

Dhaka sits on gas exploration in Bay

Delhi, Yangon busy discovering huge reserves

STAR REPORT

While Bangladesh is going slow about marking its deep sea boundary in the Bay of Bengal for the last three years, neighbouring India and Myanmar are busy discovering huge gas reserves in the bay close to Bangladesh territory.

South Korean oil company Daewoo International along with its Indian and Myanmar partners has discovered about 7.7 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of exploitable gas in three blocks in the Bay of Bengal near the Bangladesh border, according to an AFP report.

A Daewoo spokesman told AFP that the size of the reserves is a record for Myanmar, and certified by international consultants Gaffney, Cline and Associates.

The reserves were certified as between 4.5 and 7.7 tcf, he said.

Daewoo has a 60 percent stake in the fields. The state-run Korea Gas Corp owns 10 percent and the remaining 30 percent is held by two Indian firms -- Gail India and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).

Daewoo hopes to supply 600 million cubic feet of gas per day, or 3.7 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas per year for up to 25 years, the spokesman said.

The company also said it would be cheaper and quicker to pipe the gas to neighbouring countries. "We are in talks with potential buyers in China, Thailand and India," the spokesman said.

Earlier on January 15, Indian newspaper Business Standard reported that India's east coast is emerging as one of the hydrocarbon hotspots in the world with 100 tcf of gas and two billion barrels of oil in place.

Two main basins in the Bay of Bengal -- Krishna-Godavari and Mahanadi -- have shown a potential of nearly 18 billion barrels of oil equivalent gas in place.

Earlier, Canadian company Hardy Oil along with ONGC and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) announced major oil and gas discoveries in the southernmost basin in the area--Kaveri basin.

Official sources quote a figure of

100 tcf for gas reserves in the region but unofficial estimates peg the reserves at 200 tcf. This, says a report by equity brokerage house CLSA, could put India in the league of top 10 natural gas producers in the world.

Bangladesh government has been planning to hold its own offshore oil and gas exploration bid. Though the government did not even make any primary preparations with basic seismic data, it has identified some offshore blocks for this bid.

Locations of some of the offshore blocks overlap the maritime region of India and Myanmar. Similarly, some of the offshore blocks of Myanmar and India, where exploration activities are now going on, overlap Bangladesh's maritime region.

Last year, The Daily Star ran a story on Bangladesh government's indecision about marking its deep sea boundary.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Govt asked to ensure RMG transportation during curfew

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Readymade garment exporters yesterday asked the government to ensure transportation of their goods to and from Chittagong during curfew hours.

They also called for keeping the RMG industries outside the purview of curfew.

"We're observing the situation. If the curfew continues for some time, the government should consider exempting the export-based industries," Fazlul Haque, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said.

He said production is going on at different places, especially in Narayanganj and Gazipur, where curfew has not been imposed, stacking warehouses with finished products.

He noted that the country exports garment products worth about \$25 million a day, which are now being heaped inside the industries from last night on.

Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), hoped that the situation will improve soon.

He maintained that the chaos

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



People scramble to board a train at Airport Railway Station yesterday as curfew was relaxed for three hours from 4:00pm.

PHOTO: STAR

US, UK call for restraint

Urge all to help lift curfew at earliest

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US and the UK yesterday reiterated their call for restraint and urged all to reach a situation which could help lift the curfew at the earliest possible time.

Supporting the caretaker government, the United States welcomed the chief adviser's (CA) statement in which he asserted that curfew in the six divisional headquarters will be lifted soon after the situation improves.

The US Embassy in Dhaka also urged all to end violence and find solution to the problems in the best interests of the country's people.

"The US embassy in Dhaka expresses its support for the caretaker government. The embassy welcomes the chief adviser's statement that the curfew will be lifted

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



Vegetables being offloaded from trucks at Karwan Bazar in the capital during the three-hour relaxation of curfew yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ESSENTIALS

Prices go up further in short time shopping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the first day of curfew yesterday, the law enforcers did not allow vendors and shopkeepers to open any kitchen market in the city and after a span of 20 hours of curfew prices of essentials shot up in different kitchen markets.

