

## GOVT'S INDECISION ON 3RD ROUND GAS BLOCK BIDDING Country to miss another yr in hydrocarbon exploration

UNB, Dhaka

When the country is experiencing nagging energy crisis, it is going to miss another year in exploring hydrocarbon in the offshore because of the government's indecision.

Normally, hydrocarbon exploration is conducted in the sea during the dry season because of favourable weather condition. The dry season ends in April.

According to official sources, the government has neither cancelled nor approved the tender proposal of the foreign oil companies qualified under the 3rd round international gas block bidding that the state-owned hydrocarbon corporation Petrobangla invited in 2008 during the caretaker government.

However, the 3rd round bidding had failed to attract any oil majors like Shell, Mobil or Chevron because of the government's conservative pricing of gas.

The 3rd round bidding proposed the gas price about US\$ 4.5 per 1000 cubic

feet (mcf) as against the international price of about US\$ 6-9 per mcf. The present gas price is US\$ 3.5 per mcf which was set in second round bidding in 1998.

The energy sector experts said offshore exploration involved huge investment for which it demands a relatively higher price than the price offered for onshore gas.

In the 3rd round bidding, the government invited tender for a total of 28 blocks, but foreign companies bid for only 15 blocks and finally offers for only 9 blocks from two companies was found to be valid.

Just two IOCs, US-based Conoco Philip qualified for 8 blocks and the Irish Tallow offered for one block. All the offers were found to be single one and there was no other competitor in each block.

While inviting tender, the caretaker government had targeted to complete the tender evaluation process and award contracts by September 2008 and finally

start exploration by October 2008 to utilise the dry season of that year.

But none of the targets was achieved, as the caretaker government did not dare to approve the single bid.

The policymakers left the matters to the elected Awami League-led alliance government to make final decision on acceptance or rejection of the bids.

The present government also did not make any decision in last 2 and half months for which the country had to miss the current year's dry season for exploration.

According to official sources, the government policymakers are also in a dilemma with the offers of lone bidders.

The sources said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked her adviser Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury to examine the merit of the 3rd round bidding.

It is likely that he will submit his observation report soon to the prime minister who is also in-charge of the power and energy ministry.



PHOTO: STAR

(Left) A gate of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital remains locked during the strike by interns of the college yesterday morning, resulting in suffering of the patients. (Right) An elderly woman waits outside the hospital as she could not enter the hospital during the strike. (Story on Page 1)

## Basic healthcare services absent in Char lands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Excluded from the mainstream development programmes, the people living on Char lands across the country also lack access to basic healthcare services.

According to a study conducted on 51 char lands in Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Pabna districts, around 71 percent of char dwellers depend on quack doctors while only 15 percent can have access to qualified doctors.

The findings of the study conducted by Unnayan Shamannay in association with the Concern Worldwide were presented at a roundtable titled 'Health Poverty in Chars of Northwest Bangladesh' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

The study reveals that more than 97 percent of deliveries take place at home. Nearly 70 percent of mothers do not get medical attention during their pregnancy while more than 85 percent of mothers do not receive postnatal care.

"Almost no healthcare services, not even temporary ones, are available in charlands. Occasional vaccination camps, satellite clinics or visits from NGO teams are the only source of medical advice there," said Taifur Rahman, chief of Programme and Research, Unnayan Shamannay.

Char dwellers have to travel long distance to receive medical service, as the nearest government health facilities are located at Union level, which are also in poor condition. Moreover, poor commu-

nication system causes suffering to patients.

The study also shows that about 77 percent of Char dwellers are considered hardcore poor and 9 percent moderate poor.

Khairul Islam, country representative of Water Aid, said lack of safe water and sanitation in Char lands puts life at risk. The number of diarrhoea cases is extremely high in these areas.

Asaduzzaman Noor MP, Kieron Crawley, country director of Concern Worldwide, Dr Ataur Rahman, chairman of Unnayan Shamannay, Zafrullah Chowdhury of Gonoshas-thaya Kendra, and Sajeda Begum, coordinator, Nodi O Jibon project of Concern Worldwide, also spoke at the roundtable.

## BDR to be reconstituted under new name: DG

UNB, Jamalpur

New chief of the mutiny-mangled Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Brig Gen Md Mainul Islam yesterday said the paramilitary border force would be reconstituted under a new name with courageous and patriotic members who are still dedicated to the cause of the nation.

"The BDR will freshly be formed under a new name with honest, dedicated and patriotic jawans who were not involved in the mutiny," said the BDR director general (DG).

The newly appointed DG made the remarks while addressing battalions at Jamalpur BDR camp.

He struck a note of optimism that the force, which will emerge through the resurrection process, would perform its duty for the betterment of the country as per their expectations.

"I'm talking at a time when the entire nation is passing through a transitional period and you know, a brutal killing was staged at Pilkhana in the name of realising demands," he said.

## World Water Day today

UNB, Dhaka

With the theme "Shared Water-Shared Opportunities," the World Water Day 2009 is being observed with due significance in the city today.

