

Concern over Titas gas field state

Gas gushes out of numerous cracks over 1,000-acre land

SHARIF KHAN and
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The country's biggest gas field Titas may face the threat of a blowout that can wreak havoc in Brahmanbaria sadar upazila and the country's energy system, according to geological experts.

locals and sources in Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFL).

They point out that due to some undetermined fault in the gas field's geological structure, natural gas is gushing out of various cracks and hundreds of holes spread over an area of about 1,000 acres of land in location number three of Titas

Gas Field.

Indicating symptoms of a serious disaster, about half a dozen hand tube-wells in the area are automatically streaming out water round the clock.

According to local people, the gas leakage started about five years ago on a small scale. But after last

year's rainy season, the leakage became alarming.

"An uncontrolled leakage is a great risk because gas cannot be seen and a spark of fire can trigger a chain of events which cannot be controlled," said a geological expert. He along with seven other

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Gas is emitting through various cracks and holes in Titas Gas Field area in Brahmanbaria sadar upazila. The authorities are yet to take any steps in this regard.

PHOTO: STAR

Detention of Mir Nasir challenged
HC asks govt to produce Mamun in court

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain why the detention order against former state minister Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin should not be declared illegal.

The rule was issued following a petition filed by his son challenging the validity of the detention order given under the Special Powers Act.

A division bench comprising Justice MA Wahab Miah and Justice M Emdadul Huq issued the rule, returnable in 10 days.

Joint forces detained Mir Nasir, also a BNP leader and former mayor of Chittagong City Corporation, from his Gulshan residence on February 3. Later, he was sent to jail with a 30-day

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

ACC bigwigs decide to step down

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The chief and two commissioners of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) have decided to resign following a request from President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday.

ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan will tender his resignation today and Commissioner Prof Maniruzzaman Miah in a day or two. But the other one, Maniruddin Ahmed, declined to say when he would submit his resignation.

The decision followed their meeting the president at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

The three have been with the

ACC since its inception in November 2004. They had promised a crusade against corruption, but will be leaving with no success under their belt.

Though processed through a selection committee, their appointments are said to have been made on political considerations.

The ACC Act does not permit the government to remove them from their posts and that is why they have been asked to quit voluntarily.

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday told reporters that the positions (to be vacated) would be filled as soon as a selection body finds suitable replacements.

Instead of combating corrup-

tion, the ACC commissioners were busy doing infighting. They could not even make the anti-graft body functional while it had remained subservient to the bureaucracy.

Communications Adviser Major Gen (retired) Abdul Matin, also a member of the advisory committee on graft, recently told The Daily Star that the immediate past government had deliberately formed a "crippled anti-corruption body".

The committee held its first meeting Sunday and recommended that the government reconstitute the ACC. The following day, President Iajuddin invited the ACC commissioners to tea.

As the three called on him at the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

RMG staff mugged of Tk 10 lakh in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of muggers yesterday snatched Tk 10 lakh from the staffs of a garment factory at the city's Dhanmondi area injuring one.

The snatchers came by three motorbikes and stopped the car of MNS Garments on Dhanmondi

Road No 8 at around 2:00 pm and fired on the windshield leaving car driver Abdul Alim, 32, hurt.

Alim received bullet in his hand and was given treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Alim told The Daily Star that the muggers attacked them while they

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Politicians who backed militancy to be arrested

Says law adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday said the politicians who patronised militants will also be arrested as part of the caretaker government's drive to restore law and order in the country.

"There were political hands in the rise of militancy in the country," Mainul told reporters at his office, adding that the militants dared to exercise their strength because of party politics of the country.

The government is mulling an anti-militant act while it is probing the nature of the politicians' involvement in the rise of militancy, he said.

Those who patronised the rise of militants in the country are on the list of the bigwigs against whom the crackdown is being conducted.

"The priority of the caretaker government is to arrest people who think they are above the law," said Mainul, adding, "They looted (public wealth) because they thought they are above the law."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Party registration with EC to be mandatory

Civil servants to be barred from contesting polls 3-4yrs into retirement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government is preparing tough laws to make registration of political parties with the Election Commission (EC) mandatory in a bid to ensure financial transparency and accountability of the major parties.

Besides, the government will issue an ordinance to bar civil servants from participating in the parliamentary election within at least three to four years of their retirement, said Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday.

Major political parties, including BNP and Awami League (AL), have been ignoring the registration law for the last six years since it is an optional provision.

Adviser Tapan Chowdhury meanwhile said yesterday the caretaker government will make a final decision on the voters' iden-

tity cards early March following filing of recommendations by a committee working on it.

