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Gas crisis hits households, industries

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Inadequate gas supply has been forcing Farzana Akter and Rabiul Islam to eat breakfasts at restaurants for two weeks.

The gas stove at their home near 60 Feet Road in the capital's Agargaon only works for around two hours after 4:00pm, and Farzana, a nurse at a government hospital, tries to cook within that period.

For a few hours after midnight, the gas supply becomes normal, and the couple often stays awake to cook their dinner at those hours.

"This has affected everything, including my work, because I feel drowsy all the time," Farzana says.

Since December 1, the daily supply of natural gas has hovered around 2,700 mmcfd against a demand, combining household and industrial users, of some 3,800 mmcfd, according to Petrobangla data.

Daily life in many neighbourhoods of Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Gazipur cities is being disrupted by the cooking gas shortage.

In the first four days of this month, the supply dropped even further as one of the two floating storage and regasification units (FSRU) in Moheshkhali, Cox's Bazar, was out of commission for maintenance work.

The Daily Star talked to at least 15 residents of different areas in Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Jigatola, Nakhla Para, Green Road, Uttara, Chakbazar, Nazimuddin Road, Gendaria, Mogbazar, Kazipara, Banasree, and Khilgaon who said the gas crisis began in December and worsened in recent weeks.

"I pay Tk 1,080 a month for gas, but what do I get? I have to use the electric stove every day and pay more for electricity," said Abdur Rahman Dipu, a resident of Kathalbagan area.

Shahnewaz Parvez, managing director of Titas Gas Distribution and Transmission PLC, said the supply often suffers disruptions when temperature drops in winter because gas condensates in the pipelines.

Maintenance work also lowered the supply, he said, adding that the FSRU is functioning now, but voids within the pipelines will have to be filled first before the supply improves. "It will increase within this week," he said.

In the months of December and January, less LNG is imported compared to the rest of the year because the demand at power plants falls, Shahnewaz said.

PRODUCTION SUFFERS

M Jamaluddin, managing director of Jamaluddin Group, which owns a knitwear factory in Narayanganj, said he had cut production by almost a third.

The burners require gas pressure at 15 psi [pound per square inch], but it often falls to 2 or 3 psi.

"Gas pressure fluctuates a lot that results in waste. All the fabric in the dyeing machines becomes useless when this happens," he said.

Mohammad Hatem, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the current situation was unacceptable.

Five other factory owners in Gazipur and Narayanganj also expressed disappointment.

"We are struggling a lot," said a ceramic factory owner in Sreepur, Gazipur. "If gas pressure fluctuates, production stops."

THE POOR SUFFER

This newspaper spent three hours in Bhasantek from 12:00pm to 3:00pm on Sunday and found that nobody was able to light their gas stoves.

Residents of Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project -- where the low-income people live in one room flats -- say they were in serious trouble because they cannot afford to eat out.

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Senior party leaders and relatives see BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia off at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport before she boarded a flight to London last night.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

JULY UPRISING Injured victims to be given jobs in police

**Students, ex-staffers of
security forces to get
similar opportunity**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to provide employment in the police for those injured during the July uprising, students as well as retired members of the armed forces, police, BGB, and Ansar.

The injured will be given the task based on their physical condition, while students and retired personnel will be recruited to control traffic.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, the home adviser, yesterday made the announcement after visiting the offices of the Special Branch and Criminal Investigation Department of police.

He said that many were killed or injured during the movement of students against discrimination.

"We discussed how to employ those who were injured. We have already submitted a proposal from Bangladesh Police to absorb some of the injured to the force," he said.

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Khaleda finally off to UK for treatment

**Leaders, supporters filled the
streets to bid her farewell**

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

After years of relentless appeals and repeated denials by the Awami League government, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia flew to London last night for better medical treatment.

The 79-year-old former prime minister, who endured years of separation from her loved ones, is set to reunite with her son, Tarique Rahman, and other family members in what promises to be a long-awaited and emotional reunion.

