

# The Daily Star

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TO  
People's Right to Know

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## Gas supply rationed

### Tongi power plant, Polash fertiliser shut down; new connections restricted till Dec; re-rolling, salt, lime factories to get less gas

SHAKHAWAT LITON and SHARIEF KHAN

In the wake of the acute energy crisis, a high-powered committee yesterday recommended introducing a gas rationing system in the industrial sector and suspending until next December new gas connections except for those to export-oriented industries.

As part of the rationing system, the committee suggested shutting down the Tongi power plant and Polash fertiliser factory until next December.

The other fertiliser factories, however, will be provided with less gas, said the committee in its report placed at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

The gas supply will be suspended mainly for industries like re-rolling mills, and salt and lime factories.

The recommendations have been categorised as short-term measures till December, medium-term measures till June 2006 and long-term measures till 2008.

The working committee, which will submit its report to the energy ministry today, also suggested launching a massive drive to cut all illegal connections, lowering system losses and ensuring timely closing down of market and shopping centres, sources said.

Currently Petrobangla supplies around 1,510 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) of gas against the demand of

1,610 mmcf. Power plants consume around 46 percent of the gas while fertiliser plants consume 19 percent.

This crisis has been caused mainly by delays in implementing the 37-kilometre Ashuganj Manohardi gas pipeline. The pipeline was originally planned to come into operation in June 2004, then rescheduled for June 2005. Due to opposition of the people of Manohardi (Narsinghdi-4 constituency) to giving up rights of land, the project has now been rescheduled for June 2006, Petrobangla sources said.

In addition, the gas production capacity of the country has also reached the maximum level. To keep up with the country's demand growth of 7 to 8 percent a year, the government

must find new gas production to stay even with the demand growth.

The Power Development Board will form a committee with specialists taken from the universities to improve the power situation, sources said.

In the first phase of the gas rationing till December, the committee suggests saving 44 mmcf gas by shutting down the 80-mw plant in Tongi and the Polash fertiliser factory. During that time, Petrobangla will focus on bringing an additional 25 mmcf of gas from Titas and 20 mmcf from Unocal's Moulavibazar field.

New gas connections will also resume after December, sources said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Dhaka turns into city of rickshaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has become a city of rickshaws once again as the Eid nears and the streets are getting clogged with the three-wheelers.

The result is immense traffic jams and the policemen are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain order in the street. According to guesstimates, there are now over three lakh illegal rickshaws plying the streets against the legal licences for only 79,616.

A large section of village poor, who have flocked to the city to earn a few bucks before the Eid by plying rickshaws, are now found sleeping on the sidewalks at night. These unskilled rickshaw-pullers are also posing accident hazard.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has initiated a drive to seize illegal rickshaws and so far grabbed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

Rickshaws move at will due to traffic mismanagement at Segunbagicha intersection near the Experimental Theatre Hall in the city yesterday, causing serious congestion.

## JMB threatens to bomb 17 Kushtia installations

STAR REPORT

Banned Islamist organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) yesterday threatened to blow up 17 offices and important establishments in Kushtia if police continue to arrest and harass its activists and their activities are obstructed.

Kushtia judge court, shopping malls and markets, police stations, police lines, local newspaper offices and all banks are on the JMB hit list, according to threat letters sent to the heads of the 17 offices and establish-

ments by post.

The computer-composed letters, issued by the "district unit chief commando of JMB," were posted from Kushtia Police Lines post office on Saturday, sources said.

A UNB report says the deputy commissioner of Feni also received a threat letter sent by JMB yesterday, prompting the district administration to beef up security in the district and upazila headquarters.

Meantime, law enforcers yesterday arrested four JMB members -- two in Jhenidah and one each in

Gopalganj and Comilla.

Our Kushtia correspondent reports: Panic gripped the people who were busy shopping at different markets in the district town after the news of JMB threat spread at about 12:00 noon. They left the malls and banks in fear of bomb attacks.

District administration admitted receiving threats and the law enforcers have been put on high alert to protect every targets mentioned on the JMB hit list. The police have also started a combing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Harkatul Jihad banned at last

### Govt terms it 'a terrorist outfit'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government at last banned Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) and its activities in Bangladesh yesterday, over a decade after the international terrorist group had started to spread its tentacles across the country.

The fourth Islamist organisation to be banned, Huji's Bangladesh chapter has been involved in carrying out terrorist activities in Bangladesh for more than half a decade. It has been behind several major bomb

attacks as well as assassination attempts on former prime minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina and some leading intellectuals.

An intelligence report in October 2003 had strongly recommended that Huji be banned for the sake of the country's security. Despite being well aware of the militant outfit's activities, the government kept denying its existence over the last few years.

Describing Harkatul's activities

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## SMALL POWER PLANT DEALS

# Govt shelves unsolicited awarding on WB threat

SHARIEF KHAN

As the World Bank (WB) has threatened to suspend all funds on grounds of massive nepotism, corruption and irregularities in the unsolicited small power schemes, the government yesterday decided to shelve the unsolicited awarding of small power purchase deals.

Instead the government will now float tenders seeking the lowest price offers from small power developers,

competent sources said.

At a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), chairmen and high officials of the power ministry discussed that the October 19 deadline to award unsolicited power sales contracts to different small power developers will have to be shelved.

The PMO also decided to form a high powered committee to design the tenders for small power purchase agreements. This design will be used

for small power contracts all over the country till 2015, the sources said.

Around 45 to 48 small power purchase agreements were set to be awarded to different ministers and ruling party parliamentarians, sources said. While they know nothing about the power sector, these beneficiaries were supposed to 'sell' these deals to real power developers.

