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# The Daily Star

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## Test supply of gas thru' A-B pipeline begins

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Test supply of gas through the Ashuganj-Bakhrabad gas pipeline began last night, official sources said.

When the test operation of the pipeline will be completed, gas supply to the Chittagong region will increase and power generation at the Raoozan 210 MW power plant will resume.

The pipeline will be officially declared open when the gas flow pressure gradually reaches 600 PSI (per square inch). "It will take a few more days," an official said.

Meanwhile, the Ghorashal-5 power unit, which was undergoing maintenance, began operation yesterday. This unit is generating 210 MW power and as a result the total power generation rose to 1750 MW during the peak hour after a long time.

There was no loadshedding.

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## 6-day JS session begins today

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The seventh Jatiya Sangsad goes into its fourth session this afternoon, with the opposition BNP poised to ventilate its various grievances against the government.

The session will continue until May 15, according to a decision taken at a meeting of the JS Business Advisory Committee held yesterday evening with Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury in the chair.

The advisory body, comprising senior members of the parliamentary parties and groups, also decided that a general discussion on the proposed 'Sub-regional grouping' would take place on May 14.

Meanwhile, Awami League chief and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina, at a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) yesterday evening asked her party colleagues to attend the Sangsad proceedings regularly and not to do anything that might provoke the opposition BNP to stage walkout.

The meeting presided over by Hasina, discussed the party strategy to fall 'possible opposition complaints' against the government. Ten MPs, addressing the meeting, apprehended that the opposition might raise the issues like the recent Feni incident that left two BNP activists killed, capital market and load shedding problems.

They themselves, however, pointed out that the load shedding had really appeared to be a big problem across the country which immediately needed to be addressed effectively.

The parliamentary wing of the BNP is scheduled to meet this morning to decide its strategy to 'reveal the failures of the government' in meeting the aspirations of the people, sources in the BNP said last night.

The issues the BNP is likely to raise during the session include 'deteriorating law and order, government's failure to constitute the standing committees on ministries, stock market scam, acute electricity problem, deliberate oppression on the political opponents, price hike of essential commodities'.

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## \$210m US aid for health, FP programme

Bangladesh and the United States signed here yesterday an agreement under which USAID will provide 210 million US dollars to reduce fertility and improve family health in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

US Ambassador David N Merrill and Dr Masihur Rahman, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, signed the agreement on behalf of the two governments, a USIS press release said.

The agreement will implement the National Integrated Population and Health Programme (NIPHP) over a seven-year period. The NIPHP will be implemented by a partnership consisting of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, USAID, and seven USAID cooperating agencies.

At the end of this seven-year project, the total fertility rate in Bangladesh is expected to be reduced from 3.3 live births per woman to 2.1.

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## Gunshots rock DU: 10 hurt in clashes

**By DU Correspondent**  
Gunshots rocked the Dhaka University campus yesterday as activists of BNP backed Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal and left leaning Ganotantrik Chhatra Oikya clashed with those of Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, the student wing of Jatiya Party.

At least ten persons were injured, none with bullet during the clash which took place after the admission test for first year honours courses under Kha unit.

Of the injured, Yusuf Harun, a staff of the Proctor office, Faruq, a student of Political Science and Zuel, a student of Library Science were treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, sources at the hospital said.

Panic gripped the campus during the hour long clash and students and admission seekers ran for safety. Some admission seekers were also injured.

The violence erupted at about 11 am when the JSC activists at a rally near the DUCSU building was chased by those of JCD, witnesses said. Activists of the JCO also joined in chasing the JCS.

While fleeing to the TSC area, the JCS activists fired gunshots and exploded hand bombs. They also fired shots at the admission seekers.

JCD will also hold a "protest rally" today at 11 am at the Aparajeo Bangla on the campus.

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## 67-member ALCWC announced

A 67-member Central Working Committee of the ruling Awami League was announced yesterday, reports UNB.

The committee was elected for a three-year term in the party's triennial council session that ended on Wednesday. Names of the committee members follow:

President: Sheikh Hasina.

Presidium Members: Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Principal Mohammad Quamruzzaman, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Momen, Pulin Dey, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Dr Mohammad Selim, Suranjit Jengupta and Mohammad Abdul Jalil.

General Secretary: Zillur Rahman.

