

# Tata finds discussions brought

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issue as none of its two proposals is realistic in the context of Bangladesh.

Tata's offer of fixed gas price, which referred to gas prices in the Middle East, indicate a very low offer hovering around \$1 per unit. "The other option is tying gas price with steel price, which also does not appear to be lucrative," said a source in the negotiation committee.

"Though we just had a discussion on Tata's latest gas price offer, we can only say we will find the price acceptable if we do not incur any loss from selling gas to Tata. For instance, if we buy Chevron's Bibiyana field's gas at \$2.75 per unit, we cannot sell it for less (even though the government gets a free share of that gas, the owner of that free gas is the people. The gas price we suggested is based on market principle."

He went on, "But Tata can get a competitive gas price if it eases its condition of getting a 20-year gas security. If we have to promise to Tata that even if Bangladesh runs out of gas, the state will ensure gas supply, Tata must pay us a premium."

A leading businessman said Tata's main goal is to produce steel and fertiliser, not to consume gas. For steel, it will import iron ore from the neighbouring region in India and that makes Tata's investment in Bangladesh profitable, even if it pays gas price higher than that in the Middle East. "But we should consider a special incentive package that appropriately reciprocates an investor's \$2.5 billion plan."

The last round of talks between the government and Tata ended on February 8 without any agreement on the gas issue. Tata negotiators then said that within two weeks, they would submit to the government a revised and comprehensive proposal on its investment.

Whether Tata would change some aspects of its proposal in its revised package can be learnt only after it is submitted.

"We will then forward the Tata proposal in details to the policymakers for their decision," said Energy Advisor Mahmudur Rahman on February 8. "Finally, it will be up to the policymakers to decide whether the investment will be made or not."

On April 20 last year, Tata submitted its \$2.5 billion investment proposal for setting up a 1,000 MW power station, a steel mill with an annual production capacity of 420,000 tonnes and a fertiliser unit to produce one million tonnes a year. To run these establishments, Tata needs 200 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas supply for 20 to 30 years.

Talking to The Daily Star, the Tata resident director expressed his optimism about the progress made so far on the investment plan.

"From the beginning of our proposal, the Board of Investment (BoI) identified six key areas. We started talks on the land issue. Initially, there were doubts whether the government would agree to provide Tata with the size of land it was asking for. Finally, the government agreed to provide us 2,000 acres of land for the steel plant along with residential facilities. It also agreed to give another 300 to 350 acres of land for fertiliser plant in addition to residential facilities,"

# ACC asks audit

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corruption by the department officials.

The ACC commissioner at a view-exchange meeting with the high officials of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) suggested introducing e-governance to check corruption.

CAG Asif Ali, while presiding over the meeting, expressed his support for introducing e-governance, said a meeting source. "E-governance is one of the most useful tools to curb corruption," Ali was quoted as saying.

He also asked the ACC representative to strongly advocate that the government and parliament introduce e-governance as soon as possible at any cost.

"Self-motivation and self-audit are also required for the officials who would work with computers to run e-governance system, as manipulation can also be made by the machines," he added.

Admitting malpractices in his department, Ali not only gave importance on introducing systems to check corruption but also emphasised monitoring the system.

"The pensioners suffer by no means suffer while getting their pensions," he said.

Controller General of Accounts Reazuddin Chowdhury however claimed to have taken initiatives to curb harassment of the pensioners. Ali asked the CGA to review whether the initiatives are yielding any positive results.

ACC Commissioner Miah citing a few contradictory rules asked the officials to propose the finance ministry to resolve legal tangles.

He suggested that the auditors and accountants train, not to hurriedly pass bills in closing period of fiscal years, to acquire knowledge on important financial rules and other issues.

He also suggested computer networking connecting all district and upazila accounts offices with the CAG and CGA offices and strong monitoring cell to check activities at district and upazila level.

Ali gave importance on training to strengthen the audit process without restricting it on theoretical aspects. He suggested identifying

Manzer Hussain said.

