

## Gas price hike is a blessing in disguise

Says Nasrul Hamid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the gas price hike in the international market a "blessing in disguise" for Bangladesh, State Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday said the government was now getting offers for deep-sea exploration.

He made the remarks at a seminar on "Energy Transition: Global Context and Bangladesh" organised by the Forum for Energy Reporters Bangladesh (FERB).

"No company showed interest before the gas price rise. Badrul Imam [energy expert] in an opinion article published in The Daily Star asked – Why didn't we [the government] go for exploration in the deep sea. We floated the tender, but no company came forward then because the gas price was very low at that time."

As the gas price has gone up, many are coming, the state minister said.

Nasrul added that the private companies could import petroleum products, including fuel and LNG, and sell those at their outlets or filling stations.

He said the world was going through an energy transition period, and Bangladesh was also thinking of the new fuel mix for power generation.

"We are prioritising the affordability of the people. About 1,000MW diesel-fired power plants will phase out next June."

Nasrul said, "The transition will not depend only on renewable energy... it will on the affordable cost, less carbon emission and efficiency of the energy we will use."

Mentioning that the government has already formulated a policy on electric vehicles, the state minister said, "We need to convert fuel-fired vehicles to electric ones fast as they are more efficient."

He said use of fuel would come down across the globe soon, and that the gas production would increase by two to three folds.

Meeting the government's commitment to use 40 percent clean energy by 2041 would be very difficult, he said.

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India captain Rohit Sharma and Bangladesh's stand-in skipper Liton Das pose with the trophy ahead of their three-match ODI series, set to get underway today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Locked up for no reason

No evidence, yet Fardin's friend Bushra still in jail

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Amatullah Bushra, a friend of slain Buet student Fardin Noor Parash, has been in jail for four weeks although the law enforcers found no evidence of her involvement in Fardin's murder.

Bushra was arrested from her home in the capital's Banasree area on November 10 as she was named in the case filed over the murder.

Her family members kept insisting that she was innocent and falsely named in the case documents.

"Police arrested my daughter in this sensational case without conducting a primary investigation. The investigators are now saying that they have not found her involvement in Fardin's killing," Bushra's father Monjurul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Bushra, the eldest among four siblings, had started her higher studies at

a private university. She, however, is now experiencing a great loss because of the case.

"Her dreams are now shattered for this case. I would have had no regrets if she was involved in the murder. But she is innocent. It is uncertain when she would come out of jail," said a frustrated father.

Monjurul said Fardin dropped Bushra in a rickshaw in the Rampura TV Centre area on November 4 night. Then she went straight to her hostel, alone, and did not go outside.

Fardin, a third-year student of the civil engineering department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), was found dead in the Shitalakkhya river in Narayanganj on November 7, three days after he went missing.

His father Kazi Nooruddin Rana filed a murder against Bushra and some unidentified people with Rampura Police Station.

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## AL won't sit idle if BNP resorts to arson: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP wants to hold their December 10 rally at Nayapaltan as they have ill intentions centring the event, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

"You [BNP] will come to occupy Dhaka city and will we be just having lollipops? The Awami League does not fear Paltan [the rally]. We fear your arson, terrorism. You have this bad intention. This is why you need Paltan," he said.

Quader, also the roads, transport and bridges minister, made the comments while speaking at the annual council programme of Dhaka

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## Jubo Dal president, 2 others 'held'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP last night alleged that law enforcers picked up Jubo Dal President Sultan Salahuddin Tuku and a BNP leader from different areas of Dhaka.

This happened when the BNP is going to hold a rally on December 10 in the capital.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told the media that Jubo Dal President Tuku, Vice-president Nur Islam Nayan and Tuku's Personal Assistant Nur Mosharraf Hossain were picked up by law enforcers. Their car was stopped in Amin Bazar area. They were returning to the capital after BNP's rally in Rajshahi, he said.

Law enforcers also picked up Dhaka South city unit BNP Joint Convener Mosharraf Hossain Khokon, said his Personal Secretary Rakib Hossain.

Condemning the incidents, the BNP demanded their immediate release.

Police officials did not confirm their detentions till filing of this report around 1:30am today.

Tuku's wife Saima Parvin told The Daily Star that Darus Salam police accepted food that she brought for her husband.

## One dead in clashes over transport toll collection

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

One man was killed while 25 others were injured yesterday in a clash between two local groups in Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar upazila.

