



The Daily Star

Today's issue 20 pages



People's Right to Know

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVII No. 269

DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 18, 2007

KARTIK 3, 1414 BS

SHAWAL 5, 1428 HURI

20 PAGES PRICE: Tk 10.00

Belated move to revitalise Bapex

Gets new drilling jobs; Govt mulls fresh price formula for Bapex gas

SHARIEF KHAN

For the first time in its history, the much-ignored national oil and gas exploration company Bapex is being awarded more than eight projects to increase natural gas supplies within a short time.

Besides, the government plans to devise a new price formula for gas produced by Bapex to enable the company to make profit.

"The new prices will cover Bapex's investment in a gas field and add another 15 per cent cost as overhead expenses. These prices will be independently applied to each of Bapex's gas producing wells," said a highly placed energy ministry source.

While international oil compa-

nies get close to three dollars (around Tk 200) per thousand cubic feet (mcf) gas, Bapex gets an unrealistic low price of Tk 7 per mcf, the government's bulk sale price of gas is Tk 115 per mcf.

Since its inception in 1989, Bapex was hardly given any project to help the company grow. Due to sparse and irregular approval of exploration and development projects, Bapex has only a couple of producing gas wells which supply only 31 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas.

But now, the government is processing a number of projects for Bapex. These include developing the Semitang, Begumganj and Shahbazpur gas fields and drilling exploratory wells in Kapatia, Srikal

and Sundarpur gas structures.

The government is also considering drilling of two development wells in Salda river gas field.

In addition, Bapex has received allocation under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) to purchase a drilling rig. It has been awarded the job of conducting three dimensional seismic survey in six gas fields of Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFL) and Sylhet Gas Field Ltd (SGFL), conducting regular seismic survey in Mobarkpur and Netrokona, and undertaking drilling and workover of wells belonging to national gas production companies.

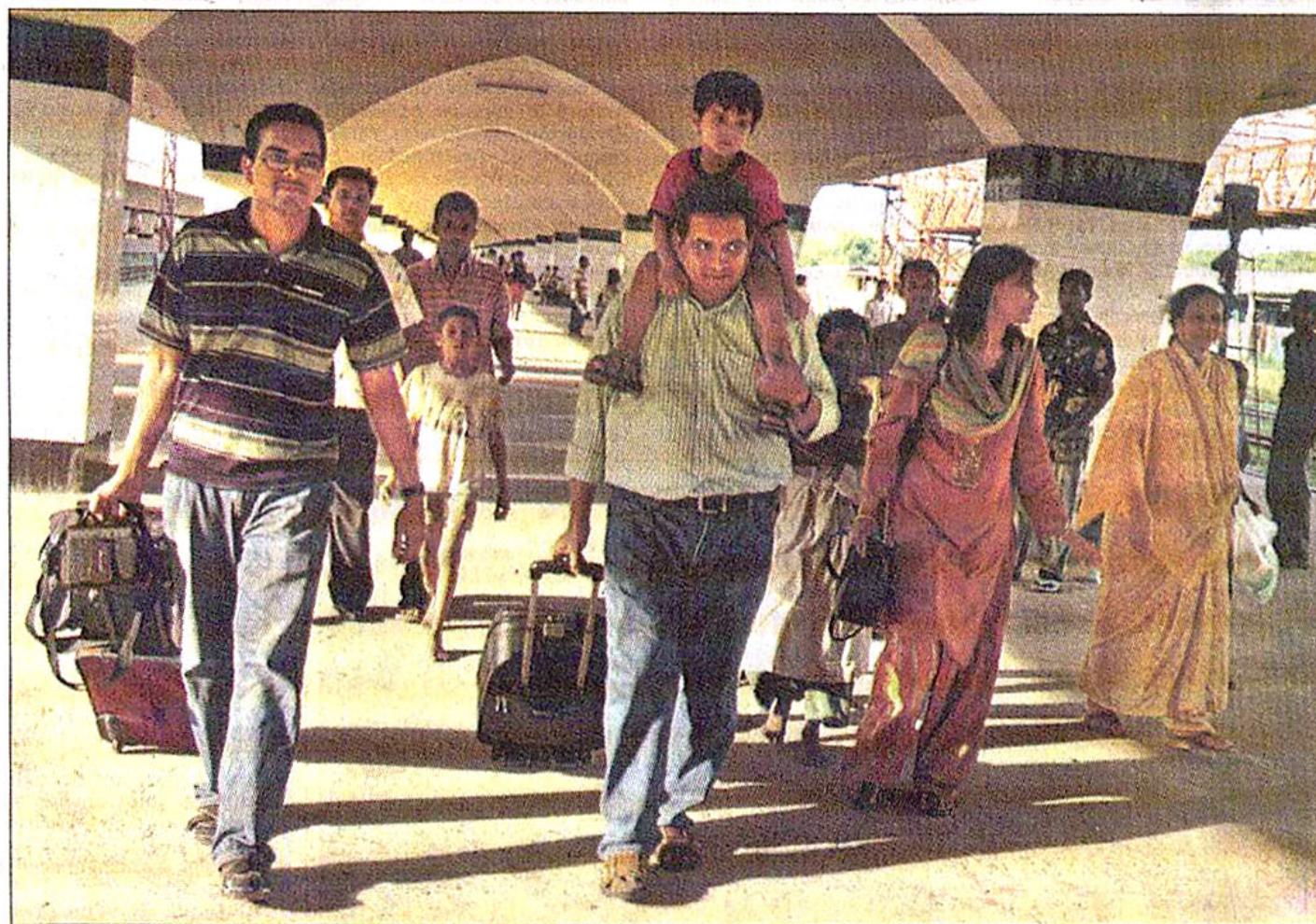
Bapex was formed out of the exploration wing of Petrobangla following the advice of a World

