

## Ashuganj-Manohardi

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The pipeline cannot be used.

The CPTDC was awarded the Tk 18-crore project for laying the pipeline section across the Meghna last year, although it had already proven its inefficiency through the first blow-out of the Tengratila gas field in January 2004. It was then working as the drilling contractor for Canadian Niko at the gas field that blew out on January 7 for negligent operations and flawed drilling designs.

But political high-ups pressured the project implementation authority, Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL), to award the contract to CPTDC despite its negative Tengratila record.

A top GTCL source defended the decision, saying, "The company meets the experience and technical criteria. There are many wings of the CPTDC and one of those might have been involved in the Tengratila operations. We cannot blame the CPTDC as a whole. Besides, its failure to lay pipeline across the Meghna does not prove inefficiency. In the past, a French company also failed to lay a pipeline of 24-inch diameter in this river."

However, he said, "If it fails to complete the task by the deadline, we will take punitive actions as per the agreement."

Another source pointed out that, as because a renowned French company named Spie Capag had to try thrice to lay a 24-inch pipeline across the Meghna, the authorities should have been more careful about picking the contractor to do the new job.

The pipeline project, which is already running nearly two years behind the schedule, created a lot of uproars among parliamentarians last year.

Ruling BNP lawmaker Shakhawat Hossain Bokul elected from Manohardi, who heads the parliamentary standing committee on energy, at one point was blamed for hindering the progress of the pipeline project for his personal gains.

Some officials said Bokul engaged some men in erecting structures along the route of the pipeline in Manohardi before the phase of land acquisition. A section of officials of the energy ministry joined the league and over-estimated the price of land. This

way, the land acquisition cost multiplied several times and Bokul made several crores of fastback. However, he flatly denied the accusation or having any connection with those who built structures overnight along the pipeline's route.

Later, the blame was shifted to Petrobangla and the project completion schedule was reset at June 2006.

The CPTDC's job consisted of installing pipelines across two rivers -- a 300 metre section across the tamed Arial Kha and the 1km one across the tough Meghna. It succeeded with the Arial Kha job.

"Once it is completed, gas supply will increase by 100 to 150 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) and greatly improve the gas transmission pressure," said an expert, "but, most importantly, a number of new pipelines can be built based on this pipeline." These will include a pipeline from Manohardi to Elenga, Dhanua, Bonpara and then to the further east in Bharamara etc, he said.

Currently, Petrobangla supplies around 1,510 mmcf of gas against a demand for 1,610 mmcf. Power plants consume around 46 percent of the gas and fertiliser plants some 19 percent.

## 150 hurt

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Nurani Hotel to hold a rally.

The locals protested the rally and demanded expulsion of Rahman, also known as Rajarbagi Pir, and his men for his 'anti-Islamic activities'.

The police at 10:00pm removed a podium erected for the rally, but about 4,000 people under the banner of Imam Muzezzin Oikya Parishad continued agitation for his expulsion.

At one stage, Rahman's followers pelted the mob with stones from the roof of the hotel, resulting in a counter-attack, witnesses said.

The police intervened and fired gunshots and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the mob. The area around the old bus terminal in the town turned a battlefield as the police and the mob chased each other for one and a half hours.

Officials of the district administration finally forced the Pir to leave the town with his men at 2:45am. Of the injured, 25 were committed to Sunamganj General Hospital, sources said. Police said about 20 of their men were also injured.

## Delhi floats tender

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February 15 and that for submission of those is April 3. On completion of the tender process, India plans to complete its largest hydropower project by 2012.

Experts said under the project, India would build one of the world's highest 'Rock Fill Dam' (162.80 metres high) to harness the Barak waters for generating electricity.

The project is a multipurpose project. It is not clear if it includes an irrigation component, as envisaged earlier.