According to locals, Ibrahim Mia, a timber trader, and Rahim Mia, a toll collector, locked in an altercation over toll collection of a pick-up van plying on the Muktarampur-Dharabhangha road on Friday. At one point, both the parties started beating each other.

The next day, Ibrahim's men attacked Manik and Khokon, residents of Dharabhangha village. Manik and Khokon carried out a counter attack in Muktarampur village, setting 6 houses on fire, said Saifuddin Anwar, officer-in-charge of Nabinagar Police Station.

Shitof Miah, 55, son of late Kanu Mia of the village, was ambushed by the attackers while he was on his way home on an autorickshaw. He died during the attack.

On information, police reached the spot and brought the situation under control.

However, Manik and Khokon are absconding, the OC added.

The injured were sent to Nabinagar Upazila Health Complex.

No case has been filed till the filing of this report at 8:45pm.

## Govt in a bind over new picks

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predecessor KM Ali Azam, also a senior secretary, went on PRL on October 31.

Later, the government appointed Azam as a member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission, suspending his PRL and related benefits.

Of the 35 or so secretaries set to go on PRL before the 12th general election, 11 will start their PRL by the end of this month – six of them on December 31. The rest 24 will go next year.

According to the public administration ministry's website, 78 secretaries and 399 additional secretaries are now working at different ministries and divisions.

The timing of the retirement of a whopping number of top civil servants in a span of one year means the government will have to fill up this vacuum with the election just round the corner.

There is no recent precedent of such a large number of senior bureaucrats going into retirement in such a short time.

Speculations already run rife about the appointments to be made, given the general election will be held under that administration.

Most bureaucrats are against contractual appointments of secretaries. Immediate juniors of secretaries get deprived when the latter get extension and contractual appointments.

This is why many bureaucrats are opposing the appointment of Kabir Bin Anwar as the cabinet secretary since the government may have to give him an extension.

Against the backdrop of this opposition, Mahbub Hossain, senior secretary of the Energy and Mineral

Resources Division, may become the cabinet secretary.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar is against any contractual appointments in the bureaucracy.

"One contractual appointment destroys the possibilities of many juniors who are next in line. Usual promotion procedures should be followed in bureaucracy."

About the 35 top bureaucrats going into retirement, he said this will not create any vacuum.

"The additional secretaries who will take over the responsibility as secretaries have the experience of working in the administration for around 30 years. So they will be able to discharge their duties smoothly," Ali Imam added.

Usually, deputy commissioners function as returning officers during elections, while UNOs perform the duties as assistant returning officers.

Both the DCs and UNOs work under the public administration ministry.

On the other hand, the cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the PM and the PMO secretary play a very crucial role in the government's decision-making.

Senior secretary of the Public Security Division under the home ministry is another vital post in the run-up to the election, as police, Border Guard Bangladesh, Coast Guard, Ansar and VDP, who play important roles during polls time, are under this division.

Senior secretary of this division, Aminul Islam Khan, a cadre of the 8th batch, is scheduled to go on PRL on March 31. As the police are under this division and the post of Inspector

General of Police has been elevated to the rank of senior secretary, a senior secretary-level official is required to succeed him.

The government is in a fix over appointing 35 new secretaries as it is left with the option of choosing them from the 11th and 13th batches. These two batches come from examinations held during the BNP Jamaat tenure between 1991 and 1996. Iajuddin Ahmed and SMA Faiz were the PSC chairmen when these two BSCs exams were held.

Iajuddin Ahmed went on to become the country's president and Faiz was made Dhaka University vice-chancellor during the BNP rule.

Government policymakers are also faced with a tall task of appointing deputy commissioners, who play a vital role during the polls.

Only last month, the government appointed new DCs in 18 districts and reshuffled DCs in five other districts.

Of them, 13 came from 21st BCS, four from 22nd and one from 24th.

Public administration officials said the government will also change the DCs in the rest of the districts ahead of the national election. These DCs are likely to come from the 24th and 25th BCS batches.

Government sources said since the policymakers are uncomfortable with appointing DCs from those batches, they may pick them from the 27th batch, whose appointments were made during the Awami League tenure in 2009.

"There are strong possibilities that the government will post DCs from the 27th batch," said a high official in the public administration ministry.

challenge. Teenager Garang Kuol then forced Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez into a desperate save deep in injury time before the massed ranks of South American fans celebrated a big win.