Different organisations have chalked out special programmes highlighting the significance of the day with focus on trans-boundary waters including national seminar, symposium, rally and cultural programme across the country.

The World Water Day is held annually on March 22 as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

Department of Public Health Engineering, NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, United Nation Information Centre, World Health Organisation, United Nations Children's Fund and WSP-the World Bank will hold jointly a national seminar at Kakrail.

DHAKA

TODAY

## Seminar

Renewable Energy Research Centre of Dhaka University in collaboration with Bangladesh Solar Energy Society will organise a three-day exhibition and a seminar on solar thermal energy.

Venue: Mokarram Bhawan, DU, The City

## Workshop

Environment and Social Development Organisation organises a workshop on chemical safety of food and the agricultural sector in Bangladesh.

Venue: WVA Auditorium, Time: 9:00am.

## Seminar

Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Society organises a seminar marking the World Water Day.

Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity, Time: 10:30am.

## Roundtable

TIB organises a roundtable on role of the BRTA and stakeholders in road transport system in Bangladesh.

Venue: National Press Club, Time: 10:00am.

## Book launching

The launching ceremony of an Italian origin novel 'La Madre', which has been rendered into Bangla as 'MAA' on the occasion of Ekushey Book Fair 2009, will be held.

Venue: National Press Club, Time: 5:00pm.

## PM talks to people, assures help

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talked to a number of people of the common run, including physically challenged ones, at Awami League's Dhanmondi office yesterday and assured them of providing assistance.

As part of her will to know the weal and woe of cross-sections of people, she listened to people from different strata of society.

A good number of physically challenged people shared their miseries with the

prime minister and sought her assistance in assuaging their plight.

Hasina gave them an empathetic hearing and assured of doing "everything possible" on her part for welfare of the down-and-out.

Well-known folk singer Kargalini Sufia was also among the many hapless ones to talk to the PM. She sought assistance for recovery from her illness.

Hasina also assured Sufia of ensuring better treatment for her illness and other cooperation for a better life.



PHOTO: STAR

Akkhu Chowdhury, trustee of Liberation War Museum, looks at a painting after inaugurating a solo art exhibition of Fareha Zeba at Gallery Kaya in Uttara yesterday. The exhibition of her 69 recent works will continue till April 3.

BANGLA-JAPAN SOCIETY ALUMNI ASSOC LAUNCHED

## Promotion of scientific cooperation stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to promoting Bangladesh-Japan scientific cooperation, the Bangladesh-Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (BJSPPS) Alumni Association was launched at a city hotel yesterday.

Speakers at the launching ceremony said the association would also maintain the network of BJSPPS fellows and conduct joint activities with academic institutions and science promotion agencies.

BJSPPS organised the programme in cooperation with the alumni association and Japanese embassy in Dhaka.

Speaking at the special guest, Japanese Ambassador Masayuki Inoue said Japan has been cooperating Bangladesh for its economic development for a long time and exchange of students and scientists between the two countries are equally important for development.

"Over the last 38 years, the number of Bangladesh scientists have been increasing in Japan and it is a very good investment for capacity building of the Bangladeshi scientists," he added.

Adviser to Prime Minister Prof Alaaddin Ahmed said, "Japan has been the greatest friend of Bangladesh from the very beginning and it rendered assistance to us from building infrastructure to the fields of education and scientific research."

"Japan is a very important country for us if we are to be digitised by 2021 as envisaged by the prime minister, said Dhaka

## Five shops on DU campus declared illegal

DU CORRESPONDENT

Five shops and a kitchen of a food shop on the Dhaka University (DU) campus have been declared illegal, as they did not take permission from the DU authorities properly to run business.

The authorities have issued separate notices on the owners of these shops in the second week of this month asking them to shut down and dismantle their shops by March 30, said Treasurer Prof Mizanur Rahman.

The shops are a food shop near Milan Chatter, two photocopy shops, 'Chhatra Bandhu' and 'Mama-Vagne', a laundry near Nikhet residential area and a food shop on Pahal Road.

"Generally, the Syndicate or a committee formed by the Syndicate gives permission to set up such shops on the campus. But we did not find any legal documents in favour of these shops," Prof Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the university authorities shut down a food shop -- 'Food Corner' -- at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) on similar charges.

## Death anniversary

METRO DESK

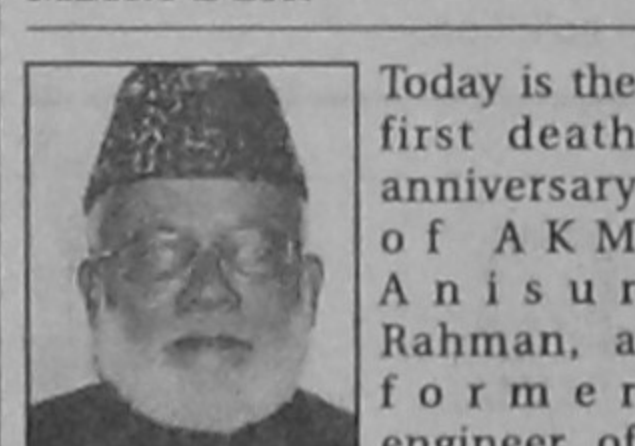


Today is the first death anniversary of Akhmed Uddin Ahmed, former chairman of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council and former general secretary of Dhaka Prabashi Muktiyoddha, Chittagong zone, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

## AKM Anisur Rahman

METRO DESK



Today is the first death anniversary of Akhmed Anisur Rahman, a former engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mohafil will be held at his village home in Rangpur.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

## Syeda Afifa Fatima

METRO DESK



Today is the 4th death anniversary of Syeda Afifa Fatima, a social worker and wife of engineer Mirza Tariqul Islam, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mohafil and destitute feeding programme will be held at her residence at Shantibagh in the city.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for salvation of the departed soul.



