

FASTBUILD
PROVIDES RODS OF ANY SHAPE AND SIZE AS PER DESIGN

BSRM
building a safer nation

DHAKA METRO RAIL

Proud Construction Partner

SHAH CEMENT

SMOOTH POWER, GAS SUPPLY Money key to ensuring it

Says Nasrul Hamid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Funds will be the main challenge in ensuring uninterrupted electricity and gas supply, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy, and mineral resources, said yesterday.

"If the finance ministry allocates adequate funds, there will be no problem in supply," he said at his first press briefing after he took charge of the ministry for the third consecutive term.

A goal has been set to ensure an uninterrupted gas supply by 2026, as the government did previously in the case of electrification.

Nasrul, however, did not give any immediate solution to the ongoing gas crisis.

Consumers have been experiencing a poor supply of gas since October last year. They are getting around 2,550 million cubic feet of gas a day against the demand of 3,800mmcf.

The crisis started when maintenance work began on one of the two floating storage and regasification units (FSRU) in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar.

This FSRU will start supplying gas within a day or two. But the second one will go for maintenance, which will be done by the first week of March, Nasrul said.

This means there will be no chance of increasing gas supply until March.

The two units could re-gasify and supply around

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



With a child in her lap, a guardian travels on a rickshaw in the cold morning at the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday. People, particularly children and the elderly, are facing difficulties amid the cold wave sweeping over the country.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP leader Quayum held in Malaysia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian police on Friday arrested BNP senior leader MA Quayum, who has been living in Malaysia as a resident under a second-home visa for the last eight years.

His son Navid Tanvin Ananta said his father is a "victim of political persecution" that began in 2015 when an Italian national named Cesare Tavella was murdered in Dhaka in September of that year.

He said Malaysian police arrested Quayum from his home in Ampang Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, and that he has yet to be informed of any specific reasons behind the arrest.

Ananta claimed Quayum was a registered refugee under the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Malaysia, a status vested upon him due to the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Close all illegal hospitals, clinics Health minister issues directive

BSS, Dhaka

Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen yesterday directed the authorities concerned to shut down all unregistered hospitals, diagnostic centres, and clinics.

"Unregistered medical facilities will not be spared ... stern actions will be taken against those who run medical facilities without licence," he said when a delegation of Bangladesh Health Reporter's Forum met him at his ministry.

"I myself have been a victim of an unlicensed hospital's poor medical care. Therefore, I will not tolerate this."

About the new variant of Covid-19, Samanta Lal said the government will be cautious against the new variant. He suggested maintaining health safety rules to prevent the virus.

The minister said the government plans to administer the fourth dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to 1.25 crore people this year and another 1.25 crore people next year.

About the recent death of Ayaan, he said, "This is a very tragic incident. We are waiting for the report from the investigation committee. If any negligence is found in the investigation, we will take stern action against those responsible for the death."

Five-year-old Ayaan died following a circumcision procedure at Dhaka's United Medical College Hospital allegedly due to negligence and wrong treatment.

Five-year-old Ayaan died following a circumcision procedure at United Medical College Hospital.

Shishu Hospital seeing an uptick of pneumonia patients

AHMED DEEPTO

Children and elderly are mostly flocking to the hospitals to get treatment for winter-related diseases like pneumonia, asthma and diarrhoea.

For instance, all 19 beds at Dhaka Shishu Hospital's pneumonia ward were occupied.

"Before a bed becomes vacant, another child arrives," said an official of the hospital.

A total of 236 children have been admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and diarrhoea so far this year, while 36 children have died with symptoms of pneumonia.

In January last year, a total of 429 children were admitted to the hospital, up from 286 a year earlier.

Maryam, a one-and-a-half-year-old child, has been receiving treatment at the pneumonia ward for the last 24 days.

"My daughter has cough - she has difficulty breathing and lung ulcers. The doctor said Maryam needs more time to recover," said her mother Shireen Akhter.

Like Maryam, nine-month-old Ayan has been admitted to the

pneumonia ward and is undergoing treatment.

Ayan's mother Sharmeen Akhter told The Daily Star that his son's fever is cyclical and the temperature goes up and down every four hours or so.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO



He already recovered from a fever after treatment, but he still has a cough.

