

LEAKAGE IN TITAS WELL 3 FOR 1185 DAYS

## Gas worth over Tk 100cr vanishes into air

Bureaucratic tangle hinders timely steps

SHARIER KHAN

Lack of proper attention and bureaucratic tangles that hindered timely action may have caused Titas field lose more than a hundred crore taka worth of gas due to leakage in well-3 since December 2003, experts say.

One expert estimates that gas escaped from this well at a rate of 15 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) for 1,185 days. This totals about

1.77 billion cubic feet (bcf) gas, which is worth Tk 200 crore in local price.

The loss was calculated on the basis that till April this year, the well was producing 15 mmcf gas. After the Bapex took some remedial actions, production shot up to 32 mmcf. Therefore prior to April, the well was losing 15 to 17 mmcf gas from December 2003, when the authorities detected anomalies there for the first time.

Two other experts however dismiss this assessment as too unrealistic, while admitting that the field has lost a substantial quantity of gas in the last few years. Increase of gas production by 17 mmcf does not necessarily mean that gas was leaking out at this rate earlier.

"This is a huge gas leakage. If such a leakage was taking place, the situation would have been visibly worse," said one of them.

But all of them say this wastage of national resource could have been stopped long ago if Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFCL) was not just a production company, or if the country just had one single gas exploration and production company like Chevron or Cairn.

The BGFCL and Sylhet Gas Field Company Ltd (SGFL) have to depend on external expertise to

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800 vehicles stranded at Daulatdia

UNB, Rajshahi

Some 800 vehicles, mostly goods carrying trucks, remained stranded at Daulatdia-Paturia ferry ghat yesterday evening due to shortage of ferry that carry vehicles across the Padma River.

Passengers, especially women and children suffered, as they had to wait in buses for hours amid hot weather.

When contacted, Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, deputy general manager (Commercial) of BIWTC, Aricha Zone, said the temporary traffic jam was created as six out of twelve ferries plying the route were sent for repair.

There is also heavy pressure of trucks from the southwestern

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Outgoing US ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis meets BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Sheraton Hotel in the capital yesterday.

Ex-MP Joynal Abedin Faruq arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday detained former BNP lawmaker Joynal Abedin Faruq at Khilkhet in the capital.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of plainclothes police officials from Detective Branch of police and Khilkhet Police Station intercepted the white Pajero jeep carrying Joynal Abedin Faruq, former lawmaker of Noakhali-1 constituency, in front of Lotus Kamal tower on Airport road in Nikunja-2 at 12:30pm and arrested him.

The lawmaker was heading to attend a programme in the area.

"We have been trailing the lawmaker since he absconded after filing of the cases against him. We

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1 killed, 50 hurt as storm lashes Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

One person was killed and at least 50 people were injured when a tornado lashed 15 villages in Delduar and Mirzapur upazilas of Tangail district on Thursday night.

Police and local administration sources said the tornado hit the villages at around 11:00pm and lasted only two minutes, damaging over 500 tin-roofed houses.

The worst affected villages are Elasin, Mushuria, Atia, Dewlee, Noyachar, Hinganagar, Rupshi, Singharagi and Adabpur in Delduar upazila, and Postkamuri, Pakulla, Jamurki, Kumarjani, Isail, Sharishadair and Bhadgram in Mirzapur upazila.

The dead was identified as

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Street urchins have a relishing bath at Saarc spring near Sonargaon hotel in scorching heat in the capital yesterday.

We're working to make country better governed Says Lt Gen Masud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lieutenant General Masud Uddin Chowdhury, chief coordinator of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) yesterday said they are trying to put things on track so that Bangladesh is known as a country better governed than before, changing its past image.

"Bangladesh is a country with enormous potential, it is not a country of natural disasters and corruption," he said.

Masud Uddin Chowdhury, who was promoted to the post of a lieutenant general from his previous post of a major general on Thursday, was addressing a book publication ceremony in the capital's Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre as the chief guest. The book titled 'US presidents with first ladies and deputies' is edited by Din M Rana.

Masud Uddin Chowdhury in his speech sought urgent cooperation from all sections of the people to make Bangladesh a better country.

