

# The Daily Star

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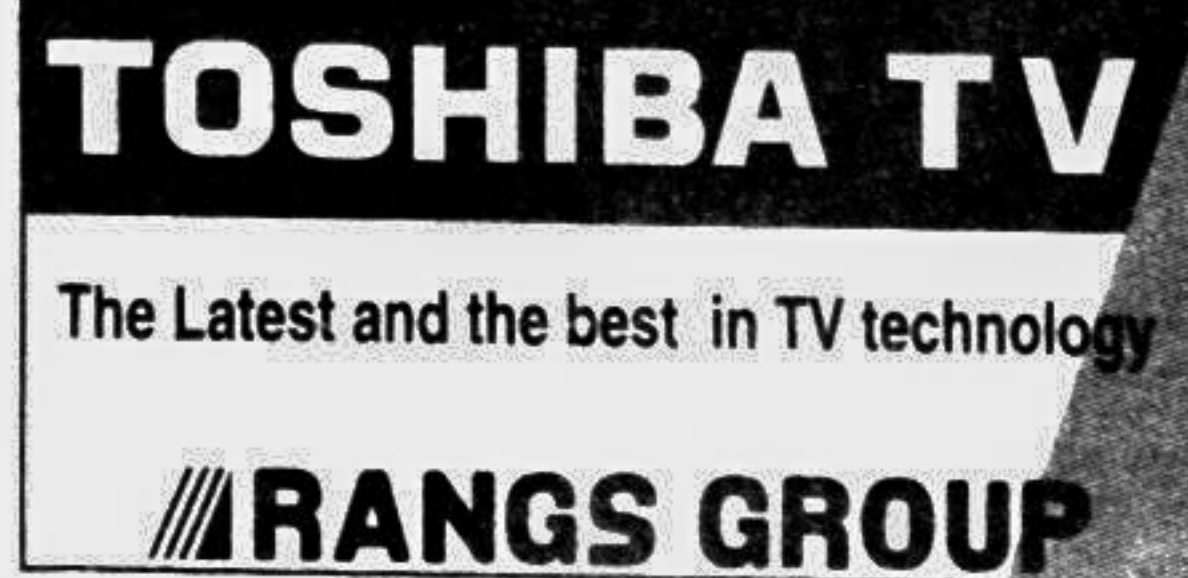
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## Shahabuddin's first state trip takes him to Turkey in Nov

By Diplomatic Correspondent

President Shahabuddin Ahmed will be going on a five-day official trip to Turkey in the first week of November.

The President leaves Dhaka on November 1 and will return on November 5, diplomatic sources said.

This would be the first trip of President Shahabuddin Ahmed during his nearly three years in office.

The President would be visiting Turkey at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart President Suleyman Demirel.

The Turkish President has extended invitations to President Shahabuddin four times, including on all three occasions that President Demirel visited Bangladesh in the last three years. Former South African President Nelson Mandela also visited the Bangladesh President twice and the Iranian President Mohammad Khatami once.

A foreign ministry official said the decision of the President to take a trip to Turkey will contribute to boosting the image of the country as it will attract positive media attention in the host country, which was the prime initiator of D-8 group and the only Muslim member of NATO.

## By-election in Tangail-8 Nov 15

Election Commission (EC) yesterday announced the schedule for by-election in Tangail-8 constituency on November 15, reports BSS.

The EC, in a gazette notification, has fixed October 17 for submitting nomination papers, October 26 for withdrawal of candidature and October 18 for scrutiny of nomination papers.

The Deputy Commissioner of Tangail has been made returning officer.

The Election Commission has sought cooperation from all to hold the election in a free, fair and impartial atmosphere.

## City suffers water crisis

By Staff Correspondent

Sufferings of the city dwellers in different parts of the city increased beyond tolerable limits owing to inadequate water supply caused by power outage yesterday.

Residents of Elephant Road, Dhanmendi, Mirpur Road, Mohammadpur and other areas suffered due to the load shedding owing to a critical shortage of water.

Residents of Dhanmendi and Elephant Road experienced power disruption four to five times yesterday. The power situation had improved recently in the city and neighbouring areas. Yesterday's disruption in power supply caught many of the city-dwellers rather by surprise.