The law enforcers warned vendors and shopkeepers of Hatirpul Bazar to shut their shops at about 11:00am. After the warning, they started preparing to close the market.

Besides, at Boubazaar and Nilkhet the law enforcers dispersed temporary bazaars, which were set

up to meet the emergency requirements.

After 4:00pm when the curfew was relaxed and customers were allowed to shop, price of essentials was somewhat volatile. In the first hour of lifting of curfew the traders had been eager to finish the stock of perishable goods including vegetables, fish and meat by offering lower price, but during the later hours of curfew lifting the price of essentials shot up.

Though there was no shortage of supply at the wholesale markets, the local markets were selling at a higher price.

Raihan, a vegetable vendor at

Hatirpul, told The Daily Star that they used to bring the vegetables at night from Karwan Bazar but as curfew was imposed since 8:00pm on Wednesday they did not dare to go to the market to buy the vegetables.

During visits to different city markets, including Hatirpul, Kathalagan and Palasey Bazar, this correspondent found almost all the commodities, including vegetables, fish and meat, were selling at higher prices.

As soon as the curfew was relaxed at 4:00pm people poured into the bazaars. The buyers were not even bargaining as the relax

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Govt asks ETV, CSB to refrain from telecasting provocative items

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked the Ekushey Television (ETV) and Focus Multimedia Company Limited (CSB) to refrain from telecasting any provocative news, documentaries, talk shows and discussions against the government.

In separate orders issued yesterday, the government said it can impose ban or attach conditions

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

368 workers of Carpeting Jute Mills lose job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of state-owned Carpeting Jute Mills at Noapara, Jessore have laid off 368 of its workers.

The retrenched workers were verbally informed about the lay off Wednesday morning. But they are yet to receive arrear wages of 18 weeks and an Eid bonus.

A large number of law enforcers

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

NATORE ARSON CASE

Dulu handed 12 yrs behind bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A tribunal in Natore yesterday sentenced former BNP deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu to 12 years' rigorous imprisonment for arson at three villages in 2004.

He will have to be in prison for two more years in default of payment of a Tk 50,000 fine.

The Special Tribunal of Women and Children Repression Prevention also sentenced 82 others in the case to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment

and fined them each Tk 20,000. In default, they will have to serve one more year's imprisonment.

Dulu's brothers--Nabi Talukder, Anisur Rahman Talukder, Mujibur Rahman Talukder, Rafiq Talukder, cousins--Nurunnabi Talukder, Abidur Rahman, nephews--Rentu, Belal, Bulbul, Dalim, Dollar, and Natore municipal ward commissioners Sadrul Huda, former

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Journalist bodies concerned at harassment of newsmen

UNB, Dhaka

The journalist associations have expressed deep concern over harassment of journalists by the law enforcement agencies during curfew hours yesterday and on Wednesday night.

In separate statements yesterday, the leaders of the associations requested the authorities concerned to take appropriate steps so that no journalists are subjected to any harassment in discharging their professional duties.

Bangladesh Federal Union of
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Mad dash for home as curfew relaxed for 3 hrs

STAR REPORT

Thousands of people who had to crash at places other than theirs for the curfew clamped on the capital and five other divisional headquarters Wednesday night hurried to go home after the government relaxed the restriction for three hours from 4:00pm yesterday.

Desperate for the safety back home, they however suffered badly due to severe transport crisis.

Meanwhile, the city dwellers flocked to the markets to make sure they have enough provisions for the days to come, but found most of the malls, department stores, and kitchen markets shuttered.

Buses, auto-rickshaws and other vehicles including rickshaws charged more than twice the usual fare. Still, people moved in thou-

sands towards the bus terminals, railway stations and launch terminals in whatever way they could. Many set off on foot, shouldering the luggage.

