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## GAS CRISIS TO WORSEN FURTHER FROM 2011 Fast decision a must to produce coal, N-power

SHARIER KHAN

The country is walking the path of a perennial gas crisis where even the best possible situation of striking gas in the off-shore blocks will not give it a respite till 2020.

This means unless the government takes major policy decisions like emphasising coal or nuclear power production within a short time, the already unbearable power load shedding that is hitting the economy and lifestyle very hard will go beyond any solution. Most of the country's power plants run on gas.

The gas situation is so bleak that Petrobangla has been declining confirmation of gas supply to a number of upcoming large power projects. In a paper submitted to the prime minister, Petrobangla even recommended discouraging use of gas for power generation as it can be generated using alternative resources like coal.

Power Development Board (PDB) sources say while Petrobangla okayed gas supply to Bibiyana 450 megawatt power project, it cannot confirm gas supply to the much older 450 MW Sirajganj power project till 2012.

For now it can only confirm gas supply to 150 MW Sylhet, 150 MW Bhola and two 150 MW Siddhirganj power projects.

Petrobangla flatly refused to supply gas to Phase-3 Meghnaghat 450 MW project, 150 MW Sikabaha, 240 MW Dhaka North and 150 MW Khulna power projects.

And it can conditionally supply gas to the dual-fuel 450 MW Bheramara project, 360 MW Haripur, dual-fuel 210 MW Khulna, 150 MW Chandpur and 150 MW Sirajganj projects. The condition is that gas may be available for these schemes after 2012.

Lack of gas supply to the power plants is already forcing the PDB to refrain from gener-

ation of around 600-700 MW power. This is adding to power load shedding because of inadequate power plants in the country.

Planning of power project has been revolving round availability of gas since the sixties. Till now the focus remains confined to gas-based power projects which generate around 90 percent of the country's power.

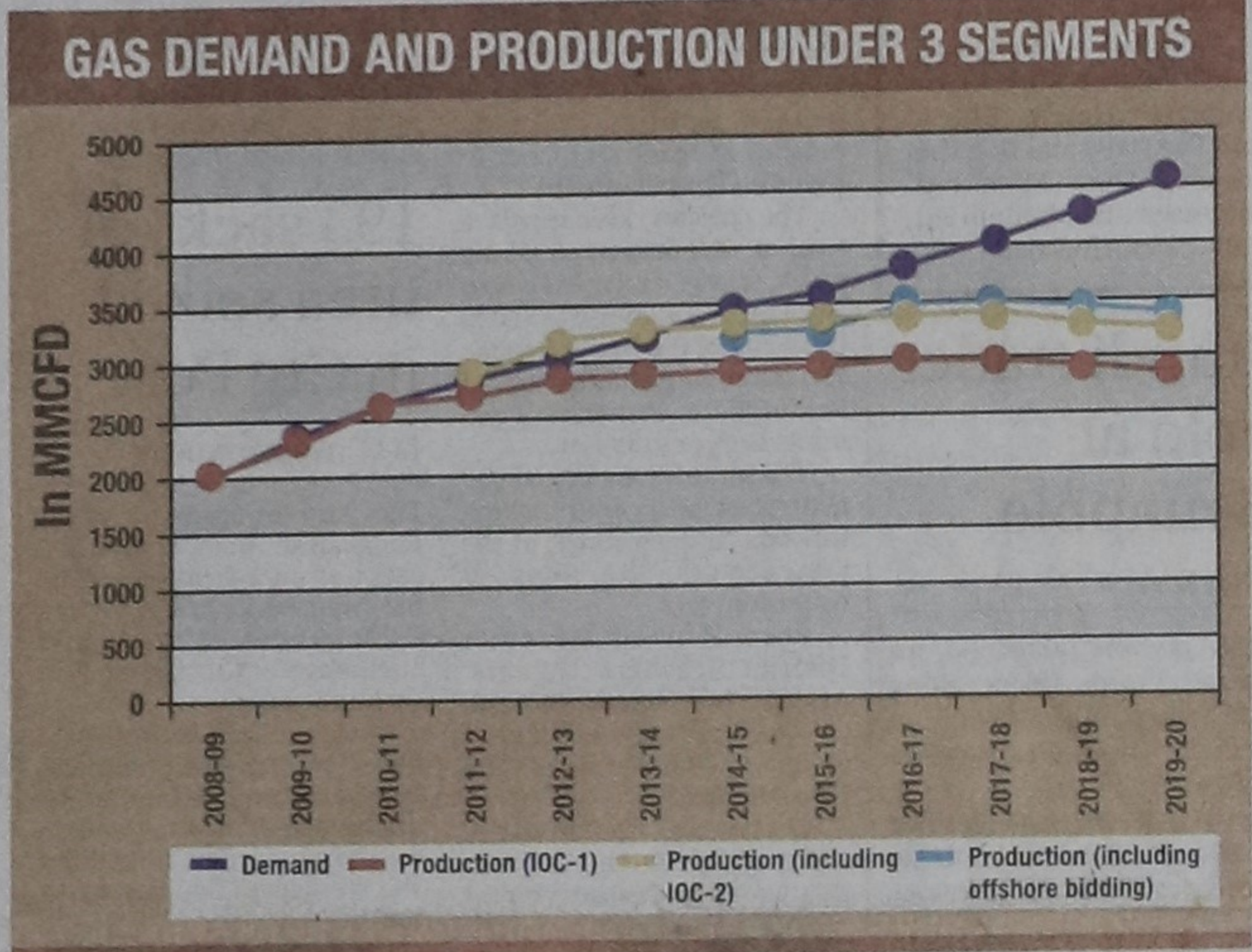
**PETROBANGLA'S PROJECTIONS**  
As per Petrobangla's projection number-1, with the current activities involving gas

