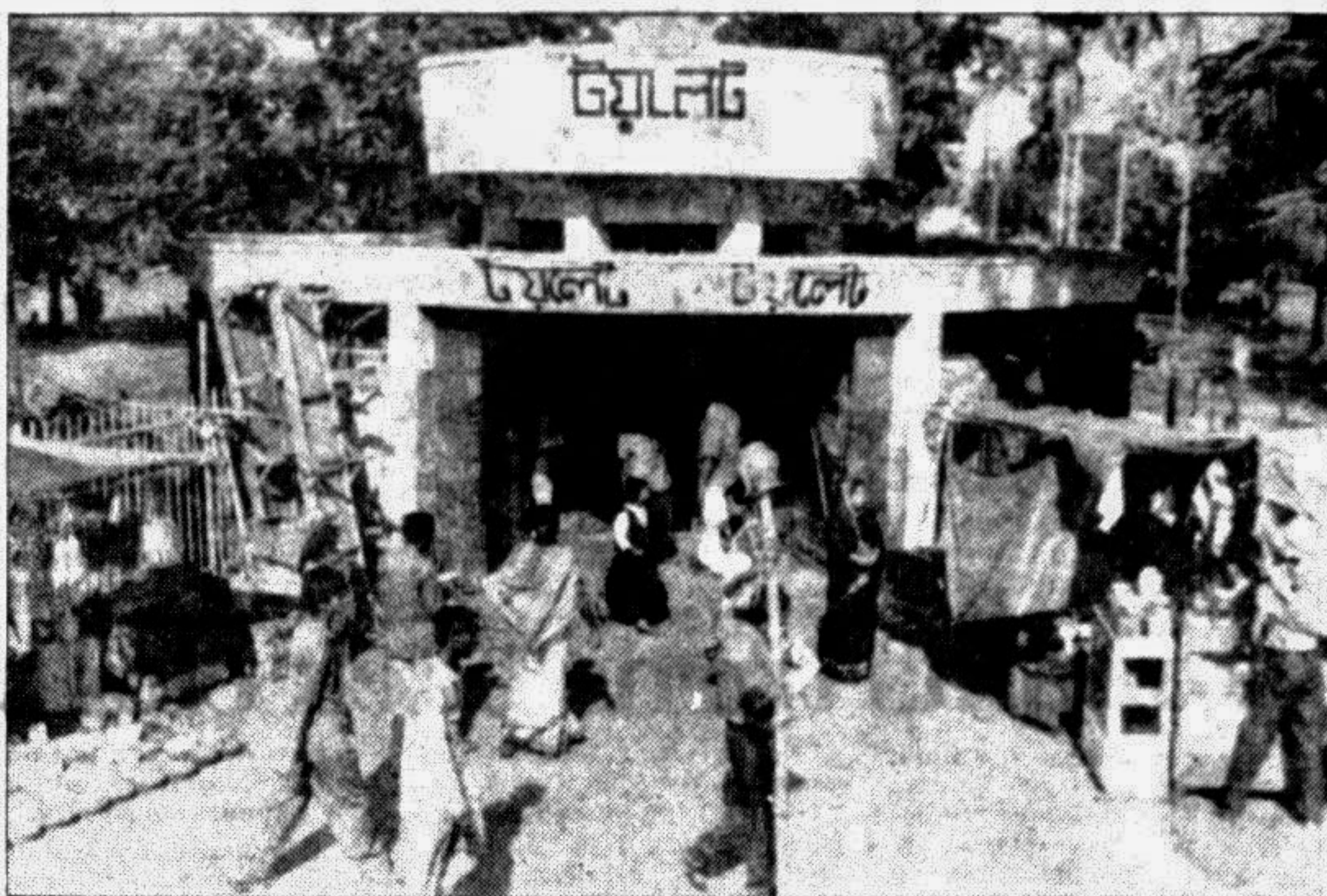


SAVE DHAKA

URBANISATION & HOUSING: PART - 5

Better not to use them at all

By Masud Hasan Khan



A so-called public toilet near Gulistan.

— Star photo

sewage lines.

Relieving becomes even more difficult at night. Most of the toilets lack any light bulbs and you don't know where you are doing it.

May be, in the darkened corner you have chosen, there is another innocent soul relieving himself, completely unaware of your intrusion.

Those who own the leaseholds of these public amenities are very smart in collecting the charges but absolutely lazy when the question of maintenance comes up.

