

# 750mw load shedding as gas pressure drops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to a drop in gas pressure in the national grid and a shut down of a major power plant, the country is facing a daily power load shedding of up to 750 megawatts.

Power Development Board (PDB) sources said that against a peak demand of 3550 megawatts (mw), the PDB is now able to generate only up to 2700 mw of power.

The PDB claims that it is capable, during peak conditions, of generating up to 3434 mw. But this amount cannot be generated now because of a sharp fall in gas pressure, which has been caused by strains to the system set on by rising demands.

Adding to the problem, a major power plant—the AES Haripur 360 mw power plant has remained shut down for maintenance since February 8. The plant is very fuel-efficient, consuming half the gas needed by older power plants in Ashuganj to generate the same level of power.

The Haripur plant will resume operation at the end of the month, PDB said.

With the current shutdown of the Haripur plant, the PDB had planned to generate equivalent power by augmenting power production at Ashuganj. But Petrobangla is unable to increase gas supplies there accordingly.

Petrobangla explained that with

the temperature rising everyday, the demand for power, most of which is gas-generated, has shot up drastically.

"We can supply gas up to 1360 million cubic feet a day (mmcf). If we must meet the entirety of gas demand for power, we would have to be able to supply more than 1400 mmcf," said a Petrobangla source.

He said the rising demand is causing a drop in the gas flow pressure, adding that lower pressures disrupt optimum power generation.

"The demand goes down on Friday and starts rising from Saturday," he said, adding, "This

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A Lebanese policeman and civilians are seen at the site of an explosion in Beirut yesterday. The huge explosion set ablaze cars and devastated buildings, leaving smouldering bodies in the streets.

# Govt, WB differ on capital injection amount at Rupali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and the World Bank (WB) are having difference of opinion on re-injection of capital needed for privatising the state-owned Rupali Bank.

The WB wants the government to pump in Tk 2,500 crore as re-capitalisation before privatising Rupali Bank while the government believes Tk 500 crore is enough for this purpose, sources said.

The government and a WB mission on Development Support Credit phase-3 are now discussing this issue among many others on macro-economic framework, financial sector, state-owned enterprise, power, trade liberalisation, tax modernisation and public administration and governance.

The WB mission that arrived in the capital on February 7 and leaves on February 15 is now reviewing the progress on several conditions against a development support credit. If all goes well, the WB may provide up to \$300 million loan, sources said.

The WB team headed by Sector Director of Poverty Reduction and

Economic Management Team Sadique Ahmed argues that Rupali Bank needs to be privatised as per international practice. For this the bank needs Tk 2,500 crore re-capitalisation.

But the government says the country's banks follow a central bank policy on maintaining their capital and that privatising Rupali Bank should also follow this. Under this policy, it needs Tk 500 crore re-capitalisation.

The sides are yet to agree on the issue.

The WB also asked the government to immediately reconstitute the board of Rupali Bank. The government said it is already working in that line and has appointed an ex-banker, a chartered accountant, an economist, among others, to the new board.

Within a couple of weeks, the government will publish information of memorandum for the privatisation of the bank.

The WB mission also met Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and chiefs of the Bangladesh Bank, National Board of Revenue and some other government agencies.

# 2 'muggers' lynched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mob lynched two alleged muggers in Keraniganj yesterday.

After four muggers snatched away a mobile phone set and cash from one Mamun at Malancha in Keraniganj at around 6:30am, he

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# Nepal party men unite in India for democracy

## EU, India put pressure on king; offer for talks with Maoists renewed

AFP, REUTERS, New Delhi/Kathmandu

Leading members of seven Nepalese political parties who fled to India after King Gyanendra seized power formed a united front yesterday to push for the restoration of democracy at home while king renewed his talks offer to Maoists.

Following a call by Nepali parties, India yesterday asked Nepal to take "immediate steps" to restore multi-party democracy.

The message was conveyed to Nepal's ambassador to India, Karna Dhoj Adhikari, who called on Foreign Minister Natwar Singh, an official spokesman said in New Delhi.

"The minister (also) conveyed that it would be desirable that immediate steps are taken towards the release of political leaders, journalists and human rights activists; freedom of media is restored (and) multi-party democracy is rein-

stated," the spokesman said. European Union member states have recalled their ambassadors from the Nepalese capital Kathmandu for consultations following the king's power grab there, a French foreign ministry spokesman said yesterday.

"In light of recent events in Nepal, we have decided -- along with our European partners -- to recall EU ambassadors living in

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# IN ACTION AGAINST PIRATES Cop station attacked, 30 fishermen hurt

UNB, Bhola

At least 30 people were injured, five with bullets, in a clash between police and fishermen at Tajmuddin upazila headquarters in Bhola yesterday.

Witnesses said over 2,000 agitated fishermen, pushed out of the Meghna River by pirates, stormed into the police station as their repeated appeals for protection went unheeded.

"The angry fishermen dismantled the boundary wall of the police station and ransacked documents, leading to a violent clash between them and the policemen," says a firsthand account of the fighting.

To bring the situation under control, police opened fire that left five of the protestors injured with bullets. They are Sadek, Farooq, Nasir, Rahman and Liton.

Amid the counteroffensive, the fishermen went on the rampage and attacked the residence of the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

Eight policemen were also injured during the clash. They are Sub-Inspector Sarwar and constables Altaf, Hanif, Ayub, Hannan, Berek, Delwar and Kamal.

The fishermen said they had demanded protection from the attacks of notorious 'Bachchu Bahini' who looted all from them in

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Prayer Timing		
February 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-52	5-56
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

