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TENGRATILA BLOWOUT

Blaze rages with same fury, no Niko move yet

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The blaze triggered by a blowout at Tengratila gas field continued with the same fury for the second day yesterday, sending the flames up to 150 feet high amid a moderate rainfall throughout the day.

Officials of Canadian company Niko or Bapex (Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Corporation) were yet to take any steps to extinguish the fire that started in a relief well following an explosion in the early hours Friday.

Panicked people of the nearby villages demonstrated in the area yesterday afternoon, demanding adequate safety measures in and around the gas field. They also

demanded adequate compensation within three days as the blowout and fire forced them out of their houses.

In a bid to pacify the demonstrators, Niko officials and the administration assured them of taking necessary measures soon after consultation with the higher authorities.

Security forces including police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) meanwhile cordoned off about two square km area around the gas field on safety grounds.

Inhabitants of several villages nearby, including Girishnagar, Koiajura, Shantipur, Ajabpur and Alipur, have left their houses in fear. Almost all shops at Tengratila Bazar

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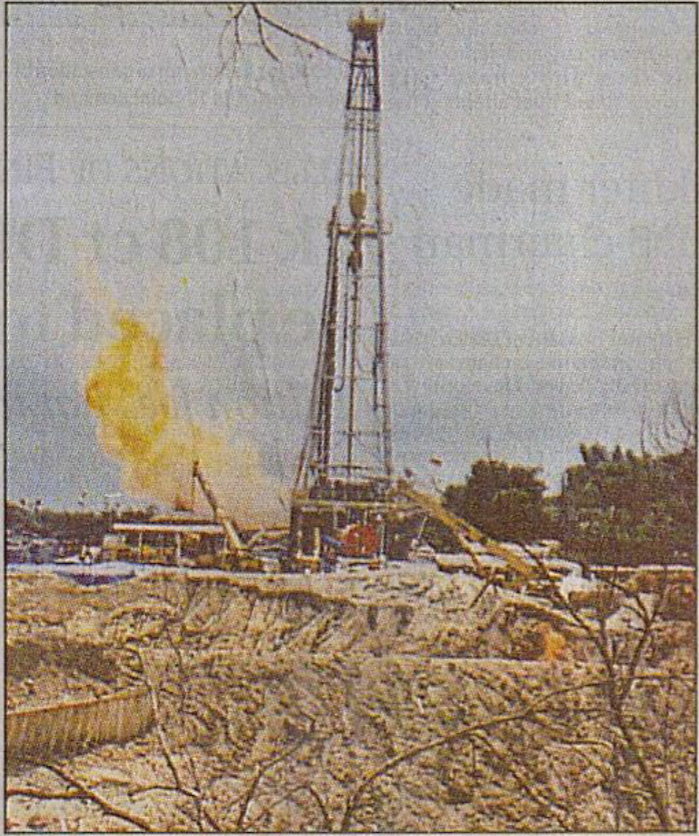


PHOTO: STAR

The blaze at Tengratila gas field continues to rage with fury for the second day yesterday.

Blowout scapegoats

SHARIER KHAN

Energy ministry Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday blasted Petrobangla along with Bapex for not monitoring Canadian company Niko's operation in Tengratila while the government's exceptional contract with Niko gave Petrobangla no monitoring role.

He also formed a seven-member probe committee without any drilling expert although the

Tengratila blowout is mainly due to drilling flaws.

At the directive of the adviser, Bapex (Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company) yesterday suspended two field level officials attached to Niko's Tengratila relief well construction, sources said.

These two officials, for 15 days by turn, oversaw the operation on behalf of Bapex. One of them had returned to Dhaka after his duty a

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MONEY LAUNDERING Bidisha gets 2 months' bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted two months' bail to Bidisha, the estranged wife of former military ruler and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, in a money laundering case filed by the government.

Apart from granting the ad interim bail, the court also issued a rule on the government to show cause within eight weeks as to why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail in the case.

