

Crisis at Titus Gas field

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The energy ministry instantly decided on this solution.

"It is also important that we now hire, on an urgent basis, an international consultant to handle this situation as per a previous suggestion of the BGFCL. The people in charge should start surfing the Internet right away to find out which companies are most experienced in handling disastrous situations like this," the source pointed out.

With high officials from Petrobangla and Bapex present at the site Friday night, the Bapex started its action to kill the third well where gas pressure anomalies indicated deep structural problems.

"To stop the gas flow from this well, technicians first injected a heavy chemical called Brine Solution. This chemical is supposed to balance the well pressure so that the well can be gradually killed. But the injection left no impact. The chemical seemed to be spreading inside the well and into the formation of the gas field," one source pointed out.

"As a secondary measure, Bapex then started pumping in heavy mud. Instead of controlling the pressure, this measure increased gas pressure immensely and soon it started gushing out at various points in full force. And this was a situation closest to a blow out."

The source went on, "In such an uncontrolled situation, the best Bapex could do is to put a flame in the uncontrolled gas and let it burn freely. This method is called bleeding the gas. This way we avert a blow out or further damage to the field's formation."

Sparse gas leakage from various points of the ground in Brahmanbaria had been noticed for the last three to five years. But since the last dry season, this phenomenon has become alarming. Local villagers and farmers had told The Daily Star in February that gas was leaking through more than 3,000 big holes-- including some 30-foot diameter ones-- in IRRI paddy fields, water bodies and the Titus river. The emitting gases through some of the holes were burning with high flames.

During that time, eight local and foreign experts reviewed Titus Gas Field's situation and data, warned of an impending disaster and strongly recommended hiring an international consultant to advise the government what actions should be taken. Later, the site was visited by experts from Chevron and Thai Petroleum company PTT, who stressed averting a disaster as soon as possible.

But the caretaker government apparently did not pursue the matter with utmost seriousness and left the matter to be dealt with by people lacking capability to do so, alleged an expert.

In late February, the BGFCL board discussed the matter and relied on the suggestions of two experts in its board-- a retired Petrobangla official and a Buet teacher. Both the experts suggested that Bapex was enough to do the job and that hiring foreign consultant would be unnecessarily costly.

Without reviewing Bapex's capabilities and experience, the BGFCL board assigned Bapex to do the job in late February. The Bapex board, headed by the energy secretary, also accepted the assignment without understanding its own strength. Bapex mobilised its rig to the site early last month.

Meanwhile, high officials warned Bapex and BGFCL officials not to talk to the press about the gas field's leakage in a bid to give the public an impression that everything was under control.

With the initial impression of the problem, Bapex wanted to initiate a work over procedure in Well Number-10, which was built in 1988 using low quality cement.

But a senior Bapex official saw different signs in the gas field's data and he pointed out that the main

source of the problem was with Well Number-3. This well was built by Shell Oil in the late sixties. When his observation was ignored, he wrote to Petrobangla and the energy secretary for their attention. In a follow up meeting, he presented his data and argument, and everyone was convinced that the culprit was the third well.

"It goes to show that the whole operation was not well planned because those who made decisions did not understand the gravity of the situation," noted an official.

Titus field produces 400 mmcfd gas as against the country's total gas demand for 1,500 mmcfd. Discovered in the early sixties by Shell Oil, Titus was estimated to have a gas reserve of 5.12 trillion cubic feet (after four decades it now has 2.78 tcf).

TROUBLE AT THE THIRD WELL
Shell Oil built the third well in 1969. Shell's original well design contained a basic flaw, which coupled with lack of monitoring of the well's health by the BGFCL, led to the present situation, sources pointed out.

"In a traditional well design, we use several smaller to larger casings to contain gas pressure and to ensure safety and control. Traditional designs start with a 30 inch casing, inside which we place a 20 inch casing, then a 13.38 inch one, then 9 point five by eight inch one, then 7.5 inch and finally 4.5 inch (total six casings)," said a geological expert.

Well Number-3 was built with five casings and it did not have the 9 point five by eight inch casing. "This means they installed the 7.5 inch casing inside the 13.38 casing. There has been a wide gap between these two casings and this served us for 38 years," he added.

Gas is supposed to flow through the 4.5 inch production tubing inside these casings only.

Again, the BGFCL should have strictly enforced monitoring routines using bottom hole pressure measuring device. It turned out in recent monitoring that gas was flowing through these casings-- from the 4.5 inch to the 13.38 inch ones-- with equal pressure. "This indicates that there must be some cracks in these casings," the geologist pointed out.

But these conclusions were drawn only recently, just because a Bapex official noticed the readings of all the wells of Titus.

"This is most unfortunate that although there had been adequate warnings, we have not treated Titus field seriously. This field is still the country's energy lifeline," he observed.