"Everybody has to contribute positively so that we can really

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## Hard rock mining finally starts

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Maddhyapara Granite Mining Company Limited (MGMCL), a hard rock mining venture of Petrobangla, finally went into production yesterday after missing several deadlines in about a decade.

Following a successful trial run from October to December last year, Petrobangla took over the project from Namnam, the North Korean company that has devel-

oped the mine under a supplier's credit contract signed in 1994.

Maqbul-E-Elahi, director (mines and minerals) of the state-run oil, gas and mineral corporation, inaugurated the mining yesterday afternoon. Other officials of Petrobangla and the project were present on the occasion.

As per the original profile, Namnam was supposed to complete the installation work by June 1998 and hand it over to the mother organisation in November the

same year.

But due to repeated delays in implementation, the project expenditure soared from Tk 650 crore to Tk 1,275 crore and cost the government an additional Tk 600 crore, said sources.

According to the mining company officials, at least 5,500 metric tons of granite will be produced from the mine every day.

Extraction from the first of the five blocks began on October 10

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Bombs recovered in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Meherpur

Five bombs were recovered from Kathuli border area in Gangni upazila of Meherpur district yesterday.

Being informed by the farmers, BDR personnel from Gangni border outpost rushed to the spot at around 3:00pm and found the bombs kept in a polybag near the border pillar no 133.

They recovered the bombs and

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## Khaleda denies existence of dynastic politics

Promises party reforms after lifting of ban on politics as she meets Butenis who rep eated call for early polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said her party does not practise politics of dynasty and backs only those with qualifications and popular support.

Demanding elections without delay, she said the BNP will initiate intra-party reforms as soon as the ban on indoor politics goes.

The former prime minister was speaking to journalists after meet-

ing US Ambassador in Dhaka Patricia A Butenis at a city hotel.

At the press briefing, Butenis urged the government to withdraw the ban so that the political parties can begin the work on reforms. She also stressed the need for holding the election as soon as possible.

Asked to comment on dynastic politics, Khaleda said, "The position I'm in today has not been achieved overnight by means of family influence. It's the result of

hard work, merit and support from the people."

"I believe only those who are accepted by the people will excel in politics," she said dismissing the allegation that the 'Zia dynasty' rules the BNP.

Her reaction came in the wake of some senior party leaders blaming her for promoting the politics of dynasty.

"We will begin working towards

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## AL plans to widen area of reforms

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

With the air buzzing with talks of bringing reforms to political parties Awami League (AL) is also planning to formulate policies reflecting the interests of people involved in different economic sectors, professional groups, and the impoverished classes aiming to make the party 'people oriented'.

Thinking that now is the best time for getting close to the people of all sectors in the changed context, several AL leaders have been working to figure out a way for making the party policy oriented, which will reflect the interests of people involved in different economic sectors including agriculture and the garments industry.

AL wants to use the changed situation, which put its archival

BNP in an apparently deep leadership crisis, to get closer to the people in order to prepare a comprehensive proposal for reforms in the party reflecting the people's interest.

The AL leaders are preparing drafts on many issues, which will be placed at party forums when the party's central working committee (ALCWC) will be held immediately following the awaited lifting of the ban on indoor politics.

A number of AL leaders told The Daily Star that AL President Sheikh Hasina is positively thinking about the issues and instructed them to work on those. Hasina, a former prime minister, already instructed different central, district, and upazila level leaders to go to the people in their respective constituencies to

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## MURDER BY MUGGERS 9 picked up for quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers picked up nine people for quizzing from different parts of the capital after AHM Arefin Alam Rusho was shot dead in Dhanmondi on Thursday.

A 20-member team was formed following the killing of Rusho, a BBA graduate from North South University and the son of Lt Col AHM Shafikul Alam and Lt Col Dr Ambory Begum, to look into the sensational mugging incident and the looting of Tk 4.45 lakh.

An additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) was made the chief of the team. The team would continue its operations in order to curb mugging incidents in the capital.

A total of five teams of police and Detective Branch of police

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