

# Hasina on gas

**FROM PAGE 1**  
out to others to make the nation resource-less.

Addressing a discussion meeting at Jatiya Press Club on the occasion of World Environment Day, Hasina suggested that instead of handing over the country's gas resources to others, it should be used for national development.

Awami League organised the discussion to create awareness among the people about environment pollution and to protect the environment for the survival of all.

This year's slogan for the day is "Give Earth A Chance".

The Awami League chief said the developed countries are prone to preserving their natural resources by going for the resources of the poor countries. "We've a little gas and everyone's eyes are on that scanty resource."

She said only two to three per cent of the population are using gas in Bangladesh when some quarters suggest exporting gas to earn Tk 1,000 crore per year.

"If we export fresh vegetables, poultry, meat and processed foods, we will be able to earn Tk 2 to 3 thousand crore a year," she said urging the people to produce organic agricultural products for capturing foreign markets.

There is a good scope for economic development by exporting agricultural products, Hasina said mentioning that her government had taken massive initiatives to set up agro-based industries in the country.

Gas is also necessary for agro-based industries, she said, adding that her government had installed gas line over the Bangabandhu Bridge on river Jamuna to supply gas to the northern region having the prospect of setting up agro-based industries.

Referring to the signing of his-

toric Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India, Hasina said: "Through this treaty, we've realised our legitimate share of the Ganges water... this stopped the ominous desertification process in the northern region."

"And because of this treaty, the necessary quantum of water flows to Bangladesh through the Ganges, which also solved the problem of salinity in the Sundarbans," she said.

She said salinity used to badly affect the mangrove forest and also created problem for the reproduction of the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger.

The former Prime Minister mentioned the steps that were taken by her government in controlling environment pollution for the preservation of forests and ensuring pure water.

She said her party has a special programme on tree planting and urged her party leaders and workers to plant at least three trees one fruit bearing, one for timber and one herbal.

Hasina said that to halt misuse of natural resources, it is essential to have a patriotic and people-oriented government, which will not think about its own interest, rather about the welfare of the people.

"If we can utilise our resources in a proper way, we will be able to develop ourselves and make the country rich and prosperous," she added.

Presided over by former Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, the meeting was also addressed by Awami League leaders Zillur Rahman, Abdul Razzak, Abdul Jaill, Motia Chowdhury, and HN Ashiqur Rahman. Awami League Health Secretary Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin conducted the function.

# Illegal gas link to 7 factories snapped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more illegal gas connections to industrial units in Fatullah under Narayanganj district were snapped yesterday.

According to a press release by Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petro Bangla), the gas lines were disconnected by a taskforce formed by the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company.

The industrial units whose gas lines were snapped are, Sonargaon Knitting Industries Pvt Ltd, Haji Rasulullah Dyeing, Alimun Dyeing, Printing and Processing Mills, Harun Dyeing, Lovely Dyeing, Noor Textile and Processing, and Cosmic Fabrics Ltd.

Some of the above factories had the illegal connections all through while others obtained the connections illegally after their gas supply had been cut off for non-payment of overdue gas bills, the press release said.

Earlier, the same taskforce had disconnected 19 such illegal gas lines.

Titas saved around Tk four crore worth of gas per month from pilferage due to the illegal line disconnection drive, the release said.

# Monju calls on PM

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Party chairman and former Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Monju paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

During the meeting, Monju expressed satisfaction over the prime minister's rapid recovery from knee operation and wished her long life.

Prime Minister's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury was present on the occasion.

# Reebok

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Sources said a gang of seven robbers entered the house yesterday morning and took away Tk 22,000 as well as 10 bharis of gold ornaments holding the inmates of the house at gunpoint.

Separate cases were filed with police stations concerned in these connections. Police were yet to arrest any of the culprits or recover the stolen goods till filing of this report last night.

# Coalmine crack

**FROM PAGE 12**  
1994, and more than 60 per cent of the project work has been completed.

The workforce consists of about 500 Bangladeshi and as many Chinese labourers. Now, the number of Bangladeshi workers has come down to a little more than 250 after the accident.

# Second link

**FROM PAGE 12**  
cerned and the communications ministry. And if taken up on a BOO basis, both the construction and operation of the expressway could be done by the investors.

A second highway was conceived over two decades ago. A US firm, Amman & Whitney, had carried out a study on the feasibility of a second highway. Although the study found it feasible, the process was learnt to have been shelved in 1985.

