

# Fresh study needed to clear confusion over gas reserves

CPD dialogue in city suggests

STAR REPORT

Fresh scientific study should be undertaken to clear confusions over the country's gas reserves.

Experts, academicians, intellectuals, politicians as well as representatives of donor agencies and international oil companies yesterday shared the observation at a dialogue titled, "Energy Sector of Bangladesh: what are the knowledge gaps?"

But, they could not reach consensus on any other aspects of gas resource, including whether Bangladesh should export gas through pipelines.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) arranged the dialogue in the city.

State Minister for Energy Khandakar Mosarraf Hossain said the actual amount of gas in the country cannot be determined without drilling. The minister, who attended the dialogue as chief guest, however, lamented the financial constraints to go for such an expensive exercise. "Where is the money to do it?"

The government did not decide to export gas yet, the state minister said, although the previous Awami League government decided on gas export.

Some participants felt the country should not consider gas export before having figures on actual gas reserve, nor should it make any forecast on future domestic gas demand.

They also observed that there was a need for considering an alternative market of gas in the country.

Some others anticipated that the growth of domestic demand for gas would not be much higher as, according to them, the country in near future will not have any significant industrial growth, which may stand affected if gas was exported.

There was a lively debate on the credibility of a recently released study report jointly prepared by Hydrocarbon Unit (HCU) of the Ministry of Energy and Norway Petroleum Directorate (NPD).

Using existing data, the study puts the proven gas

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## White paper is there to taint image: Kibria

UNB, Dhaka

Former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday termed the government's white paper a "wholesale character assassination" campaign by the BNP-Jamaat alliance against Awami League and its leaders.

He told the news agency that he was surprised to read in newspapers the so-called white paper on cases of "graft, irregularities and abuse of power" allegedly committed by Awami League ministers and some officials.

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 25		5-39 pm
Jan 26	6-42 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-15
Juma	12-15	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-43	5-48
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Bangladesh-India trade talks called off again

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Trade talks between Bangladesh and India scheduled for January 30-31 in Dhaka have been postponed for the second time after the Indian side said 'it would not be possible for them to attend' the meeting.

However, the reason for India's refusal to attend the commerce secretary level talks could not be known.

Commerce ministry sources said the Indian side informed their decision yesterday and requested Dhaka to fix a new date and communicate it to Delhi.

"Now we will sit and fix a new date suitable for both the sides," a high official of the commerce ministry told The Daily Star.

Earlier, the meeting scheduled for December 26-27 last in Dhaka was postponed at the last moment as the Indian side declined to attend it due to difference of opinion over its agenda.

The scheduled talks were considered very crucial for Bangladesh against the backdrop of a trade gap of over one billion dollars in favour of India.

In this context, Dhaka wanted to focus on the huge trade gap at the bilateral talks. But Delhi insisted on taking up all bilateral issues and demands lying unresolved for long.

Dhaka also wanted to have a new bilateral trade agreement with a wider scope as the present one expired in October last year. The agreement was signed in 1980 for three years with the provision for renewal.

Sources pointed out that Bangladesh expected a 'goodwill gesture' from India on its long-standing demand for zero-tariff access of 25 categories of products to Indian market. But India insisted on tariff concessions on a reciprocal basis and demanded duty concessions from Bangladesh on 90 items. India even proposed that it could agree to Bangladesh's demand if it allowed similar facility on 10-12 Indian items.

## Pintu freed on bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday granted bail to ruling party MP Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in an extortion case.

Pintu was arrested on December 26 last year on charge of attempted snatching of auction documents of a bankrupt company's property on December 23.

Magistrate Shafiq Anwar passed the order upon a bond of Tk 10,000 with two guarantors.

Advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder and Gazi Tawhidul Islam submitted a petition, seeking bail.

The defence lawyers told the court that Pintu was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically.

"The charges of extortion brought against Pintu were not primarily proved. So, we pray for his bail," the defence lawyers told the court.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petition, saying that the charges of extortion brought against Pintu were primarily proved.

After hearing both sides, the court granted the bail petition.

Pintu was released from the Dhaka Central Jail at around 5.15 pm yesterday.

Earlier, the Metropolitan Session Judge's Court, Dhaka had rejected the bail petition of Pintu.

In its order, the court had mentioned that the charges brought

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## Why patients take treatment abroad, president asks doctors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President A Q M Bodruddoza Choudhury has blamed the physicians in the country for the 'unfortunate reality' that a large number of patients go abroad for treatment.

"It is a reality that thousands of patients are still going abroad for medical treatment and even for simple check ups. It is very unfortunate," he said.

The president was speaking as chief guest at the 23rd annual conference of the Chest and Heart Association of Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

He said, "A few years ago, it was quite natural for patients to go abroad for treatment as the country lacked proper diagnostic facilities. But now we have all the facilities for diagnosis and also well trained specialist doctors."

