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SQUASH
VINEGAR
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PRAN for Health **প্রাণ**

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NEWS BRIEFS

Special prayers held

Special shukrana prayers were held in all mosques yesterday expressing gratitude to Almighty Allah for successful signing of the Water Treaty on sharing of Ganges waters between Bangladesh and India, reports BSS.

Shukrana prayers were held in Baitul Mokarram National Mosque after Juma prayers. Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad and Awami League central leader Amir Hossain Amu and a cross section of people took part in the prayers.

Special prayers were also held in mandirs, churches, pagodas and other places of worship on the occasion.

Young man commits suicide in city

A young man reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself from the rafters of his residence at Pallabi in the city Thursday night, police said. The victim was identified as Hasem, 22, son of Bondor Ali Talukdar of Baniabandh at Pallabi. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy, reports UNB.

Body recovered in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Dec 13: Police recovered a body from a village Holudia under Raoson thana in the early hours of today. The victim was identified as Devashish Barua. According to police, Devashish had been missing since last night when some miscreants called him out of his residence. His body bore multiple injuries of stabbing. The killing was a sequel to family disputes, the sources said, reports BSS.

30 die in Nigerian bus mishap

LAGOS, Dec 13: At least 30 people, many of them school-children, died when their bus tried to stop for a police check and ran into a truck, Nigerian newspapers said today. The Daily Times said, police considered the damaged bodies to be nearby tertiary after the crash on Thursday near Lagos, reports Reuter.

One beheaded in KSA

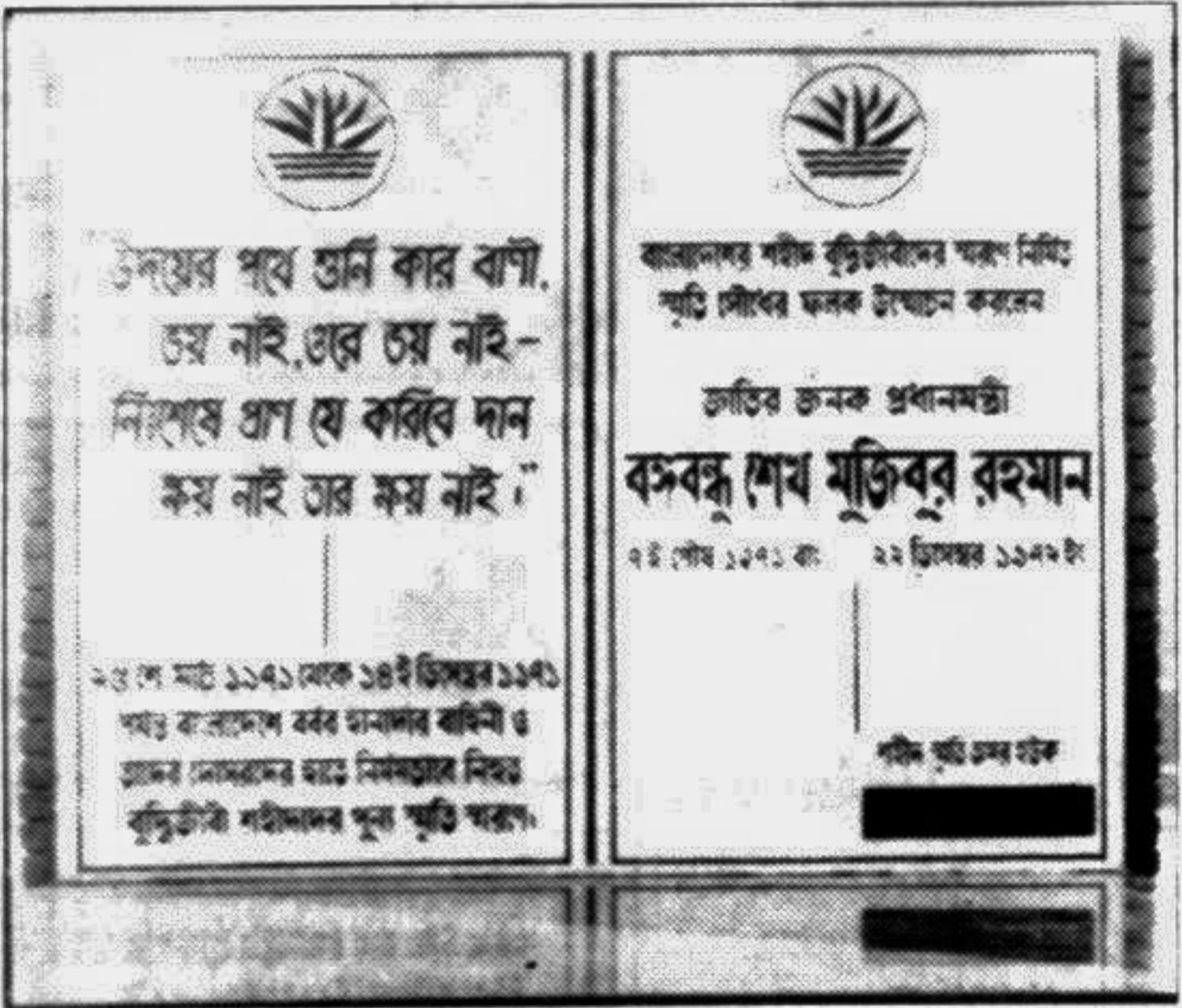
DUBAI, Dec 13: Saudi Arabia today beheaded a Syrian man by the sword for practicing witchcraft, state-run Saudi Television reported. An Interior Ministry statement carried by the television said a court had decided on the maximum penalty because of what it considered the dangerous effect witchcraft could have on individuals and society, reports Reuter.

