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Gas crisis ripples across economy

Over 3,000MW of loadshedding recorded yesterday

ASIFUR RAHMAN *and* SUKANTA HALDER

Bangladesh's worsening gas crisis is now disrupting economic activity well beyond the power and energy sector, with factories cutting or halting production, CNG filling stations struggling with near-zero gas pressure, and homes facing severe gas shortages.

The power crisis has deteriorated sharply, with the electricity generation shortfall exceeding 3,000 megawatts (MW) throughout much of yesterday, according to Power Grid Bangladesh data. This forced distribution companies to extend load-shedding across the country.

The gas shortage has also left CNG filling stations receiving little or no gas. Operators across the country said pressure has fallen to around 0-1 psi (pound per square inch) from 7-8 psi, causing queues of vehicles to grow longer as stations struggle to refuel vehicles.

Most CNG filling stations had long queues of cars and CNG-run autorickshaws throughout the day and night. On visits to at least seven stations in the Tejgaon area yesterday, these correspondents found long queues in all of them.

Although the main road from Moghbazar to Mohakhali was relatively quiet around noon, traffic congestion was visible in several Tejgaon side



streets. The queue at Super CNG station on Love Road stretched beyond Begunbari.

Autorickshaw driver Abdul Mannan could refuel after waiting in the queue for 16 hours since 4:00am.

But he received just Tk 120 worth of gas, as the pressure was low.

"I will need to wait in the same queue after making two or three trips. If we have to spend most of our time in queues, how will we earn? Moreover, I will not be able to pay the deposit money [to the owner] with such a small number of trips," he added.

The squeeze is particularly severe for industries that depend on gas for both production and power generation. Factory operators said inadequate gas pressure is forcing them to reduce operating hours, cut production or temporarily shut down units.

The worsening power supply is adding another layer of disruption.

When inadequate gas supply reduces generation from captive power plants, factories normally depend more on grid electricity.

But prolonged load-shedding is now making that alternative increasingly unreliable, industrialists said.

The gas crisis has severely disrupted industrial production across Narayanganj, particularly in the dyeing and garment sectors, said Md Morshed Sarwar, senior vice-president of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

At least 85 dyeing and 65 garment factories have been directly affected, with many receiving no gas at all and others operating with only 2-4 psi, which is far below the pressure required for normal production, he said.

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Vehicles queue in three rows outside a CNG filling station in Dhaka's Kalyanpur amid rain yesterday as motorists continue to struggle with the ongoing gas crisis. The capital has faced severe gas shortages since July 21, when a technical fault at a floating LNG terminal off Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar cut supplies to the national grid by about 450 million cubic feet a day.

Don't allow Hasina to use Indian soil for politics

Dhaka asks Delhi

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has sought India's cooperation to ensure that deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, or any individual associated with the Awami League, cannot use Indian territory to deliver political speeches or engage in activities aimed at creating instability in Bangladesh.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Humaiun Kobir made the request when Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi paid a courtesy call on him at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday, according to a foreign ministry statement.

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LOOKING BACK AT JULY

Road to one-point demand

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

It began with a question that resonated with millions of young Bangladeshis competing for scarce government jobs: should merit take a back seat to quotas?

Within little more than a month, the protests of students on campuses for abolishing quotas in jobs escalated into a nationwide mass protest, fuelled by political intolerance and state violence, that ultimately ended Sheikh Hasina's 16-year-rule.

The transformation was swift and largely unforeseen. Yet, in retrospect, it now appears the movement unfolded through a series of distinct turning points that morphed a simple anti-quota movement into an anti-government uprising.



THE SPARK

After independence in 1972, Bangladesh introduced a quota system under which 56 percent of first- and second-class government jobs were reserved for specific groups, while 44 percent were filled on merit. The quotas allocated 30 percent for children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, 10 percent for

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ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Govt to use GPS to monitor staffers

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is turning to geofencing and other digital technologies to ensure the regular attendance of doctors and health workers at public hospitals, with plans to link attendance records to salaries, leave and promotions.

Geofencing is a technology that uses Global Positioning System (GPS) or mobile network data to create a virtual boundary around a specific area and automatically detect when a person or device enters or leaves it.



Authorities will also regularly prepare lists of the best- and worst-performing (five percent each) health facilities based on performance and take incentive or disciplinary measures accordingly.

The decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman during his visit to the health ministry on July 20.

In a letter issued on July 29, the Health Services Division instructed all its agencies to implement all the decisions taken at the meeting and submit progress reports by August 15.

The prime minister is scheduled to review the progress on August 25, according to the document.

In his first visit to the health ministry, the prime minister had given several directives regarding the measles and dengue situation, health infrastructure and management, but the issue of doctors' attendance at public hospitals was discussed for nearly an hour, a participant of the meeting told this correspondent on that day.

Officials at the meeting said although biometric attendance systems have been introduced in many government health facilities, they cannot

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Benazir may have multiple passports

Salahuddin also says efforts on to bring him back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed, who was granted conditional bail in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after spending more than a month in prison, may hold passports from multiple countries, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, the minister said, "We have instructed our law firm to file a petition seeking the cancellation of his bail because we suspect he may have passports from other countries as well.

"We have also requested the firm to place before the court all the documents we sent in connection with his repatriation."

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Traders pile up sand illegally extracted from the Dhaleshwari on its bank in Savar yesterday, threatening the river and the area's biodiversity.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Death penalty if victim dies

Cabinet okays draft, keeps provision for up to Tk 1cr fine

STAR REPORT

The cabinet has given final approval to the draft of the Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Redress Act, 2026, subject to vetting by the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, keeping the punishment at up to death, along with a fine of up to Tk 1 crore.

The draft law included provisions to complete investigations within a maximum of 120 days and trials within a maximum of 120 days.

According to the draft law, enforced disappearance has been defined as a distinct criminal offence that will be cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable, with the aim of upholding human rights, human dignity, personal liberty and the rule of law.

The draft got the green light when it was placed by the home ministry during a cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the chair at the Secretariat yesterday.

The law seeks to establish an integrated legal framework for preventing enforced disappearances, bringing perpetrators to justice, tracing disappeared persons and protecting the rights of victims and their families through compensation and rehabilitation, reports UNB, citing a press release issued by the Cabinet Division after the meeting.

The draft includes provisions allowing courts to issue search warrants to recover disappeared persons, conduct

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