The land for the steel plant may be allocated either in Ishwardi or in Kushtha, and for fertiliser factory in Banshkhalhi of Chittagong. "For the steel plant, we would prefer Ishwardi," Manzer said.

"The land area for the proposed open-pit coal mining project has not been fixed yet. The project will be dealt with under the new coal policy (likely to be finalised within a couple of months). But when it is done, it may stretch out to 4,000 to 7,000 acres."

The Tata resident director says two types of infrastructures are crucial for Tata's investment. The first one is gas supply and the second one is railway links.

"The government is working on a Sirajganj-Bheramara gas pipeline with help from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). This would ensure adequate gas supply to northern Bangladesh and meet Tata's steel mill needs in due time. For the fertiliser factory in Chittagong, the government needs a small investment to install a pipeline up to Banshkhalhi. It is not a problem," he noted.

"Railway infrastructure is very important. Bangladesh Railway (BR) is not as developed as in the rest of the subcontinent. That's why we requested BR to appoint a consultant and it hired RITES, a consultant of Indian Railway. The RITES in its initial study pointed out that the BR has an annual cargo carrying capacity of 3.5 million to 4 million tonnes. Tata alone will need 8-9 million tonnes cargo handling. Then, we know that Asia Energy will start work at the Phulbari Mine and it will also need a huge cargo handling. This situation calls for a detailed study on the railway system and the communication ministry has approached the ADB in this regard."

He further said iron ore for Tata's steel mill will be brought from India (by train). After steel is manufactured, Tata will export a part of it either through Mongla or through Haldia to India. Whether it is import or export or coal mining, railway will play a vital role.

On coal mining, Manzer said initially Tata's investment plan was entirely gas-based. On a government suggestion, Tata looked at the Barakuria mine and felt that it could be useful. Initial survey by a German consultant suggested this mine should be an open-pit one, otherwise it will not be useful. But under the current policy, open-pit mining is not encouraged. The new policy will change it. "In principle, we have an understanding about mining," he mentioned.

On power, the Tata executive said its power plant will be based on coal. But the pressing issue here is was at what price? "The Power Division hired a consultant to suggest a mechanism for the pricing. This is being done keeping in mind factors like cost of coal and investment return for the plant."

On incentives for the investors, Tata made four propositions based on discussion with the government. The first one is that the Independent Power Project (IPP) Policy should allow 15-year tax holiday for IPPs. And extending this facility to Tata's power project. The second is extending the incentives offered to Asia Energy to Tata for its coal mining operation and the third is extending the incentives typically awarded to export-oriented fertiliser factory.

the reasons behind corruption and harassment, and training of the concerned officials to eradicate those.

He refused Transparency International's grading Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world and claimed only a very few people of the country are engaged in corruption.

CGA Chowdhury gave details of the steps his office took to remove irregularities including those related to pension.

## Logic, talks

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economy and political struggle.

"We will have to build up an educated, trained, technology-based modern nation. Bangladesh will have to build a strong economy utilising the country's resources," she told the function.

She urged the countrymen to forge a broad-based unity on important national issues.

The prime minister distributed Ekushey Padak, 2006 among 13 recipients or their spouses (three posthumously) at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium. Each Padak (medal) carries Tk 40,000 in cash, a gold medal and a citation.

Those got the Ekushey Padak this year for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields are Prof Jasimuddin Ahmad (education), Sukomol Barua (education), Prof Anwara Begum (education), Prof M Asaduzzaman (education), Abul Kalam Manjur Morshed (literature), Prof Md Nurul Islam (literature, posthumous), Prof Hamiduzzaman Khan (sculpture), Begum Rowshan Ara Mustafiz (music), Anwar Uddin Khan (music, posthumous), Begum Fatematz Zohora (music), Gazul Hasan Khan (journalism), Shahadat Chowdhury (journalism, posthumous) and Aftab Ahmad (photographer).