When contacted an official of Power Development Board said that the 'load shedding' occurred due to fall in power generation at Ghorashal unit-3, which generated 210 Megawatt (MW).

"We are shedding 350-400 MW load today due to stoppage of production at the Ghorashal unit-3 and other related problems," a PDB official who preferred anonymity told The Daily Star.

## Inside Today

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## For Whom are Our Cities?

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## Business

Trade expansion serves developing countries better than aid: BISS roundtable told

Vajpayee vows economic review if re-elected

DSE, CSE price quotations

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## Prayer Timings

October 7

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:30	5:00
Zohr	12:45	1:25
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:50	5:55
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

# BJP poised for landslide

Early results indicate 300-plus seats for Vajpayee's alliance

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: India's ruling Hindu nationalist alliance looked firmly on course to retain power Wednesday, but without the substantial general election majority it had hoped for, reports AFP.

As vote counting continued across the country, three television projections all gave the alliance, led by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party, an overall majority in the 545-member parliament.

But the projected final tally for Vajpayee's combine ranged from 273 seats -- just over the halfway mark -- to 303 seats.

Sonia Gandhi's main opposition Congress party and its allies were projected to win between 152 and 185 seats.

A slim overall majority of around a dozen seats would leave Vajpayee and the BJP vulnerable to the same internal bickering that brought down his coalition government in April after 13 months in office.

"We are expecting a majority," a beaming Vajpayee told reporters at his residence, shortly after election officials announced his own victory in

the northern constituency of Lucknow.

The prime minister said the results from what was India's third election in little more than three years were "going according to our expectations, barring one or two states."

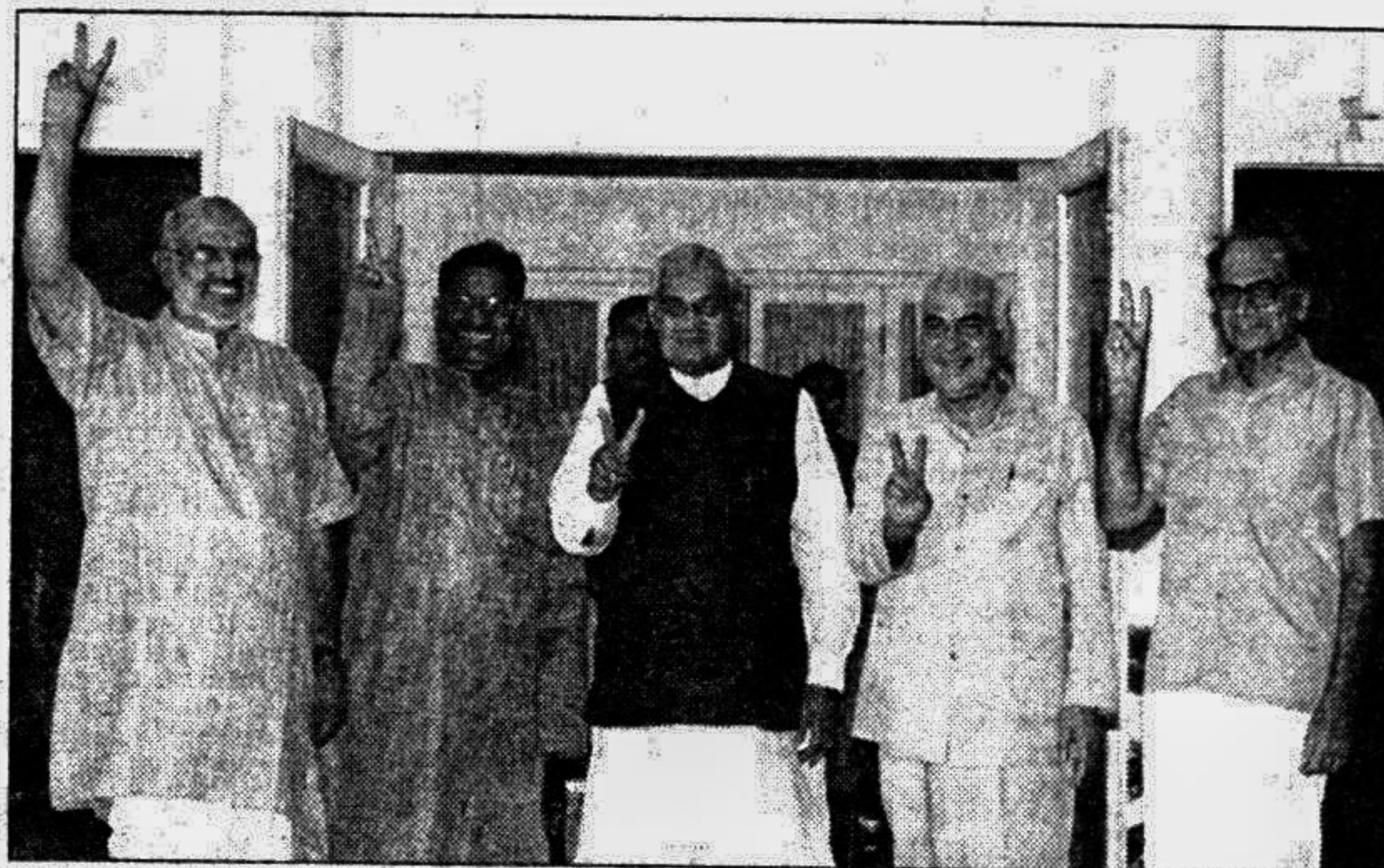
Indian share prices on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)

