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Grim energy crisis looms

Captive power generation eating up gas supply; 100mw power, 100mmcfcd gas shortfall likely

SHARIER KHAN

An unprecedented rise in industrial and commercial demands for gas, coupled with inadequate supply, is set to trigger off an energy crisis this year.

Fed up with load-shedding, an increasing number of industrial and commercial consumers have been installing their own small-scale gas-fired power generation

units -- putting an unforeseen pressure on gas supplies.

The Power Development Board (PDB) says captive power generation capacity has reached 800 megawatts (mw) this year, up at least 250mw from 2002.

Petrobangla says gas consumption for captive power generation has shot up by 100 million cubic feet per day (mmcfcd) over the last year to 130mmcfcd.

But the industrial and commercial consumers' effort to keep their wheels running with power generated by themselves may face a basic problem: there will be a shortfall in gas supply.

With no way to augment gas supply this year, the shortfall may hit 100mmcfcd by the year-end, with the total demand standing at over 1,400mmcfcd.

On the other hand, the mini-

mum power shortfall this year is expected to be 100mw, even with full supply from all the power plants, including two new power plants adding over 300mw to the national grid.

So, any accidental shutdown of a major power plant is likely to plunge the nation in partial darkness because of continuing high demand.

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Humayun Azad stabbed, struggles for life at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown assailants critically stabbed prominent writer Humayun Azad with butcher's knives in front of Bangla Academy last night.

A profusely bleeding Azad, also professor of Bangla at Dhaka University, was struggling for life at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with three stabs -- one at the back of his head and two in the left side of his face. Witnesses said the gang swooped on the 56-year-old linguist when he was returning to his campus house from the Ekushey Book Fair.

"As he reached the Bangla Academy gate, four to five youths jumped on him with the knives," a DU student said.

As he cried for help, the attackers opened fire and exploded a bomb, triggering panic among the visitors to the fair who ran helter-skelter for cover.

Finding Prof Azad lying in a pool
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Hasina hails, Moudud dismisses US HR report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday rejected the Human Rights Report on Bangladesh launched on Thursday by the US State Department while the main opposition Awami League (AL) greeted the findings saying it mirrored the misuse of the ruling coalition.

"Officially we do not accept this report," Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. He said the people who prepared the report did not take the realities in Bangladesh into consideration.

"It's a routine and stereotypical report published every year," he said, refusing to explain his remark.

The report for 2003 said the Bangladesh government's human rights record remained "poor" and it continued to commit "numerous serious abuses".

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in a speech to a public rally in Jatrabari hailed the report, saying: "The report reflects the realities of Bangladesh what the Awami League has long been saying."

"It has brought to light violation of human rights under the present regime including custodial torture and deaths," said Hasina, also the president of the AL.

The government has been
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'Think twice before attacks, we'll have our turn'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday warned law enforcers and ruling coalition-backed 'cadres' that time is coming when they will have to face the consequences of their 'atrocities' on her party leaders and workers.

"Think twice before attacking our (AL) leaders and workers, and keep it in mind we will have our turn," said the leader of the opposition in parliament.

Hasina asked her party men to list persons who are torturing them. "If necessary, take their photographs."

The AL chief was addressing a grand rally at the capital's Jatrabari ahead of today's countrywide
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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addresses a public rally on Shaheed Faruk Road in South Jatrabari yesterday ahead of today's anti-government countrywide hartal.

AL, close parties plan concerted agitation

REAZ AHMAD

The Awami League's (AL) move to strike an alliance with left-leaning parties is yet to get much response, but the opposition parties are now thinking of holding simultaneous anti-government agitation.

Stirred by main opposition AL's oust-government movement and subsequent parleys with other parties, Hasanul Haq Inu-led Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Workers Party (WP) are also holding dialogues among themselves on how to give the current anti-government movement a coordinated shape.

Sources in the opposition camp said in recent weeks the AL gained a great deal of sympathy and moral support of other opposition parties because of what they said was high-handedness of the government and

recent police excesses on pro-hartal pickets.

Despite drawing little response from mainstream leftist political parties to its alliance-building bid, the AL is set to continue dialogues with all pro-liberation parties in an attempt to add spark to the campaign to overthrow the BNP-led coalition government.

Following AL's separate talks with different components of the Left Democratic Front and the 11-party grouping during the last two weeks, all the small political parties met on February 19 under the 11-party banner. The meeting resolved to further strengthen a third alternate political force beyond the existing AL-BNP bipolar politics.

As none of the parties, including the CPB, WP, Gano Forum, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Samyabadi Dal,
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60 arrested ahead of today's hartal

Pickets damage vehicles in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arson, arrests and bullet injuries marked the final hours to today's countrywide hartal of the main opposition Awami League (AL), a fourth in a month, amid the ruling coalition's hard line on demonstrations, processions and picketing.

Police arrested about 60 AL leaders and workers in Mymensingh and Chittagong and arsonists with alleged ties to the opposition party set fire to a human-hauler and a CNG autorickshaw in Dhaka last night.

Despite a government warning of confining opposition activists indoors, the AL remains unbent on the 6:00am to 6:00pm shutdown as part of its oust-the government

movement that the ruling BNP described as a trigger in disorder.

Police arrested about 50 leaders and activists of the AL and its front organisations after cordoning the party office on Shiv Bari Road in Mymensingh district town yesterday evening, our correspondent said.

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Khaleda to address BNP rally in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) holds a rally today at Bashabo in the city that coincides with the countrywide daylong hartal enforced by main opposition Awami League (AL).

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is scheduled to address today's rally organised by Dhaka City Unit of BNP at 3pm. The last public meeting that the unit organised was at Jatrabari on February 14, another day of AL-called shutdown.

The BNP claims today's rally is but one of eight such meetings to be held in the city announced much ahead of the hartal-call.

But AL sources allege the BNP announced the programme after their hartal-call in an attempt to foil the shutdown and repress AL leaders and activists, who will be out picketing on the streets.

It's India v Pakistan

Hosts avoid Australia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh avoided a Plate Championship semifinal clash with Australia when they defeated Ireland by eight wickets in one of four final group league matches of the Fifth ICC U-19 World Cup yesterday.

While the home side ducked a tough battle Pakistan had to embrace a five-run defeat against England only to set up a blood and thunder Cup semifinal clash with bitter rivals India.

Opener Nafees Iqbal struck a timely unbeaten 86 as Bangladesh toppled an unimpressive Ireland total of 141 for the loss of only two wickets and with 20 overs to spare at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium.

The talented right-hander hammered fifteen boundaries and a six in his 97-ball knock after left-arm spinner Nadeef Chowdhury ripped the Irish hearts out, claiming four wickets for 14 runs.

Bangladesh will now take on Scotland in the second Plate semifinal at the same venue on March 1. Ireland on the other hand will face Australia in the first semi at the MA Aziz Stadium on February 29.

Meanwhile, in the more glamorous Cup competition, Pakistan needed a victory against former champions England at the Fatullah Stadium to dodge a meeting with India. But the young Pakistanis, who were the only unbeaten team until Friday, collapsed to 191 on a

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TOSHIBA
PLASMA FRIDGE
RANGS GROUP

হান্টার এখন শহরে সামলে রাখুন নিজেকে

হপস, রাইস আর মল্ট থেকে তৈরী হান্টার মল্ট বেরাডেজ। এবার এলো শহরের আনাচে-কানাচে, আপনাকেই খুঁজে নিতে। হাতে তুলে নিন হান্টার, অনারকম আমেজ বারবার!

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Positive Bangladesh
See our special story titled 'the strength within' on page 12.