In the face of strong opposition from major political parties, including the AL and BNP, the EC could not make political parties' registration mandatory ahead of the 2001 parliamentary election.

The key political parties also opposed introduction of a provision barring civil servants from contesting parliamentary elections for at least three years after their retirement from service.

As the provision for registration was made optional, none of the major political parties, including the AL, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, applied for their registration in the last six years.

Thirty-five political parties have so far applied for registration, but most of them are name-only parties.

Among the big parties, only Jatiya Party (JP) led by HM Ershad applied for its registration to get the election symbol "plough" as another JP faction also demanded the symbol.

Sensing complexities and as major parties ignored the provision, the EC stopped the registration procedure, EC sources said.

The caretaker government has now moved for making necessary laws to oblige political parties to register themselves with the EC before the next parliamentary election.

Expressing the caretaker government's determination to bring all political parties under the law, Adviser Mainul Hossain said, "The government has already started drafting the laws. We will complete the task within our tenure."

He said registration of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Ex-MP Lobi, state minister Salahuddin arrested

Falu, Tariqul sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces yesterday detained former state minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed and ex-BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi from their Gulshan houses in the capital, adding to the long list of high profile arrestees.

Meanwhile, already arrested BNP leader and former minister

Tariqul Islam, and ex-lawmaker from the same party Mosaddak Ali Falu were sent to detentions for 30 days yesterday.

Yesterday's arrests were part of the interim government's ongoing crackdown on corruption, which has already resulted in netting of 17 high profile politicians including former ministers and lawmakers, with an objective of ridding the

country of corruption and holding a free and fair election.

The forces arrested 1,626 people including three union parishad chairmen and the Natore municipality chairman on various charges across the country and seized 16 firearms and 203 homemade bombs yesterday.

The joint forces picked up Salahuddin from his residence on

Road No 15 of Gulshan 1 in the capital around 11:00am.

"The forces picked up Salahuddin when he was preparing to surrender to Gulshan police," Salahuddin's wife told The Daily Star over the phone.

She also said earlier on Sunday night the joint forces raided and searched his house and took away

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BNP concerned over arrest of its leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has expressed concern over the arrest of its leaders and activists including former minister Tariqul Islam, Salahuddin Ahmed, Mosaddak Ali Falu and Ali Asgar Lobi.

Demanding immediate release

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Detained former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi, left, and former state minister Salahuddin Ahmed; former BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu is being produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fake doctor held, date-expired medicines seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court detained an impostor pretending to be a doctor and seized a huge quantity of date-expired life saving medicines, injections and saline from a pharmacy at Pallabi in the capital yesterday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

6 lakh sacks of spurious fertiliser seized

Two factories, 14 warehouses sealed off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces seized over six lakh sacks of spurious and date-expired fertiliser and adulterated pesticides and sealed off two factories and 14 warehouses during separate raids across the country yesterday.

Besides, the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a huge amount of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and telecommunication equipment in Munshiganj.

In Pabna, the joint forces seized the spurious and date-expired fertilisers during a raid at Nagarbari, the largest fertiliser market in the northern region, reports our correspondent from Pabna. Some six lakh sacks of sub-standard fertiliser were seized, which would have fetched around Tk 30 crore to the unscrupulous traders.

Led by Magistrate Akhtar Masud, the joint forces also arrested seven people in this connection. Three of them were identified as Rafiqullah, a union parishad chairman, Abdul Jabbar Mollah, owner of Jabbar Trading and Rowshan Ali, a former UP chairman.

The seized fertiliser included, urea, TSP, potash and banned FMP fertiliser.

The drive will go on until all spurious fertiliser stores are sealed off, Abu Bakar Siddiqui, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) said.

In Khulna, the police closed down a factory at the city's Shironi under Khanjahan Ali Police Station, which marketed adulterated TSP fertilisers, says our staff correspondent there.

The law enforcers also recovered 250 sacks of soil and dust from

the factory, owned by Ishtiaque Ahmed Romel, proprietor of Mitali Food Industries.

Security guard of the factory Al Mamun, arrested at the spot, admitted that the dust and soil were used for manufacturing TSP fertiliser.

Earlier the joint forces had recovered 14,000 sacks of rotten wheat from four warehouses owned by the same Mitali Food Industries in the area.

Meanwhile our correspondent from Sirajganj reports that Rab-12 busted a factory at Bohuti village under Sadar upazila on Monday night and seized 5,000 sacks of adulterated pesticides.

Five people were arrested from the factory. They are -- Belal Hossain, Humayun Islam Khan, Abdus Sattar, Saiful Islam and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

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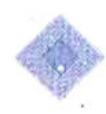


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