Bank consultant in 1989. The consultant's original recommendation was forming a single company to oversee exploration and production of oil and gas. But the Ershad government formed the exploration unit Bapex and separate production companies BGFL and SGFL on narrow political grounds, sources said.

"The government decision to make exploration and production units separate is the root of all problems for Bapex because its own revenue generation system was not established back then. This has de-linked Bapex from operating on a commercial basis," noted a Bapex official.

Later, when Bapex started raising

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



City dwellers arrive at Kamapur Railway Station yesterday after spending Eid-ul-Fitr holidays with their relatives outside Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangladeshi farmer gets FAO award

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has given award to one Bangladeshi and four other Asian farmers for their outstanding achievements in the areas of horticulture, aquaculture, agribusiness, home gardening and community forestry.

Thai Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presented the award to the five Asian farmers in Bangkok yesterday.

Abdul Kalam Azad from Bangladesh has received the award for his success in horticulture, Negat Sareng (aquaculture) from Cambodia, Ochirbat Ganzorig (agribusiness) from Mongolia, Ponifasio Ricky Westerlund (gardening) from Samoa and Pramuan Charoenyong (community forestry) from Thailand.

The Bangladeshi model horticulture farmer, Azad, who was

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Reforms in political parties stuck in limbo

No meaningful progress seen in 10 months

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Bringing reforms within the political parties has made no considerable progress in the last 10 months because of the prevailing political situation and discord within the major parties themselves.

Even when indoor politics is allowed in the capital for over a month now, the two major political parties have not made any move towards the much-hyped reform initiatives to ensure financial transparency and intra-party democracy. They have rather been engaged in discussing how to remove discords within themselves to keep the party united in the absence of the party chiefs.

The leaders of both Awami League (AL) and BNP, who have been vocal about party reforms, have failed to gain support for their moves. Many of them are now trying to dissolve their discord with party colleagues.

The reforms issue now largely depends on the success of the Election Commission's (EC) ongoing initiatives for electoral reforms, which include mandatory registration of the political parties.

If the current situation continues, possibility of any improvement on the reforms issue before March-April next year is slim as implementation of the EC proposals for electoral reforms will take up to next February.

Once the EC proposals are

made laws by February 2007, the political parties will have to start amending their constitutions in line with those laws to meet some criteria to register with the EC to contest in the next parliamentary elections.

According to the EC electoral roadmap, the political parties will have three months—from March to May—to bring necessary amendments in their constitutions and form committees by holding party councils to get registered by June.

The issue of reforms within the political parties has been discussed since the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11. It got momentum last June when

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

26 senior citizens for CA's attention to sending ancient artefacts to Paris

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing their concern, 26 senior citizens have drawn the chief adviser's attention to the issue of sending 187 ancient artefacts to the Guimet Museum in Paris for exhibition and urged him to take necessary steps regarding the reported mismanagement in the process.

In an open statement, the senior archaeologists, educationists, artists, journalists, botanists, philosophers, architects, poets, litterateurs and environmentalists said some important issues were ignored in the process of sending the artefacts.

They said suggestions of the local archaeologists and museum experts were totally ignored in selecting the artefacts from three museums.

They referred to the letter of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Judiciary separation from November 1

Affirms chief justice

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Justice (CJ) Md Ruhul Amin yesterday said the separation of judiciary from the executive will be effective from November 1 and this has been possible because of the congenial atmosphere now prevailing in the country.

"The Supreme Court continued its efforts to separate the judiciary from the administration, but without such a congenial atmosphere it would not be so easy or even possible to accomplish the task," he said.

The CJ made the remarks while addressing an orientation programme for additional district and sessions judges and joint district and sessions judges, who

have been appointed as chief judicial magistrates under the new provision, at Judicial Administration Training Institute.