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman presided over the function while Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim conducted it. Ministers, MPs, writers, litterateurs, singers, journalists and distinguished personalities attended the function.

At the function, the prime minister announced that government would provide honorarium to the families of language martyrs as a mark of respect to them.

She asked the cultural ministry to take necessary steps immediately in this regard. The honorarium will be given on a monthly basis.

The fourth one is that for steel mill, the government should chalk out a new package of incentives because there is no large integrated steel mill in Bangladesh that produces cent percent flat products. Tata's steel mill will consume 40 percent of Tata's investment plan and for the first 5-6 years, the mill will not generate any money for the investors. Therefore, the government may consider a befitting tax holiday, which may be a "floating tax holiday".

Explaining the floating tax holiday, Manzer said "Take a specific number of tax holiday years (for instance 5 years). The investors may use this holiday in the first phase of 15 years of investment or later on."

The National Board of Revenue has been apprised of the concept but a decision needs to be taken, he mentioned.

On the issue of gas, which remains the case of the discord, Manzer said the price and security issues are inter-linked. "If Tata gets a go-ahead now, it will start operating from 2009-10. Gas is the main raw material for both the steel and fertiliser plants. But there are forecasts on gas supply problem and we need assurance to get bank finance and board approval."

He went on, "Interruption of gas supply is bad for both fertiliser and steel mills. But then there are potentials for new gas in both on-shore and off-shore blocks. These need to be explored. The oil companies believe that the existing blocks have potential gas resources of 3 to 8 trillion cubic feet (tcf). The oil companies will feel encouraged to explore and develop these prospects when there will be a large consumer like Tata."

In this context, Tata is seeking a gas supply guarantee that would prompt the government to be proactive in new gas exploration when the supply is going low in the future, he added.

He pointed out that there are three types of gas prices around the world. Of this, the retail customers pay the highest tariff, heating or power developer pay medium price and the large or "feed stock" consumers like steel or fertiliser factories pay the lowest price.

"For fertiliser or steel, lowest tariff of gas determines the price of the product because gas is the main raw material here," Manzer said. "Therefore, we are seeking a low gas price here."

Steel can be manufactured using coal. But Bangladesh coal is good for power generation and not for steel manufacturing, he said.

"Petrobangla seeks a premium on gas price for giving us the required security. Petrobangla gave a formula that spells out a very high gas price. Tata's responded saying nowhere in the world is there such a high price for fertiliser or steel."

Manzer said, "We are not suggesting a \$1 per unit gas price. But we cannot accept the price proposed by Petrobangla."

"The BoI chairman then asked us to make (a specific) offer which will be discussed with the higher authorities for a final decision."

## PM replies

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the prime minister."

In his letter, President Bush expressed his hope for holding free and fair general election in Bangladesh on schedule. Rocca told reporters here during her visit.

The US president also expected that Bangladesh's strong efforts to combat terrorism would continue, Rocca added.

Replying to a question about US Congressman Joseph Crowley's forthcoming visit to Dhaka, Morshed Khan said given the Bangladesh-US relationship, the visit is very important.

During his visit the government would request him to ensure that some of Bangladesh's textile items are included in the duty-free list under the WTO regime. BGMEA leaders will have a meeting with Crowley on this issue.

The foreign minister also said that the Trade Bill-2005, now pending with the US Senate, will be discussed since Crowley is a co-sponsor of the Bill that seeks duty-free access of Bangladeshi apparels and other products to the American market.

**Khaleda to visit India**  
Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said Dhaka seeks good neighbourly relations with New Delhi and hoped that the prime minister's India tour set for next month would be fruitful and have positive effect on Indo-Bangladesh relationship.

The foreign minister said Khaleda would visit India in March and hold talks with her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh.

He said the officials in the two capitals are working on the details of the visit and the agendas of Khaleda-Manmohan talks.

Replying to a question on existing relations between the two neighbours, Morshed said situation has changed tremendously and "reality is setting in and no body can afford to lose out."