When contacted, JRC Member Taulhidul Anwar Khan said yesterday he is aware of India's floating of international tender for the project. He however mentioned that New Delhi has been consistently assuring and reassuring Bangladesh of no diversion of water from the upstream of the Meghna.

He declined to comment on possibilities of retaining scanty Barak water within the proposed dam during dry season and releasing huge volumes of water from Tipaimukh point during monsoon.

"We're looking forward to raising various issues at the JRC meeting. Tipaimukh is very much on the JRC agenda," Taulhid added.

Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed had earlier said Bangladesh had fears about Tipaimukh project as the Barak is a feeder for the Surma, Kushiya and Meghna. But India gave assurance that it would not build any barrage there and would not divert the Barak waters.

At the last JRC meet in Dhaka, the then Indian water resources minister and JRC Co-chairman Priya Ranjan Dasgupta had said, "we'll present Tipaimukh's planned design to Bangladesh when it is prepared."

Dasgupta had also assured of not constructing the planned barrage that comes under Tipaimukh project package at Phulbari, 100 km downstream of Tipaimukh and 100 km upstream of Amalshil, Sylhet.

Phulbari barrage would have direct bearings on the Surma, Kushiya and Meghna due to diversion of water for irrigation purposes in northeastern India. Regarding the hydropower component and rock fill dam, India claims no damage to Bangladesh but Bangladesh fears water flow regulation in the upstream.

Since the last JRC meet, India has changes in its water resources ministry twice as the portfolio went to Santosh Mohan from Dasgupta and then to Saifuddin Soj from Santosh last week.

In the process, there is no response as yet to the Bangladesh water resources minister's December 15 letter asking his Indian counterpart for a joint visit to common river sites, as decided at the last JRC meet.

pants (academics, rights activists and experts) from both India and Bangladesh expressing deep concern.

"The Tipaimukh project was entirely developed and approved without even informing the government of Bangladesh or involving its people in any meaningful exercise to assess the downstream impacts of the dam," says a report prepared by ActionAID Bangladesh.

## Ctg tele link

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(carrier and wave).

T&T engineers patched up the damaged cables and restored the link at 1:15pm yesterday.

Though the T&T officials claimed that they have alternative system during the contingency, but subscribers of both nationwide, overseas and TeleTalk hardly get chance to establish tele link by the limited capacity.

The 256-km Dhaka-Chittagong optical fibre, installed at a cost of Tk 250 crore, is now almost in peril as irresponsible construction workers accompanied by thieves frequently sever the fibre.

## ACC

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commissioner's "capacity to provide the leadership needed for the challenging tasks ahead" as decisions on personnel appointments and transfers were taken without consultation with the three commission members, contrary to the provisions of the ACC Act.

Referring to what the TI termed "extremely low level of internal revenue collection", the report observed that the appointment of a tax ombudsman was awaiting approval from the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs despite continued demands from the civil society and business community.

Citing the absence of information about the tax ombudsman's "independence, investigative powers and resources", the TI report said "it is still questionable whether (the ombudsman) will prove an adequate response to corruption in the NBR."

The report also contained a brief overview of corruption in the Customs Department and questioned the professionalism of the police force in the country.

Referring to how corruption deprives millions of essential medical care, the globally released report stressed that stamping out corruption in the health sector is a "matter of life and death", a press release said quoting the report.

"Corruption in health care costs more than money. When an infant dies during an operation because an adrenalin injection to restart her heart was actually just water--how do you put a price to that?" the press release quoted TI Chairperson Huguette Labelle as saying.

## Biman's stranded passengers at Brussels sent by other airlines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Biman Airlines finally sent the 237 stranded passengers at Brussels to New York (NY) yesterday.

Biman made arrangements with Air India and Delta Airlines to transport the passengers of its New York flight which left Dhaka on Sunday.

Biman's BG-011 Dhaka-NY flight started from Zia International Airport after rescheduling departure time thrice and it got stuck at Brussels on the same night due to engine failure. Since then 21 Business Class passengers, 203 adult and 13 infant passengers of Economy Class of the DC-10 aircraft were stranded in Brussels.

