

Gazprom makes fresh push for Bhola gas

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Russia's state-linked energy giant Gazprom is back with a renewed push to pursue gas exploration and infrastructure projects in Bhola, asking Bangladesh to move forward with proposals it submitted over the past several years.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Division has called a meeting with a visiting Gazprom delegation today to discuss cooperation in exploration, drilling and other areas of the country's oil and gas sector.

The proposals include drilling five wells, conducting a 3D seismic survey across Bhola, Char Fasson and Hatiya, constructing a pipeline to carry gas from Bhola to Barishal, and setting up a small-scale liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility.

The renewed approach comes when some of the company's earlier proposals have been overtaken by developments in the government's procurement process, while others remain unresolved.

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The government had several drilling projects in the pipeline

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With schoolbags on their backs and little feet carrying big dreams, four children make their way along a road to Shishu Kalyan Primary School in Tepatari village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The government-supervised school provides education to underprivileged children, many of whom walk long distances without their parents, who are away at work. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

UP POLLS

EC sticks to old laws, key reforms left out

AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission's decision to hold union parishad elections under existing laws has raised questions over the fate of key electoral and local government reforms aimed at strengthening grassroots accountability and representation.

The EC plans to hold the polls in five phases between January and May next year, without incorporating recommendations made by the Electoral Reform Commission and the Local Government Reform Commission.

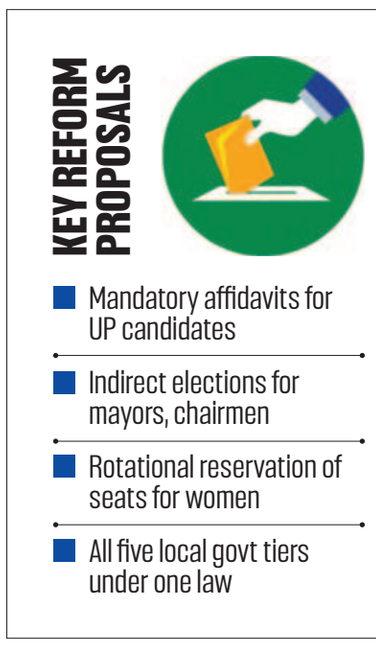
Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanel Masud said the polls would be held strictly under existing laws.

Asked whether the EC would consider the reform proposals, he said, "No. These are matters for parliament now. We will consider them if the law is changed. We will not go an inch beyond the existing law."

He said the EC had already submitted proposals requiring legislative changes but had received no response.

Any subsequent amendments could be incorporated into municipal elections, but the UP polls would proceed under the current legal framework, he added.

The reform commissions proposed major changes, including non-partisan local government elections, mandatory affidavits for UP chairman and member candidates, and rotational reservation of seats for women.



The Electoral Reform Commission also recommended requiring MPO-enlisted teachers to resign before contesting local polls and holding local government

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Jamaat's old guard retains grip on local leadership

Incumbent ameers re-elected in 51 of 77 units

MAMUNUR RASHID

Long-serving leaders continue to dominate Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's district and metropolitan units, with 51 of the 77 units retaining their previous ameers for the 2027-28 term. In at least 10 districts, the ameers have held office for a decade or longer.

However, several districts have seen leadership changes. In Khagrachhari, Minhajur Rahman, former district secretary, replaced Syed Md Abdul Momen, who had served as district ameer for nearly 28 years. New ameers were also elected in Joypurhat, Khulna, Barishal, Rajbari and Lakshmipur, where their predecessors had held office for 17 to 23 years.

The findings are based on an analysis of the lists of ameers for the previous and new terms, reports from The Daily Star's district correspondents and interviews with local and central Jamaat leaders.

The party announced the names of the elected ameers in a press release on Wednesday night. Jamaat Ameer and Leader of the Opposition Shafiqur Rahman announced the names at an executive council meeting at the party's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

According to the party, the ameers were elected through secret ballots cast by its rukons (members).

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Maulana Abdul Halim told The Daily Star that members consider the criteria under Article 72 of the party constitution, including experience in organisational, political and

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Univs must not leave HSC retakers behind

Admission schedules have to be aligned with govt decision to introduce supplementary exams

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The introduction of supplementary examinations for students who fail one or two subjects in the Higher Secondary Certificate exams is a welcome move. It offers hundreds of thousands of students a second chance without having to lose an entire academic year.

Until now, students who failed one or two subjects had to wait another year to retake the HSC exams before becoming eligible for university admission. The new system is intended to spare them that wait. This year, 4,22,905 of 5,94,113 students who failed will be eligible to sit for the supplementary exams.

But a major problem has emerged: the new system is not aligned with university admission schedules. While the government has introduced a second chance for these students, universities appear to be proceeding with their existing admission plans without taking the change into account.

Dhaka University is set to hold its admission tests between December 5 and 26. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has scheduled its admission test for January 16, while medical college admission tests may take place on December 18.

The supplementary exams, meanwhile, will begin on December 1, with results expected on December 31.

This means candidates may not receive their results before application deadlines or even admission tests at some institutions. Even if they pass the supplementary exams, they could be denied the opportunity to compete for university admission in the current academic year. There is also concern that other universities may follow the lead of DU and BUET, further narrowing their options.

This defeats the very purpose of introducing supplementary examinations. A system designed to save students an academic year should not leave them unable to pursue higher education because their results come out too late.

Admittedly, public universities are autonomous institutions with the authority to determine their academic calendars and

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NEWS ANALYSIS



Gas supply was due to return to normal yesterday after a four-day shutdown of Summit LNG Terminal in Moheshkhali, Cox's Bazar, for emergency maintenance, but autorickshaws and other vehicles still waited in long queues at CNG filling stations in Chattogram. The photo was taken at a station in the CRB area in the afternoon.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

NEWS IN FOCUS

Eisenkot begins bid to form govt

Warns Netanyahu has brought Israel to historic crisis

AFP, *Jerusalem*

Israel's former military chief Gadi Eisenkot yesterday started the tough task of forming a government, reaching out to Benjamin Netanyahu's allies as he warned the veteran prime minister had brought the country to a historic crisis.

Eisenkot, 66, a political novice who has vowed to bridge Israel's deep polarisation under Netanyahu, formally received a mandate from President Isaac Herzog, giving him 28 days to form a government despite his bloc lacking a clear majority.

"We are in a state of emergency, approaching a point of no return for the State of Israel," Eisenkot, who had traded his usual all black for a suit and tie, said at a ceremony at the presidential office.

"We must form a national emergency government. This will require creative and unconventional political steps."

Eisenkot, born to a family of working-class Moroccan immigrants, would be the first Sephardic prime minister -- a community mostly descended from



Middle Eastern or North African Jews -- in a country long dominated by an Ashkenazi elite with ties to Europe.

Netanyahu is Israel's longest-serving prime minister, having led the country

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