The bail order prompted the government to file a criminal miscellaneous petition in the Appellate Division yesterday against the order.

The laundering case is the fourth to have been filed against Bidisha, who on rejection of her bail petition in a lower court, filed the petition with the higher court on June 21.

The court heard the bail petition

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BNP top brass mourn Jubo Dal 'criminal'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers are hesitating to take action against notorious criminals holding portfolios of ruling BNP and its front organisations as many ministers, including prime minister herself, showed sympathetic concern for slain Jubo Dal leader Sagir Ahmed who was accused in over a dozen cases including murders.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia went to the party's Naya Paltan office yesterday to see Sagir's body and placed wreath on his coffin wrapped with the party flag. She offered feteha, seeking peace for the departed soul of Sagir and talked to his family members and consoled them.

Ministers, MPs and senior leaders, including Senior Joint Secretary

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia along with her party top brass attends a prayer for slain Jubo Dal leader Sagir Ahmed in the capital yesterday.

Ershad sees BNP victory in next polls

BSS, Rangpur

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman H M Ershad yesterday said the BNP-led alliance will get the majority seats while the Awami League will occupy the second position in the next parliament elections.

"In the next general elections, the BNP-led coalition will bag 170 to 180 seats while the Awami League 115," he said, adding, "The Jatiya Party will lend its support to the party that will form the government after winning the election."

The former president made his prediction at a press conference at

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Int'l concern can't stop persecution

20 attacks on Ahmadiyyas in 18 months

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Zealots carrying out countrywide violent campaigns against Ahmadiyyas once again disregarded the concern of world rights community by attacking the sect members with bombs and setting fire to their mosque in Brahmanbaria on Friday.

The attack created panic among the 20,000 Ahmadiyyas in the district where the minority sect

preached their beliefs first in Bangladesh.

One suspect was arrested yesterday at the district town after a Special Branch (SB) team visited the spot where two dozen bombs were exploded by the zealots. A team of army explosives experts is likely to visit the spot today.

District Amir of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Monzur Hossain filed two separate cases with Sadar

Police Station in connection with Friday's attack.

The attack came six days after a European Human Rights Conference on extremism, intolerance and violence asked Bangladesh government to ensure safety to Ahmadiyyas and restore their mosques now in capture of anti-Ahmadiyya operatives.

The conference also asked for

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Gas goes to Bogra Writ petition bares SIM tax anomaly

60km pipeline set up

SHARIER KHAN

Petrobangla completed on Thursday installation of a 60km gas pipeline between Nalka in Sirajganj and Bogra, bringing several important areas in the energy-starved northern region, including Pabna, Baghabari and Iswardi, under the national gas network.

This pipeline will also facilitate setting up of proposed large-scale industrial projects by Indian giant Tata in Iswardi.

A well placed source in the Gas Transmission Company Ltd said the gas network will soon reach southern districts also -- the other energy-starved region -- beginning from Kushtia and Bheramara. By 2010, the network will cover Khulna.

The new pipeline is transmitting up to 70 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas under the Pashchimanchal Gas Company Ltd (PGCL) that was set up four years ago to facilitate gas transmission to the northern districts.

The PGCL was created when the

government for the first time set up a gas pipeline on the Jamuna bridge and connected Sirajganj in the north with the national grid that earlier supplied gas only in the country's eastern part from Sylhet to Chittagong. The expansion of gas network then slowed down.

The country presently consumes around 1,450 mmcf of gas.

The northern pipeline is presently feeding gas for domestic use and small industrial belts. The northern as well as southern Bangladesh had so far depended on oil-fired power supply which is very costly for the nation. Consequently, both the regions saw little industrial growth over the decades.

Now the upcoming coal-fired 250 megawatt power plant, and gas-fired ones will trigger a significant industrial growth in the northern districts, GTCL sources believe.

