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City lacks gas

Supply dearth changes cooking, lifestyle in Mirpur, Pallabi, Mohammadpur

WASIM BIN HABIB

Residents of Mirpur, Pallabi and Mohammadpur as well as some industries in the outskirts of the city have been suffering from a huge shortage in gas supply in the areas over the past month due to a deficit in gas production.

The demand for gas usage in the city is over 200 million cubic feet each day while the production is only around 170 million cubic feet, resulting in a shortage of around 30 million cubic feet.

Many residents in these areas, especially block C of Mirpur section-12 and 11, have taken to cooking in the very early hours of the morning to cope with the prevailing crisis. Some residents say that they have also resorted to buying cooked food from restaurants.

Mohammad Solaiman, a resident of block C of Mirpur section-12, said they have been experiencing a very poor supply of gas between 10:00am to 2:00pm, which are the peak cooking hours in general.

"We wake up earlier and try to complete our cooking by 9:00 am now," he said.

Another resident of the same area Sayeeda Aktar said they cook only at night.

"After the shortage in power supply, now a shortage in gas supply seems to have become a part of our daily routine. The supply and pressure of gas is so low that we are not able to burn more than one burner at a time on our stove," said another housewife in Mirpur section-11.

"You can imagine the state of cooking that gets done at such a low temperature," she said.

Khadiza Yasmin, a resident of Mohammadpur Madrasa road, said she had to give up cooking at noon. Instead she cooks late in the afternoon.

Talking to The Daily Star, Director (operation) of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, Khalid Hasan said the reason behind the gas crisis in Mirpur and some pocket areas in the city is the deficit in production.

He said the population has increased significantly resulting in an increase in the demand

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PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Gradual land grabbing and dumping of garbage and sewage into the Rajkhal Canal in Chaktai of Chittagong City left the canal in this sorry state.

Jumbo buses to run on city streets

UNB, Dhaka

The government has decided to introduce articulated bus service (articulated buses are buses of a type with an increased passenger capacity) soon under a pilot project to ease its nagging traffic congestion.

The decision came from a recent inter-ministerial meeting held here with Roads and Railway Division Secretary ASM Ali Kabir in the chair.

According to the decision, 20 buses--10 of BRTC and 10 privately owned double-deckers

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Police on trail of an Afghan war veteran

DB launches operation on arrest of Lashkar men

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The Detective Branch of police has launched a nationwide hunt for Afghan war veteran Moulana Bakhtiar Hossain, who was earlier arrested in 1999 with four others including two foreigners for involvement in a militancy campaign.

The search began after detained Indian national and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) organiser Moulana Mansur Ali revealed that Bakhtiar is the founder and principal of Madrasatur Rahman al Arabia in the city's Dakkhin Khan area

where he was arrested last week.

Monirul Islam, DB deputy commissioner (south), told The Daily Star, "Mansur joined the madrasa in 2006, but he had been in contact with Bakhtiar since he entered the country in 1995.

"We're looking for Bakhtiar to know the relations between the two, and their activities."

Bakhtiar met Mansur, a top-listed terrorist in India, while fighting for Taliban in Afghanistan in the early 90s.

He came under watch in 1999 with an intelligence agency probing the activities

of Servants of Suffering Humanity International (SSHI), a Dakkhin Khan-based Islamist NGO.

Following up leads provided by intelligence officials, the Criminal Investigation Department raided the Servants office and arrested five including Bakhtiar on January 25, 1999.

The other detainees were Saleem of Maniganj, Shahabuddin of Chittagong, Ahmed Sadeq Ahmed, a South African national, and Mohammed Sajed, a Pakistani national.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Suicide bombers strike Afghan city

Two Nato soldiers, over a dozen militants killed

AFP, Khost

Seven suicide bombers tried to storm security targets in an Afghan city yesterday, wounding personnel and a girl in the third Taliban commando raid in a week, authorities said.

Part of an increasingly deadly Taliban insurgency, the attacks underscored the vulnerability of Western-backed government forces less than four weeks before landmark elections and raised concerns for the security of the polls.