The communications minister said his ministry is also planning a high speed train service between the capital and the port city. This too, if decided at the highest level, would be implemented through international tender either on a BOT or BOO basis. He said there are two methods available for the proposed train service. It could either use silver bullet system or magnetic navigation. The 'cargo component capacity' of the magnetic navigation system is more and if it could be introduced, the load of trucks and heavy vehicles on the highway would decrease.

In either case, communication experts feel that because of increasing focus on Chittagong port and its capacity and potential to develop as a regional hub, taking up schemes for establishing quick and durable links with Dhaka and neighbouring areas deserves the highest priority and attention of the government.

# AL rebels

**FROM PAGE 1**  
member Dr Mohammad Selim for contesting the last elections defying party decisions.

Selim and his supporters have meanwhile formed a new party named Bangladesher Awami League. This could not make any impact on the mainstream AL, the sources said.

It is not clear whether the party leadership will fill the posts falling vacant after the actions or will wait till the next party council, the sources said.

Two posts of the party Presidium are now vacant following the death of Pulin Dey and expulsion Dr Md Selim.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at a function at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre on the World Environment Day yesterday.

# Saifur's new challenge

**FROM PAGE 1**  
taxmen into action, but unrealistic projections are certainly political ploys portraying the image that does not stand the test.

Like it or not, this is the ground reality and the nation will wait till the B-hour to know what trump cards Saifur has hidden up his sleeves.

"In the outgoing fiscal, revenue collection has already been 2.5 per cent short of target till April, which was basically because of import slowdown."

"So, the future import target will be a crucial issue against the backdrop of low foreign exchange reserves," said Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya. "This brings us to the second important issue - if import remains low, revenue collection has to rely more on internal sector, which comprises internal trade related tax like VAT and direct tax as income tax."

So, a two-pronged tax collection emphasis has to be there to ensure compliance in terms of those who can pay tax, and efficiency of institutions. And addressing only one will not do, said Dr Debapriya.

However, these may not be adequate, thus the budget will have to look for expanding revenue receipts through the non-NBR component of tax envelop and through non-tax revenue receipts. This will mean rationalisation of duties and fees of the government as well as pricing of a number of public sector services such as post, telegraph, railway and stamp duty.

While public expenditure in Bangladesh now at 15 per cent of the GDP is still low compared to other developing countries, still the resource problem is holding back the government to spend more to spur investment demand. The Achilles' heel here is the shrinking foreign financing.

Last year (FY01) saw one of the lowest disbursements of US\$1.37 billion in foreign fund. Till March this year, the picture looks marginally brighter as \$1.03 billion, 15.4 per cent over the preceding year, has been available.

"But if one looks at the percent-

age of foreign financing against GDP, it transpires that from 4.66 per cent in 1990-91 it has come down to 3.43 per cent in 2000-2001," Dr Debapriya pointed out. "Paradoxically, about 6 billion dollar in aid remains unutilised in the pipeline and Bangladesh has in recent past leaned very heavily on domestic debt creation to finance its development needs."

"In the upcoming budget, while the spirit of self-reliance as espoused by the finance minister is well taken, there will still be some need to make better use of available foreign resources with necessary discretion. The issue will acquire a new dimension as the country completes PRSP exercise and new aid package is negotiated."

Hopefully, the next budget will avoid the much more costlier form of foreign financing which is suppliers' credit.

"Now if we look at the expenditure side, the ideal situation is a zero-based growth, which implies a moratorium in real terms making adjustments for natural increments which are well within inflationary limits."

Last year, revenue expenditure growth was projected at 6.7 per cent.

So, if the government wants to contain it to less than five per cent, given an inflation rate of less than four per cent, then expenditure may experience some pressure if the government wants to programme budget for severance benefits for state-owned enterprises.

Having a high ADP is definitely desirable given the development needs of the country. But its implementation and financing will definitely be a major challenge. It can be implemented if it can provide necessary boost to domestic and linkage industries.

"But we hope that the next ADP will not contain unallocated or non-project lump sums under various heads. In fact, while doing the revision of this year's ADP, Tk 657 crore was pruned from lump sum," continued Dr. Debapriya.

But what's more worrying is the

absorption capacity of the line ministries.

If we look at the ADP revision, we observe that six large ministries accounted for about two-thirds of the axed amount of Tk 3000 crore. The power division had Tk 340 crore pruned, health Tk 291 crore, education Tk 261 crore, physical infrastructure Tk 255 crore, oil and gas Tk 201 crore and agriculture Tk 200 crore, bringing the total to Tk 1548 crore.