Joint General Secretaries: Shamsur Rahman Khan Shahjahan, Azizur Rahman and Mozaffar Hossain Palto.

Organising Secretary: Mozaffar Hossain Palto.

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## Mahbub-Jalal panel leading in BMA polls

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The panel led by Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub and Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin was leading the biennial elections of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), according to unofficial results from 55 out of the 66 centres reaching the BMA office in the city last night.

Another panel led by Dr MA Majed and Dr Gazi Abdul Haq also contested the polls held on Thursday with some 14,000 doctors casting votes.

According to unofficial results from 54 centres other than the one in Dhaka, candidate for the post of president Dr Mahbub polled 4126 votes while his opponent Dr Majed 2449 votes. For the post of general secretary, Dr Mohiuddin got 4502 votes and his rival Dr Haq 2101 votes.

Of the 4243 votes cast at Dhaka centre, Dr Mahbub got 2270 votes and Dr Majed 1973 votes, Dr Mohiuddin polled 2456 votes while Dr Haq 1787 votes.

Full unofficial results are likely to be announced today after receipt of results from 11 other centres, where a total of 350 votes were cast.

Meanwhile the panel led by Dr. Majed and Dr Haq, in a press statement, alleged use of state machinery and massive rigging in the polls.

The panel also called a press conference at the VIP Lounge of the Jatiya Press Club today at 4:00 pm.

## Macro-economic management 'Govt to face real test if & when investment picks up'

**By Inam Ahmed**  
The economy still shows a dismal performance with alarming increase in the government's domestic borrowing from the banking system, low level of aid disbursement, and a drastic low industrial production.

The inflation rate is creeping up after raining low for long and it is feared that a pick up in private sector activities can make it sharply swing upward.

"There is no immediate threat to macro-economic stability. However, macro-economic balances which deteriorated during the last two fiscal years still remain fragile despite the current low rate of inflation," said Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, renowned economist and former advisor in the caretaker government. "The existing strains in fiscal and external balances are likely to continue or even worsen during the coming fiscal year unless bold initiatives are taken to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation efforts."

"The real test for the government's macro-economic management will come if and when there is a pick up in the investment and activity levels in the economy," he added.

Inflation rate recorded at 3.20 per cent in February this year is lower than the four per cent rate in the previous year mainly due to good harvest and declining foodgrain prices. But in the recent months, there has been a slow upward trend in non-food prices indicating some build up in demand pressure in the economy, Bangladesh Bank sources said.

One major source of macro-economic strains is the low level of aid disbursement in the current fiscal year. Annual gross aid disbursement in recent years has hovered around 1.62 to 1.7 billion US dollars. But the amount fell to 1.45 billion dollars during 1995-96. At that time, the decline in aid utilisation was mainly attributed to political unrest and uncertainty.

However, the available estimate of aid disbursement during the first half of the current fiscal year is at around 700 million dollars and it shows virtually no improvement compared to last year's situation. The low rate of aid utilisation may be partly due to the imposition of stricter project level aid conditionalities by donors. But it is also partly due to the weakness in project implementation.

Mainly due to low aid disbursement, the size of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) is also affected.



Admission seekers for Honours courses under Kha unit at the Dhaka University Arts Building yesterday. — Star photo

## 6 dacoits beaten to death in Ctg

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, May 9: Six alleged dacoits were beaten to death last night at Fatehagar village under Raoozan thana, police said.

Of the dead, only two were identified as Fulmeah and Shamsuddin.

The dacoits equipped with arms were waiting at an arum field for committing robbery in nearby houses when several thousand villagers chased them and caught hold of the six dacoits. The rest managed to flee by opening several rounds of fire. The mob beat the six to death.

The villagers came to know about the dacoits when one Jahangir raised hue and cry. Jahangir first saw the dacoits at the field, but he was caught by them and kept confined at a place. However, Jahangir managed to free himself and started shouting that drew the villagers from surrounding places.

Police rushed to the spot at around 3 am and recovered the bodies.

## 70 killed in Indian truck accident

**CHANDIGARH, India, May 9:** A truck carrying a wedding party fell into a 50 metre (165 feet) deep gorge in a mountainous north Indian state, killing 70 people, said today, reports AP.

The accident occurred last night as the wedding party headed to the bride's Hamirpur village in Himachal Pradesh, 400 kilometers north of New Delhi.