Two crushed under wheels of trucks

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 13: Two people were crushed under the wheels of speeding trucks in Raiganj and Shahjadpur thanas in the district today. Police said a minor boy Salim, 11, died on the spot when a truck knocked him down on the Bogra-Nagarbari highway at Chandaidkona in Raiganj thana at about 3 pm. On the same highway in Shahjadpur, an old woman, Margina Khatun, 57, was run over by a truck at Sarishakol at about 10 am, reports UNB.

Nation mourns for martyred intellectuals today

By Staff Correspondent



The nation today pays homage to the celebrated sons and daughters of the soil who were brutally murdered by Pakistani occupation forces at the end of Bangladesh's nine-month War of Liberation. Today is Martyred Intellectuals Day.

On this day in 1971, many intellectuals of the country embraced martyrdom as the occupation forces along with their local collaborators killed them under a blue-print to cripple the emerging new nation by making it intellectually bankrupt.

Many writers, poets, teachers, doctors, journalists, engineers and other well-known personalities in various fields were mostly picked up from their residences by fascist collaborators — Al-Badr, Al-Shams and Razakars — and killed brutally on December 14, 1971, just two days ahead of that historic December 16 when See Page 12 Col 1

Annan set to be next UN chief as France drops threat of veto

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 13: Kofi Annan of Ghana, who heads UN peacekeeping operations, won the unanimous support of Security Council members today in an unofficial poll for UN Secretary-General after France dropped its previous threat of a veto, British UN Envoy Sir John Weston said, reports Reuter.

The next Secretary-General will be Kofi Annan, he told reporters.

Earlier story on page 5

Annan, 58, led in all seven previous unofficial ballots among four African candidates, three of them from French-speaking countries, but was opposed each time by France.