The interior ministry said "seven suicide bombers blew themselves up" in different parts of the eastern city of Khost, which is close to the border with Pakistan, where Islamist militants

have carved out safe havens.

"All of the bombers who had suicide vests on their bodies were identified and fired at by our brave police before they reached their targets," it said.

Three of the bombers set off their explosives in front of the town's police headquarters while another targeted the rear of the facility, it said.

Nearly one suicide attacker tried to storm a police post, another detonated near a police rapid reaction unit and a seventh targeted a bank near the city centre, the interior ministry said.

Two police were injured in the attacks, the ministry added, but officials warned the toll

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Whip scorpion, one believed to be *Hypoctonus oatesii*, sighted at Lawachhara and another one, *Hypoctonus carmichaeli*, inset, spotted in Kalenga.

Whip scorpions seen nearly 100 years after!

DR REZA KHAN, Head of Dubai Zoo

I was frantically searching for a few frogs that were likely to be hiding under the hard blocks of hilly soil, fallen logs and other materials on the floor of the Lawachhara National Park near Srimongal after a burst of monsoon rain.

The driver of a three-wheeler -- who was doubling as my field helper for the time being -- and I were the sole visitors to the park on that Saturday.

While walking along a trail, we saw a few bags of solidified cement blocks stacked one over the other. They had been lying by the side of a rainwater drainage line for ages.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

No curb on hajj quotas for flu

But Saudi Arabia may ban elderly, children from pilgrimage to limit risks

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia is likely to ban the elderly and children from the hajj this year to limit the risk of swine flu, but this will not change country quotas for the pilgrimage, a health official said yesterday.

Dr Khaled Marghali, spokesman for the Saudi health ministry, said the government is expected to implement recommendations to block people older than 65 and younger than 12 from the hajj made at Wednesday's emergency Arab health ministers meeting in Cairo.

But national quotas for the annual pilgrim-

age to the holy cities of Makkah and Medina, which takes place in late November this year, would not change, he told AFP.

"This will not touch on the quotas, the percentage of pilgrims" allocated each country, he said.

"When we implement the new law, it will stay as it is."

Close to two million people were originally expected to arrive this year for the hajj, a requisite act for Muslims in their lifetime if they have the means.

Saudi authorities each year set the number

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

First ODI against WI today

SPORTS REPORTER

Expectation will be high when Bangladesh start their three-match one-day international series against a makeshift West Indies side today after a historic first-ever away Test series victory in the Caribbean.

The Tigers swept the two-match Test series and go into today's ODI at cricket's newest venue, Windsor Park in Dominica, with the 'favourites' tag.

The West Indies Cricket Board stuck to the replacement squad for the first two games despite the top players made themselves available

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Drought may hit Boro farming too

Fear experts; lack of rainfall already upsets Aman planting

PORIMOL PALMA

Apart from Aman drought-like situation in the country is posing a serious threat to the production of Boro rice in the next winter as low rainfall has already affected water percolation into the ground, irrigation experts said.

The government's subsidy on irrigation during this Aman season may help farmers for the time being but for a permanent solution, authorities must have to preserve rainwater, they suggested.

Farmers mainly in the north and central parts of the country this time are facing trouble planting Aman seedlings due to scanty rainfall.

According to met office, the average rainfall in June was recorded only 288 millimetres against the average 459 millimetres. Until July 20 the average rainfall was registered at 265 millimetres against the average 337 millimetres.

The time from June to September is the peak rainy season when the ground water is recharged which is withdrawn for Boro cultivation between January and May.

"This time around ground water was recharged 15% less than usual and if it continues to go on the next Boro season will face major irrigation crisis," said Eftekharul Alam referring to an ongoing study of Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC).

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OnlinePoll

Do you agree with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud that BNP is trying to make the Tipaimukh issue as 'political issue' though it is a national issue?

Yes (40.5%)
No (58.8%)
No Comments (0.7%)

Total votes: 1208

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think law enforcers often get involved in criminal activities because of poor wages?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

July 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Zohr	1-45	2-15
Asr	6-00	6-15
Maghrib	7-50	7-55
Esha	9-15	9-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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