

Gas crisis hits Ctg homes

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Shahana Akter was in a fix when the gas supply went off on Monday evening.

Shahana had to wait till 10:00pm for gas supply to resume and it was midnight when she bade her son goodnight.

And this housewife who resides at Khulshi is not an exception, people in many areas in the port city are having the same experience since low pressure and abrupt outage of gas have been causing serious trouble for over two weeks.

Delwara and Shahinur, residents of the same area, said they have to prepare both the breakfast and the lunch together since the gas pressure starts falling at 11:30am and finally goes off at around 12:30pm.

"The supply resumes at around 3:00pm and goes off again for at least three hours at 6:00pm," they added.

The gas crisis has forced many to buy kerosene stove to do cooking with additional costs or go for brick-made fuel woodburner.

People at Agrabad, Sugandha Residential Area and Kapashgola also have the complaints.

Sources in Bakharabad Gas Systems Limited (BGS) blamed the increasing gap between the demand and the supply

for the crisis, which they feared to worsen in the summer.

"There is no official suspension of gas supply in the city. It must be the gradual decrease in production against increasing connection and demand that causes poor pressure in supply lines and consequent outage of gas. Besides, fall in temperature also contributes to the poor pressure," said BGS Manager (customer maintenance) Md Azam.

"We get some 233 MCF (million cubic feet) of gas, including 33 MCF from the offshore gas-field of Sangu, against an increasing demand that by now stands at 350 MCF in Chittagong. Of this, CUFL and KFC get 48 MCF each while some 57 CNG stations get some 35 MCF. The rest is left for household and commercial use," he said adding, "Some 35 MCF is needed for household use."

"The situation would worsen further when we would restore supply to power plants in the upcoming summer," he observed.

Rationing could check wastage of household gas. But, residential connections could not be separated from commercial connections.

Businessmen, particularly owners of composite factories of knitting sector, strongly protested the idea of gas rationing since it might break the production chain in composite factories having different units located at different places,

he said.

BGS General Manager Ashraf Ali said BGS gets all the 33 MCF produced by Sangu that once produced around 180 MCF.

BGS get most of its supply from Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited and Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL). But, by the time the gas of these two sources reaches Chittagong from a long distance it loses pressure.

"Introduction of a coordinated process of distribution could help improve the situation here," said Ashraf stressing an alternative to gas.

Ashraf said they have put forward some recommendations and Petrobangla and the authorities concerned are thinking actively to improve the situation.

Meanwhile, sources in BGS preferring anonymity observed that import of fertiliser instead of producing locally (that require huge quantity of gas) and running captive power plants with diesel might lessen the pressure on gas.

However, any step like rationing or suspending supply to fertiliser factory or captive power plants is sure to spark protest and will have some negative impacts.

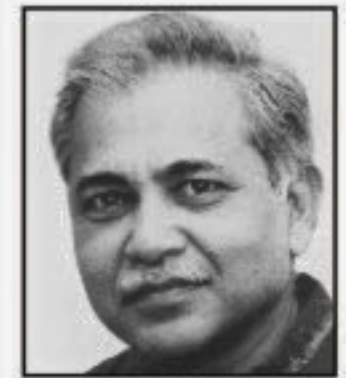
So, the matter should be reviewed and discussed thoroughly at the policymaking level to come up with a feasible solution to the crisis, they added.



LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam speaks at the 27th regular meeting of the executive committee of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap) at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 3)

Obituary

METRO DESK



Dr Omar Haider Chowdhury, a noted economist, passed away in the city on Friday at the

age of 65, says a press release. Dr Haider, who retired as research director of BIDS late last year, had been undergoing treatment at the Square Hospital for the last two weeks.

He left behind his wife, three daughters and a host of admirers and well-wishers to mourn his death.