Chaired by Justice MD Hamidul Haque, director general of the institute, the function was also addressed by Law Adviser Mainul Hossain and Justice MM Ruhul Amin of the Appellate Division.

Appreciating the role of the present caretaker government in separating the judiciary, the CJ said it would not be possible for the Supreme Court alone to separate the judiciary if all relevant quarters, including the government, did not provide necessary supports in this regard.

He said the desire for an

independent judiciary has been lurking in people's mind since the 20s and it was finally made possible with the joint efforts of all concerned. "The institutional shape of the independent judiciary could be given in 2007 and the process should be continued to make it successful," he added.

"We have to make the judicial magistracy successful to prove that we are able to turn the people's dream into reality," the CJ said, adding, "We will be able to perform the responsibilities from the very beginning and we will be successful by working jointly."

He urged the newly appointed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

AL against appointing more advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday said that it would not be right to expand the caretaker government through appointing new advisers or consultants.

"We don't want more advisers to be appointed and it would not be right to expand the government's size as there is only a few months left for holding the elections," AL Acting President Zillur Rahman told the reporters at his Gulshan residence in the capital.

The reaction came a day after Army chief General Moeen U Ahmed said in London that an expansion of the advisory council is being considered and is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

EU renews support for interim govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

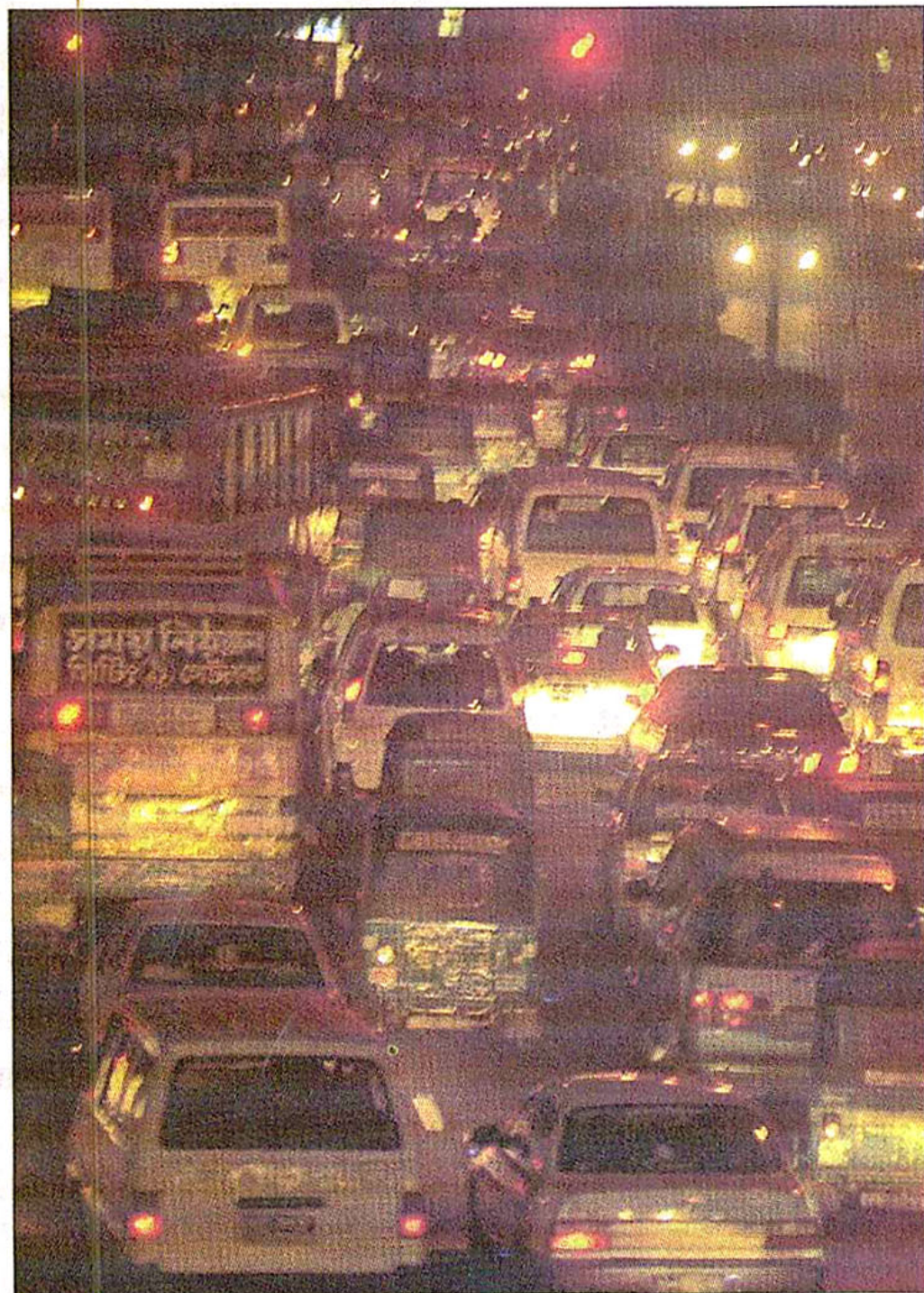
The European Union (EU) yesterday reiterated its support to different initiatives of the caretaker government when Netherlands Ambassador BM Ten Tusscher met Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury at the foreign ministry.