Every day, 1,000 to 1,200 patients are coming to the hospital for treatment and most of them are suffering from pneumonia and diarrhoea along with respiratory symptoms, said Md Jahangir Alam, director of Dhaka Shishu Hospital.

Due to the outbreak of winter, the number is increasing as children are most vulnerable to pneumonia, he said.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Cargo ship hit by missile off Yemen

AFP, Dubai

A Greek-owned cargo ship was hit by a missile off Yemen, a maritime risk management company said yesterday, following a string of attacks in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

"A Malta-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier was reportedly targeted and impacted with a missile while transiting the southern Red Sea northbound," Ambrey said in an alert.

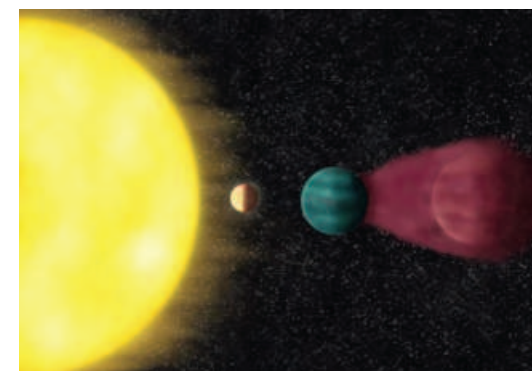
The ship, which has visited Israel and was headed to Suez, changed course and headed to port after the incident, Ambrey said.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis, who launched attacks on American vessels on Sunday and Monday following US and UK strikes on their territory last week.

Meanwhile, the US military said yesterday it seized Iranian-made missile parts en route to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Scientists find Earth-sized planet nearby



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Astronomers have found an Earth-sized planet shockingly close to our own.

The world - known as HD 63433d - is the closest and youngest Earth-sized world ever to be found. Researchers hope that proximity could prove useful: we could get a good look at the world that might be like a young version of our own Earth.

It sits only 73 light years away and can be seen through a pair of binoculars.

"It's a useful planet because it may be like an early Earth," said Melinda Soares-Furtado, one of the co-leaders of the research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Researchers will be able to look closely at the planet and see whether gasses are escaping from inside of it or how its magnetic field works, for instance.

Coal-laden vessel sinks in Bhairab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lighter vessel carrying 800 tonnes of coal sank in the Bhairab river in Bhatpara area of Jashore's Abhaynagar early yesterday.

The price of the coal onboard MV Purbanchal-7 is estimated to be around Tk 1.35 crore, reports our Jashore correspondent quoting Jagadish Chandra Mandal, sales officer of M/s JHM Group, an importer.

Master of the ship Mofizur Rahman said due to the low tide early in the morning, the vessel began to list. The vessel started taking in water around 3:30am and the ship slowly sank.

The crew onboard the vessel were safe.

Mandal said the coal was imported from Indonesia and brought to Mongla port by a cargo ship.

A small amount of the coal was unloaded to a lighter vessel on the morning of January 14.

On the evening of January 15, the ship anchored at the Bhairab ghat in Bhatpara area.



Commuters in the capital have been battling severe congestion on the Naya Bazar main road for almost a month now as a row of bulky sewer pipes occupy a significant portion of the road. Dhaka South City Corporation haphazardly left the pipes on the side of the road for underground sewerage work.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

GAZA OFFENSIVE Israel slowing aid delivery Says Jordan

AGENCIES

At least 158 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza in 24 hours, the enclave's health ministry said yesterday, as Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi accused Israel of placing 'big impediments' to aid for Palestinians.

A family home was blown up in an Israeli strike in Rafah killing an entire family of 12, including kids, though Israel said its operations against Hamas in southern Gaza will soon enter a less intensive phase.

Residents said Israeli planes and tanks intensified their bombardment across Gaza. In Al-Bureij in central Gaza, medics said an Israeli missile strike killed four people and wounded others, while in the Tel Al-Hawa suburb of Gaza City in the north, they said two people were killed and others wounded by an Israeli strike.

Israel's offensive in Gaza since the October 7 has turned much of the Palestinian territory into a wasteland and killed, health officials said, some at least 24,285 people and wounded some 61,154, reports Reuters.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

- No peace without 'a real' 2-state solution: Qatar
- 35 Palestinians detained in West Bank raids