Official sources said the prime minister is expected to go to India on a three-day visit on March 20 or 21. Dhaka and New Delhi will make a formal announcement on the schedule of the tour.

Sources said Khaleda might visit Aijmeer Sharif and Indian "Silicon Valley" in Bangalore during her tour.

# Amar Ekushey today

**FROM PAGE 1**  
and raise awareness of cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

On this day in 1952, students in Dhaka took to the streets in protest at the then government's denial of Bangla as a national language and imposition of Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shafiur, Jabbar and many others sacrificed their lives as the then Pakistani rulers ordered firing on the agitation.

The brave sons of the soil established mother tongue Bangla as a state language through shedding of blood.

The protest sparked on February 21, 1952 progressed into the long-drawn struggle that eventually led to the birth of Bangladesh.

President Iajuddin Ahmed led the nation in paying tributes to the language martyrs by placing wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar at 12:01am, followed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

This is for the first time journalists have been denied access to the Central Shaheed Minar as the authorities imposed bar on them for 'security reasons'.

As part of security measures, some 8,000 members from police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Ansar and Bangladesh Rifles took position at the strategic points in the capital, especially the Central Shaheed Minar and the adjacent areas yesterday evening.

Sixteen CCTV of police, and 12 CCTV and four night vision cameras of Rab have been installed there. The police and Rab members will also take video footages of people where CCTV will not be installed.

Rab and police swept the whole area and a contingent of 200 Rab men completed their rehearsal in the Shaheed Minar area. The Rab dog squad will also be there.

Bomb disposal teams have been asked to remain alert.

To mark the occasion, the Shaheed Minar and the surrounding areas have been given a facelift and roads and medians festooned with Bangla alphabets and national flags.

The Dhaka University authorities that are supervising the Ekushey February (February 21) programmes have prohibited display of portraits, posters or banners and processions or rallies in and around the Central Shaheed Minar.

The day is a public holiday and the national flag will fly at half-mast atop government, autonomous and private buildings.

President Iajuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion said great Ekushey would illuminate an everlasting unity and gracious feeling among present and future generations and the mankind in general by bridging a bond of unity and amity.

In her message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia specially called for a strong unity of all the citizens to work together for the flourishing of mother

## Outage causes

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as people from the supply dearth

zones call me with repeated complaints of water scarcity," a Wasa engineer said.

Wasa is worried about its water supply capability in the summer when power cut problem would take a turn for the worse.

People of Narayanganj are also suffering from acute water crisis and poor power supply, our Narayanganj correspondent reported yesterday.

According to power sector projections, the coming summer may witness a demand and supply deficit of up to 1,800MW. Dhaka has at least 450 to 500MW of daily power deficit.

# EC starts work today

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in the rise of voters in 20 thanas under Dhaka district was noticeable.

The number of new voters increased by 63 percent in Savar while Tejgaon has not yet seen any rise in its voters' sources said.

The number of voters increased by 55 percent in Uttara, 40 percent in Mohammadpur, 23 percent in Motijheel, 2 percent in Kotwali, 5 percent in Sutrapur, 5 percent in Ramna, 13 percent in Nawabganj, 20 percent in Keraniganj, 15 percent in Lalbagh, 16 percent in Sabujbagh, 15 percent in Cantonment, 16 percent in Gulshan, 11 percent in Dhanmondi, 17 percent in Pallabi, 19 percent in Mirpur, 15 percent in Dhanrai, 24 percent in Dohar, 22 percent in Demra.

On the last day of the enumeration, CEC MA Aziz refused to talk to the press yesterday. EC Secretariat officials too seemed hesitant to say anything about the status of the enumeration task.

EC Secretariat in its press release claimed that enumerators have covered every area. If anyone is still not included, they will be included within March 12, it read.