"Without significant administrative and institutional reforms, it will be very difficult for these sectors to spend such a big budget without compromising quality. That's why we need to have a public expenditure review commission and an independent anti-corruption bureau as safeguards," the CPD executive director maintained.

The other big challenge that everyone will eagerly wait to see today is how the finance minister proposes to rein in fiscal deficit. The overall budget deficit was seven per cent in FY00 which remained almost static at 6.91 per cent in FY01 and has been targeted at 6.17 per cent this fiscal. So, bringing it down to below five per cent will require either reduced expenditure or increased earning.

"We don't see expenditure being curtailed and foreign financing is increasing. That leaves us with domestic resource creation either through debt creation or revenue surplus. It is here that the government will have to choose instruments to get money from the market at market rate," concluded Dr Debapriya.

The other innovative way for the government would be to carry out the privatisation programme enabling it to use the proceeds to underwrite the deficit and even to reduce some accumulated debt.

The other is the corporatisation of the autonomous bodies to allow them to raise funds from the market, thus containing the government's expenditure compulsions.

# Nuke fallout

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Spelling out Bangladesh's stand during the current standoff between India and Pakistan, he said, "We are as much worried as our other SAARC neighbours - Nepal, the Maldives, Bhutan and Sri Lanka - and Myanmar. We want both countries (India and Pakistan) to exercise restraint. We want them to fall back and we want that they should go for immediate dialogue for peace and stability in the region," Khan told the crowded press briefing following his return from a three-week visit abroad.

Making Dhaka's position clear, he said, "We want restraint. However, we have no intention to meddle in the internal affairs of any country."

During his trip, Morshed Khan attended the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group Conference (CMAG) in Botswana, held official talks in Washington with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Advisor Dr Condoleezza Rice and her Deputy Steven Hadly, Deputy Secretary of Treasury Kenneth Dam, visited the Pentagon and also had several separate meetings with members of the US Congress. Later, he went to New York and held talks with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and flew to Canada to have meetings with Prime Minister Jean Chretien and his Canadian counterpart Bill Graham.

Responding to a volley of questions, the foreign minister said he had 'very useful and productive discussion' with the US secretary of state.

"I highlighted our position as a democratic country which has made tremendous progress in empowerment of women, micro-credit programmes and education schemes, particularly for girls and oral re-hydration programmes initiated by us, which saved at least four million lives."

In this regard, he observed that

Bangladesh should be called a truly democratic country.

**Nothing called Muslim democracy**

Making an oblique reference to comments made by various quarters in the West, he observed, "We are not a Muslim democratic country. One is either a democratic country or not. There is nothing called Muslim democracy as there cannot be Christian democracy or Hindu democracy. At best, we can be called a democratic country with a Muslim majority."

In reply to a question, the foreign minister said, "Neither the US side raised any conditionalities nor did we ask for any special facilities. I did not go for RMG (readymade garments) issue but I put forward our points, asking if 46 countries could get duty-free access, our people were naturally asking why could not Bangladesh."

He said the issue of SOFA was not raised by the US side during discussions with the State Department officials or the Pentagon people.

On the issue of natural gas export, he explained that the government's current assessment was underway and a decision could only be taken after it was completed.

Asked about Afghanistan, Morshed Khan said Dhaka expressed its willingness to participate in its rebuilding but pointed out that it does not have the means. Besides, it will only participate in 'blue helmet operations.'

In this regard, he noted that an inconsistency regarding the 'territorial jurisdiction of peace enforcement must be settled.' The Bonn agreement and the UN Security Council spoke of different jurisdictions.

Meanwhile, he convened a meeting of all former foreign secretaries at the Padma yesterday. "It is a process that will continue," he said.

# Irish cliff-hanger

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Saudi. I'll be watching them tomorrow against Cameroon to see what happens. We're in with a chance."

German midfielder Carsten Ramelow said: "At 1-0 it was not enough. We knew we had to get a second goal to feel safe. In the end they equalised with practically the last touch of the game."

"It was a great shame for us. But we tried everything...I think we played well but that's the sort of thing that can always happen. It shouldn't but it did."

Earlier, Klose, who fired a hat-trick in Germany's record-breaking 8-0 win over Saudi Arabia, had confirmed he could become one of the revelations of the tournament by scoring from a Michael Ballack cross in the 19th minute.

After overcoming the departure of captain Roy Keane for a 1-1 draw with Cameroon in their first game, Ireland lived up to their fiery reputation.

But they looked short of ideas and were hampered by defensive mistakes, most notably when Ian Harte failed to challenge Klose as he beat goalkeeper Shay Given for his fourth goal in the finals, the highest tally so far.