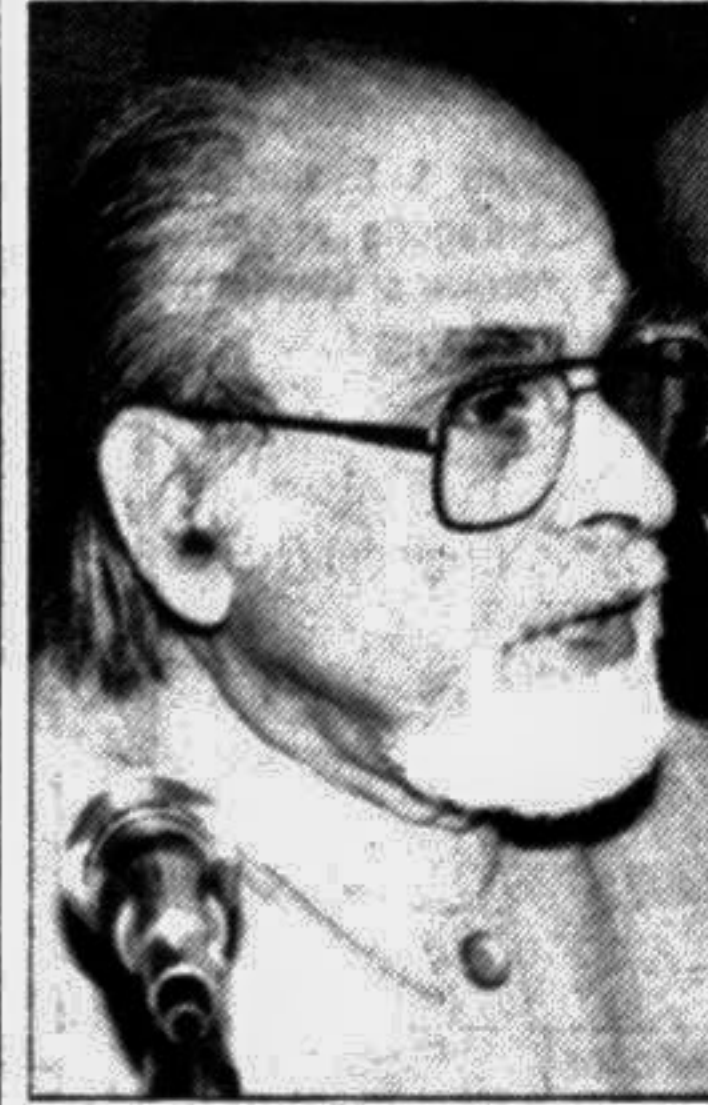
The council's five permanent members — the United States, Russia, Britain, China and France — have a veto in any official vote.

Today's unofficial poll giving Annan unanimous council See Page 12 Col 3

Gujral tells The Daily Star

No secret clause in treaty, no link with other issues

From M Anwarul Haq



I K Gujral

NEW DELHI, Dec 13: Indian External Affairs Minister I K Gujral has said there is no link between the just concluded water sharing treaty and any other issue.

There is "no secret clause" in the accord and there has been "no trade off of any kind" between the two countries, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Gujral replied to a number of questions on the signing of the agreement.

Asked whether there was any political or secret understanding behind reaching such a landmark agreement, the Indian foreign minister said, "Absolutely not. There has been no trade off of any kind whatsoever. There is no secret clause in the accord. The text of the See Page 12 Col 6

agreement contains the full treaty."

In reply to a question if the issue of transit would be taken up now, Gujral said "it is not on the agenda. It has not been discussed."

He hoped that the water accord would bring about a congenial climate of change and help develop better ties between the two neighbours.

He also expressed his satisfaction that the two countries could sign a water accord before the onset of the dry season. "There must have been a great deal of cynicism about finalising the accord when we started off in September," he said.

"Thanks to the goodwill, sincerity and political will of the leaders of both sides, we See Page 12 Col 6

A better water treaty would be welcome, says Hasina

By Staff Correspondent



Sheikh Hasina addressing a press conference yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that the Ganges water sharing treaty with India had opened up the prospect of solving other regional problems and further expansion of mutual cooperation.

"This treaty is a milestone in the country's history," and a big step towards expansion of regional cooperation, the Prime Minister said. This historic treaty has "opened the door for cooperation not only with India but also with the remaining SAARC states and other countries as well," she added.

"We are successful in solving a problem which was very much critical for the country," Sheikh Hasina said at a press conference at the Ganabhaban, a day after she and her Indian counterpart H D Deve Gowda signed the accord in New Delhi.

