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SECOND EDITION

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## Behind gas crisis

Neglect of nat'l companies causes short supply; local gas cos with more reserve produce less than IOCs with smaller reserve

SHARIER KHAN

The country would not have faced any gas crisis now if the government paid a little attention to capacity building and modernising the companies under Petrobangla instead of becoming over-dependent on foreign oil companies to produce gas, experts say.

"International oil companies (IOCs) with fewer gas reserves are producing much higher volume of gas because they have installed bigger production wells. They have done so because they have detailed information about their gas fields," said a senior official of Petrobangla.

"In contrast, the wells of the big national companies like Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Ltd (BGFL) or Sylhet Gas Field Ltd (SGFL) are old and much narrower. They never modernised their gas fields to increase production capacity, neither did they try to gather detailed

information about the gas fields' health," he added.

This has not happened because the government did not have fund to run the

### Bapex set for maiden 3D survey

SHARIER KHAN

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) is set to start for the first time three dimensional surveys in large national gas fields within a couple of months, completion of which will give a new understanding of the fields.

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national gas companies. On the contrary, Petrobangla and its affiliates have been earning thousands of crore taka each year -- all of which goes to the national exchequer and for payment for gas produced by foreign oil companies.

Until recently, Bangladeshi companies possessed 78 percent of proven gas and foreign companies only 22 percent. In terms of reserve this means, national oil companies had 5.38 trillion cubic feet (TCF) gas and foreign companies 1.53 TCF. This estimate has drastically changed after Chevron submitted two studies on its Bibiyana gas field's reserve.

The Bibiyana field was initially estimated to have 2.4 TCF recoverable gas (with 952 billion cubic feet proven reserve). Following studies and reassessment, Petrobangla recently increased its recoverable reserve to 5.76 TCF with its proved and probable reserve estimated at 7.43 TCF.

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As the gas supply crisis continues in the capital, many city dwellers have now opted to purchase gas cylinders for household use. This photo was taken at a shop in Mirpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Devotees pour in as Biswa Ijtema begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day Biswa Ijtema, the largest congregation of Muslims after hajj, started yesterday on the bank of the Turag in Tongi with participation of a large number of devotees from home and abroad.

Locals and witnesses claimed that the number of devotees on the first day of this year's Ijtema surpassed that of previous years. Tens of thousands of devotees started arriving at the Ijtema ground in the morning from different places across the country to offer Juma prayers. The area literally turned into a human sea. Maulana Qwari Zobayer, imam of Kakrail Mosque, led the Juma prayers with rows of worshippers spilling out of the 150-acre ground, around 20km off the capital.

Meanwhile, three people including two devotees died in the last two days. Nurul Biswas, 50, died around 12:30am yesterday. The identity of another deceased devotee could not be known immediately. A policeman had died in an accident on Wednesday.

The namaz-e-janaza of the two devotees was held after the Juma prayers.

An unidentified devotee aged around 55 was killed while crossing the road in front of the Farmgate police box around 2:30am yesterday, said Tejgaon police.

The Juma prayers witnessed a huge gathering of devotees stretching from Tongi station road to Abdullahpur bus stand. Not getting space on the Ijtema ground, many were seen offering the prayers on Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway.

Vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Gazipur roads were halted for a few hours during the prayers, creating a long queue of vehicles. Many people offered

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: SHAFIQUIL ALAM

Thousands of devotees offer Jum'a prayers at the Ijtema ground on the bank of Turag yesterday, first day of the congregation.

## Teesta talks likely in March

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The minister-level talks of Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) between Bangladesh and India will be held in March, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tari Ahmed Karim said here yesterday.

The meet is an attempt to work out an interim water-sharing agreement of the river Teesta, he said during a press conference at Indian Women Press Corps on the state of India-Bangladesh relationship after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India.

He said the ministerial-level JRC meeting is likely to be held in the first week of March either in Dhaka or New Delhi.

Karim said if the political leadership of the two countries show the determination to solve the Teesta water-sharing issue, it could be done.

Pointing out Bangladesh's stance in favour of an interim agreement, he said, "Given the political eagerness of the two countries, we can resolve the matter."

The high commissioner, SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Investigators still in the dark about plot

Charge sheet in BDR carnage case in a month

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Investigators of the BDR headquarters carnage case have not yet pinpointed any conspiracy behind the bloodbath although they are considering submitting the charge sheet in a month.