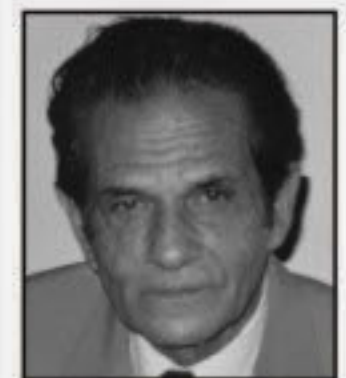
Omar Haider Chowdhury worked as a consultant to World Bank, ADB, FAO, ESCAP and APDC and advised the government on various issues. As BIDS director, he headed the general economics division and led numerous research and studies.

He was buried at Azimpur Graveyard.

His qulkhwanī will be held after Asr prayers today at his residence at Dhanmondi.

Syed Mahbub Ali

METRO DESK



Writer Syed Mahbub Ali, eldest son of historian Syed Murtaza Ali, passed away on Saturday.

He was 80, says a press release.

He was the author of 'Ontorogo Aloke', a memoir about his uncle novelist Syed Mujtaba Ali. His essays on science were also published in The Daily Star, Ittefaq, Pakistan Observer and Biggan Samoyiki.

Mahbub Ali worked at an export agency house specialising in scientific equipment.

He left behind three brothers, three sisters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His qulkhwanī will be held at House # 30, Road # 7, Dhanmondi after Maghrib prayers on January 26.

Hasibul Hasan Lablu

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur



Hasibul Hasan Lablu, general secretary of Faridpur district Awami

League, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at the National Heart Foundation at Mirpur in the city yesterday at the age of 56.

He was the former chairman of Faridpur municipality and the president of Faridpur Motor Workers' Union and South-Western regional Sramik Oikya Parishad. He was also the vice-president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribhan Sramik Federation.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Leaders of Awami League, BNP, CPB and Workers Party expressed condolence at his death.

Rokeya Begum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rokeya Begum, wife of late Islam Ahmed Master and mother of Chittagong Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader Hasan Shaheed Rana, passed away on Saturday due to old-age complications at her residence in Jiri village of Patiya. She was 75, said a press release.

She left behind five sons, four daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu MP and General secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia expressed deep shock at her death. They also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

Md Mahiuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Md Mahiuddin, former MLSS of the Press Information Department, passed away due to old-age complications in the city at the age of 80, said a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and three daughters to mourn his death.

Chief Information Officer AKM Shameem Chowdhury expressed deep shock at his death.

Punishment to attackers of Sanjeeb Drong demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists yesterday condemned the attack on indigenous community leader Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, and demanded punishment to the attackers.

They alleged that Sanjeeb was attacked by a group of armed hoodlums near Rashmani Memorial in Netrokona on Friday when he was returning to Birishiri after attending a meeting.

The rights activists said this at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolon at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city.

They demanded proper investigation into the incident, arrest and punishment to the attackers.

Sanjeeb, who was accompanied by his wife during the incident, was later rescued by local people. His motorcycle was also vandalised by the assailants.

The injured Adivasi leader in his speech said the attackers were all Bangalees except one Garo accomplice named Supen Toju from Madhabpur village.

A case has been filed in Durgapur Police Station in Netrokona. Police later arrested one Krishna Saha in connection with the attack.

Sanjeeb said an influential group is creating pressure on the police to release the arrestee, who can disclose the names of the architects behind the attack.

Demanding protection, the indigenous leader said he and his family members are feeling insecure after the attack.

Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolon, said human rights activists are most vulnerable to aggression.

Pankaj Bhattacharya, president member of Gono Forum, Prof Robayet Ferdous and Dr Sourav Sikdar of Dhaka University, Sharif Jamil of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon and politician Haidar Akbar Khan Rono also spoke.



Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolon, speaks at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Bangladesh Adivasi Adhikar Andolon at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. On his right is indigenous leader Sanjeeb Drong.

Fire at N'ganj garment factory: 15 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

At least 15 people, including five firefighters, were injured when a fire engulfed an under-construction building of a garment factory in Kayempur area at Fatulla here yesterday.

Huge amounts of T-shirts, yarn, polythene and construction materials of the building of Fakir Knitwear, one of the country's biggest export-oriented industries, were gutted.