Hasina returned Thursday evening.

"No government in the past sincerely tried to solve this vital issue of water sharing. We had realised the gravity of the problem and proceeded to have this treaty as fast as possible," the premier said.

"We had total support of the people, excepting a few, to proceed to sign this treaty. We also got full cooperation from India. All these factors helped make the negotiation for this treaty a success."

Referring to BNP's criticism of the agreement, the Prime Minister said, "If there is a flaw in the treaty, they (BNP) are welcome to criticise it. If they can make a better treaty than this one, we would welcome that too." But criticism only for the sake of criticism is not good for See Page 12 Col 7

Water Treaty to be placed in next JS session

The historic Indo-Bangla Ganges Water Sharing Treaty will be placed before parliament in its next session, reports UNB.

Talking to newsmen at Ganobhaban yesterday morning, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said she would request the President to summon the parliament session shortly.

The treaty has already been presented in both houses of the Indian Parliament — Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha — on Thursday.

Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed the treaty in New Delhi on Thursday morning.

Deve Gowda's letter to Basu Any Ganges project keeping in view lean season flow at Farakka

CALCUTTA, Dec 13: Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda has assured West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu that the Sankosh River Project, as soon as it is finalised, will be taken up for implementation in the Ninth Plan for augmenting water flow at Farakka consequent upon the new India-Bangladesh river water sharing treaty, reports PTI.

In a letter to Basu yesterday, the Prime Minister said there was more than one option for augmentation of water at Farakka. A quick study will be made of all these options with special emphasis upon the Sankosh project, and the best option would be finalised in consultation with all relevant parties. This project, as soon as it is finalised, would be taken up for implementation in the ninth five-year plan," he said.

The Prime Minister referred to Basu's recent letter to him, and said that he had carefully considered the points referred by him (Basu) regarding the back-up arrangements required consequent upon the just-concluded accord on Ganges water sharing at Farakka.

Deve Gowda said that the project, comprising seven river training works, submitted by the Calcutta Port Trust, had been taken up for implementation. "One of these works would be taken up for implementation during the Ninth Plan."

Referring to Basu's demand for adequate funds for Calcutta Port Trust for capital dredging and regular maintenance of the river, the Prime Minister assured to intensify dredging operations subject to technical feasibility.

See Page 12 col 5

Saddam's son shot

DUBAI, Dec 13: Hundreds of people were arrested after gunmen shot and wounded Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday during an ambush in an area of Baghdad where he meets women, a former intelligence chief said today.

"Based on my information, several armed men opened fire on Uday at the same time as he was driving in the wealthy Al-Mansur neighborhood," where he goes to meet women, General Waful Samarra'i told AFP when contacted in Damascus.

"Around 500 people were arrested overnight as part of the investigation," said Samarra'i who was head of Iraq's military intelligence until he defected to Syria in 1994.

It was the second attack against Uday in six months. "Last June, Uday was the target of a similar attack carried out by a group of Iraqi opposition members, who were all arrested and executed," he said.

President Saddam Hussein has two sons and three daughters.

Central Baghdad was quiet after the reported shooting.

Commentary

Historic breakthrough

by Mahfuz Anam

In a stunning reversal of the two decades of stalemate in Bangladesh-India relations, Sheikh Hasina's government brought to fruition a 30 year water sharing treaty which addresses most of our water needs, especially when we need water most — that is in the dry season.

To have brought about such a significant treaty in the sensitive and critical area of water sharing within five months of assuming power speaks, in the most glowing terms, of the ability of this government and that of the prime minister herself, to take on an extremely difficult challenge and delivering on it. Frankly, till the other day, it seemed impossible. When this government declared its goal to achieve a permanent water sharing agreement with India, and that too before the on set of the dry season, it appeared to many observers that the government was unwisely setting itself too ambitious a target and putting its reputation and credibility too much at risk. To the credit of the five-month old Awami League government, it took the risk and delivered, and hence it now deserve our unreserved commendation.

