

# Steps underway to kill burning Titas Gas well

Govt to sign deal with US company shortly

SHARIER KHAN

The government is expected to sign a contract with US company GSM in the next two weeks to effectively kill the third well of Titas Gas Field that had been leaking huge gas for many months and was about to blow out in mid April.

Specialised in handling troubled oil and gas fields, GSM would apply a "snubbing unit" to kill the well, highly placed sources said.

If the operation goes well, it would take about a month to complete the job once necessary equipment arrive in the country. In such a case, total cost of the operation would be less than Tk30 crore.

But in case anything goes

wrong, the time limit and cost for remedy of the troubled well are uncertain. According to Bapex, applying snubbing unit involves high risks.

"Assuming that GSM's operation can kill the well without any hitch, the company would afterwards investigate the state of the well. If the findings are very negative, we might have to abandon this well. Otherwise, we may use this well after some modifications," said one source.

Uncontrolled gas leakage of the field meanwhile came down to around one million cubic feet per day (mmcf) on Friday from mid-April's 18 mmcf. Sources said the actions taken by Bapex to kill the

well prior to mid-April's near-disaster situation had ultimately helped reduce the severity of the leakage.

Following months of warnings from experts about a potential blow out at Titas field, Bapex was assigned to fix the uncontrolled leakage through open places. Detecting the source of the problem at Well-3, Bapex mobilised its rig to the site and pumped in heavy chemical barite to stabilise the well's pressure. As it proved ineffective, Bapex pumped in mud. But instead of becoming stable, huge gas started flowing out from three points without any control forcing Bapex to light a fire on the gas to

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# 17 'JMB men' held

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers yesterday arrested 17 militant suspects of Jama'atul Muktagachha upazila in the early hours of yesterday, reports our Mymensingh correspondent quoting Rab sources.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 15 JMB militants from Isakhali Bazar of village Chatol in Muktagachha upazila in the early hours of yesterday, reports our Mymensingh correspondent quoting Rab sources.

The arrested are: Dr Md Shamsul Haque and his three brothers Mokhlesur Rahman, Abdur Rahman and Abdul Hye from village Rampur, Nazmul Haque alias Tara from village Binna Kuri, Abdul Hye, Saheb Ali Master, Fulbar Rahman, Hatem Ali, and Shahidulla Hottu from village Binnakuri, Mohammad Ali Master and Sekandar Ali from village Chandi Mondop, Abul Munshi and Abu Bakar Siddik from village Malajani, Motaleb alias Hira Khalifa from village Nabinagar -- all under Muktagachha upazila of

the district.

Following a tip, the Rab squad raided the house of Motaleb alias Hira Khalifa at village Nabinagar at about 4:00am yesterday where the militants reportedly used to meet regularly but none was found.

Later raiding the tailoring shop of Hira Khalifa at nearby Isakhali Bazar where the militants were holding a meeting, the Rab captured the 15 militants while five or six militants managed to escape, Rab officials said.

Two mobile sets, copies of case filed against Bangla Bhai, newspaper cuttings of the stories published on the hanging of Bangla Bhai and other top militants, some books on Jihad were also seized from them.

Our Khagrachhari correspondent reports: The joint forces yesterday arrested two JMB activists from the district town.

The law enforcers arrested

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# 59 people killed in Iraq carnage

3 more GIs slain

AFP, AP, Baghdad

Insurgents killed at least 37 people in car bombings in Baghdad yesterday, shattering a short-lived lull in sectarian violence in the Iraqi capital as 59 people died in a spate of attacks.

One blast alone killed 33 people and wounded 63 as shrapnel scythed through a commercial street in the southwest Bayaa neighbourhood, a mainly Shia area lying on one of the city's many dangerous sectarian faultlines.

At the same time, further north in the Sunni city of Samarra, militants assaulted a police station with a car bomb and automatic fire, killing 12 officers and triggering a bloody street battle with US

forces.

Both attacks bore the hallmarks of Sunni insurgent factions, in particular al-Qaeda's Iraqi branch, which has reacted to a US-Iraq security crackdown by unleashing a spate of deadly suicide bombings.

A 10-week-old security plan in Baghdad has substantially reduced murders by sectarian death squads, US military spokesmen said, but has been unable to stem the wave of deadly car bombs.

"The initial indications are the levels of murders and executions ... in the city have gone down quite a bit," said Major General William Caldwell on Sunday. "We are still challenged, however, by the car bombs."

Nowhere was this more clear than in the shattered Bayaa commercial street, where a row of shops had been devastated and the blast crater was awash with blood and sewage.

"There is no checkpoint here to protect us," complained baker Abu Ali, whose shop was demolished when the car bomb exploded outside in a crowded area near a bus stop. "The government hasn't imposed its security plan here."

A second car bomb exploded near another bus stop a short distance from the public works ministry in west Baghdad, killing at least four people, security sources said.