The bridegroom was traveling in a separate car, said Manoj Kumar Shrivastava, a local administrator. Eight people were injured and hospitalized.

Sixty-five bodies were pulled out by rescue workers and another five were buried under the wreckage of the truck, said Shrivastava.

The cause of the accident was not immediately known. Poor villagers often hire trucks for travel on the occasions of weddings and religious festivals.

## Oil exploration in Khulna US co allowed to go for 'unsolicited bidding'

**By Sharier Khan**  
A high-powered investment committee recently gave green signal to a US oil and gas company to go for "unsolicited bidding" for hydrocarbon exploration in the Khulna-Barisal region, according to official sources.

The decision contradicts an earlier decision of the government to open up of 15 "blocks" in the country for "solicited bidding", the sources added. The decision contradicts an earlier decision of the government to open up of 15 "blocks" in the country for "solicited bidding", the sources added. The decision contradicts an earlier decision of the government to open up of 15 "blocks" in the country for "solicited bidding", the sources added.

A British trade official who visited Dhaka recently also shared similar observation saying, "such decisions should be avoided".

Earlier on January 20, the same committee had allowed the same US company to develop the Shahbazpur gas well beyond the depth drilled by BAPEX (Petrobangla's subsidiary which discovered the well).

This decision had evoked protests from other interested oil companies, the sources said.

Afterwards, the government, in an "apologetic tone," assured the companies that no such approval would be given to a company.

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## FAO DG due in city today

**Director General of Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, Dr Jacques Diouf, arrives here this afternoon on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.**

He is expected to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhaban chamber the same evening.

The FAO director general will also call on President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban tomorrow.

During his stay, Dr Diouf will hold talks with Food and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed and State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Satish Chandra Roy.

The FAO executive will also meet UN resident coordinator in Dhaka David Lockwood and heads of the UN agencies stationed in Bangladesh, and pay visits to the FAO office here, BARI, BRRI, and IPM Farmers' training project at Gazipur.

He will leave here for London on Monday night.

## DUCSU polls in Sept or Oct VC calls meeting with student bodies May 11

**By Aminul Islam**  
Different student organisations of Dhaka University are taking "field level" preparations for the next election of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU), according to sources in the organisations.

The DU Syndicate recently decided to dissolve the present committee of the DUCSU following a recommendation of a probe committee. The present committee has however not yet been dissolved.

The student leaders are expecting that the election will be held in September or October this year. But the university authorities have not yet taken any decision in this regard.

Dr Nur-Un Nabi, Proctor of the university, while talking to this correspondent said that the authorities were observing the situation on the campus. Decision will be taken after consultation with all student organisations, he said.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury is scheduled to hold a meeting with leaders of the student bodies on May 11. But JCD has decided not to join the meeting protesting yesterday's violence on the campus. It also called a strike on May 11.

The probe committee, formed to investigate into the killing of a DU student on the campus in March recommended dissolution of the DUCSU and all student unions in residential halls.

The last DUCSU election was held in 1993.

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## 200 houses gutted in Bandarban, 12 injured

**BANDARBAN, May 9:** At least 12 people were injured and more than 200 houses were gutted in a devastating fire, in Army Para and its adjoining areas here this afternoon, reports BSS.

Fire Service and local administration sources said the fire originating from an electric short circuit at a house swiftly engulfed the adjacent houses.

As a result more than 200 dwelling houses were completely gutted in one-and-a-half-hour time.

Four fire units from Bandarban, Patiya and Kalurghat extinguished the fire area, densely populated by the government employees of Army.

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## Demand both at home & abroad on rise Tea output must be raised to maintain export markets

A drought in two major tea producing countries could be a boon for Bangladesh this year, but the tea industry's export momentum would finally depend on efforts to increase quality output, reports UNB.

Official sources said the Bangladeshi tea growers were receiving huge enquiries about their output from international buyers as two large exporters, Sri Lanka and India, have experienced production shortfall.

Bangladesh exports another bumper production for the second consecutive year, thanks to a much-needed rain that occurred in most of the tea growing areas of the country, barring only a few pockets.

This year, the total yield is expected to reach 54 million kg, the same level of last year. The hope for a higher output was, however, dashed by the acute shortage of electricity, the sources said.