As treaties go, it is by definition, a negotiated instrument. And as negotiations go, it must be a rule based on a process of give and take. Hear lies the most important aspect of the just concluded water treaty — it is a position arrived at after taking into consideration the needs of both the countries and not their "wishes". It will be childlike on our part to judge this treaty solely from the point of view of what we wanted. The more realistic way of looking at it would be on the basis of what we actually needed. This need, again will have to be judged on the basis of not what was, but on what is, available.

No treaty will ever fulfill the totality of the wishes of any one side. The way to see it is whether or not the fundamental interest of our country has been adequately protected and promoted. So judged, the water treaty not only ends a long period of devastation and impoverishment of our people, but opens up the possibility of regeneration and rebirth to a large part of our country that was rendered almost barren due to unilateral withdrawal of water by India.

There is no denying the fact that demand for the Ganges wa-

ter has arisen within India, as it has within Bangladesh. With the huge demographic push in our countries it is needless to emphasize that both our people will have to learn to live with the same quantum of water to meet the rising needs of the extra millions. Translating this reality into a political document which is acceptable to both sides was the real challenge before the negotiators. It is our view that they have done a creditable job.

Judged both from the point of view of detail water mechanism, and on the overall 30 year perspective the treaty is indeed a ground breaking event and is a milestone in our bilateral relations, as described by the Prime Minister in her press conference yesterday.

A word of praise for the Indian leadership that made such a treaty possible is well in order. Coalition governments, especially in the developing world, are usually so busy maintaining their critical internal power balance that they hardly ever take any pioneering step, especially one that may prove risky as far as internal politics is concerned. To Prime See Page 12 Col 3

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria yesterday called upon the freedom fighters to unite and take the challenge of building the nation as dreamt by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The freedom fighters have also a duty to enable the new generation to know about the true history of the liberation war, he said.

He was speaking as chief guest at a reunion of freedom fighters of Sector No 7 during the war, in observance of the Silver Jubilee of Independence. State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed attended the function as special guest while Col (ret'd) Kazi Nuruzzaman presided over it, held at the TSC of Dhaka University.

During the last 21 years, the new generation were taught that a 'Major' had declared the independence and the people of Bangladesh joined the war at his call, Kibria said.

It is now clear to the people that it was Bangabandhu under whose leadership Bangladesh achieved independence, the finance minister said. He said the liberation war was not an isolated incident. "Our liberation See Page 12 Col 6

Build nation as Mujib dreamt of

25th V-Day

By Staff Correspondent

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Taramon Bibi Bir Pratik and Setara Begum Bir Pratik at the opening ceremony of a programme in observance of the Silver Jubilee of Independence at the Ganashastha Kendra at Savar yesterday. —Star photo

Armed clashes in N'ganj leave 20 injured

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 13: At least 20 people were injured during armed clashes between rival youth groups in a slum in Rajdar Bazar area here today.

Of them, five people — Jahid Hossain, 18, Kamal Hossain, 28, Munir, 14, Belayet, 22, and Alamgir, 24 — were admitted to the Narayanganj Hospital with bullet wounds.

According to witnesses, the clashes erupted when a group of masked youths, equipped with firearms, attacked the slum.

See Page 12 Col 7

8 forged passports recovered: Gang leader arrested

By Staff Correspondent

A special squad of Tejgaon police arrested an alleged leader of an international gang of frauds from Mohammadpur area in the city Thursday and recovered eight forged passports from his possession.

The arrested, identified as Sheikh Farhad, cheated a number of people in the country out of several lakhs Taka, said police sources.

The sources added, Farhad was married to a Polish woman and resided in Poland most of the time. He used to visit Bangladesh sometimes and take Tk two to three lakh per person from unsuspecting persons, assuring that he would See Page 12 Col 2

WTO endorses agreement for trade liberalisation

SINGAPORE, Dec 13: The World Trade Organisation formally endorsed an agreement today laying the groundwork for trade liberalisation over the coming years, reports AP.