Meanwhile, a replacement engine from Amsterdam and nine engineers from Dhaka were sent to the aircraft's rescue yesterday, said Biman officials in Dhaka last night.

Passengers who were supposed to fly from New York to Dhaka on the DC-10's return flight also got stranded. Biman said it would arrange for their journey to Dhaka in its next available flight.

The national airlines' loss-making NY flight faced trouble for the second time in four months. In late September last year a Biman flight was grounded at the John F Kennedy Airport in New York for three days as the US Federal Aviation Authorities stopped it from taking off without repairing the 17 mechanical faults it had detected in the aircraft.

## Hasina

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government will be compelled to agree to reforms and called upon the people to join the long march to Dhaka on February 5.

Accusing the BNP-Jamaat alliance of polluting politics in the country, the AL chief alleged that her arch political rival has got the control of militant activities as they "start and stop at her will".

Calling upon the people to stand united against militancy, she said this government cannot be pardoned for "patronising" militant activities. " They won't be pardoned...all terrorists and godfathers are with the prime minister."

In her scathing attacks against her political foe, Hasina alleged that the prime minister is sitting in parliament with '111 terrorists and godfathers'. "Will the prime minister reply who is nurturing terrorists and godfathers?" she questioned.

"Awami League does not believe in politics of killing, it is your party (BNP)," she said, alleging that former finance minister SAMS Kibria was killed at the instruction of a highly-placed person.

She also accused the finance minister of looting development funds in Sylhet. "Like a guest bird Saifur Rahman is eating up all funds allocated for the development of Sylhet," she told her audience.

Refuting the prime minister's claim for development under the alliance rule, she said there had not been any economic development apart from 'development of militancy, corruption and grenade attacks' in the last four years.

Hasina said Jamaat-e-Islami is doing politics, using Islam. "But they don't believe in Islam of Hazrat Muhammad (SM)--they believe in Maududi's Islam," she said, criticising the alliance government for issuing liquor licence.

"Do they want to establish Islam by feeding people with liquor?" she questioned.

Making pre-election pledges, she said if Awami League returns to power, they will create employment, make the country self-reliant in food, alleviate poverty, ensure voting right of expatriate Bangladeshis and restore the spirit of the Liberation War.

"I will sacrifice my life following my father for the cause of the people and the country," Hasina told the rally.

The meeting was also addressed, among others, by Dr Kamal Hossain, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Huq Inu, Abdul Razzak MP, Tofael Ahmed, Abdul Jalil MP, Abel Mal Abdul Muhi, Obaidul Kabur, Nurul Islam Nahid, opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaheed, Dewan Farid gazi MP, Mayor Badruddin Kamran, Abdul Mannan, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Bimal Biswas, Alhaj Abbas Samad, Mafizul Islam Khan Khan, Moineddin Khan Badal, Enamul Huq, MA Gani, Tofazzal Hossain and Ashit Barun Roy.

## Masud Mia

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two grenades, killing former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others, the IGP said.

Fakhrul was also blamed for not providing information about the assailants.

"As per the probe reports, Masud Mia and Fakhrul Islam were sacked," the IGP added.

The order was issued on Tuesday night.

According to police sources, about 13 allegations against Masud Mia came to light after a number of newspaper ran reports on March 1 revealing his support to the Islamist militant leader Bangla Bhai.

## Itineraries of PM's

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The premier is likely to fly to Islamabad on February 12 to February 14 and to Delhi on March 20 to March 23, the official added.

Sources said Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin is likely to announce the final date of the prime minister's visit to Pakistan on February 9.

Dhaka has asked the Bangladesh high commissions in Islamabad and New Delhi to arrange the details of the visits in association with the foreign ministries of the two countries, the sources added.