A chaotic scenario prevailed since the government announced

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Prevent killing of guest birds to tackle avian flu

### Govt asks livestock staff

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The government, as per its emergency plan, has instructed the livestock officials to be on strict vigil to prevent the killing of the migratory birds, which have the potential to spread the bird flu virus in the poultry industry.

The instruction was given following the warning of the UN agencies that migratory birds are carrying the bird flu virus and Bangladesh, along with some other countries, have the potential to become new large endemic areas of bird flu infections as the countries are situated along one of the major migratory routes.

The UN also called on these countries to be vigilant for signs of disease in wild and domestic birds and prepare national emergency plans.

"We have instructed all upazila-level livestock officials to check killing of migratory birds in remote areas coming during the season," Md. Abdul Karim, secretary of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, told the news agency.

Moreover the officials were also instructed to maintain strict

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Least prepared to tackle bird flu

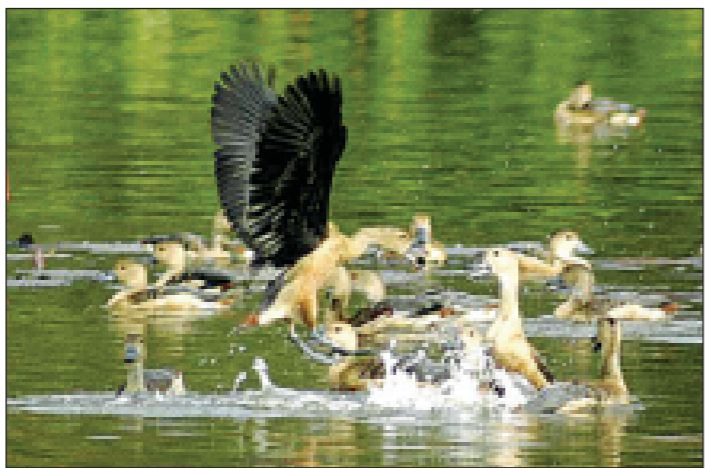
PINAKI ROY

The government has no preparatory mechanism for stocking anti-viral vaccine as a precaution to tackle avian influenza, neither for fowl nor for people of the densely populated country.

But most of the countries, where the poultry sector is booming, have

been scrambling for precautions by making stocks of anti-flu vaccine to combat the deadly outbreak of disease. Their mad dash for precautionary measures came against a backdrop of recent news that bird flu occurred in Romania and Turkey that killed more than 60 people in Asia since 1997.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



STAR FILE PHOTO

Migratory birds may carry and spread the potentially lethal avian flu virus.

## IOJ blames 14-party for Ctg leader's killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ-Amini) yesterday blamed Awami League-led 14-party alliance for the murder of IOJ party leader Iqbal Bin Yakub at Chittagong on Saturday night.

Addressing a protest rally at the North Gate of Baitul Mokarram National Mosque, IOJ Chairman Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini accused the leaders and activists of the 14-party alliance and termed the killing of Iqbal 'politically motivated and pre-planned'.

He said, "At the beginning of the BNP-led government a senior leader of Chittagong, Muslehuddin Abu Bokor, was murdered but we are yet to get justice."

He called on the BNP to stop using the IOJ as the stairway to more power.

The government must take immediate steps for the trial of Iqbal muder case otherwise the IOJ will opt for tougher movements, Senior Vice-chairman of IOJ Moulana Mohiuddin said while speaking at the rally.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## 20,000-man security blanket for Saarc meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 20,000 security personnel will be deployed to ensure maximum security for the upcoming 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka, foreign ministry officials told the high officials and advance security teams from the member states yesterday.

The officials briefed them about the preparation of the November 12-13 meet as well as protocol and security arrangements.

The high commissioner of Sri Lanka, ambassador of Nepal, advance security team from India, foreign ministry officials from the Maldives and senior officials from the Pakistan and Bhutan missions in Dhaka attended the meeting.

Security officials from host country also attended the meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Chief of Protocol Brigadier General Shaikh Monirul Islam in the chair.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

The meeting discussed the security arrangements, programme venues and accommodations of the heads of the state and government, foreign ministers, high officials and the media people covering the high-profile summit.

The foreign ministry officials told the officials and the delegations that six sub-committees have been working round the clock to ensure fool-proof security.

They made a presentation of the security arrangements and provided the advance teams and the embassy officials with necessary documents.

Apart from enquiring about the security and other arrangements, officials from the member states also put forward some suggestions regarding the security matters.

The Indian deputy high commissioner in Dhaka, officials from the external affairs ministry and six

## 3 killed in blast at ship-breaking yard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three workers were killed and at least 15 others injured as a tank in an oil tanker exploded at a ship-breaking yard in Sitakunda yesterday.

The dead are Shamim, 25, and Habib, 26, of Nandile in Mymensingh and Kanchan, 45, of Hosenpur in Kishoreganj.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when oil tanker MT Daya caught fire at the ship-breaking yard of Six Star Corporation at Kadam Rasul Jahanabad in Bhatiyar around 7:00am.

Some of the workers breaking the vessel got trapped inside the tanker, said Siraj, worker of an adjoining ship-breaking yard.

The fire continued until an oil tank inside the vessel exploded with a loud bang around 9:00am, he added.

The blast left the three killed on the spot and at least 15 others injured, five

of them critically. The injured were rushed to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) and other clinics in the port city.

Firefighters rushed to the scene and recovered the charred bodies and rescued the injured after they doused the fire around noon.

Witnesses alleged the firefighters arrived before the explosion but were not allowed to start operation inside the yard.

The fire roused suspicion as the oil tanker had obtained a gas-free certificate from the explosives department. A gas-free certificate is mandatory for dismantling a vessel and the rule is much more strict for oil tankers.

Sources said dismantling of MT Daya started after an inspector had inspected it.

Managing Director of Six Star

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