More than 100 firefighters from five fire stations from Dhaka and Narayanganj brought the fire under control

after a four-hour effort.

The injured firefighters were identified as Senior Station Officer Yahiya, Station Officer Sayem and firemen Zahurul Haq, Monir Hossain and Tajul.

Witnesses said the fire originated from the ground floor of the building.

General Manager (personnel and management) AK Shamsul Arefin said the extent of loss is yet to be ascertained.

The fire might have originated from an electric short circuit or from a fire made by somebody to ward off biting cold, he added.

JAMUNA FUTURE PARK Writ hearing resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday adjourned for a day the hearing of a writ petition challenging the notice issued by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) shopping the Jamuna Future Park asking the unauthorised floors of the complex.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury and Justice Borhan Uddin, which yesterday started dealing with the petition, fixed today for its hearing.

On January 13, the Rajuk notice issued the notice for demolition of four unauthorised floors of the Jamuna Future Park shopping complex within seven days.

Jamuna Future Park authorities filed the writ petition on January 17 challenging the Rajuk notice.

Advocate Ahsanul Karim yesterday placed arguments on behalf of the petitioner.

On January 19, Rajuk's lawyer AF Mesbahuddin assured the HC that Rajuk would not take any step to demolish the unauthorised floors of the shopping complex until the hearing of the writ petition.

DHAKA TODAY Plastic Fair

The inauguration ceremony of 6th Dhaka International Plastic Packaging Printing Industrial Fair will be held. BPGMEA will organise the fair. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Center. Time: 3:00pm.

Training

Bangladesh Forest Department and Wildlife Trust jointly organise a briefing on Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan Progress and the inauguration of Wild Animal Capture and Immobilisation Training. Venue: Bana Bhaban Auditorium, Agragaon. Time: 9:30am.

Book launch

The launching ceremony of a book titled 'Nissanka Potnik' will be held on the occasion of 77 birthday of its writer Ronesh Moitra. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

Australia to help Bangladesh combat poverty

BSS, Dhaka

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr Justin Lee yesterday said as a development partner, Australia is committed to helping Bangladesh combat extreme poverty and improve education and health sectors.

Australia looks forward to working closely with Bangladesh bilaterally and in regional and multilateral fora, he said, adding Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Australian assistance in South Asia.

The Australian envoy made this comment in a message on the occasion of "Australian Day" to be observed tomorrow, says a press release.

During 2009-10, the value

of Australia's total aid programme to Bangladesh was estimated at AUD 61.2 million, marking an increase of around 70 percent from 2006-07, he said.

"Australia will attend the SAARC leaders' summit as an observer for the first time in 2010, and we hope this year will see increased high level exchanges between our countries."

Australia and Bangladesh share a close and abiding friendship, the envoy said, adding: "Our mutual support of democracy and our similar legal, education and commercial systems provide a strong foundation for our relationship."

Mentoring that Australia welcomes increased numbers

of Bangladeshi students, tourists and business people, he said at present, there are around 20,000 Bangladeshis living in Australia, with this figure increasing by 77 percent from 2001 to 2006.

Trade interests between the two countries are growing as Bangladesh exporters started to take full advantage of the duty-free and quota-free access to the Australian marketplace for Bangladeshi goods, he said.

"Australia is the 14th biggest economy in the world and the only advanced economy not to go into recession during the recent downturn," he said, adding: "The country is offering an attractive market for Bangladesh products."

IAEA to give salinity-, drought-tolerant seeds

UNB, Dhaka

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will provide Bangladesh with salinity and drought-tolerant varieties of seeds to boost agricultural production, as the country grapples with adversities stemming from the changing climate.

IAEA Deputy Director-General Ana Maria Cetto made the assurance during a meeting with Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury at the latter's office yesterday.

Ana Maria said IAEA would also strengthen activities in implementing the ongoing projects with Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA),

Mymensingh.

Matia Chowdhury stressed innovation of more salinity- and drought-resistant seeds to cope with adverse impacts of global climate change.

"Cropping in our country suffers from droughts, salinity and floods caused by global warming," the minister said, adding that the country needs high-yielding varieties of seed that can fight these stresses.