Khaleda is making the visits at the invitation of her counterparts with the aim of advancing bilateral and regional cooperation regarding a number of issues, promoting Saarc and Safta, enhancing bilateral trade and commerce, and resolving longstanding concerns.

"The groundwork for the prime minister's visits are going on in full swing," said a high official of the foreign ministry.

Full implementation of South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta), among other issues, is likely to come up during the talks with the premier's counterparts. Moreover, she may hold talks on Islamabad's non-ratification of the Safta agreement due to Indo-Pak trade related disputes.

Officials said Khaleda would have a special meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and hold official talks with Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz.

Diplomatic sources said Khaleda would push the issue of duty-free access for 102 Bangladeshi products to Pakistan. Besides, Pakistan's investment might be sought for setting up composite textile mills in Bangladesh.

They said at the official talks Bangladesh will review the entire range of bilateral issues with Islamabad, particularly trade and economic issues. The issue of repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh will also come up.

Meantime, preparations for Khaleda's first visit to India in the last four years are being fine-tuned.

## Judiciary Separation

FROM PAGE 1  
prime minister and the law minister and others concerned for violating the Supreme Court directives in the judiciary-separation case.

The hearing on the contempt charge against nine bureaucrats for violating the 12-point SC directives started around 9:30am yesterday. Attorney General (AG) AJ Mohammad Ali drew the court's attention to consider its fresh petition seeking four months for implementation of the SC directives.

"If you have any information since October 20 last year, present it to us; otherwise, there is no scope to pray for time without any positive development," the court told the AG, as it had earlier disposed of the matter refusing similar government excuses for time-extension.

The SC on October 20 last year refused to entertain another similar petition of the government.

"This is a continuous process to implement the court edicts. And since all these are technical in nature, the government needs further time," the AG submitted.

The court said, "Do not speak of technical matters since we have already heard the submissions of technical matters. We have told the authorities to implement the directives."

The AG told the court that this time the government is working to amend the laws needed for implementing the SC directives and the matter will be tabled in parliament.

The court asked: "What did you do two months ago? What were your steps during this period of time?"

## Saifur irked by waste

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rules, could change the situation.

"Framing rules won't help much, unless people become sincere. I've been with the government machinery for 13 years. I am frustrated," he told the launching ceremony of the Public Expenditure Management Manual and the Internal Control Manual at the NEC auditorium.

The manuals were prepared under the FDI-funded Financial Management Reform Project of the government with a view to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of public coffers. From now on every ministry will have to follow these manuals in expending public funds.

Speaking as the chief guest of the function, the finance minister said the macro-level financial management starts with the budgeting. The budget spells out how much money the government is going to spend, and for what, in a fiscal year. But, within a month or two, the ministers and the secretaries start to clamour for more allocations, Saifur observed, adding, "Then what is the point of preparing a budget?" In fact, in his opinion, the ministries do not exercise budgetary control.

The finance and planning minister said a particular project is finalised through elaborate scrutiny by the line ministry, and then again verified and approved by the planning ministry. But, afterwards, the project cost increases by 50 to 100 percent and sometimes even by 200 percent, he noted.

Saifur said a minister has the authority to approve projects costing up to Tk 25 crore. Therefore, he pointed out, projects are deliberately planned so that each one's cost amounts to around Tk 24 crore. But, after six project months, they (the ministers) send letters asking for more money on various pretexts, he described and said, "This is what is

The foreign offices of Dhaka and Delhi will simultaneously announce the final date of her visit to India, sources said.

A highly placed source told The Daily Star the visit may be of two to three days depending on the programmes and related factors.

Sources said the premier would hold official talks with her Indian counterpart and a meeting with ruling Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. She is also likely to call on Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam.

Trade imbalance, tariff, non-tariff barriers, border management, settlement of boundaries, sharing waters of the common rivers, human trafficking and drug smuggling would dominate the talks between Khaleda and Manmohan, said a high official.