## Vajpayee, Sonia, Advani win, but Manmohan Singh fails to make it

closed down 0.24 percent after a jittery day's trading, with brokers voicing concerns that the alliance majority would not be sufficient to ensure long-term stability.

The Hindu nationalists suffered a major setback in India's northern Hindu heartland, but made up with gains in other states, including a clean sweep of all seven seats in the capital.

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Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (C) flashes a V-sign as he stands with victorious BJP Delhi candidates (from L to R): Sahib Singh Varma, Lal Behari Tiwari, Madan Lal Khurana, and Jagmohan, at the former's residence yesterday. — AFP photo

# Non-committal IOCs mar much of gas prospects

By Sharier Khan

Most of the well drillings for oil and gas undertaken by international oil companies in the country in recent years have so far failed due to "half-hearted" operations, knowledgeable sources allege.

Out of six exploration wells drilled since 1995, four yielded negative results. Of these, drilling in Moulavibazar-1 or Magurchhara ended in disasters due to 'negligence' of the operator and others concerned.

In the other cases, the oil companies drilled exploration wells just to meet Production Sharing Contract (PSC) obligations. The PSC obligation dictate that an oil company should drill at least one exploratory well in each block in the first three years of Initial Exploration Period (IOP) and one exploratory well in the next two years besides undertaking other tasks as well.

The costs involved in these unsuccessful schemes (other than Moulavibazar-1) would either be recovered from the production of the gas fields discovered by the international oil companies (IOCs) or would be an area of legal disputes between the IOCs and Petrobangla. The costs totalled over 40 million US dollars while the operators involved were Cairn-Shell and Occidental-Unocal.

Cairn's first venture in Bangladesh, the offshore Sangu gas field in block 16, was successful and it is now supplying gas to the national grid. "But that is the only success story of Cairn," observed an informed source. "Its other ventures in Sonadia in block 16 and Haldia in block 15 failed due to poor performance."

Other than the failure at Magurchhara, Occidental failed

in achieving positive results by drilling an exploration well in Karna without any approval from Petrobangla under block 13. Occidental itself officially said that there was only 20 per cent prospect of striking any oil or gas reserve in Karna before it started its drilling there.

Notwithstanding such high risks, Occidental began drilling as it became mandatory for the oil company to drill at least one exploratory well in block 13 by the end of this year," said a source. "It just wanted to drill a well; it was not very serious about achieving positive result."

Both Occidental and Cairn have discovered two gas fields: the Sangu in block 16 and the Bibiyana in block 12. Once an oil company has discovered a gas field in a certain block, all others failed exploratory ex-

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## Basement fire at Aziz Super Market

By Staff Correspondent

At least five people were injured and 10 basement shops gutted in a fire at the Aziz Super Market located on the busy New Elephant Road near Shahbagh in the city yesterday.

