



Draft Gas Act ready for Cabinet approval

By Sharier Khan

After a break of more than a year, the government has come up with the final draft of Bangladesh Gas Act 2000 to help expedite long term development of gas sector in a competitive environment, fostering private sector investment, protecting consumer interest, preventing misuse of monopoly power and without affecting environment, sources concerned said.

The Act would also help setting up of a powerful Gas Regulatory Commission which would provide gas operators licence, ensure public safety and punish violators of the Act.

It suggests that none should export or import gas without a licence granted as per provisions of the Act.

It addresses policy and institutional framework, use of gas and technical and safety stan-

dard etc. It seeks to amend and consolidate the existing law relating to processing, transmission, distribution and supply of gas.

The Draft Act would be placed before the Cabinet shortly for approval, the sources said.

The draft was prepared by the National Economic Research Associates (NERA), UK and Dr Kamal Hossain and Associates, Bangladesh, under an Asian Development Bank Technical Assistance Project on "Gas Regulatory Authority for Bangladesh".

The Act would reinforce the government's powers and functions in the gas sector. In order to maintain a sound gas reserve management system, the government would monitor that annual gas extraction does not exceed 7.5 per cent of the proven

reserve.

The government may issue regulations prohibiting the use of gas in specified circumstances or by specified consumers, and allocating gas for use by specified end consumers.

The Act recommends that Bangladesh Gas Regulatory Commission would be formed comprising a Chairman and four members. The office bearers would require experience of at least 15 years in the fields of administration, law, industry, commerce, engineering etc.

The Commission will be independent in the exercise of its powers to develop gas sector to meet the needs of different regions of the country.

The Act seeks rigorous imprisonment for up to five years or fine or both for theft of gas including getting illegal gas connection, use of gas without

metres, making a hole or other changes in a metre or gas pipeline and for wasting gas.

The Commission would be the authority for providing gas transmission, processing, distribution and supply licences to persons or companies. While it would authorise gas transmission and processing tariff, licences would have to make public all rates, charges and other terms and conditions relating to tariff.

The Draft Act says all licences should ensure that except to the extent permitted by the Commission, there would be no cross-subsidy among separately licensed activities or between customers or classes of customers.

Licences would also have to ensure that the prices they charge for transmission, pro-

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Hasina arrives in NY

NEW YORK, Sept 4: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived here today (Monday) to attend the UN Millennium Summit beginning September 6, reports UNB.

The Bangladesh Biman aircraft carrying Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her entourage landed at the John F Kennedy Airport at 12 noon local time.

Scores of Awami League leaders and workers gathered at the JFK Airport to welcome the party chief and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, who will address the summit on the opening day in Bangla.

Bangladesh Ambassador in the US KM Shehabuddin Ahmed, Permanent Representative to the UN Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Awami League leaders Nurul Islam Anu, Abdus Salam and Sharafat Ali were also present at the airport.

BNP labour front threatens to paralyse Ctg port

CHITTAGONG, Sept 4: An opposition-backed trade union threatened to paralyse the seaport if the date for the postponed CBA elections was not announced by September 19, reports UNB.

It was announced at a rally of the port unit of Jatiyatobadi Sramik Dal, the labour front of BNP.

General Secretary of the unit Nurul Bahar issued the warnings from the gathering in front

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Loadshedding level exceeds 500 MW Power supply situation worsens again

Star Report

Power supply situation in the country has once again deteriorated as three out of six large power plants at Ghorashal remained closed for the last one week for technical faults, PDB sources said.

Loadshedding level has exceeded 500 MW, which is roughly more than one sixth of the peak demand for power daily.

In the city, all areas were now experiencing unusually frequent loadshedding.

The situation was tolerable a few days back, commented an official of PDB. "There were days a few weeks ago when there was no power generation shortfall and for the last couple of months, loadshedding level remained below 200 MW."

However, when two major power transmission lines tripped last week, some power plants were also affected. Now against a peak demand of 2700 to 2800 MW of power, PDB is

able to supply up to 2350 MW.

The situation is likely to improve from September 10 as two out of the three Russian made Ghorashal units are expected to resume operation by then.

The three plants are 210 MW units 3, 4 and 6. Of these, unit 6 started operation on January 31 this year.

Since unit 6 was commissioned, it had to be closed four times due to technical fault, said the official. "This time, it had to be closed due to leakage of hydrogen in the plant. Unit 4 also developed the same problem."

Some sources said power crisis in general would continue. A number of power plants including Raazan I and Ghorashal 4 need rehabilitation immediately. Ghorashal units 1 and 2 would be rehabilitated soon. "Experts from Russia are already here to repair the plants," one source said.

US to help extract, process & market mineral resources

By Staff Correspondent

US Deputy Secretary for Energy Kelvin Humphrey has said the United States will help Bangladesh extract, process and market its mineral resources.

He was addressing as chief guest at the 14th Bangladesh Council of FOBANA at the historic Madison Square Garden in New York, according to a message received here yesterday.

In his written speech, Humphrey praised Bangladesh for nurturing democracy and for its various development activities. "Clinton-Gore administration has taken up liberal policy for the overall development of Bangladesh," he added.

Praising role of expatriate Bangladeshi, he called upon them to be united for work for the development of the country.

He said President Clinton and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will meet at the White House during the UN Millennium Summit, which he said will further develop the existing relationship between the two countries.

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Strike at garment factories Sept 11

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Garments Sramik Oikya Parishad, a combine of 10 organisations of garment workers has called a day-long strike in all garment units across the country on September 11 demanding implementation of their various demands.