"We have a broad-based agenda with India and the prime minister's upcoming visit will not be an one-issue visit," the official added.

## Fuel crisis

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"I received only 9,000 litre diesel from Kazipara while I needed 27,000 litres. I sold all of it within six hours yesterday," said an owner of a petrol pump in Lalmoniari.

The ongoing fuel crisis in the north has hit the Boro cultivation hard. Hundreds of farmers were seen waiting at different filling stations in Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmoniari districts in vain.

Our correspondent in Gaibandha reports: The fuel crisis since last week has forced the farmers of remote areas to leave the Boro seeding fields dry.

According to the district fuel monitoring cell, the requirement of diesel during Boro season is 1,80,000 litres but the oil traders and depots have had dry tanks since Monday.

Motiuur Rahman, an official at the Balashi floating oil depot, told The Daily Star that it would take another week before the oil tankers return with diesel.

Gaibandha district administration sources said 1,20,000 litres of diesel and 13,500 litres petrol reached the district but the fuel is yet to reach the farmers.

As the AG repeatedly pleaded for granting further time for implementing the SC directives, the court told him there is no scope for granting time further. "We want to see the implementation of the 12-point directives. Do not put the court into an embarrassing situation by seeking extension of time without any reason," it said.

The court later took up the matter of the contempt petition. Barrister Amir-Ul Islam told the court that he needs time to update the petition as many of the bureaucrats against whom he had brought the allegation were transferred from their posts.

He, however, submitted that no matter if a person changes his position, the offence of contempt-of-court is a personal liability. He told the court that he would submit the updated petition in seven days.

After a short hearing, the court asked the counsel to file a revised petition also adding the names of the persons replacing the transferred bureaucrats. The court adjourned the hearing until February 22.

The nine bureaucrats facing charges of contempt of court for violating the SC directives appeared in person before the court during yesterday's hearing.

TH Khan, counsel for the bureaucrats, at one point prayed for exempting the bureaucrats from appearing before the court in person.

The court rejected the plea.

## BSF kills 1

UNB, C' Nawabganj

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi farmer at Chakpara frontier in Shibganj upazila of the district early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Kamaluddin, 33, son of Irfan Ali of Bagichapara village in the upazila.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the Indian border guards opened fire on Kamal while he was irrigating his paddy field near pillar no 182, killing him on the spot. Later, the BSF men took away the body.

BDR protested the killing and sent a letter to its Indian counterpart demanding immediate return of the body.

The killing of a Bangladeshi by the BSF occurred in the frontier district only a day after the commander-level flag meeting between the BDR and the BSF at Maldah in India on Monday.

## If explosives came

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"The government has taken quick steps and a firm position against the bombers," she said, adding that four terror outfits, including the JMB, had been banned and some 631 suspects arrested until January 20.

Besides, she said, law enforcers recovered huge bombs, arms and bomb-making materials from the secret dens of terrorists. The government also announced bounties to catch the JMB leaders of different ranks.

The prime minister said after the bomb attacks in the northern region in February last year, and particularly after the August 17 blasts, the government took several measures to nab the bombers, break their network, ensure the trial and punishment to the arrestees and ban the militant outfits.

Referring to her address to the nation over radio and television on November 10, Khaleda said she had reiterated her firm commitment to resist the bombers and terrorist activities and called upon the alem and the people to build up united resistance against bomb terrorism in the name of Islam.

The prime minister invited different political parties and social organisations through letters and discussed the matter.

## EC pleas

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EC extended the time limit for the voter-listing job until February 20 amid opposition of the two election commissioners, who have all along opposed preparing a fresh voter list.

"An appeal petition has been filed on behalf of the Election Commission in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court today against the High Court observations over making voter list," counsel for the EC advocate Khondoker Mahbubuddin Ahmed told the press yesterday.

On January 4, the High Court in a verdict on two much-talked-about writ petitions observed that the EC should prepare the voter-list for next general elections basing on the existing electoral roll of 2000.