Tea exports last year were 26 million kg, an increase of 20 per cent over fiscal 1995-96, and the country is expected to maintain the level or export more during this season.

The growers are also hoping a higher price this year. The average value of tea is likely to rise to Tk 60 per kg from Tk 45 per kg last year, due to both domestic and overseas demand.

But a fast growing internal demand of tea has appeared as a matter of concern to the tea experts. The domestic demand is rising by over a million kg every year that means the country may have to go for import from 2010.

The solution is to increase production if the country wants to maintain its export markets, the expert told UNB. He said Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) has recently put forward a set of recommendations to the government in this respect.

The grant area for tea production is now 114,000 hectares, but the tea gardens use only 47,880 hectares, or 42 per cent of the total land. If the land use could be raised to 50 per cent, the production would be around 61.50 million kg.

"Even we have the capacity to go up to 85.50 million kg every year by 2015 if the yield and use of land can be increased along with proper management and investment," said the tea expert.

According to him, the average yield, which is now only 1079 kg per hectare, can be raised to 1500 kg.

The expert said it is possible to increase both the use of land for tea production and the per unit yield as even some good gardens utilise 80 per cent of their land and produce 2400 kg per hectare.

But the problem lies with the gardens owned by the National Tea Company (NTC), private companies and the proprietorship, he said.

As per tea production by management, the so-called sterling gardens owned by foreign companies command 33.60 per cent of land, but they contribute only 50 per cent of total production. The BTB gardens command 2.25 per cent of land and produce 2.25 per cent of total production.

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## AL presidium meet held

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The first meeting of the newly elected presidium members of Awami League was held yesterday at Ganobhaban in the city with party president Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

In the hour-long meeting that began at 11 in the morning, they discussed the latest political and organisational developments, sources said.

Besides, the meeting took preparations for announcing the full central committee of the party for 1997-2000. The full AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) was announced later.

**Dock workers clash at Ctg port: 5 hurt**  
**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, May 9: At least five people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of dock workers at the port area this afternoon, sources said.

The clash between the supporters of pro-AL Srantik League and pro-BNP Srantik Dal ensued following a procession brought out by Srantik League demanding CBA election at the port.

Later, police brought the situation under control.

However, officials said, port works were not hampered.

## Situation in 15 thanas in city Each IO deals with cases 3-4 times his capacity

**By Masud Arif**  
Police officers in thanas of the city often fail to investigate into cases up to their expectations as each investigating officer (IO) has to look into piles of cases at a time, according to senior police officials.

On an average, an IO — usually a Sub-Inspector (SI) of a thana — is now dealing with as many as 30 cases. Sometimes an SI has to investigate into 40 to 50 various cases simultaneously, they said.

"In an ideal situation an IO investigates into eight to ten cases at a time after doing his or her other regular duties," said a police official who has been in service for more than two decades.

The SIs in the thanas are involved in a lot of various cases at a time as the number of cases, recorded with the 15 thanas in the city are increasing day by day. But the number of IOs has not been increased, the official said.

Currently, on an average, 11 to 15 SIs are posted in each thana in the city while 90 to 100 cases are being filed with a thana a month, the sources said.

Other than investigating cases, an SI has to carry out patrol duty, execute warrant, security duty and maintain law and order. Besides, sometimes they need to concentrate more on cases filed in connection with serious incidents like murder.

Due to these various reasons, an IO has to keep his earlier cases pending, thereby increasing the number of piled up cases, the sources said.

Admitting that people often make allegations against police, a high police official said that an SI or a police man often has to do more than 12 hours duty a day. Salary of an SI, who must be at least a graduate, is not more than Tk 2,000, he added.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police recently sent a proposal to the police headquarters for recruitment of policeman in the rank of SI.

## Col (ret) Malek quits JP

Jatiya Party Dhaka City unit president Col (ret) Abdul Malek has resigned from the organisation as he could not play his "due role" during the recent crisis in the party, reports UNB.

The top-ranking JP leader yesterday sent his letter of resignation to party Chairman HM Ershad, who accepted it gladly, said a press release. He has also resigned from JP-Presidium and primary membership.

Accepting the resignation letter, Ershad wished for continued-success of Malek in politics and expressed the optimism that he (Malek) would not have to change his political master again.