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Feni gas field reels from writ petition

Tk 50cr Bapex revenue trapped in legal tangle; HC hearing 2005 Niko case

SHARIEF KHAN

As a partner of the controversial Canadian oil company Niko, which developed and began selling gas from the marginal Feni Gas Field from late 2004, Bapex has been suffering financially by a four-year-old writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (Bela) and others with the High Court.

While the court is finally holding hearings on the petition, both Niko and Bapex's arrears with Petrobangla for sale of around 20 billion cubic feet of gas till date remain unpaid.

Petrobangla owes Bapex around Tk 50

crore (more than \$7 million) and Niko around \$22 million.

A High Court order also suspended drilling of any development well in the Feni Gas Field.

"Once the High Court clears the case, Niko would re-invest this money to drill two development wells in Feni to boost gas production by 40 million cubic feet per day from this formerly abandoned gas field," said a well-placed Petrobangla source, referring to an appeal of Niko to the court regarding this matter.

Niko-Bapex was initially producing 20 million cubic feet of gas a day in November, 2004. The production has now

come down to 1.5 million cubic feet of gas a day.

Petrobangla signed the gas sales agreement (GSA) with Niko in December 2006. The price of Feni's gas was fixed at \$1.75 per thousand cubic metre following prolonged disagreements between Petrobangla and Niko.

Long before this GSA was signed, Petrobangla under pressure from the then energy minister AKM Mosharraf paid \$4 million to Niko in April 2005. Mosharraf also made Petrobangla take the Feni field's gas from November 2004 without any agreement.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Outages to go on till Boro harvest
Says power minister Tuku

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The persisting electricity crisis and power outage across the country will not ease until the end of Boro harvest, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku said yesterday.

"The power production now stands at 3800MW which was 3200MW during the last caretaker government's tenure. The power crisis will not ease until Boro harvest ends as the government is giving priority to providing farmers with electricity for irrigation," Tuku said at a roundtable at the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) in the capital.

He said the government

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Tk 6,542cr revenue stuck in litigation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) could not realise around Tk 6,542 crore in revenue because of 16,372 unresolved cases.

NBR sources said there might be a massive shortfall in revenue collection in the current fiscal year due to the global financial crisis and realisation of the arrears can help to achieve the target.

Sources said the tax administration has set a Tk 54,500 crore revenue collection target for the current fiscal year but the collection may not cross over Tk 51,000 crore.

Against the backdrop, the NBR has taken initiative to collect money through resolving the cases soon.

In 2007-2008 FY, the NBR collected Tk 47,287 crore in revenue against a target of Tk 45,970 crore.

As part of a special initiative to face the situation, NBR Chairman Muhammad Abdul Mazid and other officials yesterday held a meeting with the law officers of the Attorney

General's Office (AGO) to work out a way to settle the cases.

After the meeting, Mazid told reporters that legal aspects of the issue were discussed during the meeting with state lawyers.

NBR will organise a weeklong training for the officials dealing with the cases from March 29 to April 3.

In many cases, the revenue related cases are not resolved in higher courts due to lack of competence of NBR officials and their inadequacy in relevant laws.

In the weeklong training programme, law officers of AGO and other senior lawyers will train up the NBR officials on handling of such cases.

Of the pending cases, 1,580 involve Tk 1,700 crore in income tax, 2,023 involve Tk 3,112 crore in value added tax (VAT) and 12,769 relate to Tk 1,730 crore in customs duty.

"We often find it difficult to work due to the pending cases. This backlog may tempt some people to do something illegal as it generally

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



People crowd the road in front of MuktiJodha Supermarket in flames at Mirpur-1 in the capital yesterday. Police at one stage charge truncheons, inset, to drive them away to help fire fighters reach the spot.

2 workers burnt alive
Firemen struggle to carry out duty for curious people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two female factory workers were burnt alive in a fire that broke out at Mrs Luna United Company, a cotton factory, in the city's Kadamtoli area yesterday night.

The deceased were identified as Mary, 16, and Rina, 15, workers of the factory.

Police said the fire originated inside the factory at about 8:00 pm and soon engulfed the entire factory.

Factory sources said the two workers were burnt alive as they were trapped inside its bathrooms during the blaze that also gutted goods kept in the factory.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and brought the flame under control at about 8:40 pm.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

10 die, 30 hurt in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least ten people were killed and 30 others injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Basail upazila of Tangail at about 6:00am yesterday.