According to agricultural experts, agriculture in Bangladesh is becoming vulnerable to climate change, as evidenced from recurrent cyclones, floods and droughts.

Nearly 10 lakh hectares of land remains under brackish waters from the bay in the southern region of the country.

Dhaka-N'ganj rail link snapped for three hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Railway communications on Dhaka-Narayanganj route remained suspended for three hours yesterday as the engine of a train went out of order.

When the Narayanganj-bound reached Jurain in the afternoon, its engine went wrong. The passengers had to suffer immensely due to the incident.

Later at 7:00pm, a new engine was attached with the train and movement on the route resumed.

Platform Stationmaster of

Narayanganj station Moniruzzaman said though the movement of the train resumed, all other trains on the route would move behind their schedules.

Shah Alam, Narayanganj station manager of private firm Banna Enterprise, which is managing the trains on the route, said the train stopped in Jurain Bazaubazar as its engine developed fault.

Meanwhile, a train coming from Narayanganj also got stranded at Fatulla due to a fault developed in its engine in the afternoon.

10 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were killed and 100 others were injured in separate road accidents at Satkhira, Thakurgaon, Noakhali and Jhenidah yesterday.

Our correspondent in Satkhira reports: Four people were killed and 30 others injured as a bus crashed into a roadside tree near Baukhali in Kaliganj upazila of Satkhira.

Three of the dead were identified as Sirajul Islam, 40, Bishnu Pada, 55, and Rezaul Haque, 35. Reports our Satkhira correspondent.

Locals said a Kaliganj-bound passenger bound bus from Shyamnagar dashed the tree after its driver lost control over the steering at about 10:00am, leaving Sirajul and Bishnu dead on the spot.

Two others succumbed to their injuries on way to hospital.

The injured were admitted to Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

Our Thakurgaon correspondent adds: At least three persons were killed and 50 others were injured when two buses collided head-on in front of Thakurgaon Silk Factory in the town yesterday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Jalil, 55, of Haripur upazila and Abdul Zabbar, 45, son of late Batasu and Kutub, 60, son of late Fu Mohammad—both hailed from Shingurul village of Pirgonj upazila of the district.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred around 5:00pm when a Haripur-bound bus collided with a Thakurgaon-bound bus from opposite direction, leaving three persons dead on the spot and injuring 50 others.

Of the injured, 23 were admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital while nine were shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

The rest of the injured were released from sadar hospital after giving first aid.

Our Noakhali correspondent reports, a madrasa student and a pedestrian died and 15 others were injured when a passenger bus hit a train at Sonapur zero point area of the district yesterday morning.

Severely injured Abul Kashem Ansari, 22, a Fazil student of Sonapur Karamatia Alia Madrasa died on the spot while Suman, 25, died on way to Noakhali General Hospital. Police and witnesses said the accident

occurred around 9:00am when the driver of a Chittagong-bound passenger bus of Babun Express lost control over its steering and hit the Comilla-bound Upakul Express, leaving one person dead on the spot and injuring six others.

Immediately after the accident, a clash erupted between the students and bus workers that left 10 others injured.

The agitating madrasa students put barricade on Sonapur-Majidi road for two hours and ransacked two vehicles.

Police later, rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. In another incident, one person was killed and five others were injured when two trucks collided head-on at Charui Bill area under Shoilkupa upazila yesterday, reports our Jhenidah correspondent.

Police and witnesses said a Jhenidah-bound truck from Kushtia collided with a Kushtia-bound brick-laden truck on Dhaka-Kushtia highway in the morning while another sand-laden truck hit the brick-laden truck from behind, leaving one dead on the spot and injuring five others.

The accident caused disruption of traffic for two hours in the area.



WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Prevailing mild to moderate cold wave over Rajshahi division and the regions of Srimongal, Jessore and Chuadanga may continue, Met Office said.

Slight rise in night temperature is expected. The sun sets in the capital at 5:40pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 30.3 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 6.5 degrees at Rajshahi.

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

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)