Germany recovered from a nervous start to control the game from midfield despite Ireland's best efforts to take the game to their opponents.

Striker Keane missed a bicycle kick just before the break, blowing what would have been a spectacular equaliser.

The combative Irishmen kept trying after the interval and were denied in the 57th minute by a brilliant save by Germany goalkeeper and captain Oliver Kahn from an close-range effort from striker Damien Duff.

Germany, who relied on a faultless performance from defence marshal Carsten Ramelow to shrug off Ireland's spirited but often clumsy challenge, came close to doubling their advantage when Jancker lobbed Given in the 58th minute, but the ball landed wide.

Klose remained dangerous, as he proved in the 77th minute with a header that flew over the bar, but failed to inflict further punishment on Ireland.

Ireland now face Saudia Arabia in their final match in Yokohama on June 11 while Germany play Cameroon on the same day in Shizuoka. The Africans take on Saudi Arabia first in Saitama on Thursday.

**TEAMS**  
**Germany:** Kahn, Linke, Ramelow, Metzelder, Frings, Hamann, Ballack, Schneider (Jeremies 90), Ziege, Jancker (Bierhoff 75), Klose (Bode 85)  
**Goal:** Klose 19  
**Ireland:** Given, Finnan, Breen, Staunton (Cunningham 87), Harte (Reid 73), Kelly (Quinn 73), Holland, Kinsella, Kilbane, Keane, Duff  
**Goals:** Keane 90  
**Attendance:** 35,854  
**Referee:** K Nielsen (Denmark)

# India offers patrol

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Vajpayee was speaking in Almaty where he was taking part in a regional summit which was also attended by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

The two men did not meet face to face, amid intense efforts to bring them to the negotiating table and head off war.

Reuters from Islamabad says: Pakistan rejected an Indian proposal for joint patrols along the disputed Kashmir border to stem the infiltration of militants, saying it was "unlikely to work."

"The proposal is not new," a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. "Given the state of Pakistan-India relations, mechanisms for joint patrolling are unlikely to work."

India and Pakistan have massed more than a million troops along their borders amid fears that tension could trigger a fourth war between the nuclear-armed foes.

Meanwhile, Indian and Pakistani troops traded heavy fire yesterday after their leaders failed at an Asian security summit to ease fears of war between the nuclear-armed rivals.

An Indian defence official said the two armies exchanged over night fire along their frontier but it was a "routine exchange," limited to heavy machineguns and sporadic use of mortars, with no casualties or damage on the Indian side.

Pakistan government officials said two people were wounded yesterday morning near Sialkot, on the boundary that separates Indian-ruled Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan's Punjab province.

That area on the Punjab plains has been especially hard hit in the recent bout of shelling.

Witnesses said Indian and Pakistani troops were exchanging heavy mortar and machinegun fire along the boundary, causing people in the area to flee to relief centres set up by the government in the nearby city of Sialkot.

"There are no casualties, but our houses are being destroyed," a resident of Pondran village said. "Many houses, stored with large quantities of hay after the recent wheat harvest, caught fire in our village when hit by Indian mortar bombs overnight."

The Civil Defence Department has been organising air raid drills in Punjab towns this week, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported. The city public works department in Multan has been ordered to dig trenches for people to take shelter in.

In Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, police said Indian troops intensified mortar fire in the Samani sector yesterday morning, but there were no reports of any casualties or damage.

# Flash flood

**FROM PAGE 12**  
Brahmaputra and Meghna, they said.

The long-range forecast said there is possibility of one or two seasonal depressions over the Bay during this month, which may trigger heavy rains.

# PM: Environment Day

**FROM PAGE 1**  
under the sea.

Addressing the function at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in observance of the World Environment Day 2002, the prime minister said protective measures should be taken from now on to avert possible dangers.

"Give the earth a chance" is the theme of this year's World Environment Day. Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdul Mannan MP and UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner, among others, addressed the function presided over by Environment Minister Shajahan Siraj.

Ministers, MPs, diplomats, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and environmentalists attended the function organised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

The environment ministry or the government alone cannot bear the entire responsibility to protect the environment, the prime minister said. The people should share both

national and international efforts for protection of the environment.

"Everyone - individuals, parties, clubs, organisations, associations, the society and NGOs - should come forward and work for it," she said.

Khaleda underscored the people's awareness and inspiration to contribute to preserving the environment.

The prime minister said the country must advance towards progress. At the same time, people should make sure that the environment is not damaged in the process of development. The government has adopted such a policy, she added.