The Dutch ambassador, who chairs the EU presidency in Dhaka in absence of a Portuguese embassy here, also discussed regional and international issues with the foreign adviser, according to a foreign ministry press release. Portugal holds the current EU presidency.

The two sides discussed potentiality of Bangladeshi skilled and semi-skilled workers to fill up jobs in Europe left by ageing European and American workforces.

Iftekhar told Tusscher that

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



The photo taken at Farmgate yesterday shows a large number of vehicles plying the road as the capital gets busy again after Eid holidays.

PHOTO: STAR

Biman buys its leased Airbus

Govt asks it to restore NY route

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd has purchased an Airbus A-310, which the airliner, while being nationalised, leased on October 22, 2003 for four years.

Biman Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Dr MA Momen and high officials of Crane International have recently signed an agreement in this regard in Singapore, sources said.

Biman purchased the 220-seater, the backbone of its fleet, from Crane International, a US-based company, at \$12.5 million. Earlier,

Biman had to pay Crane monthly \$0.25 million for the aircraft.

The government, meanwhile, asked the Biman yesterday to restore its important routes including Dhaka-New York one as early as possible, sources said.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed called Biman Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Dr MA Momen and acting secretary to the civil aviation and tourism ministry Sheikh Altaf Ali at his office and discussed the issue.

Amidst huge loss and schedule

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Bangladesh to seek \$1.6b WB assistance

Mirza Aziz leaves for Bank's annual meeting

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh is going to seek \$1,623 million assistance from the World Bank (WB) to carry on its reform and development initiatives in the current fiscal year (FY).

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who left Dhaka yesterday to attend the annual meeting of the WB and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC, will raise the issue on the sidelines of the meeting scheduled for October 22-23.

Among other members of the Bangladesh team are Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Saleh Uddin Ahmed, ERD Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan and Finance Secretary Dr Mohammad Tareq.

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) sources said the government has prepared a report on the status of WB assistance for different projects, which will be placed before the meeting when the adviser raises the subject.

Although the WB had pledged

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Oil prices hit all-time high

AP, New York

Oil prices surged to an all-time high of \$89 a barrel last night after Turkey's parliament authorized an incursion into northern Iraq in search of Kurdish rebels.

The vote overshadowed a U.S. government report that crude oil and gasoline inventories overall rose more than expected last week. But prices did draw some support from a 200,000 barrel decline in inventories at the closely watched New York Mercantile Exchange delivery terminal in Cushing, Okla.

Light, sweet crude for November delivery rose \$1.09 to \$88.69 a barrel on the Nymex after rising to a record \$89 earlier.

Oil prices initially fell after the Energy Information Administration reported that crude inventories rose by 1.8 million barrels during the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BNP to change its Dhaka unit body

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP has decided to dissolve its Dhaka city unit committee to bring changes in leadership in a bid to strengthen the most important party unit.

Party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain plans to announce a convening committee of the city unit soon nominating party chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah as its convener, party sources said.

One of the three leaders -- city BNP vice presidents Abu Sayeed Khokon and Eklhas Uddin Mollah and Hajaribagh thana unit President Ramjan Ali Hiru -- might be nominated member-secretary of the new committee, said a party leader.

A party meeting attended by Delwar, Hannan and other leaders

on Tuesday finalised decisions to this effect as part of preparations for participating in the coming city corporation election.

Detained party chief Khaleda Zia through her lawyers has already conveyed Delwar her consent to bringing changes in city committee, another party leader claimed.

Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Abdus Salam, president and general secretary of the existing city BNP committee, have expressed solidarity with expelled party secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's initiative for intra-party reforms.

"We are taking steps to strengthen the city committee of BNP alongside formation of party committees where there are no committees," Hannan told reporters yesterday at his Mohakhali

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

EC to stay mum on nat'l govt

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission wants (EC) to remain neutral on the issue of national government as it thinks intellectuals and constitutional experts of the country should decide on it.

"We've no comment at the moment. Let the concept mature. Let's see how the idea develops and proceeds which way. We're not yet thinking anything about it," Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussain yesterday said as reporters sought the EC's version of the theory of a national government.

He said the EC wants to reserve its comment on the much talked-about formula mooted by former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

"Are you talking about holding

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3