Traders and fire brigade officials could not confirm whether anyone had been trapped inside the basement shops. Fire officials said they found it difficult to carry out a search amidst smoke and power outage after the fire broke out at 4.30 pm.

The fire is suspected to have originated from a kerosene stove. Some shopkeepers claimed that a number of shop assistants live inside the market complex ventilation facilities of which fall far short of the safety standards. Use of kerosene stoves has always posed a threat, they said.

It took over two hours for six fire brigade units to douse the blaze.

The market complex also houses apartments on its upper floors. The first three floors are used for offices and shops.

There are more than 300

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## Golden boys come home to bipartisan welcome

Thousands of soccer fans will greet their heroes at a grand reception at Paltan Maidan today for earning the long-cherished gold in the SAF Football at Kathmandu on Monday, reports BSS.

The soccer tigers clinched the coveted medal for the first time since 1984. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to attend the reception as chief guest.

The gold winning SAF Football team, led by Jewel Rana, arrived home to the heroes' welcome yesterday evening.

President of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of

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# When will our leaders learn that their politics is killing the nation?

By Mahfuz Anam

Why is it that what our leaders say are so removed from our day to day problems? Why is it that they seem to be totally engrossed in their private world of fantasies rather than our world of insecurity, rising crime, huge unemployment, shameful level of malnutrition, over-population, massive illiteracy, oppression on women, etc? Why is it that what they say seems so devoid of sincerity and honesty? Why is it that we find it easier to disbelieve them rather than the opposite? Why is it that they always appear to us to be so self-serving? Why should our democracy mean freedom for our mastans to have their way, and for our law abiding citizens to have nothing their way? The list is long.

The above questions arise out of a very deep sense of sadness that after almost a decade of democracy and elected government we feel compelled to

pose them. But sadder still is the fact that none of the above questions will make the slightest of difference to any of our leaders. They will continue to behave as they please, say all the accusatory rubbish about each other that they usually do, call hartals whenever the opposition will have nothing else to do, let the police lose on the slightest of pretext, and generally shove down the throat of the people the so-called 'programme' they will decide to undertake.

It is impossible now to go anywhere in Dhaka without being stuck in traffic for at least an hour if not more. Did we ever hear the opposition raise this as an issue? Government departments have revealed that food products sold in the market are 50-90 per cent adulterated. Dhaka air is like poison with lead and it is damaging the

brain of our children. We are not even referring to the other unhealthy exhausts that puts every rickshaw-pullers, baby-taxi drivers, traffic policemen's and wayside shopkeepers lives at risk. Almost every market area is being sucked dry of its economic activity by extortionists. To prevent it the shop owners are being forced to set up their own private force to protect themselves. Garbage is making almost all street corners impassable with stench, foul air and a repulsive sight forced upon thousands of pedestrians who are compelled to walk through the apologies of sidewalks that remain after street hawkers pay the police to occupy. Here again the list is long. But can we recall a single agitation of any kind by the opposition on these issues?

We take two latest examples of activities of our two leaders

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## Wait for Ombudsman to get longer

By Mizan Ali

The appointment of an Ombudsman is likely to be further delayed as the government recently asked the Law Commission to examine the effectiveness of the Ombudsman Act 1980, official sources said.

The government had said in 1996 that the Ombudsman would be appointed at the earliest possible opportunity as part of its pledge for good governance. But the appointment was delayed due to a number of factors, including non-availability of a suitable person.

Now the authorities want to review the act. Before finalising a draft proposal on Ombudsman Act, the Commission will compare the existing Act with those of other countries and hold a seminar at the national level for across section of opinion, the sources said.

Action of a ministry or a public officer or a statutory

public authority can be investigated by the Ombudsman under the present Act, enacted in 1980. But no Ombudsman has so far been appointed.

Many public functionaries have been kept outside the jurisdiction of investigation by the Ombudsman under the present Act, observed some officials and legal experts.

The world 'action' as mentioned in the present Act is not specific and precise enough to investigate acts of corruption, they said.

The Act should specifically provide for investigation of cases of corruption by the Ombudsman to strengthen its offices, they noted.