Later, the prime minister opened an environment fair.

UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner suggested that 'green tax' providing for fines for environment polluters and incentives to protectors be introduced.

Welcoming the suggestion, the finance minister said the government would actively consider it to encourage healthy environmental practices and discourage unhealthy ones.

# Arsenic in food chain

**FROM PAGE 12**  
and 400 of water collected from 50 upazilas in 15 most affected regions were analysed in laboratories in the country and in Australia.

The samples were collected from Rampur, Dinajpur, Kushtia, Jessore, Faridpur, Laxmipur, Narayanganj, Rajshahi, Pabna, Munshiganj, Meherpur and Dhaka.

The on-going study, the first of its kind in the country, is being funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. Dr Ravi Naidu from Australia, the team leader and Prof S M Imamul Huq of the Department of Soil, Water and Environment, DU, jointly carried out the research.

"We have detected significant amount of arsenic transferred from groundwater to crops although many crops are still safe," said Dr Ravi Naidu.

He said, "Intake of arsenic by plants from soil varies from region to region. Some types of soil have capacity for very strong bonding while others do not. So, arsenic released from soil to the plants is quite different."

Apparently, by looking at the plants, one can not understand whether those are contaminated or not.

In the study, the researchers also found that food cooked with arsenic-contaminated tubewell water contains high level of arsenic.

They also studied samples of cooked food collected from the affected areas. The level of arsenic was found at 0.35 mg/kg in rice, 0.81 in vegetable curry, 0.33 in spinach, 0.39 in fish curry and 0.27 mg/kg in pumpkin. However, arsenic was not found in cooked lentil, brinjal and egg.

"When a crop is irrigated with arsenic contaminated water, there is evidence of arsenic entering into the crop. In the study, arsenic in irrigation water was found at between 0.136 and 0.555 parts per million (ppm)," said Prof S M Imamul Huq.

He said, "We have to do further studies to find out whether arsenic travels from cooked vegetables to human body or it is simply eliminated from the body."

# 16 Israelis killed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
to deal with the injured -- there were many soldiers," said Ogen Drori, a 25-year-old medic and witness.

The bombing followed a resurgence of Palestinian suicide bombings following an Israeli military offensive in the West Bank that Israel said was intended to halt such attacks, which are part of a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

"This is a very serious terrorist attack. There are many casualties, including fatalities," regional police commander Dov Rutsky told Israel Radio.

"Initial indications at the scene are that the explosion occurred at the bus's flank. It was a car bomb."

Three bodies in olive-drab uniforms lay in front of the wreckage, surrounded by emergency crews and police sappers checking the area for more bombs.

It was not clear how many of the dead were soldiers and how many were civilians.

fighting during the recent Israeli military offensive. Israel describes Jenin refugee camp as a major Palestinian militant base.

Israel's security cabinet later convened for a meeting that had been scheduled before the blast.

**Israel blames Palestinians**  
An official in Sharon's office called the bombing "another cowardly act of terror by the Palestinians, showing again that murder and the Palestinian Authority are indistinguishable."

Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, an aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, blamed the attack on the "continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian areas."

Abdel-Rahman said Israeli invasions into Palestinian territories had made it impossible for the Authority to carry out its security duties.

Tenet, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has been leading the latest diplomatic drive to halt the violence, in which at least 1,379 Palestinians and 486 Israelis had been killed before Wednesday's attack.



Wheelchair-bound Laboni looks at her paintings at an exhibition organised by the North South University Media Club yesterday to highlight the plight of the physically challenged.

# United States stunner

**FROM PAGE 1**  
score from close range at a corner after Portugal goalkeeper Vitor Baia failed to hold a glancing header from McBride as he dived to his left.

The Portuguese showed nerves in their approach play. After they gave the ball away deep in their own half, the United States went 2-0 up in the 29th minute.

A speculative cross from the right from midfielder Donovan took an unfortunate deflection off Jorge Costa, leaving Baia completely wrong-footed and unable to stop the ball sneaking past the post.

Portugal seemed to lose all their composure. The Americans went 3-0 ahead just seven minutes later when McBride scored with a superb diving head after a cross from the

right from Tony Sanneh.

Luis Figu, their 2001 world player of the year, worked hard down the left flank after starting the match on the right.

The Portuguese had virtually all of the game in the second half and narrowed the gap to 3-2 when Agoos put the ball in his own net after a cross from Pauleta.

But the Americans managed to hang on desperately. The U.S. team's next game is against co-hosts South Korea on June 10.

"They are a very very good team so we have to come out prepared," McB