He told the gathering of several hundred doctors, "Ask yourselves why so many patients are still eager to seek medical treatment outside the country."

Referring to doctor-patient relationship, he said, "Many

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offers munajat after unveiling the foundation stone of the National Cancer Institute and Hospital at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

# PM declares Zia's birthday Nat'l Teachers' Day

Language centre opens in city

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday declared January 19, the birthday of late president Ziaur Rahman, as the National Teachers' Day.

"The day will be observed every year to uphold the dignity of the teacher community and improve teacher-student relationship," she said while inaugurating a language centre at Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) in the city.

The prime minister also declared reintroduction of the pension allowance scheme for non-government teachers.

She distributed medals, grants and pension allowance among eminent academics and teachers at the function jointly organised by the Education Ministry, Non-government Teacher-Employee Oikya Jote and BIAM.

The PM lamented that the cordial teacher-student relationship that prevailed in the past in the country was now absent. "We want to restore that relationship," she added.

Recalling the initiative and contribution of late president Zia, Khaleda said he wanted to bring about a radical change in the education system.

She said shaheed president Zia had formed a National Education Commission to introduce a modern and suitable education system in the country. She also recalled his contribution to spreading mass literacy and education for elderly people in a bid to remove illiteracy.

Zia rebuilt, expanded and established many educational institutions, she said. "But he neither changed the name of any educational institution nor allowed naming any after him during his lifetime."

She said the teacher community remembers him for his contribution to the spread of education and their welfare. The education ministry accepted their proposal to declare his birthday as National Teachers' Day, she added.

The prime minister said she had asked the authorities concerned to reduce the requirement of four years of experience to two years for promotion to fill in the vacant posts of teachers this year.

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# Hasina shrugs off graft charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday dismissed allegations of graft labelled against her and claimed that her government with honesty and tries to save public money.

Referring to the government's white paper on alleged corruption during the 1996-2001 AL rule,

Hasina said, "They have brought five allegations of corruption against me. It is unfortunate that in this country, corruption charges are brought if one runs the government with honesty and tries to save public money."

Hasina, also president of Awami League, was addressing as chief guest the annual general meeting of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

She also mentioned filing of two graft cases accusing her of making the country lose Tk 700 crore in the purchase of eight MIG-29 aircraft for the Air Force and Tk two crore in appointing a lobbyist for readymade garments' access to the US market. The cases were filed with Tejgaon thana in the city.

Hasina claimed that a minister in Khaleda Zia's cabinet who was defense attaché at Bangladesh mission in Russia had looked for commission in the Mig purchase.

"But we went for state-to-state negotiation for the best bargaining price, leaving no scope for commission. Now they have brought charge against me."

"I challenge that none could buy the Migs in lesser price than we paid. I made the state gainer by 165 million US dollars by procuring the Migs at 124 million US dollars, lowering the rate from 289 million US dollars."

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## Six SB men off Hasina's security cover

UNB, Dhaka

Six policemen of the Special Branch on duty at the residence of Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina were finally withdrawn yesterday.

A source in the Sudha Sadhan said two of the SB personnel who used to work shifts split into three at the opposition leader's residence were withdrawn in the morning.

Earlier, the government withdrew Special Security Force from her security cover put in place under a special law enacted during the rule of Awami League.

Meanwhile, a source in the Special Branch admitting withdrawal of SB personnel said, "Extra plain-clothes personnel have been withdrawn, but other security forces are there for her protection."



PHOTO: STAR

Pakistan's Yusuf Yuhana takes the aerial route on his way to an unbeaten 112 against Bangladesh yesterday.

## Bomb explodes near British HC in Islamabad

AFP, Islamabad

A small bomb exploded in a carpark next to the British High Commission in the Pakistani capital yesterday but there were no injuries, police and embassy officials said.

Commission spokeswoman Rachel Jameson said the explosion occurred around 11.50 am (0650 GMT) in the carpark, which was used by commission staff.

"The Pakistani authorities were immediately alerted and they have investigated. There were no casualties," she told AFP.

"It appears that it was an explosive device but we are unable to comment further while the Pakistani authorities are urgently investigating this matter."

Islamabad police Senior Superintendent Nasir Khan Durrani confirmed that a "low intensity bomb" caused the explosion.

## Strike: No classes held at DU yesterday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Classes and examinations were not held at Dhaka University for the second consecutive day yesterday due to the strike called by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). BCL activists damaged a private minibus near the Teacher-Student Centre in the afternoon. University transports did not ply.

Central and Science libraries remained open and administrative activities continued partially.

The opposition Awami League-backed BCL called the strike at DU on Wednesday and in all educational institutions of the country yesterday, protesting Tuesday's attack on its rally on DU campus allegedly by activists of Jatiyatubadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP.

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