exploration and production, gas shortfall will hit 142 million cubic feet a day (mmcf) in 2011, 341 mmcf in 2014, 838 mmcf in 2016 and 1,714 mmcf in 2019-20.

The demand for gas is 2,018 mmcf at present and it will rise to 4,567 mmcf in 2019-20 at the present trend of consumption growth, Petrobangla sources said.

But the country is already experiencing more than 200 mmcf gas supply shortfall, and the Petrobangla projection did not include this. It

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## OMS SHOPS Lowest rice price fails to attract customers

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and WASIM BIN HABIB

The shops selected for open market sale (OMS) of rice have failed to attract customers in the capital despite offering this time the lowest price under the programme.

Consumers shy away from the OMS shops as the rice there is substandard and the prices in the market are not too high.

The rice, which was selling at Tk 18 per kg in the OMS shops from April 1, is available at Tk 19-21 in the city's kitchen markets while medium quality rice like Parija, BR-28, BR-29

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PHOTO: STAR

Open Market Sale of rice, which began in the capital this month, has so far failed to attract enough customers even though prices have been lowered drastically. The photo was taken at an OMS outlet at Palashi.

## Khaleda uses cantt house for politics defying law Says Ashraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia runs party activities from her residence in Dhaka Cantonment although Cantonment Board laws forbid politics there, alleged Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday.

In a press statement, the AL spokesperson also said when AL President Sheikh Hasina was in the opposition she was barred from entering the

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## CONFESION BY 3 MORE MUTINEERS CID to quiz ministers who tried to strike deal

KAILASH SARKAR

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has decided to take statements of ministers and lawmakers who played roles in negotiating with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans involved in the February 25-26 carnage at Pilkhana BDR headquarters.

"We will soon take statements of the ministers and lawmakers to learn what the mutineers told them at negotiation meetings and over mobile phones," said a top CID official investigating the carnage, seeking anonymity.

Their statements will also help identify those BDR personnel.

Meanwhile, three more BDR jawans yesterday

day confessed to their involvement in the carnage before Metropolitan Magistrate Zulfiqar Hayat. They are Havildar Masud Iqbal, Nayek Abdul Qayyum and Sepoy Monirul Alam.

Earlier, six BDR members confessed to their involvement in the BDR massacre.

Sources said the investigators might talk to Home Minister Sahara Khatun, State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanok, lawmakers Fazole Nur Tapas, Mirza Azam and Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

When contacted for comments, Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Abdul Kahar Akand told The Daily Star that they may talk to the ministers and lawmakers and take

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## Student dies contacting live wire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student of Narayanganj Charukala Institute died after falling from an under construction foot over-bridge at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday.

Family members said Sultana Akter Sumi, 20, a first year student of the institute and a resident of the city's Sabujbagh, went to Shahbagh for tuition purpose.

"I saw a spark of light and heard a bang when the girl was

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## TWO MINISTERS ON ACC Govt to probe activities, spending in last 2 yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two ministers yesterday said the government would look into the activities and expenditure of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in the last two years.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government would have the 'unusual' spending of the ACC over graft cases audited.

"The ACC spent a total of Tk 13 crore on lawyers to run the cases against politicians in last two years. It is unusual. The government will have the expenditure audited," the minister told reporters at his Indira Road residence.

On corruption allegation against ACC boss Hasan Mashud Chowdhury who resigned on Thursday, the law minister said the ACC should investigate the allegations against him, if there is any.

"There was no pressure from the government for him to resign. He resigned on his own and everyone has the right to do so," he said adding that the committee concerned would appoint a new ACC chairman as per law.

He alleged the ACC had filed cases against

politicians during the Fakhruddin-led caretaker government; some of those were found to be false and baseless.

At a separate programme in the city, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan yesterday said the government would dig into the activities of the ACC to make it more effective in future.

He, however, did not disclose what steps the government would take. There are some questions among people on activities of the ACC in the past two years.

The minister said this before attending a reception of successful students of a coaching centre at the ICMAB auditorium at Nilkhet in the city.