Many eminent persons have been left out of the list while many others opted not to be registered as voters as they disapprove of the ongoing voter-listing, which has caused widespread controversy and uproar.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina refused to be on the list, as she says, it is being done illegally. Besides, election commissioners M Munsif Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, among others, did not get themselves enrolled because they are in favour of revising the existing roll.

Meanwhile, district election officers, who were appointed as the registration officers for the task, yesterday said they are having difficulty carrying out the job, as the EC Secretariat keeps mum about remuneration of the manpower working from January 1.

The HC January 4 ruling came in response to two writ petitions challenging the legality of CEC's unilateral decision to having a fresh roll and the task undertaken to this end.

Despite the HC directives for an

language, culture, heritage and overall welfare of the motherland.

She paid deep respects to the memory of those brave sons of the soil who had sacrificed their lives during the language movement of 1952 for establishing the dignity of mother tongue Bangla.

## Tigers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
again appalled by yet another no-show from the Tigers, who suffered a five-wicket defeat after being bundled out for 118 in the opening match against an under-strength Sri Lanka.

The Lankans, who came here to play three ODIs and two Tests without their regular captain Marvan Atapattu, paceman Chaminda Vass and champion off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, cantered to 119 in just 24.1 overs with five wickets standing. The victory margin could have been bigger had not the Lankans lost their last three wickets for only six runs as they tried to hurry things up.

A heavy defeat for Bangladesh was written on the wall when the infamous top-order threw their wickets away in a fashion they have been doing without any conviction time and again.

Bangladesh were reduced to a hopeless 5-37 by the 11th overs and as it has always been the case emerged a face-saver after that. This time it was Khaled Mahmud who spared the blushes with a fighting 36. It was only fitting for Mahmud to sign off from international cricket with an innings of determination that he has been known for in a career spanning over 10 years.

Alok Kapali scored an unbeaten 19 in his comeback match after a year. But why a technically sound and temperamentally strong Kapali batted at number nine was the talking point in listless Bangladesh innings, where his effortless four through the covers was undoubtedly the best shot of the day.

While the team management's decision to bat Kapali at number nine made little or no sense then the way Abtab Ahmed and Mohammad Ashraful presented their wickets was absolutely ridiculous.

After hitting right-arm paceman Ruchira Perera for four over extra-cover, an arrogant Aftab unnecessarily danced down the wicket to go over the top of the mid-on fielder only to see his leg stump knocked off.

A lot has been expected from Ashraful when the little right-hander with a famous hundred against Australia under his belt came out in the middle. But he too departed for four playing a rash shot outside the off-stump.

Bangladesh innings never got off to a start after left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees was out in the second over, edging an attempted drive against Farveez Maharoof behind the wicket to Kumar Sangakkara.

Skipper Habibul Bashar also suffered a soft dismissal. He was caught in the slips by his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahela Jayawardene after scoring only two.

Wicketkeepers are now-a-days batting assets for any team. But Bangladesh's Khaled Mashud showed signs of getting past his prime as he was out for a duck off Perera, the most successful Sri Lankan bowler with 3-23. His new ball partner Maharoof also took three wickets giving away 30 runs.

Sri Lanka however saw their wicketkeeper-batsman Sangakkara scoring exactly 50 after Sanath Jayasuriya (13) failed with the bat for a change.

Sangakkara, who hit seven fours a six in his 85-ball knock, was out in the 21st over with side seven runs away from victory.

The lively debate on country's economic took place at a seminar in CIRDP Auditorium yesterday organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

CPD Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan chaired the discussion while renowned economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former Bangladesh Bank governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and Dr SR Osmani were the discussants.

Two keynote papers were presented at the seminar on growth and equality in South Asia and on how has Bangladesh performed.

Dr Shantayanan Devarajan and Dr Ijaz Nabi of the World Bank prepared one of the keynote papers, and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Dr Fahmida Khatun of the CPD prepared the other.

"Budgetary contribution to the public sector savings was negative in South Asia while it was positive in East Asia which makes the main difference between the economies of the two regions," said Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud.