The accident occurred as a Tangail-bound truck collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound bus from Gopalpur leaving six people dead including drivers and helpers of both the vehicles on the spot, police said.

On information, firefighters and police from Tangail immediately rushed to the spot and sent the injured to Tangail General Hospital where four more bus passengers succumbed to their injuries.

Six of the deceased are former president of Tangail Bar advocate Sirajul Haque Lal, 60, driver of the truck Rafiqul Islam Shofi, 30, of Moytha of Basail, Amir Ali, 35, of Pathon in Kalihati, Abdus Salam, 35, of Kharabor of Ghatail in Tangail, helper of the bus Mostafizur Rahman, 30, of Jhikargachha in Jessor and Ekabbar Hossain, 32.

Identities of the rest four could not be known immediately.

Of the injured, 28 bus passengers were admitted to the hospital. Of them, conditions of seven people are critical, said Tangail Sadar Police Station Sub-inspector (SI) Shahanoor Islam.

Witnesses said the truck hit the bus while overtaking another bus at Matora in Basail.

One of the passengers Mohammad Ali Hossain said during the accident visibility was poor due to dense fog.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Death lurks in 60km road
Record accidents for reckless driving

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The 60km highway from Jamuna Bridge to Mirzapur in Tangail has turned into a death trap since the Jamuna Bridge came into being in 1998.

Since then the highway has so far experienced about 1,300 road accidents in which at least 1,600 people were killed and 3,580 others injured, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and police sources said.

They attributed the accidents mainly to reckless driving, widespread violation of traffic rules, insufficient space for movement of a large number of vehicles, plying of unfit vehicles overloaded with passengers even on their rooftops and unskilled drivers.

At least ten people were

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World's maiden organic fertiliser plant launched
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The world's first composting plant under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) set up in Bangladesh, WWR Bio Fertilizer Limited, launched its organic fertiliser in the city yesterday.

The 12-million Euro organic fertiliser plant, a joint venture of Waste Concern (Bangladesh) and World Wide Recycling (Netherlands) set up at

Iran to change if US leads the way
Says Supreme leader Khamenei

AGENCIES, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei rebuffed President Barack Obama's latest outreach yesterday, saying Tehran was still waiting to see concrete changes in US policy.

Khamenei said Saturday the Islamic republic is ready to reciprocate if US President Barack Obama changes American attitude towards his country.

"If you change your attitude, we will change our attitude," Khamenei said in a groundbreaking address to thousands of Iranians in the northeastern holy city of Mashhad which was broadcast on state television.

Speaking a day after Obama offered Tehran a "new beginning" to turn back the tide on decades of mutual animosity.

A seminar lesson for Dipu Moni
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Being requested to be the chief guest of a seminar, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni was on her way to the venue. A few speakers and journalists covering it were already there. But the organisers were not.

Dipu Moni had to return and the seminar was cancelled.

A private university called World University was to hold the seminar on "International Sea Boundary: Bangladesh Perspective" at Russian

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

পরিশোধকৃত ঋণের দলিলপত্র ফেরত সংক্রান্ত বিশেষ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিএইচবিএফসি'র সম্মানিত ঋণ গ্রহীতাগণ-যারা ঋণের সমুদয় পাওনা পরিশোধ করেছেন অথচ তাগাদা দেয়া সত্ত্বেও কর্পোরেশনের হেফাজতে থাকা মূল দলিলপত্র ফেরত গ্রহণ করছেন না-তাদেরকে আগামী ২৩-০৪-২০০৯ তারিখের মধ্যে দলিল ফেরত নেয়ার জন্য বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

বর্ণিত সময়ের মধ্যে উক্ত দলিলসমূহ ফেরত নিতে ব্যর্থ হলে তা দাবিবিহীন দলিল হিসেবে তালিকাভুক্ত হবে এবং ভবিষ্যতে কোন কারণে দলিলসমূহ বিনষ্ট বা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হলে কর্পোরেশন কোন ভাবেই দায়ী থাকবে না।

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E-mail:bbhfc@bangla.net.

5 Myanmar nationals arrested
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and members of Ansar-VDP arrested five Myanmar nationals in separate drives from bordering Thanchi and Naikhongchhari upazilas yesterday.

Of the arrested, three are believed to be members of Myanmar Army while two other members of intelligence agencies, official sources said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Prayer Timing		
March 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-55	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-16	6-20
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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