Sources in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) say the investigation officer and his assistant investigators are working hard to submit the charge sheet by February 20.

The sources add the investigators have yet to train enough focus on tracing any conspiracy behind the mutiny as they are getting bogged down in probing offences like murder, arson and loot inside the BDRHQ.

Following the Pikhana carnage that killed 74 people including 57 army officers, the investigators have detected 75 places of occurrence, while the number of witnesses is around 8,000.

"We'll have the opportunity to submit a supplementary charge sheet later if we find anything regarding conspiracy behind the February 25-26 mutiny," comments a CID investigator asking not to be identified.

"There was certainly well-planned conspiracy behind such carnage, but we've yet to make any headway to unveil it," he adds.

The national probe committee on the BDR mutiny could not establish beyond doubt the real cause and motive behind the barbaric incident.

The summary of the committee report however hints that the architects of the carnage might have used negative attitudes of SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Proshika standoff over

Keys handed over to present CEO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mirpur police yesterday handed over the keys of Proshika Bhaban to the non-government organisation's (NGO) incumbent Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mahbul Karim, after being directed by the High Court.

"We've got the office keys. We will come to work tomorrow," said Abdur Rob yesterday, a director of the NGO.

There has been a long standing feud between the organisation's current management and its former chairman Qazi Faruque, leading to violent clashes recently over possession of Proshika Bhaban, the NGO's headquarters.

Local ruling Awami League lawmaker Ilias Ali Mollah was present during the handing over of the keys last evening at Mirpur police station.

Abdur Rob said Proshika's incumbent CEO along with the current management committee members entered the office building around SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

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## Work on counter intelligence unit underway

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government is working to set up counter intelligence unit for watching over the activities of the country's intelligence agencies and get advance intelligence on any future conspiracies or plot for unlawful activities.

To avoid recurrence of incidents like the Bangladesh Rifles mutiny last year, the government has already formed National Committee for Intelligence Coordination headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

In line with recommendations of the national enquiry committee on BDR mutiny, an inter-ministerial taskforce based in the home ministry has also been formed to monitor implementation of the recommendations put forward by the retired bureaucrat Anis-Uzzaman Khan-led enquiry committee.

"The formation of a national crisis management committee headed by the prime minister is also underway. It will be formed to tackle future national crises," Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder told The Daily Star last week.

The home minister, LGRD minister, cabinet secretary, chiefs of the three defence services, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on national security, opposition leader in parliament, IGP and director generals of NSI and DGFI will be members of the high-profile committee.

About formation of the much-talked-about counter intelligence unit, he said, "We are still working on it. We are discussing whether a single counter intelligence unit or separate units will be formed for each of the agencies."

National Security Intelligence (NSI), Special Branch (SB) of Police, Detective Branch (DB) of Police, Director General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and Rifles Security Unit (RSU) are the intelligence agencies.

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Supporting the needy merits ...

### Inviting applications for 2010 higher studies scholarship

As a part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, Bank Asia invites applications for 2010 Higher Studies Scholarship from poor meritorious students of the rural areas. Students from Malkhanagar and Sirajdikhan (Munshigonj), Rohitpur (Keranigonj), Ashulia and Savar (Dhaka), Konabari (Gazipur), Chatkhil (Noakhali), Ramgonj (Laxmipur), Tarail (Kishoregonj), Lohagara and Bhatiary (Chittagong), Beanibazar (Sylhet) and Ishwardi (Pabna), who passed Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination in 2009 and took admission in reputed universities/institutions in MBBS, Engineering, Agriculture, Business Administration, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Computer Science, Genetic Engineering or other core subjects are eligible to apply for this scholarship which is of 4-5 years' duration. Tk. 2,000 (two thousand) per month and Tk. 10,000 (ten thousand) lump sum for buying books and tuition fees each year will be awarded as scholarship. **Starting from 2005, Bank Asia has awarded the higher studies scholarships to 122 students till now.**

Students from the above mentioned areas are requested to collect Application Forms from the concerned Branches of the Bank and submit duly filled Application Forms to the respective Branch Managers by **5:00 pm on 18 February, 2010**. For any information in this respect, **Mr. Ashrafuddin Ahmed (01199816780) or Mr. Inamul Islam (01552479377)** may be contacted.

