

Stop gas payment to Niko, freeze accounts

HC also asks govt why contract won't be declared illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to stop gas payment to Niko and freeze all bank accounts of the Canadian oil company in Bangladesh.

The court also asked the government to explain in six weeks why the Bapex-Niko gas exploration agreement should not be declared illegal.

It also directed the government to submit within 15 days the six investigation reports of different committees—five on the two blow-outs at the Tengratilla gas field in January and June this year, and one on the agreement between the Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) and Niko.

The HC vacation bench comprising justices MA Rashid and M Fazlur Rahman further directed the gov-

ernment to submit in 45 days the report on the steps taken to realise compensation from Niko for the damage at the Tengratilla gas field.

The court has also asked the government to submit the names and particulars of the individual and corporate shareholders of both Niko Resources (Bangladesh) Ltd and its parent company Niko Resources Ltd.

The orders came following a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by three human rights organisations, challenging the validity of the joint venture agreement of October 16, 2003, between the Canadian gas and oil exploration company Niko and Bapex.

The Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (Bela), Ain-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK) and Odhikar jointly filed the writ petition on

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Shady agreement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint venture agreement (JVA) between Niko and Bapex was done in violation of the government policy, constitution and against the opinions of the government's own energy experts.

Among many controversial issues related to this deal, former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain forced Petrobangla to pay Niko Resources Ltd \$4 million illegally in Niko's bank account till April for purchase of gas from Feni marginal field illegally without fixing any price or any purchase agreement. Bapex did not get its portion of the money as per

the agreement.

In addition, the BNP government took away the three gas fields of Feni, Kamta and Chhatak from two gas companies of Petrobangla without paying them any compensation. These fields were placed under Bapex so that Niko can have access to them through the joint venture.

Again of these three fields, Chhatak is divided in two parts—east and west. The eastern part is unexplored, but the government gave it to Niko showing it as a "marginal gas field" in gross violation of the rules.

The unsolicited agreement

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Militants' bomb factory found in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives in city's Nawabpur yesterday seized raw materials and tools for making bomb-heads and arrested two men for suspected links to the August 17 blasts.

The arrestees used to work for Abdus Samad alias Mintu, the absconding JMB leader who had stockpiled the huge cache of bomb-making materials seized from a South Goran house on Thursday.

Police have yet to obtain leads about the whereabouts of Samad, who had reportedly received some 100 plastic 'bomb-heads' after the August 17 blasts. The law enforcers believe he had stored the bomb-making materials in his South Goran house and was working to carry out a fresh spell of bomb attacks in the capital.

Of the two arrestees, Tofael Ahmed, 32, is an activist of Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh and was placed on a seven-day remand yesterday. He used to work for

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Tofael Ahmed, right, an accomplice of JMB leader Abdus Samad, shows detectives metal dies for making bombs at Satata Machineries, an engineering workshop on Nawabpur Road in the capital yesterday.

Khaleda off to NY to attend World Summit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia left here yesterday for New York to attend the three-day summit of the world leaders and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session beginning tomorrow on the

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JMB chief Abdur Rahman's brother held in Jamalpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested Moulana Obaidur Rahman Ibne Fazle, younger brother of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman, at Madarganj upazila in Jamalpur early yesterday, suspecting his involvement in the August 17 countrywide serial blasts.

Acting on a tip-off, Madarganj and Jamalpur sadar police raided the house of Moulana Solaiman, father-in-law of Obaidur, in Miasabpara village at about 1:30am



Moulana Obaidur Rahman

and arrested him.

Obaidur went on hiding after the serial bomb blasts across the country on August 17, according to sources.

Following police prayer for remand, a Jamalpur court yesterday sent Obaidur on a five-day remand for interrogation. He has been under intensive interrogation by police and different intelligence agencies. He might be transferred to the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC) in Dhaka for interrogation, sources said.

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90 MW FENCHUGANJ POWER PLANT

PDB signs deal with inexperienced firm

SHARIER KHAN

The government yesterday signed its Tk 524 crore second power project deal with Chinese company Harbin that also built the poorly performing 100 megawatt simple cycle Tongi plant, the first power plant under the BNP government.

The Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday signed the agreement with Harbin for the 90 megawatt combined cycle Fenchuganj

Power Plant for which the company did not qualify. The company never built a combined cycle plant on its own.

Once the contract is made effective, Harbin will get a 10 percent down payment or Tk 52 crore against the project cost. The government had approved this payment in April ignoring its own rule not to make any such down payment.

The project is scheduled to be

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DOING BUSINESS

Bangladesh costliest in South Asia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A global business survey by the World Bank and International Finance Corporation (IFC) reveals that the cost to start a business in Bangladesh is the highest in the South Asian region.

The survey "Doing Business in 2006: Creating Jobs", which covered 155 countries, shows that among the seven south Asian countries Bangladesh fares better than India in the process and time required to start a business.

Bangladesh demands eight procedures to start a business, while it takes 11 in Pakistan, India and Bhutan. The Maldives needs only six procedures. Globally, Afghanistan is the most business friendly in terms of procedures it just needs one.

The number of days needed to start a business in Bangladesh is 35 while it takes 71 days in India, 62 in Bhutan and 50 in Sri Lanka. On the other hand Pakistan needs 24 days

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Notice

Full results of the written test of the 25th BCS examinations, 2004 on page-7.

Sports News Grameen Phone

Tigers crash after Bashar fifty

AL MUSABBIR SADI from Colombo

Habibul Bashar led from the front but Bangladesh failed to capitalise on his magnificent knock on the first day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at the Premadasa Stadium

here on Monday.

The Bangladesh captain carved 84 off 96 balls however the Tigers, who surprisingly after being put in on a flat track, collapsed from a promising 155-2 to 188 nearly 45

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Biman raises domestic fares

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided to increase the fares of its domestic flights due to rise in aviation cost including fuel price hike. The increased fares will come into effect from September 16, said a Biman press release yesterday.

The new fare for Dhaka-

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HOSPITAL FEE HIKE

Minister, secretary face off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and former health secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal are at loggerheads, claiming their statements correct on whether or not the minister knew about the raise in fees at all public hospitals.

The health minister, who claimed

Sunday that he had not been informed about the circular on the fee hike, yesterday in a clarification said the statements given by the former secretary were completely incorrect and baseless. He also said of taking actions against those involved in issuing the notification.

Meantime, Sarwar Kamal, now director general of the Jute Institute,

last night sent a statement to newspaper offices, saying the circular was issued maintaining all required rules and procedure of the government. "All the parties concerned are well aware of [the raise]," the statement said.

The health minister's clarification said the document of the

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