The Act of 1980 provides for the Ombudsman to investigate any action taken by a Ministry, a Statutory public authority or a public officer in any case where a complaint in respect of

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## Proposed law on 'open city spaces' comes under fire

By Staff Correspondent

Participants at a public debate on a draft bill to protect 'open spaces of cities' criticised the government for trying to enact such a law and then going ahead with the construction of a conference hall at the Osmany Udayan — one of the few remaining public parks of the city.

The public debate on the draft bill on 'Protecting Open Spaces of Cities' was jointly organised by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) and UNDP at the CIRDP auditorium in the city. Eminent citizens, lawyers, engineers, architects, environmentalists and other professionals joined in to give their opinions on the draft bill.

Minister for Public Works and Housing Mosharraf Hossain was chief guest while the Environment Secretary

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## Rain-ruined match ends in a draw

Star Report

The three-day match between Bangladesh and West Indies was abandoned and declared a draw yesterday after



The first Bangladesh-West Indies ODI tomorrow.

rain washed out any prospect of play.

The decision was taken after umpires and management of both teams deemed it unfit to continue the final day's play after inspecting the ground at Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The match was Bangladesh's first ever three-day against a

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## Hasina greets football team

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted the players and officials of the national football team when they reached Gonobhaban directly from the airport, reports BSS.

Recalling the glorious moment of the solitary goal in the final, the prime minister urged them to keep up the momentum on greater sporting stages.

Hasina said she was really moved by the display of skills by the golden boys at Kathmandu.

"Once we had thought that our football was finished," she said, adding, "This remarkable victory will rejuvenate our football once again."

"We have to maintain this winning streak at any cost," she added.

Mayor of Dhaka and President of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader, Secretary of BFF Haroon-or-Rashid, MP, Jomal Hazari, MP, were present on the occasion.

# Shell says export is the option 'India offers one of the best markets for gas'

By Staff Correspondent

Oil giant Shell feels that Bangladesh should initiate the process for exporting gas to India through pipeline immediately as it is one of the most profitable options for the country's gas utilisation and also because there is a high gas demand growth in India. This may not be available in the future, a Shell spokesman said.

While presenting a report on the "Gas Utilisation Options" that was earlier given to the prime minister by newsmen yesterday, Shell Bangladesh chief Andrew Vaughan stressed on the importance of gas export options saying, "any such deal would require at least seven to eight years to implement". Other Shell executives were present.

The decision on gas export and other ways of utilisation of

course, depends on Bangladesh," Vaughan said, adding that a marketing plan should be outlined from the national level with the aim to push the country's GDP level up to 7 to 10 per cent.

According to Shell's data and analysis, Bangladesh could expect to discover new gas reserves equivalent to 25 trillion cubic feet (TCF). Bangladesh has already discovered 13 TCF gas and consumed 3 TCF. "In total, we estimate that Bangladesh's gas resource would stand at more than 38 TCF. At the current rate of gas consumption, this means a huge potential reserve."

But, he said, huge investment was required to exploit the 38 TCF gas reserves. If the market did not expand rapidly, exploration activities would

slow down, he added.

Presenting a chart on foreign direct investment (FDI) flow to other countries, Vaughan noted that high growth countries had been successful in attracting FDI. Bangladesh would require billions of dollars of foreign direct investment for its growth and the country could emulate the success of Malaysia and the Philippines where FDI flow was significant, by careful utilisation of natural and human resources.

He said that Shell's first priority was developing and feeding the local gas market where selling gas to the power sector was the most profitable option for Bangladesh.

Andrew Vaughan said that the gas discovered in the past by Petrobangla was as cheap as 20

US cents per unit as all the investment and development costs of these gas fields had been recovered.

"But gas delivered by international oil companies would be costlier as it includes costs related to exploration, appraisal, operations, maintenance, development and contractors' takes," the Shell chief said, "as per our estimates, these costs are covered when the gas is sold at 1.2 dollar per million BTU (MMBTU). The sale rate above this price would cover profit or government take."

On the basis of this 1.2 dollar MMBTU gas pricing, Vaughan said that it was not desirable to use gas for production of fertiliser, as it required cheaper gas. Similarly produc-

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