The demands include implementation of five-point agreement signed with the BGMEA, declaration of minimum national wage, enhancement of salary of garment workers, Tk two lakh compensation for the family of each victim of fire incident at Globe Knitting, investigation into the fire incident and removal of officials at the Department of Factory Inspection.

Addressing a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) office yesterday, the leaders of the Parishad said that the BGMEA had signed an agreement with the Parishad accepting four out of the five point

demands in 1997, but it did not implement those.

The four-point demand accepted by the BGMEA through an agreement is issuance of appointment letters, identity card, service book and wage slip to all workers, implementation of wage board award, payment of salary within seven days of the following month and ensuring weekly holidays, and trade union right of all garment workers.

The Parishad would hold a grand rally at Muktangon on September 8 and bring out processions in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong and Tongi on September 9 and 10 in support of the strike programme.

Chairman of the Parishad advocate Delwar Hossain Khan, Secretary general Towhidur Rahman and presidium members Khurshid Alam and Salahuddin Shwapan address See page 11 col 6

Nude paintings withdrawn from Indian nat'l gallery

By Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Sept 4: Indian artists have withdrawn their works from an exhibition in Delhi's National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) after the government ordered the removal of a painting - a Nude Icarus atop the Ashoka pillar - a national symbol, reports AFP.

The move by the Cultural Ministry sent shock waves through the Indian artistic community which accused the state today of stifling artistic freedom.

"I cannot understand how my painting of the Ashoka Pillar with the Greek mythological character Icarus standing on top of it can be constituted as a slight to a national symbol. I am in shock," said Surendra Nair, who was ordered to remove his canvas from the exhibition.

India's Cultural Secretary RV Vaidyanatha Ayyar pulled Nair's work on Saturday, prompting all 25 artists taking

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Relatives of Ali Hossain (inset) wailing in front of DMCH morgue. Ali, a police informer, was gunned down allegedly by miscreants hired by phensidyl traders at Agargaon slum in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Police informer shot dead for helping recovery of phensidyl from slum

By Staff Correspondent

A police informer was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in front of Department of Environment building at Agargaon in the city's Mahamedpur area yesterday.

Police said, Ali Hossain, 32, son of Fakir Chand, was shot while he was walking in front of DoE building at about 2:30 pm yesterday.

Bhangari Setu and Azad, two miscreants residing at the nearby BNP Slum, killed Ali, said a police source.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition. The attending doctor at the DMCH declared him dead.

The killing of Ali was a sequel to recovery of over 13,000 phensidyl at BNP Slum by the Detective Branch of police on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the fourth court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Rabiu Hasan granted more time to top terror Asaduzzaman Litu to appear before the court on October 1. Litu was supposed to appear on Sunday in connection with BNP leader Bablu Murder Case. He is also one of the accused in Journalist Shamsur Rahman Murder Case.

As part of preparation for the next general election, the Jatiya Party (M-M) will hold a two-day extended meeting of its central committee in the city on Friday-Saturday.

Party sources said the meeting has been called to take opinion of the leaders of central and district committees and front organisations about party's strategy for the next parliamentary polls.

They said the party is still thinking of contesting the election alone and fielding candidates in all the constituencies. "We will finalise the strategy regarding the election after taking opinion of the leaders at the extended meeting," said an influential leader of the party.

It is expected that possible candidates for the election would be selected during the meeting after the meeting.

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Former deputy controller of examinations of Chittagong Board Md Mujibur Rahman, who was charged with involvement in HSC result scandal of the board, has challenged the probe report by a committee headed by Prof Ahmed Hossain.

Two students of Chittagong Cantonment Public School and College secured first and eighteenth positions in the HSC examinations of 1998 by fraudulent means with the help of a teacher and some officials of the board.

In a statement yesterday, Mujibur Rahman said that Prof Ahmed Hossain brought charge against him to take revenge as he (Rahman) had earlier helped a probe committee to reveal that Prof Hossain managed to get the post of Chief Examiner through illegal means.

Rahman further said as soon as Hossain was appointed Chairman of the Board, he again tried to implement his "hostile probe report" and framed charges against him.

"If needed, I shall go for legal action in this regard," Rahman said.

BIRDEM reported admitting one fresh case, Bangladesh Medical College and Monwara hospitals one each, Central hospital at Green Road and Samarita Hospital two and one patients respectively. Al-Razi Hospital one, Red Crescent Hospital four, and Ibne Sina clinic reported admitting two patients.

Meanwhile, the control also reported death of a ten year old girl Shefali Khatun at Khulna Medical College Hospital yesterday. Besides, six more people were admitted to Khulna Sadar Hospital yesterday with the dengue fever.

BORAL MURDER: Another arrested

BAGERHAT, Sept 4: Police arrested another suspect in Advocate Kalidas Boral killing in the town today, reports UNB.

Police began interrogation and said they might get important clues of the killing from the arrested Hasan Siddiqui Sagar, 24.

Meanwhile, agitated villagers today set fire to the residence of another suspect Shayamol Mondal of Garibpur village in Chitalmari upazila.

Shayamol was arrested recently in connection with the killing of Advocate Boral.

Chairman of the Poursabha Golam Kibria said he had written to the ministry concerned for funds to re-examine the canal. He hoped that funds would be available soon.

"If we get support from the local administration, we shall be able to free Katakhali of encroachments and bring back its lost glory," Kibria said.

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