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B1

Buyers seek 5pc discount on apparel



P11

Nannu reminisces fond Chelmsford memories



P7

54 killed in Manipur violence



P6

Idols paying tribute to idols

On the cusp of finding a new gas field

Promises come from Ilisha union in Bhola

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bapex believes it has discovered a gas field at Ilisha union in Bhola.

"We found gas in the first layer, a depth of 3.44km. Now we are checking whether there is gas in the upper two layers," said Mohammad Ali, managing director of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex).

If everything goes as expected, Bapex will formally announce the new discovery of a gas field, possibly by the middle of this month, he told The Daily Star.

The first drilling stem test, a method of determining extractable reserve, reveals that the pressure in the deepest layer is around 3,500 PSI and the gas flow is over 14 million cubic feet a day, he said, adding that producing gas from the field would be commercially viable.

Bapex estimates that 180-200 billion cubic feet of gas would be found in the new field. The company has been extracting gas as an experiment from the exploratory well, Ilisha-1, since April 28, and the second drill stem test, down to 3.2km depth, will start this week, officials said.

The last gas field discovered in Bangladesh was at Zakiganj, Sylhet, in June 2021.

The current known gas reserve in Bangladesh is almost 10 trillion cubic feet of gas. The country currently consumes around 1 TCF of gas a year.

The reserve they found in Ilisha is not part of the two previously discovered gas fields, Shahbazpur and Bhola North, said the Bapex chief.

That Bhola North is a separate gas field is debated because many renowned geologists believe that it is a part of the Shahbazpur field, which is only about 3km away.

Bapex chief Mohammad Ali says Ilisha is at least 35km away from Shahbazpur, and its reserve is separated by a seismogenic fault from the two other gas fields.

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, recently wrote on Facebook that the authorities were about to find a new gas field.

The development comes at a time when the government is spending foreign currency to import expensive LNG to meet the growing energy demands.

Renowned energy expert Prof Badrul Imam said, "The exploration is significant. Several years ago, some influential individuals in the government started saying there was no gas in our country and our reserves were running out.

"They stopped exploration and started importing LNG from the international spot market. Geologists, like myself, have always said that these were false claims. We have large volumes of gas onshore and offshore because our country is the biggest delta in the world.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

"We have large volumes of gas onshore and offshore because our country is the biggest delta in the world. We need more and more exploration so that we can save millions of dollars by reducing LNG purchases."

Energy expert
Prof Badrul Imam



Construction of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Railway Bridge over the Jamuna is going on in full swing. Once built, the dual-gauge double-track bridge will enable the railway to operate more trains between the capital and the western districts. The bridge is expected to open late next year. The photo was taken at the east end of the bridge in Tangail recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Gold smugglers game the system

They use baggage rules, travellers as carriers to bring in gold and then smuggle those to India

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and
MOHAMMAD SUMAN

International smugglers are bringing gold bars into Bangladesh through legal means and then smuggling those to India.

In Saudi Arabia, the United Arabia Emirates, and several other middle eastern countries and Singapore, the racketeers approach people travelling to Bangladesh and give them gold bars weighing not more than 234 grams, the maximum an individual can bring under the Baggage Rules-2016, said police and customs officers who have investigated gold smuggling cases for years.

Once the travellers arrive in Bangladesh, the local gang members receive the bars from them and smuggle those across the border.

The gangs pay the customs fee for the bars and give the carriers some money or even buy their plane tickets in return for the favour, investigators said.

The money needed to buy the bars



are sent abroad through hundi since Bangladeshis are not allowed to travel abroad with more than \$ 12,000 a year.

According to NBR data, people travelled to Bangladesh with at least 99,791 kg of gold from 2019 to 2022. At least 52,195 kg worth Tk 44,366 crore was brought in 2020 alone.

The government has received Tk 1,714 crores in duties from the gold.

Since the authorities do not keep an account of the amount of gold an individual brings every time they travel to Bangladesh, the smugglers can use the same person to bring gold over and over, investigators said.

Mohammad Fakhruul Alam, director

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

China is mediating Rohingya return

Says Ambassador Yao Wen

STAR REPORT

China has been mediating between Bangladesh and Myanmar to promote Rohingya repatriation to their homeland, said its ambassador Yao Wen yesterday.

"A local friend once told me sincerely that many people provide lip services, but only China is actually doing practical things to proceed with the repatriation," he said at a symposium in Dhaka, reports UNB.

The symposium is part of the Cosmos Dialogue Ambassadors' Lecture Series titled "Bangladesh-China Relations: Prognosis for the Future".

Yao's comment comes a day after a delegation of 20 Rohingyas went to Rakhine State for assessing the situation there.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

GAZIPUR MAYOR POLLS

Zahangir dead set on getting mother elected

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU and
ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND

Despite the ruling Awami League's repeated warning of taking stern action against him, suspended Gazipur city mayor Zahangir Alam is adamant to back his mother in the mayoral race.

Zahangir is now desperate to get his mother Zaida Kahtun, an independent, elected as his nomination was cancelled by the Election Commission during scrutiny, say his supporters.

The former mayor has already started seeking votes for his mother.

"I urge you all to elect a good person so that no one becomes a victim of such injustice in future. I seek your cooperation for getting my mother elected as mayor," Zahangir told people at the Bhogra Bypass Jame Masjid after Juma prayers yesterday.

He claimed that he did not commit any crime but he became a victim of injustice.

"I spent my time and money and also worked hard to serve the people. I am standing by my mother to ensure the welfare of the people," he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Law being amended to try Jamaat

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq has called for patience as the process of amending the International Criminal Tribunal Act is underway to try Jamaat-e-Islami as a political party for its role in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Responding to a query about the delay in the trial of Jamaat as a political party, the minister said, "The government has prosecuted individuals who were involved in crimes against humanity. They were the founders of Jamaat. If you think we are not proactive in that regard, then that is unfortunate for us."

He explained that the International Criminal Tribunal Act needs to be amended before Jamaat can be prosecuted as a political party for violating human rights, and that the amendment is under process.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



King Charles III is crowned with St Edward's Crown by The Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Justin Welby during his coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey, London, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Charles III is crowned

Becomes the 'oldest sovereign' in UK; Camilla crowned as queen consort

AFP, London

Charles III was crowned monarch of the United Kingdom and 14 Commonwealth realms yesterday at Britain's first coronation for 70 years, during a ceremony steeped in a millennium of ritual and spectacle.

After a lifetime as heir to his late mother Queen Elizabeth II, Charles, 74, became the oldest sovereign yet to be crowned at London's Westminster Abbey.

At 12:02 pm (1102 GMT), Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby placed the solid-gold St Edward's Crown on Charles's head as a sacred and ancient symbol of the monarch's authority.

Welby also crowned Charles's wife, Queen Camilla, 75. Cries of "God Save the King" rang out from the 2,300-member congregation, which included foreign royalty and political leaders.

US President Joe Biden, represented at the abbey by First Lady Jill Biden, tweeted his congratulations and paid tribute to the "enduring friendship" between the United States and Britain.

Trumpet fanfare sounded along with gun salutes across Britain and beyond.

Returning to Buckingham Palace in the day's second horse-drawn parade, the royal family appeared on the balcony to applause and more chants of approbation from tens of thousands of well-wishers braving a spring downpour.

Some had camped out for days. A ceremonial fly-past was scaled down due to the weather.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5