4pm.

Of the four injured, all passengers of the tempo. Two were identified as Abdul Majed, 35, Mujibur Rahman, 30.

In another incident, one Kuddus died when a part of boring machine fell on him at a housing project in East Rampura in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, some unidentified persons stabbed a guard of a house in New Baily Road yesterday.

According to sources, guard Zahangir Alam, 26, tried to resist a group of about 20 persons when they tried to enter the house.

Ctg Urea Factory stops production

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several thousand agitating farmers allegedly looted 200 bags of fertiliser during the Awami League-sponsored thana gherao programme at Kazipur yesterday.

About 5,000 people thronged the thana headquarters responding to the Awami League call for gherao to protest the price spiral of fertiliser and rice.

Police said during the programme the agitating farmers looted a fertiliser truck heading towards the thana for distribution among the farmers at fair price.

Police lathicharged the mob to disperse them, leaving at least 15 people injured. A policeman was also injured during the clash.

Two of the injured were admitted to Kazipur Health Complex.

Later, a contingent of police from district headquarters rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control. They also recovered eight bags of fertiliser and arrested five people, including a UP member, from the spot.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina among child artistes at the Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday. People's Theatre Association organised the first-ever Children's Drama Festival which Hasina inaugurated. — Star photo

"AL struggling to ensure safe future for children"

Awami League President

Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party is struggling to ensure a safe and secure future for the children, reports UNB.

The nation has plunged into darkness. There is no security of life, there is no peace. Clash, conflict and killings are taking place everywhere," she said while inaugurating the First National Children Drama Festival at Shilpakala Academy.

Hasina said drama is a powerful medium to make people conscious about their rights, education, health and other important issues. "Drama is more effective than speech to motivate the people," she added.

She said cultural activities are not less important than formal education. They can help develop the mental faculty of the children.

The AL chief said, "We have a glorious tradition and rich history. Children should be acquainted with the true history and tradition of the nation to build up a prosperous Bangladesh."

People's Theatre Association organised the week-long festival being participated by some 20 drama groups of children at the Shilpakala Academy.

Copenhagen summit

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director of the opinion survey project Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad presented the draft report of the survey at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon.

Thirty-five point two per cent respondents viewed that holding national elections, before the expiry of the term of the present Parliament, by handing over power to a caretaker government could resolve the political crisis.

Forty-one point five per cent of the respondents held the ruling BNP while 25 per cent held the Awami League responsible for the present crisis.

Meanwhile, 59 per cent said the resignation of opposition MPs was not a proper step while 52.9 per cent felt that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament should have met and worked out a solution.

The survey conducted during January and February was based on a nationwide sample of 1,862 respondents drawn from the voting-age people in urban and rural areas. Twenty-eight per cent urban and 72 per cent rural sub samples were allocated to 60 districts

in proportion to population.

Social, political, economic and religious issues were included in the survey in which the respondents comprised men and women from various professions such as service holders, teachers, business people, politicians, lawyers, doctors, engineers, housewives, industrial labourers, day labourers, students, farmers and agricultural labourers.

In the survey, majority of the respondents said that there was no difference between the present government and the past autocratic government as regards the use of the electronic media.

Meanwhile, 66.6 per cent felt that private radio and television channels would be neutral. Besides, 80.3 per cent respondents felt that the electronic media in the country were not enjoying freedom while 45 per cent had no confidence in this media.

Dr. Kholiquzzaman said more surveys would be conducted on other important national issues from time to time.

The press conference was also attended by Prof Abdur Rashid Chowdhury, Nilufar Banu and Shamsul Alam.

Finance Ministry contradicts

Hasina's comments

The Ministry of Finance has contradicted comments made by the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, regarding the executive committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) at a press conference which was published in different dailies on March 14, reports BSS.

The Finance Ministry, in its statement issued yesterday, termed the comment of Sheikh Hasina as "unwanted, regrettable and defamatory" as "she passed some generalised comments regarding the institution without bringing any specific charges."

The ministry in its statement said that the ECNEC is comprised of one minister, seven members from the cabinet committee on government purchase and eight members from the cabinet committee on financial affairs.

Outlining the general practice of the ECNEC, the statement said that usually those proposals of development projects having financial involvement over certain ceiling and having been recommended by the committees of different ministries and various levels of the Planning Commission, are placed before the ECNEC for consideration and approval.

The committee, through unanimous consent of all members, takes the decision on the investment projects on the basis of specific guidelines and after proper consideration of the recommendations of various ministries and the Planning Commission.

Under such circumstances, it is clear, the statement said, that Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina is not well aware of the system of taking decision and the working process of those committees. "Making sweeping comment without bringing any specific allegation by the Awami League leader against these institutions is unwanted, deplorable and defamatory," the statement added.

Opinion poll

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The Social Summit was an occasion when all the leaders who went there became more aware of some of the most pressing social and economic problems.

Apart from the new moral ethics set by the Copenhagen Summit or the discussion on issues that had never been addressed by a UN conference before, the only tangible benefit that Bangladesh derives, perhaps was the debt relief, Bangladeshis summitters said.