At Zia International Airport (ZIA), thousands of incoming passengers and their relatives remained stranded for hours yesterday. Cabbies charged exorbitantly from those willing to reach home sooner.

Some 2,500 people arrived at the ZIA in seven foreign and three Biman flights in 12 hours beginning from 7:00am, Biman officials said.

Many who reached the capital late on Wednesday night and yesterday morning from different cities and districts complained of beating and harassment by the law enforcers when they tried to return home.

A good number of them could neither manage a transport or a

hotel to stay put.

CAPITAL

Thousands of passengers stranded at the ZIA also did not find foods or water with most of the shops in the area closed. Many including children stood in the rain outside without knowing what was awaiting them.

"I have been here since 7:30am as there was no transport at the ZIA," said a person who came from Qatar in a morning flight.

"A few taxi cabs that were available demanded huge fares," he lamented. Many of the taxi drivers were asking for a minimum of Tk 2,000 no matter what the distance was. Some demanded as high as Tk

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Journalists harassed

STAR REPORT

A number of journalists including The Daily Star's Dhaka University (DU) correspondent were assaulted by law enforcement agency personnel since the curfew was imposed on Wednesday night.

Kamrul Hasan Khan, Dhaka University correspondent of The Daily Star and a post-graduate student of the university, was beaten up at around 4:30pm on the university campus yesterday, half an hour after the curfew was lifted for three hours.

A speeding vehicle of law enforcers screeched to a halt before him while he was walking by Teachers' Students Centre (TSC). Kamrul at the moment was covering the situation at DU when curfew had been lifted.

Two law enforcers got out of the vehicle and started to beat up Kamrul with sticks without giving him the chance to identify himself

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Patients suffer

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Patients faced tremendous sufferings, as no vehicles plied the city streets, medical employees failed to attend their duties and the pharmacists, with or without the knowledge of the curfew, kept their stores closed.

Emergency patients from districts outside Dhaka who had no knowledge of the city were stuck at various entry points for hours, while patients from within the metropolis

either were forced to pay a few times high fares for transports or had to wait for many hours.

In some areas patrolling law enforcers on the streets barred groups of patients asking them various questions and even forced them to go back thereby delaying their admission to hospitals that worsened patients' condition.

Rina Begum, mother of a diarrhoea patient Afsana Akhter Brishti, 5, of Azimpur Daira Sharif,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Raid on dorms, Aziz market

STAR REPORT

Law enforcement agencies reportedly raided several Dhaka University dormitories and student accommodations at Aziz Supermarket in the capital since the imposition of curfew on Wednesday night, allegedly beating up a number of students.

Several citizens were also beaten up in different areas of the capital yesterday on suspicion of being students.

DHAKA UNIVERSITY

Law enforcement agencies raided DU dormitories on Wednesday night and early yesterday and allegedly beat up some university

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

High soil salinity nearly ruins Kantaji temple

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, back from Dinajpur

Kantaji temple in Dinajpur is on the verge of destruction as high salinity in the soil beneath its foundation has been seeping through the structure, damaging its beautiful terracotta embellishments by a huge number.

The wretched condition of this eighteenth-century marvel is mostly caused by "absence of proper maintenance and sufficient manpower due to fund shortage of the department" in the last six years, said a senior official of Department of Archaeology (DA).

M Abdul Khaleque, regional director of DA, said a huge number of terracotta panels have already been damaged by salinity -- especially in the lower-southern section of the three-storied 51-foot square

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Salinity of the soil beneath and the absence of proper maintenance slowly erode the priceless terracotta on the walls of Kantaji temple in Dinajpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Notice

Because of problems relating to transporting of staff during curfew hours, today's The Daily Star issue had to come out in a truncated version of 12 pages instead of the regular 24 pages. We regret the inconvenience caused to the readers.

-- Editor