



## Govt trying to get Bhola gas as LNG

Stakeholders frustrated over plans

ASIFUR RAHMAN

After a private operator fell far short of delivering the approved volume of gas from Bhola island to the mainland in compressed form, the government has now moved to pursue a liquefied gas option – despite warnings that it may also prove commercially unviable due to high costs.

A more viable alternative could be to set up power plants in Bhola and transmit electricity to the mainland, or develop export-oriented industries on the island to directly utilise the gas reserves, said sector stakeholders in a public hearing yesterday.

They expressed frustration as the plans to instal a gas pipeline from Bhola to Barishal to feed underutilised power plants in Khulna or to connect Bhola's gas to the Padma Bridge pipeline for national distribution – remain stalled.

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) held the public hearing to set Bhola's gas prices for industrial and captive power usage in LNG format.

Following instructions from the energy division and



PHOTO: ASADUZZAMAN TIPU

The 41-km Dinajpur branch canal under the Teesta Irrigation Project has dried up as all upstream regulator gates remain closed following a breach at Sindoi village in Nilphamari on January 20. As a result, authorities have had to suspend irrigation for about 10,000 hectares of boro fields in Nilphamari and Dinajpur until the Water Development Board carries out repairs. The photo was taken in Nilphamari Sadar upazila yesterday.

## Govt lenience fuelling mobs

Say speakers at a dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government patronage is fuelling organised mobs in the country, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday.

At a dialogue organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) styled "Media Reform in Bangladesh: Between Freedom, Responsibility and Power", Editors' Council President Nurul Kabir described the attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo in the capital's Kawran Bazar as cases in point.

The government either allowed the attacks on December 18 last year or failed to prevent them, he said.

"That was not spontaneous – that was organised," he said, adding that the inability of fire services to reach the scene reflected a grave breakdown of state responsibility.

Earlier this month, in an interview with Al Jazeera Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shaiful Alam dismissed Kabir's assertion that the entire government or a part of the government let the attacks happen, saying the allegation lacked evidence. Kabir, however, rejected Alam's statement.

Citing Alam's post on his Facebook page the day after the twin attacks in which he said he had made scores of

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## EU, India agree to 'mother of all' trade deals

The pact set to cover a quarter of global GDP

AFP, New Delhi

The European Union (EU) and India yesterday announced the "mother of all deals", a huge trade pact to create a market of two billion people, reached after two decades of negotiations.

EU chiefs and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hope the pact will help shield against challenges from the world's two leading economies, the United States and China.

The agreement will cut or eliminate tariffs on almost 97 percent of European exports, saving up to 4 billion euros (\$4.75 billion) annually in duties, the 27-nation bloc said.

"A mother of all deals," Modi said yesterday in the capital New Delhi, where he met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council

President Antonio Costa.

"This deal will bring many opportunities for India's 1.4 billion and many millions of people of the EU," Modi said, adding the agreement "represents about 25 percent of global GDP, and one-third of global trade".

The EU has eyed India – the world's most populous nation – as an important market for the future.

"Europe and India are making history today," von der Leyen said in a statement, a day after she and Costa were feted as guests of honour at India's Republic Day parade. "We have created a free trade zone of two billion people, with both sides set to benefit."

EU officials said the deal was the most ambitious India had ever agreed, and European companies would

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## ATTACK ON Star Submit probe report by March 8

Court tells cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked detectives to submit the probe report by March 8 in a case filed over vandalism, arson, and looting at The Daily Star's office in the capital.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Awlad Hossain Muhammad Zonaid passed the order after the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police failed to submit the report within the earlier deadline, a police officer at the court said.

On December 23 last year, the court had directed the investigator to submit the probe report by yesterday.

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## Dhaka, Beijing sign drone production deal

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation International (CETC) yesterday signed a government-to-government agreement (G2G) for establishing an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) manufacturing and assembly plant, as well as for technology transfer.

Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmud Khan attended the ceremony as the chief guest at the BAF Headquarters, according to a statement on BAF's verified Facebook page.

Under the agreement, the BAF and CETC International will jointly establish a state-of-the-art UAV production and assembly facility in Bangladesh.

"This will include technology transfer, capacity building, industrial skill development, and joint technical cooperation, which will help achieve long-term self-reliance in UAV production," the statement said.

Initially, the BAF will acquire the capability to produce

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- BERC proposes Tk 47.50 per cubic metre at consumer level
- Tariff same as Intraco's CNG price
- Stakeholders oppose high price
- Bhola's gas key source for new gas supplies

applications from Petrobangla with two other distributor companies – Titas Gas and Sundarban Gas – the technical evaluation committee of BERC proposed a gas price of Tk 47.50 per cubic metre at the consumer level.

The proposed price matches the rate at which the private company Intraco supplies gas to industries in small quantities as compressed natural gas (CNG).

During the hearing, most stakeholders opposed the move, arguing that such high rates would make usage unfeasible, as they currently receive gas at Tk 30 per cubic metre from the pipeline.

Recently, the BERC fixed Tk 40 per cubic metre as the gas price for new industries.

According to the proposals, six gas wells from Shahbazpur Gas Field are currently in operation, with a production capacity of around 120 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d).

Bhola island's demand stands at 90 mmcf/d. The remaining 30 mmcf/d is planned to be supplied to

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Vendors occupy both pavements and a significant portion of this street in the capital's Gulistan. They've been running their businesses illegally in plain view of the authorities for a long time. The photo was taken yesterday.

## 'Some' US feds to leave city after fatal shooting

Says Minneapolis mayor after talks with Trump

AGENCIES

Some federal immigration agents were due to leave Minneapolis yesterday, the city's mayor said, as US President Donald Trump struck a conciliatory note after nationwide outrage over the killings of two American citizens.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said in a post on social media platform X that "some federal agents" will begin leaving the city, but did not provide specifics of how many. "I will continue pushing for the rest involved in this operation to go," Frey added.

Frey said he spoke with Trump on Monday, adding: "The president

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## ABU SAYED KILLING Trial ends, wait for verdict begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday kept its verdict pending in the case over the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed during the July 2024 uprising in Rangpur, with judgement expected any day.

The three-member tribunal placed the case under CAV (Curia Advisari Vult), a Latin term meaning the court has reserved its judgement, after concluding arguments from both

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### URGENT NOTICE

## Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC SYSTEM UPGRADATION

Dear Valued Customers,

To ensure more advanced, secure, and reliable banking services, Core Banking System (CBS) upgradation activities will be carried out as per the following schedule. During this period, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC banking services will remain temporarily unavailable.

Sl.	Date & Time	Interrupted Services
1	From 30/01/2026, 12:01 AM to 07/02/2026, 11:59 PM	All online banking services including Card, iBanking, ATM, Islamic Wallet, Agent Banking, etc. will remain unavailable.
2	From 01/02/2026 to 03/02/2026	Cash deposit, cash withdrawal, and other branch-based banking services will remain suspended.
3	On 05/02/2026 from 10:00 AM	Limited branch-based services will be available, only for cash transactions.
4	From 08/02/2026	All banking services will resume and operate normally.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused during this period and highly appreciate your patience and cooperation.