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A policeman directs vehicles at a point of Road 8 in Dhanmondi Residential Area in the capital as one-way traffic system has been introduced in most of the roads in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

## Sacked Pakistan chief justice blasts 'dictators'

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's sacked top judge yesterday declared the "era of dictatorship is over" to cheers from tens of thousands as he took his battle with President Pervez Musharraf to the eastern city of Lahore.

En route from Islamabad, Chaudhry was cheered by large crowds who showered his convoy with fresh rose petals and chanted "Go Musharraf, go" and "Justice for chief justice."

"The motive of your struggle is supremacy of the constitution and rule of law and God will definitely give us success in this struggle," Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry told a cheering crowd in Lahore, many of whom had camped out overnight waiting for his arrival.

Tens of thousands of people gave him a resounding welcome as

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Prayer Timing		
May 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

## ONE-WAY DHANMONDI ROADS Congestion eases, but travel takes longer time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first day of the enforcement of one-way traffic movement in Dhanmondi saw relatively less traffic congestion in the area yesterday, but the regular commuters complained that under the new system, it takes more time than before to reach their destinations.

Many people were at a loss about which route to take to reach their destination as they were not well informed about the new traffic plan. Meanwhile, the rickshaw-pullers charged extra fare, as they had to go a long way round.

Roads 6, 7, 8, 6A, 7A, 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A, 12A, 13A, 14A and some other Dhanmondi roads were brought under the purview of this Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) traffic plan. However, the one-way traffic system will not be applicable on holidays.

Despite the new traffic system, traffic jam was seen at about 12:30pm on road 8A, especially around the bridge. Tolerable traffic congestion was also found on a number of other roads.

The residents of Dhanmondi

and the guardians, who take their kids to the schools and colleges in the area daily, greet the step with mixed reaction.

"One-way traffic system in Dhanmondi is a good step indeed," Dr Nahla Bari told The Daily Star, whose son studies in Master Mind School and College.

Sharmin, whose two daughters study at the Maple Leaf School, said, "I could not even walk in this area (Road-14/A) at this time (1:20pm) in other days, but today traffic congestion is much less." She, however, observed that the new traffic plan is more time-consuming as they have to take detours to reach their destinations.

"One-way traffic system did not bring any significant improvement in traffic congestion situation of Dhanmondi," Rokeya, whose child studies at Dhanmondi Tutorial, said.

"Now it takes more time to go to a destination as we can't move two-way," a rickshaw puller told The Daily Star. "We have raised our f

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## Top terror Joy captured in Kolkata

Report Indian dailies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dreaded criminal Khandakar Tanvir Islam Joy, one of the 23 most-wanted criminals declared by the Bangladesh government, was arrested in Kolkata, Indian local dailies reported yesterday.

Indian CID personnel arrested Joy from a cloth shop at Rajarhat on the north outskirts of the city on Saturday noon, reports Kolkata based Bengali newspaper Anandabazar Patrika.

Assistant Inspector General (Interpol) Motiur Rahman Sheikh last night told The Daily Star that he has heard the news but not from any reliable source.

He however said that they have brought the matter to New Delhi's notice through Interpol for confirmation.

"If they confirmed it then the government will take necessary step," Motiur said.

Joy's name figured in the list of top five most wanted criminals that was handed over to India's Border Security Force at the beginning of the year.

## BSF abducts 2

UNB, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) abducted two Bangladeshi citizens from Sardarpara border in Atwari upazila of Panchagarh district yesterday morning.

BDR sources said BSF men of Panjipara camp picked up Hamidul Haq, 25, and Ansarul Haq, 20, of Kotgachh village at gunpoint when they went to collect grass for their cattle near the pillar no-412 at about 6:00am.

On information, Company Commander of BDR Abul Kamal sent a letter to the BSF demanding immediate return of the two abducted Bangladeshis.

## Criminal killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A leader of a local criminal group was killed in 'crossfire' during a shootout between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his cohorts at Nagar Mohammadpur under sadar upazila of the district on Saturday night.

The dead Nabir Hossain alias Boma Nabir, 38, was second-in-command of a notorious group, Salam Bahini. He hailed from Baradi of Kumarkhali upazila.

According to Rab, Nabir was acting as in-charge of the group after its chief Salam was killed in a 'crossfire' on February 9.

Rab-12 sources said they had

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## Quack's delivery led to 10 babies' death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

The quack from Bhairab yesterday confessed to killing ten newborns by mutilating them during birth.

Abdus Sadek, the self-proclaimed doctor who ran a clinic named Sadek Medical at Bhairabpur in Bhairab town, gave the confessional statement under Section 164 to Magistrate Abu Sayeed.

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Abdus Sadek

## Mufti Hannan sent to jail in 2 blasts cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of banned Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad (Huji), and Abdur Rouf, another party leader, were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday in connection with two cases filed for bomb explosions at Ramna Batamul in 2001.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza passed the order after the two Huji leaders were produced before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on completion of their five-day remand.

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