Bogra got high priority under the present government, and about 100 km of gas pipeline network is being set up in the district to ensure wide

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The tax shows price of a card at Tk 2,172 while the actual price is Tk 120-240

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's proposal to slap Tk 1,200 in VAT and supplementary duty on a cellphone SIM card is based on the arbitrary fixing of its untaxed price at Tk 2,172 although each such card costs between Tk 120 and Tk 240 to import.

The capricious tariff fixation prompted the High Court yesterday to order the government, upon a writ petition, to explain within four weeks why its imposition of Tk 1,200 in taxes on SIM and RUIM cards and fixing their price at Tk 2,172 would not be declared illegal.

The court in a rule also stayed the statutory regulatory order (SRO) of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) with regard to the petitioner

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Youth nabbed for sending threat mails

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested a man who claimed himself as an al-Qaeda member and gave email threat to blow up two embassies, the American Center and the Rab headquarters in Dhaka.

The Rab intelligence men nabbed Hasanul Haq, 29, from his Jakir Hossain Road house in Mohammadpur, Director of Rab Intelligence Wing Lt Col Gulzar Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star last night.

Claiming himself as an al-Qaeda member, he sent emails to the embassies of Japan and the Netherlands and the American Center.

He threatened that the embassies would be blown up if they do not

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Boy carries his twin inside him for 16yrs

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Believe it or not, a 16-year-old boy was carrying his twin brother inside his body!

Doctors at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) yesterday operated on the boy named Abu Raihan and found a foetus-in-foeto--the term for such unborn foetus--weighing 1.5 kilograms.

The foetus was found with grown up hair, legs and the genital although the development of the head and brain was very little. It also had two teeth and two slightly developed hands.

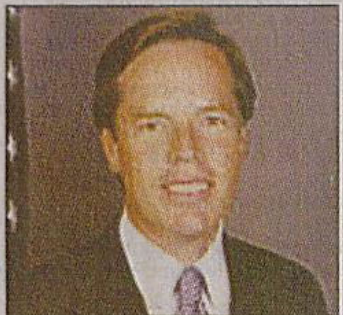
It is a matter of surprise how a boy could carry a living "child" in his

body without any uterus! "We were prepared for such a surprise," said Prof MA Majid of the surgery department. "Medical science says it is possible but this is the first such case in my professional life," said the former head of the surgery department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

From 9:00 am to 1:00pm a seven-member board conducted the operation and it was a successful operation, he said, adding that the boy is now out of danger and will not face any problem in future.

During the pregnancy of the boy's mother, the growth of the twin embryos in the uterus had imbalance. At a certain period of growth, one of the embryos entered into the

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US under secy arrives today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas R Burns arrives in Dhaka today on a brief visit for discussion on political climate and bilateral issues of mutual interest with government officials, political party leaders and

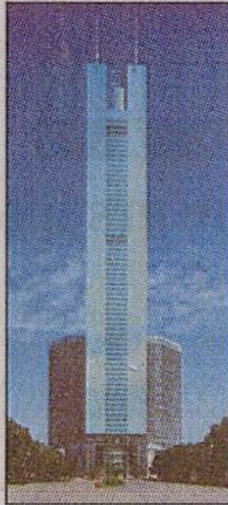
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Petronas tower



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Citic Plaza



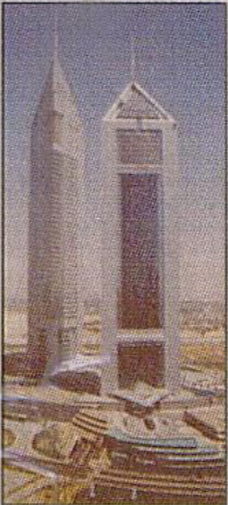
Guangzhou, China

Empire State Building



New York, USA

Emirates towers



Dubai, UAE

Sears tower



Chicago, USA

Central Plaza



Hongkong, China



Dhaka, Bangladesh

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