Khaleda's departure marks a significant moment for her supporters, who have long campaigned for her right to receive proper medical care for severe ailments, including liver cirrhosis, diabetes, and arthritis.

The special Royal Air Ambulance, sent by Qatar's Emir, was supposed to depart Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 10:00pm. However, due to her late arrival at the airport, the flight left at 11:47pm.

The BNP chairperson's office had already completed the necessary immigration formalities.

The flight is scheduled to make a

stopover in Qatar before continuing to London.

Accompanying the BNP chairperson on the journey was a 15-member team, including Syeda Sharmila Rahman, the wife of her late son Arifat Rahman Koko; several doctors, air ambulance specialists, BNP leaders, personal staffers, and caregivers.

Khaleda is expected to arrive at Heathrow International Airport this

**She is scheduled to be
taken directly to the
London Clinic from
the airport for her
treatment.**

morning (Wednesday). She will be received by her son Tarique, his wife Zubaida Rahman, and their daughter Zaima Rahman.

She is scheduled to be taken directly to The London Clinic from the airport for her treatment, BNP leaders said.

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Election by Dec if parties think reforms not needed

Says CA's press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government is ready to hold elections this year if political parties do not want broader reforms, said Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Islam yesterday.

"We will hold elections by December this year if they do not want broader reforms. However, if they think that the interim government should carry out extensive reforms before elections, it will take another six months," he said while speaking at an event at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in the capital.

"We have provided a roadmap [for elections]... We have set two timelines in this regard," he said, referring to the timelines

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Govt scraps passports of Hasina, 96 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Immigration and Passports has cancelled passports of 97 individuals, including ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, over their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances and killings during the July-August mass uprising.

Of them, passports of 22 people were scrapped for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances, Azad Majumder, chief adviser's deputy press secretary, told a press conference at Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

He said passports of 75 others, including Hasina, were revoked for their alleged involvement in violence during the uprising that killed hundreds.

Azad, however, did not disclose the names of 96 others.

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Clarification

Our investigative report, "Parking wealth under the Dubai sun" published on January 7, 2025, is self-explanatory about why we chose to name the specific Bangladeshi property holders in Dubai. Please read paragraphs 9-16 of the report for a detailed explanation. Below we reaffirm the reasons why we only named a select few and did not mention others:

1. This newspaper accessed the online database of the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS), a non-profit based in Washington DC, United States, and found information on 461 Bangladeshi property owners in Dubai. We selected 19 of these individuals and their families for this report, excluding the other 442.

2. This rationale is based on two grounds: a) those who faced investigations, allegations, or convictions or were acquitted after being charged with financial misconduct. b) those whose property-related information could

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This photo shows damaged houses in Shigatse, southwestern China's Tibet region after a strong earthquake hit the area. At least 95 people were killed and many buildings collapsed in the 7.1 magnitude tremor that was felt in neighbouring Nepal's capital Kathmandu and parts of India.

PHOTO: AFP

Govt to speed up rice import to contain prices

**Cabinet committee approves
50,000 tonnes of rice import**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken an initiative to accelerate rice imports to strengthen the buffer stock of food grains and to arrest the upward trend of the staple's price.

At a meeting yesterday of the cabinet committee on purchase, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed directed the relevant ministries to move faster with their processes for rice import without further delay.

The meeting approved the import of 50,000 tonnes of rice for \$458.84 per tonne from an Indian company named M/S Bagadiya Brothers.

"Even at the meeting, I have asked them to import rice immediately from wherever they can to strengthen the buffer stock of food grain," he told reporters after the meeting at the secretariat.

About the current price of essentials, Salehuddin said: "The price of a specific item has increased while the prices of other items are stable."

The government will soon introduce a special Open Market Sales (OMS) programme with the view to bringing relief to fixed and low-income people struggling with inflation.

Rice prices have surged in the last two weeks despite the arrival of new Aman season rice. The price of all varieties of rice increased yesterday, according to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

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