Land allotment
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Dhaka; Dastagir Enterprise of MA Kashem of Siddhinganj in Narayanganj; Afansa CNG of Ms Afansa Khan of Mohakhal in Dhaka; Aminul Haque CNG Filling Station of Maulana Aminul Islam of Siddhinganj in Narayanganj; Agam CNG Filling Station of Nazmul Haque of Kalabagan in Dhaka; Surut Ali CNG of Syedabad in Dhaka; Begum Shamsun Nahar of Shahbagh in Dhaka; Shanto Bin Salam CNG Re-fueling Station Ltd of MA Salam of Bijoynagar in Dhaka; M Giasuddin Associates of Kafur in Dhaka; BB CNG Gas and Car-parking Station Ltd of Babul Ahmed in Dhaka; Highway Filling Station of Lt Col (retd) M Wali Khan of Mohakhal in Dhaka; SS CNG Filling Station

and Conversion Servicing Centre of Begum Mahmuda Khanam Swapna of Uttara in Dhaka; and Chandra CNG Filling Station and Servicing Centre Ltd of Humayun Kabir Khan of Kalikoir in Gazipur.

There were reports of irregularities in giving land allocation during the rule of the immediate-past four-party alliance government, sources concerned said.

Purchase body

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Saiham Power Ltd for a 10MW plant in Habiganj, Youth Spinning Mills for a 20MW plant at Tangail, Comilla Spinning Mills for a 20MW plant at Narsingdi, and Energypac Confidence Power Venture for a 10MW plant at Sirajganj.

Although the nine companies were short-listed from 18 firms that took part in the bidding, they failed to provide sufficient documents required as per the tender specifications, sources said.

LC fraud

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different banks for importing various goods from India, said a Bangladesh Bank official in Bogra.

BB in a primary investigation found nearly four hundred cases out of around 1,000 allegations when bills of entry against opened LCs were not submitted.

BB sources said that investigation would be conducted initially in the banks that already opened such LCs. If gross anomalies are found, further investigation would be conducted at all 41 banks in the area that are authorised to open LCs.

Bills of entry against 27 LCs worth \$18.99 lakh opened with Marcantile Bank in Naogaon from 2001 to 2006 have not been submitted yet. Bills of entry against \$11.9 lakh worth of LC for import of rice, lentil and other commodities by one of the export-import firms in Naogaon, Ritural Enterprise, were not submitted, said the sources.

In Bogra, bills of entry against 54 LCs worth \$17 lakh opened with City Bank Bogra branch from 2005 till 2006 were not found. The bill of entry against an LC for \$9.08 lakh opened by Sarkar Flour and Rice Mill in Bogra was not found either.

ACC team raids

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the joint forces personnel to other buildings, shrimp enclosures and land properties of the AL leader, who has been absconding since his name was included in the ACC list of 50 corrupt suspects.

The ACC and the joint forces members gathered information about Shuja's wealth during the raid, which was led by ACC Deputy Director Moniruzzaman Khan.

Harris Chy

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On February 18, the ACC directed Harris to submit his wealth statement within 72 hours, but neither he nor his representative on their behalf submitted the statement.

The anti-graft body at a meeting on March 29 gave approval for filing the cases, sources said.

Joint forces quiz

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"That's what we're supposed to do we're supposed to talk out our differences," Bush said. "I'm looking forward to the meeting. I hope the Democratic leadership will drop their unreasonable demands for a precipitous withdrawal."

According to the rates, the firm's income from the Airport Road alone should be around Tk 30 crore a year.

The way Advance Ad set up advertisements on the medians on Manik Mia Avenue, broke road dividers to put up billboards, and installed unipoles along railway tracks is unprecedented and suggests how he flouted all relevant regulations at will.

No one from the DCC authorities

Outdoor ad business

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Due to Arafat's flagrant violation of government regulations, such as not paying spot-rent for the billboards on time, the DCC earned only Tk 70 lakh during the years 2004 and 2005 whereas the target revenue for the period was Tk 30 crore.

Business sources allege that Arafat pulled rank on the DCC, Roads and Highways, and Bangladesh Railway to cancel the advertisement deals with the other firms before the Saarc beautification started in late 2003.

Some firms allege that the DCC had removed all billboards from the Airport Road but later handed the spaces to Advance Ad and some small advertisement companies.

The head of one of the oldest billboard advertisement agencies told The Daily Star yesterday, "The government had promised to compensate us for the ad hoardings knocked down but we weren't given any of the spots when they allowed billboards on the road again."

According to BTV guidelines, it cannot allocate such a large peak time slot to a single company. But the then government high-handedly leaned on the authorities to approve the Ad Media contract.

CRICKET BOARD
Arafat was also reported to have benefited from monopolising advertisements on Bangladesh Television (BTV). The state-owned broadcaster reportedly stretched its rules of business to allot Advanced Ad's sister concern Ad Media an hour of the peak time advertisements, between 8:30pm and 9:30pm.

Ad Media was also given advertisement chunks for the most popular BTV shows, for which they sold the ad rights to numerous companies.

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Ershad

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Moreover, the verdict was not delivered on March 6 and later on March 27 as the judge was on leave on those days.