After tough negotiations, the developed countries finally agreed to write off bilateral debt of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and some of the African states.

The other gain for Bangladesh was achieving national treatment for its documented migrant workers.

"This means that the Bangladeshis who are working abroad will enjoy equal social rights as a national," explained Dr M Afzarul Qader, Director General of the UN desk in the Foreign Ministry.

NGO representatives at the Social Summit, however, were cautious while commenting on what we gained from the Summit.

The outcome would depend on the policy of the government as well as the atmosphere that enables the NGOs to work in the country, they said.

"What we gained from this conference is, perhaps, that for the first time people were placed at the centre of global attention," said Zahin Ahmed, a member of the NGO Preparatory Committee for Social Summit. For the first time, the centrality of people was recognised by the world and social equity and environmental concerns were re-emphasised, he noted.

The Copenhagen conference was an intellectual and moral breakthrough and furnished food for future thoughts for the world, he said, adding "The question is how fast can we recognise these challenges and implement the commitments in our country."

HR bodies, NGOs to monitor Tongi model polls

By Staff Correspondent

A coordination meeting of different human rights organisations and NGOs involved in monitoring the elections to the Jatiya Sangsad was held yesterday at the office of the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB).

Presided over by CCHRB Chairman Shafiqul Haq Chowdhury, the meeting decided to monitor the next month's model polls of Tongi Municipality and formed an advisory committee to monitor the sixth national parliament election.

The Awami League also held a rally at Nalitabari. Central leader of the party Matia Chowdhury addressed the rally.

The Midnight File

Rabbani refuses to fix date for quitting

ISLAMABAD, Mar 16: Afghanistan's President Burhanuddin Rabbani said today he would not be bound by a United Nations peace plan that calls for him to quit March 21. "We support the UN peace formula," Rabbani told a news conference in neighbouring Pakistan. But, he added, "I'm waiting for a reliable mechanism before I transfer power," reports AP.

Kerala chief minister quits

NEW DELHI, Mar 16: The highest elected official of a faction-ridden party governing a southern state quit Thursday after a coalition member threatened to pull out of the government. Kerala state Chief Minister K Karunakaran's resignation was widely expected. He is likely to be replaced by a moderate politician from his Congress Party. Karunakaran announced his resignation at a public rally, a day before he was scheduled to present the state budget in the legislature, reports AP.

Gen Manzur murder

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evidence of the more than a decade-old case of Major General Manzur's alleged murder, sources close to the investigators said.

A confessional statement made by Maj (ret'd) Kazi Emdadul Haq, the sole accused named in the FIR, remains the main basis of the investigations although the CID officials are also searching for some other vital documents, sources said.

A special team which recently visited the port city could unearth scanty evidence.

Meanwhile, police were yet to recover the dossier on the 4 killed in separate incidents in Ctg

4 killed in separate incidents in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Mar 16: Four persons were killed in separate incidents today.

Police say, angry villagers beat to death two persons suspecting them dacoits at Mirerkil under Hathazari thana early this morning.

The dead were identified as Mozammel Hoque and Abul Bashar.

Police recovered a be-headed body from Mirersharai this morning. The body that also carried marks of stab injuries could not be identified.

Another unidentified person, aged 25, was killed at Patiya when he run over by a tank-lorry carrying petroleum products.

Raozan police recovered a Pakistan made gun, an LG and a pipegun during a raid at Binajuri village last night.

But none was arrested in this connection.

Dini wins vote of confidence

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ROME, Mar 16: Premier Lamberto Dini narrowly won a vote of confidence in Parliament today staving off the collapse of his two-month-old government, reports AP.

The vote was 315-309, giving Dini victory in a test of strength against former Premier Silvio Berlusconi.

Hill students protest CHT incident

By Staff Correspondent

The Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council (GCHTHSC) yesterday brought out a procession in the capital to protest Wednesday's attack on the hill people by miscreants at Bardbaran.

Organised by the central committee of the GCHTHSC, the procession started from the road island near TSC of the Dhaka University and paraded towards the Jatiya Press Club before being blocked by police near the Institution of Engineers.

48-hr workers' strike

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while Abul Bashar declared the jute-textile-yarn sector trade unions' alliance programme at their office near the SKOPs.

At both the press conferences, the speakers reiterated their allegations that the government violated its accords signed with the labour bodies in different sectors on several occasions including one on 6 July 1992. Furthermore, this government instead of giving fresh benefits, had curtailed some of those the workers used to enjoy.

The labour leaders further alleged that the government, despite agreeing in principle to implement the National Wages Commission award in the private enterprises, had later stopped it by issuing a circular just to protect the interests of the owners.

The government had not yet taken any effective measures, as provided by the 1992 pact, to reopen some 5,000 industrial units closed due to the wrong policy pursued by the present government, they said adding many others were awaiting shutdown.

Besides, they said, although the government had formed a Law Commission to formulate democratic labour laws as per