At a closing ceremony winding up the trade body's first ministerial conference, delegations from 128 nations adopted a package of trade measures that will take a first step to bringing investment, fair competition and government contracts under global trade rules.

"It's been an outstanding success," said Singapore trade minister Yeo Cheow Tong, who was chairing the meeting.

Most significant was a deal to eliminate tariffs on computer equipment by 2000, which in Europe are as high as 14 per cent on some products.

The Information Technology Agreement was formally endorsed today by 28 countries representing about 85 per cent of global trade," Acting US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said in a statement.

Malaysia, the Philippines and four other nations declared their intention to join the agreement," she said.

Together these six countries comprise about 6 per cent of global trade in information technology, bringing the level of trade covered slightly above the 90 per cent required for the pact to go ahead.

The agreement has been touted as the WTO's biggest breakthrough since the wide-ranging free trade pact known as the Uruguay Round three years ago.

The ministers also made substantial progress towards clinching a deal on opening up telephone services to foreign investment and competition around the world.

They also agreed on a package of new studies into the viability of negotiating global pacts to simplify investment rules, prevent anti-competitive business practices and stamp out corruption in lucrative government contracts.

There was jubilation all round as Yeo announced "I now See Page 12 Col 8

declare the 1996 WTO ministerial meeting closed."

Ministers had feared that deep division between industrialised and developing countries over extending the trade agenda would hobble decision-making.

But after four days of intense negotiating, compromise was finally reached Thursday night.

On the most controversial issue of all — protecting labour standards — the trade organisation decided to leave the matter to the International Labour Organisation for now, despite intense lobbying by the United States earlier in the week for a study group to be set up in the WTO.

However, a mention of the issue in the final ministerial declaration summing up the results of the conference allows members to raise labour issues at future reviews of members' trade policies.

WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero called it "a moment of celebration of a major See Page 12 Col 8

PM places wreath at portrait of Bangabandhu

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placed wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum yesterday morning to mark the signing of the historic Ganges water sharing treaty with India, reports BSS.

After the placing of wreath, one minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the departed soul of Bangabandhu.

3 held for 'killing' brother-in-law

By Staff Correspondent

Three brothers were arrested in the city yesterday in connection with the killing of their brother-in-law, Monir Hossain, in Dhapur under Demra thana Thursday.

Meanwhile, Monir's wife, Saleha, who was arrested following the death of her husband, was placed on a one-day police remand yesterday, police sources said.

Ctg gas crisis: No sign of early solution

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Dec 13: Gas crisis persists in Chittagong with little possibility of any improvement in the situation till completion of the inter-connection work on Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (A-B) line by the middle of next year, sources concerned said.

"But immediate relief is still a far cry as no other alternatives are in sight," said a source. Rather, the crisis might deepen with further fall in production of natural gas in the two gas fields at Bakhrabad, now feeding Chittagong.

The daily production from the two gas fields dropped to 112 million cubic feet now from 200 million cubic feet earlier, of which 190 million cubic feet were pumped to Chittagong and its surrounding areas to meet the daily requirements, according to official sources.

Having a prediction of gas crisis here, the authorities had initiated the work on A-B line in March last year ('95) to meet the shortfall in gas supply to See Page 12 Col 8

Chittagong, the sources said. The A-B line inter-connection was scheduled to be commissioned in June this year, but due to political unrest and slow progress of work, it could not be completed duly. Consequently, the objective of the project is yet to be achieved and gas crisis hit Chittagong badly, the sources added.

The gas crisis already forced shutdown of two major plants including Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL) and power generating Raoson 210 MW unit.

The CUFL, built at a cost of Tk 1700 crore about 10 years ago, faced closure for an indefinite period due to shortage of gas on December 8.

The plants of CUFL may turn fully idle if kept inoperative for months together, officials apprehended.

Raoson 210 MW plant remained closed for the past two months due to lack of gas that resulted in power crisis here, of See Page 12 Col 8