A court in the case was filed with Cantonment Police Station on July 17, 1990 after a team of customs officials held four people, including two foreign nationals, at Zia International Airport the same day while they were trying to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

With no experience or necessary equipment, the company was given the contract though the proposal was rejected by the purchase committee.

Nurul Islam also recalled an incident of early 2003 when Arafat visited Hong Kong with six or seven of his friends. When the head of the Bangladesh consulate could not arrange for his friends' visas as quickly as Arafat wanted, he called right away his mother, the then PM, and demanded the consul general's immediate dismissal.

Khaleda ordered immediate return of the official, who had served in the foreign ministry for 25 years. Although the withdrawal was cancelled, he was deprived of several promotions because of direct intervention from the government head in the later years.

The president said he would deliver their message to Congress as he put it, US troops "want to finish the job."

"The families gathered here understand that we are a nation at war," Bush said. "Like me, they wish we weren't at war, but we are. They know that the enemies who attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, want to bring further destruction to our country."

Illinois Rep. Rahm Emanuel (news, bio, voting record), chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, responded that Bush and Republican congressional leaders have abandoned efforts to hold the Iraqi people accountable.

"As they rush to embrace the Bush plan for more of the same in Iraq, the Republican policy is to make US troops bear the full burden of the war on their shoulders," Emanuel said.

The Senate bill would require a U.S. troop exit in Iraq to begin within 120 days, with a completion goal of March 31, 2008. The House bill would order all combat troops out by Sept. 1, 2008. Most Republicans stand with Bush on grounds that a timetable is a dangerous war policy.

In the same breath, Bush offered to discuss "any way forward" with Congress and declared what he would not accept restrictions on his military commanders, timetables for troops to come home, or billions of dollars in emergency spending unrelated to the war.

Matin was talking to the journalists after emerging from a board meeting of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation at the conference room of the Ministry of Shipping at the secretariat.

EC probe finds

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tasks worth Tk 10 crore to 38 print-ers.

According to the probe report, the printers were awarded the jobs in exchange of money, as they did not meet the conditions required to get the job.

The report however did not name any officials involved with the process, sources said.

Most of the printers had failed to complete their jobs on time in accordance with the agreement.

Meanwhile, the EC formed another probe body on Sunday to investigate alleged irregularities in recruiting 280 third and fourth class employees in 2005.

The body would start probing the allegation in a couple of days, sources said.

No more duty-free

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under the same facility after eight years.

The law was further amended on August 22, 2005, which stated that an MP would be able to purchase a car only after two years of being elected. This amendment, in effect, barred women MPs selected under extended quota in 2005 from importing duty-free cars.

The amendment further added that an MP could purchase cars for the second time after seven years of being first elected and that they could not sell a car within four years of purchase.

The engine size of the duty-free cars was also set at 1650cc and SUVs at 3000cc.

But, parliamentarians got involved in selling the permits for cars under the duty-free privilege during the first BNP rule, and during the last BNP-led coalition government each permit for duty-free cars was sold for as high as Tk 25 lakh.

Taking a further measure, the committee decided to send notice with timeframe for demolishing illegal structures in Mirpur area and the slums around Suhrawardy Hospital.

In the meeting, it was decided that a 500-bed government hospital would be set up at Mirpur after demolishing the illegal structures on the land of Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangastra.

Among others, Communications Adviser Major General (retd) MA Matin, Education Adviser Ayub Quadri, the cabinet secretary, the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, IGP, directors-general of BDR, Ansar and Rab and other high officials concerned attended the meeting.

Now the government will have to submit the corrected rules to the court regarding pay commission by last Sunday.

Barristers Hasan and Moniruzzaman Asad were present yesterday during the hearing on behalf of Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, counsel of the judiciary separation case.

These luxurious cars and sport utility vehicles (SUV) purchased by the former MPs belong to prestigious

6 JMB cadres

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Judge Akter Hossain framed charges against JMB Chittagong Divisional Chief Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad and Zahid Hossain alias Bomb Mizan in the two cases filed in connection with the November 29, 2005 attack.

Charges were also pressed against Mohammad, Zahid, Alauddin Rubel and Arshadul Alam in connection with the case filed for August 17, 2005 serial bomb attacks in Chittagong.

The judge also pressed charges against Mohammad and Zahid along with two others-- Naimuzzaman and Rafiqul Islam alias Rumel-- in connection with the December 14, 2005 arms and explosives haul case, sources said.

Abdur Rahman, Sunny and Bangla Bhai were accused in all the four cases while Abdul Hossain was accused in the explosion and murder cases filed in connection with the suicide bomb attack that left three people including a policeman and an upazila Juba League leader dead on November 29, 2005.

Sadr bloc pulls out

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against governor Mohammed al-Waeli who accused them of representing only his political foes, including Sadr's Mahdi Army militia.

Waeli is a member of the Shia Al-Fadila Islamic party which is the leading political force in Basra, but less important nationally, holding only 15 seats in the 275-member Iraqi parliament.