He said the recent oil price hike and government borrowing from the banks have created some problems.

Mahmud further said reducing interest rates would have been better than relaxing conditions for loan defaulters.

He, however, observed that Bangladesh performed better in some human development sectors than many other South Asian countries.

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed stressed the need for focusing on productivity and technology adoption. Otherwise, there will not be a faster growth in the economy, he said.

Dr SR Osmani said instead of comparing macroeconomic stability with growth, one should see the degree of instability that the country can accommodate.

Former finance ministers AMA Muhith and M Syeduzzaman, Abdur Razzaque MP, Dr QS Alam, Prof MM Akash, Dr Naumuddin Chowdhury, Prof Mottazzuddin, AKM Shamsuddin, Syed M Ahsan, President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) Latifur Rahman, President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) MA Momen, and Dr SK Masud Ali took part in general discussion.

## No clear

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The revised draft says if an officer commits any irregularities he will be charged under the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985 and departmental actions will be taken against him.

Again if an officer is found involved in corruption in any stage of a public purchase such as process of the purchase deal and its implementation, criminal proceedings will be brought against him.

Sources said in most countries the public procurement law specifically spells out jail terms or penalty in case of corruption or violation of the law by an official, but nothing of that sort is there in this bill.

The provision for an independent review panel has been widely altered in the revised bill. According to the original draft, the government was to short-list a pool of qualified panel members including former bureaucrats having expertise on this matter, lawyers nominated by the law ministry and business representatives by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

In case of any public procurement dispute the government would form the review panel drawing from that pool to look into the issue. An aggrieved party will have the opportunity to appeal to this review panel.

But the provision for short-listing the panel members has been dropped from the revised bill. It allows the government to form one or more than one review panels with experts on laws, administration and public purchase.

Titled Public Procurement Act, 2006, the bill does not clarify whether the panel's recommendations concerning the appeal will be accepted or not. It rather vaguely says that the filing and resolving of the appeal will be determined by rules.

In case of internal purchase, an open tender procedure will have to be followed and guidelines have been set for that purpose. The guidelines say the bidders will have to be given an even playing field, tenders will have to be called through advertisements and the deal must be struck with the lowest bidder.

A limited tender process can be followed only if it is found logical on technological or economic grounds.

The draft law has set rules also for international purchases as well as purchases of intellectual and professional services.

It keeps the provision of making public purchase bypassing the competitive procedure in case of emergencies or catastrophe or in public interest on the recommendations of the cabinet committee on economic affairs.

If there is any obscurity or problem regarding any particular section of the law, the government will have the authority to give directives through circulars.

Sources said the bill offers opportunities for the vested interests to misuse the provisions.

For the sake of convenience, a procuring body can split a particular purchase in several packages on approval of the appropriate authority.

In the past, the purchasing authorities could bypass scrutiny while dividing a single purchase into several small packages.

In case of a purchase below a certain amount did not require the approval of the cabinet while the amount above that level would require the consent of the cabinet, sources said.

## Economic

**FROM PAGE 1**  
saying that there is no alternative to maintaining macroeconomic stability for poverty reduction and economic growth.

"If there is no macroeconomic stability, other economic indicators will not perform well," he explained. "So it's a necessity."

He said there should be some structural reforms for brining equality in the society.

The Bangladesh Bank governor stressed the need for a change in the nature of growth. The growth should touch the people, he said. He also said the central bank is now giving instruction to the banks to provide loan for those projects which generate employment.

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# Judges killing

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the Explosive Substances Act.

Charge sheet in the murder case filed after the gruesome killings is yet to be submitted. The CID is investigating it.

The Barisal Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal acquitted another accused, Sultan who was in jail custody and was brought to the court, giving him benefit of doubt. Judge of the tribunal M A Matin ordered his immediate release if not wanted in any other case.

The court also recommended departmental action against Abdul Mannan Howladar, witness No. 19 and office peon of one of the two slain judges -- Shahid Sohel