The EC should make the voter-list incorporating the names of people aged 18 years or above and excluding those who are dead and insane, the HC observed.

The court observed that the members of the EC, including the chief election commissioner (CEC), would have to unanimously take any decision through discussions, not by exchanging notes or letters to each other.

The court also said the EC will not be influenced by any political party or take any decision on the demands of any particular political party or parties.

The HC observation followed two petitions filed by Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP and AL lawmakers Rahmat Ali and Asaduzzaman Noor challenging the validity of CEC Justice MA Aziz's 'unilateral' decision to prepare a fresh electoral roll that began on January 1.

With support from the two newly appointed election commissioners, the CEC on Tuesday had the majority in his favour to take the decision to extend the time for voter-listing until February 20.

The commission will decide what to do after February 20 only on knowing the outcome of its appeal filed with the SC yesterday, sources said.

## Hili land port

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of Exporters and C&F Agents Association of India to settle the matter.

Shahinur Rahman, general secretary of Hili Importers and C&F Agents Association, said a seven-member delegation went India on January 22 but failed to make any progress. He said only three Indian traders control the entire exports through the Hill port.

The three Indian traders also own around 150 trucks which are used for carrying goods through the port and they changed the rules for their own benefits, he observed.

It may be mentioned that Indian Exporters and C&F Agents Association in a letter to Bangladesh Importers and C&F Agents Association said Bangladeshi importers would not be allowed to load goods more than 10 tones on a single truck. Bangladeshi traders, however, used to load 20 tones on a single truck and this new rule increases their transportation expenditure.

Meanwhile, the strike is costing the government Tk 80 lakh of revenue loss everyday.

## JP's short JS boycott

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JPPP then formally cancelled its decision to boycott the House in protest against a 'discriminatory attitude' of the deputy speaker in running the House and 'discriminatory' allocation of development funds.

Led by Rawshan Ershad, the JP lawmakers later sat with the prime minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury in the parliament building where he assured them of resolving the crisis in their next meeting at the Prime Minister's Office Sunday.

However, the rebel JP lawmakers came down hard on their colleagues during the JPPP meeting over the shortest boycott drama.

"You can not join the House without cancelling the parliamentary party's decision," a meeting source said, quoting a furious Tajul Islam Chowdhury, a presidium member and whip of the JP. "I am not speaking against you. I am just speaking about the party's decision."

Lawmaker Noor Mohammad Mandal, meanwhile, asked, "Why do we take decision if we can not follow it?"

"The party can not be run in this manner. I don't care anybody, I will resign from the party, if necessary," he said, practically shouting.

However, Rawshan told The Daily Star that she had joined the House on the government's assurance of a meeting to address their issues of boycott.

"The political secretary to the prime minister assured us of a discussion. So, we joined the House," said Rawshan in her defence. The four lawmakers who joined the House along with Rawshan also criticised the other MPs for not joining parliament.

The JP drama started as soon as it decided to boycott parliament at a meeting chaired by Rawshan.

"We also decided to sit Sunday again to finalise the next course of action," Tajul told The Daily Star.

But a lawmaker soon broke the news to Harris Chowdhury over phone, sources said. Harris Chowdhury and a whip, Rezaul Bari Deena, then rushed to the JPPP office and talked the five lawmakers into joining the House.

"Please, join the House before the prime minister's question hour is over," the political secretary was quoted as saying by a JP lawmaker.

Rawshan Ershad and four lawmakers -- Hafizuddin Ahmed, Mahrur Rahman Ranga, Golam

Habib Dulal and Marina Rahman -- joined the House just before the prime minister ended her hour.

"The parliamentary party took the decision on paper that we will not join the House today (Wednesday) and tomorrow (Thursday)," Tajul said. "The deputy speaker on Tuesday did not allow us to raise any question. Even he told us that we are free to walk out of the House," he said.