Earlier in the day, The Netherlands became the first country into the World Cup quarter-finals as they beat the United States 3-1 at the Khalifa International Stadium on Saturday.

A 10th-minute effort by Memphis Depay and another from Daley Blind with the last kick of the first half paved the way for the Dutch to set up a last eight clash with either Argentina.

Substitute Haji Wright scrambled in a reply for the United States in the 76th minute to give the Americans hope but Denzel Dumfries's volley sealed a seventh quarter-final appearance for the Dutch.

## Mbappe the game changer UP chairman shot dead

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that included World Cup-winning midfielders Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante.

Fortunately, not only did Les Blues show how talent-heavy they were with an injection of the brightest young stars in the world and center through the group stage, the chaotic background suited the best of the bunch, Kylian Mbappe. Unlike any other in the world, the 23-year-old does not like sharing the stage, at least unless it is made clear that he is the main man.

But the expectations of Mbappe are rare. The greatest players of his generation, including his idol Cristiano Ronaldo, have relentlessly chased an elusive World Cup while Mbappe has already won football's greatest prize, in 2018 while becoming the youngest to score in the final since Pele.

He also knows that international trophies are rarely on offer and things can go wrong at a moment's notice, as in Euro 2020 when Mbappe did not score a goal, missed a crucial penalty, and publicly had a war of words with Benzema. He was targeted by racist attacks afterwards which left him reconsidering his international future.

But none of that affected him on the pitch. Mbappe scored 39 goals for PSG last season, as well as scoring 11 goals in 11 games for France between the Euros and 2022 World Cup.

Now, months after the cloud he left hanging over French football prompted a conversation with France president Emmanuel Macron, Mbappe wants to set the tone. Not least because the kind of arrogance he has demands that he begins the chase of Pele's record three World Cups by getting a second of his own. Only Brazil, in 1962, and Italy, in 1934, managed to defend the World Cup.

In the group stages in 2022, France and Brazil were the only teams to have

progression guaranteed by virtue of two wins from their two games. Mbappe notched a goal and an assist against Australia, and against Denmark, he showed he was more than just the most explosive player in the world while scoring both goals in a 2-1 win.

As a result, he played just 18 minutes in a 1-0 loss in their final group game with Tunisia. Interestingly, Brazil also lost their final group game with a second-string side, meaning no team has had a 100 per cent record in the group stages of a World Cup for the first time since 1994.

Still, Mbappe leads almost every major statistical attacking category. Underlining why he electrifies crowds is the fact that he has had 32 touches in the opposition area, more than any other player, despite his relatively low 208 total minutes.

His 19 touches in Australia's box was the highest number by a player at a World Cup since 1970 – when Italy's Gigi Riva and German giants Uwe Seeler and Gerd Müller all hit 19. His direct involvement also led to 25 attempts at goal, either by Mbappe or immediately after he passed.

Australia full-back Nathaniel Atkinson, who was hounded by Mbappe in that opening game, summed up the predicament defenders face: "You give him one step, and he's gone. As a team, you can always come up with a plan. But if it's one-v-one, he gets the better of you."

Mbappe only has four more games, starting against Poland tonight, till he hits his target and while there are doubts about how far France can go without developing a Plan B, Didier Deschamps has made things clear about where their hopes lay, saying: "I knew that Mbappe was going to be ready for this World Cup. This is his competition. He knows how to make a difference."

## Security high in Ctg

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7,000 policemen across the city, installed temporary check posts, and restricted public movement near the venue. They were also raiding different areas in the city.

"Besides 7,000 police personnel, CCTV cameras and drones will be used for surveillance in and outside the venue," said CMP Commissioner Krishna Pada Roy.

As there will be a huge gathering, traffic flow will be controlled near the venue and their will be diversions, he added.

According the sources in

administration, Hasina will inaugurate some 30 development projects and lay foundation stones of four others.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of the AL and its associate organisations have started pouring in the port city to attend the rally, making many residential hotels packed.

After observing the overall situation, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, also joint general secretary of the AL, said, "We assume the number of people would be eight

to ten times more than the venue's capacity."

AJM Nasir Uddin, general secretary of Chattogram city unit the AL, said, "The city unit and north and south district units of the AL have been jointly working to make the rally a success.

"Preparatory meetings have been held in all organisational units in this connection."

Besides, publicity is being conducted in the city and in the upazilas to encourage people to join the rally, he added.