PHOTO: STAR

Dutch Ambassador Bea Ten Tusscher speaks at a presentation on the 'FMO activity in Bangladesh and Dutch-financed WWR Bio Fertiliser Project' at The Daily Star conference room in the city yesterday. On her right are Syed Fahim Munaim, managing editor of The Daily Star, N Kleiterp, chief executive officer of FMO, R Brouwer, director of FMO, and J Boone, managing director of World Wide Recycling (WWR). (Story on Page 16)

## DU POLITICAL SCIENCE

## Publication of results demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

The fourth year BSS (Hons) students of Department of Political Science of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday staged a sit-in in front of the office of the chairman of the department for around two hours demanding immediate publication of the results of their honours final examinations.

The students of session 2006-07 gathered in front of the office of Chairman Prof Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan at around 12:00 noon. The agitating students also chanted slogans to press home their demand.

They also threatened to call a strike in the department if their results are not published within 48 hours.

## SCBA elections on Mar 24, 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual election of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for its 14 executive posts, including president and secretary, will be held on March 24 and 25.

Over 1,800 lawyers will cast their votes in the country's prime bar association polls.

Sources said main contest in the election will take place between the panel of ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Sammilita Ainjibi Samannaya Parishad (BSASP) and the BNP-backed Bangladesh Jatiyatadabi Ainjibi Oikya Parishad (BJAOP).

AFM Mesbahuddin (BSASP), Khondker Mahub Hossain (BJAOP) and Mohammad Zakir Hossain (independent) are contesting for the post of president.

Other candidates of BSASP are Vice-president: Kazi Md Sajawar Hossain and Syed Haider Ali, Secretary: SM Rezaul Karim, Treasurer: Md Habibul Gani, Assistant Secretary: Mohammad Ali and Md Badruzzaman Badal and members: Md Nurunnabi Bulbul, Md Enamul Huq Mollah, Dilhad Niazi Manna, Anjuman Ara Begum Ranu, Md Shahid Ullah, Joya Bhoattacharya and Md Nurul Islam Matubbar.

BJAOP's candidates are Vice-president: Md Ibrahim Mollah and Golam Mostafa, Secretary: Md Helaluddin Mollah, Treasurer: Mohammad Abdul Baset, Assistant Secretary: Shirin Afroz and Md Abul Kalam Azad and members: Manir Hossain, Md Jalal Uddin, Golam Rahman Bhuiyan, Shahidul Islam, Shahanara Begum Sanu, Md Abul Kashem Sarkar and Md Shahidul Islam.

The polling will take place from 10:00am to 5:00pm.

## Next action on basis of grassroots leaders' views

## Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said her party would draw up the next course of action on the basis of recommendations of the grassroots level leaders.

Khaleda, also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, told this to journalists at her Gulshan office after receiving the recommendations submitted by three joint secretaries general of the party.

She said they will elaborately discuss the recommendations at the standing committee meeting and decide the party's next course of action.

Dhaka division team leader Abdulla Al Noman, Rajshahi division team leader Mirza Abbas and Khulna division team leader Selima Rahman submitted the recommendations to Khaleda.

Khaleda assigned six teams to submit a report on the basis of the opinion of the grassroots level leaders in six organisational divisions after the party's debate in the December 29 polls.

The BNP chief said she had already got reports of four divisions and waiting for reports of two others.

She said views of grassroots leaders would be useful in deciding the future course of action.

The view exchange meetings of grassroots leaders of six divisions with the team leaders began on February 3 and ended on February 26.

## Trader shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was killed and three others sustained injuries as miscreants sprayed them with bullets when they were playing carom inside a shop at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Karim, 30, a small trader, and the injured were Bahar Hossain, 32, Md Yusuf, 30, and Shah Alam, 15.

Locals said three criminals came to the shop and asked for one Raju and shot at the four indiscriminately and fled away.

The injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Karim dead. Others were receiving treatments at the hospital.

Police said the incident might have occurred over taking control of the area.



## No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:10pm today and rises at 6:00am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.2 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.1	23.8	75	42
Chittagong	32.5	22.4	79	82
Rajshahi	35.7	21.0	81	63
Khulna	34.2	22.7	96	59
Barisal	33.9	22.8	94	65
Sylhet	33.8	21.7	67	55
Cox's Bazar	32.7	22.0	82	81