When asked about the effort of the government and ruling Awami League in reining in Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of AL, Faruk said, "The prime minister has instructed the BCL central leaders and police to take steps in this regard."

"The student politics has a good history in the country but recently activities of some students are embarrassing the government," he said.

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## 23 Bangladeshi job seekers stranded at KL airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-three Bangladeshi job seekers have been stranded in Kuala Lumpur International Airport for nearly two months as their Malaysian employer Network Esquire Sdn Bhd is yet to receive them although they have all valid documents.

Bangladeshi recruiting agency Fahmi International Ltd processed the documents of these workers who arrived in the Malaysian airport on February 12 and were detained by the Immigration Department there.

Network Esquire now says the immigration department did not allow the workers to enter the country. It received Malaysian Ringgit (RM) 2,700 as fees to hire each worker and an additional RM 20,000 from Fahmi International for releasing the stranded workers.

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## GOVT COLLEGES IN CITY BCL men pocketed huge money from admission seekers

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League have received a few crore taka brokering illegal admission of freshmen to government colleges in the capital.

They obtained the money mainly from students on the waiting lists and the ones who failed to qualify in the freshmen admission tests.

The admission tests for the first-year honours programmes of colleges started early last month and will end within a few days.

According to Chhatra League leaders directly involved in this, known as "political admission", at different government colleges, they are taking Tk 20,000 to Tk 1 lakh for each admission as carrots depending on the faculty and the college's reputation. Dhaka College and Eden College top the list of institutions where political admissions are going on.

Chhatra League leaders carry out such illegal admission business with the connivance of a section of teachers, officials and employees of the colleges, sources in the institutions say.

If any college official refuses to comply with Chhatra League leaders' instructions, they are threatened with transfers, according to college sources.

They said Chhatra League leaders, student wing of the ruling

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## 15 hurt as BCL rivals clash at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured in a violent intra-party clash over establishing supremacy at a dormitory at Jahangirnagar University (JU) early Friday.

Witnesses said the clash erupted as a faction of BCL led by Jihan-Palash entered the Meer Mosharrif Hossain (MMH) Hall along with 40 to 50 outsiders at 4:00 am and vandalised at least 25 rooms of the dorm.

Masked and equipped with sharp weapons and firearms, the attackers made their entry through the dining room and swooped on sleeping students, said sources.

Earlier another faction led by Pritam-Sabbir drove loyalists of Jihan-Palash out of the dorm on March 10 when a bloody clash halted all

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## Son kills father over voting dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A youth killed his father yesterday following an altercation over casting vote by his mother in the by-elections of Rangpur-6 constituency.

Police and locals said Badsha, 50, the father, asked her wife Nasima, 45, to cast her vote for Awami League candidate but the woman voted for BNP candidate at Gangaram High School polling centre.

They said Badsha started beating up his wife at about 1:00pm on Thursday when Nasima returned home at Gangaram village in Peerganj upazila and told her husband that she had voted for another candidate.

Angered by the trouble, Shaheen, 25, tried to stop his father and engaged in an altercation with his father.

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PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka Wasa digs a long trench in the road from Mohammadpur to Asad Gate in the capital, narrowing down the street significantly and putting locals and students of nearby schools in difficulty.

## Road digging starts as monsoon approaches

HELEMUL ALAM

With the monsoon approaching, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has permitted different utility service providers to dig up 12,601 square metres of street surface, which is likely to make city dwellers suffer.

Different service providers, especially Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), have already started their digging.

DCC officials said the DCC on January 29, through one stop service cell, gave permissions to Dhaka Wasa, Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd, Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd, Bangla Link, Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd and other individuals to dig up the roads and do repair and installation work.

Dhaka Wasa has been digging roads in Gendaria, Segunbagicha near Anti-Corruption Commission office, Azimpur, Asad Gate, Taj Mahal Road, Iqbal Road and Shah Suri Road and in Uttara.

Traffic chaos has become a common phenomenon in those areas. Movement on those roads is now risky since they are now narrower and they become slippery when wet, locals said. A number of locals of those areas com-

plained of respiratory problems caused by dust in the air.

Wasa, however, said they are causing sufferings to city dwellers for a certain period of time to relieve them of water-logging and sewerage problems in future.

Papiya, guardian of Taki, a class-III student of St Joseph's Higher Secondary School near Asad Gate, said they face huge traffic jams every day caused by the road digging.

"It takes almost one hour to come to school or return home in Adabar," she said, adding that it is almost twice the usual time required.

Shirin Akhtar, mother of Sadid and Ilma of the same school, said she along with her kids have to walk almost half a km to and from school every day. Getting a rickshaw has also become very difficult in this road, she added.

Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Iqbal Road, said Dhaka Wasa has been working there for over the last one month.

Amir Hossain, contractor of the Wasa job, said it would take a month more to dig the road, work in the sewerage lines and cover the surface. Asad Gate-Mohammadpur Road, Iqbal Road, Shah Suri Road and Taj Mahal Road are being dug up in Mohammadpur area.

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