Usually, the rate is 50 paisa for using the urinal pans and take one for the latrines.

"We are doing our best," commented a sweeper at the New Market public toilet. "But we cannot buy toilet fittings or disinfectants from our own pockets if the leaseholder does not provide for them."

This particular toilet facility pays nearly Taka 10 lakh to the exchequer every year, according to the DCC.

Monitoring the regular servicing of these public toilets rests on the DCC. However, Corporation officials claim that they do it regularly.

A senior DCC official, who declined to be named, said

that the monitoring ceases because of the intense palm-greasing that takes place between the leaseholders of the public toilets and the monitors.

DCC sources informed this correspondent that some of the toilets are never leased out because no one competes in the annual bidding.

This happens because a section of City Corporation officials run these toilets, either in pseudonyms or in the name of their relatives, they said.

The toilets in the market-places are run by those who have strong economic ties with the management committees of the markets.

"So they run these toilets without really caring for the convenience of the people," said one source.

The lack of adequate toilet facilities has also put a big question mark on the responsibilities of the owners of public facilities such as market-places, shopping arcades and cinema halls.

The owners of private markets like Noor Mansion, Chandni Chowk, Gausia, Ramna Bhaban and smaller shopping

places hardly care for the convenience of their customers, even though business worth lakhs of taka are transacted at these places everyday.

Usually, each of these marketplaces has one toilet, but these are either closed or their conditions are abominable.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rajdhanee Unnayan Kartripakha (RAJUK) officials said that they could not force the private owners to install toilets, because there were no laws.

"What would be the number of toilets in one factory rests completely on the owner," said Zakir Hossain, Chief Town Planner of RAJUK.

For the ladies, the problem is even more excruciating and very often they are forced to seek the key from the shop owners to use their private toilets.

Under the circumstances, men can but helplessly use the public toilets without looking at other's eyes but the lack of minimum provisions for the women puts on trial the civic tastes of our city fathers.

In most cases, it's better not to use the so-called public toilets if one can help it.

Saifur at ADB seminar in Auckland Closer regional ties must for economic growth

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said, continued regional cooperation is a key factor in maintaining stability in Asia, much needed for sustained economic growth and promotion of trade, investment and technology transfer, reports UNB.

Such cooperation provides conducive framework within which military expenditure may be drastically reduced in favour of urgent development priorities, Saifur said at a seminar on the Asia's development agenda in the New Zealand city of Auckland.

He said it is also the only way to harness common resources to mutual advantage and increase the volume of intra-regional trade.

Prime Minister of New Zealand James Bolger inaugurated the seminar organised in connection with the 28th annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank that will conclude on May 5, according to a message received in Dhaka.

The Bangladesh Finance Minister was one of the keynote speakers along with the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and the Finance Minister of Australia.

Presided over by Finance Minister of New Zealand and Chairman of the Board of Governors Bill Birch, the ADB

meeting is being attended by the representatives of 52 member countries, international agencies and financial institutions, and NGOs.

Saifur said Bangladesh has always been a staunch champion of regional cooperation and played a pioneering role in establishing the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Strongly pleading for a steady flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for combating poverty in South

For details see Page 6

Asia and some other transitional economies of Asia, Saifur regretted that 75 per cent of the world's poor receive only 25 per cent of the ODA.

Due to political considerations, he said, 40 per cent of aid is earmarked for strategically important countries and twice as much as the ODA per capita goes to high military spenders compared to countries with moderate military budget.

The finance minister said aid as a percentage of the Gross National Product (GNP) of the traditional donors has remained at less than 0.35 per cent, half of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of the GNP. Flow of concessional funds from the ODA and ADB is also plummeting.

Manzur murder case

From Page 1

there would be no scope for Latif to tamper with the evidence or investigation of the case.

Assistant Commissioner Baktiar Hossain Bhuiyan, who represented the prosecution, argued that Latif's involvement in the murder of Manzur was revealed in his voluntary confessional statement, recorded earlier by a magistrate in Dhaka.

Besides, sufficient evidence has already been gathered and more would soon be unearthed about Latif's involvement in the murder of General Abul Manzur in 1981, the AC (prosecution) said.

He also said that even the dead body of Manzur was not handed over to his relatives in a bid to suppress the incident.

Public prosecutor Abu Saleh argued that at this stage of investigations, it was not fit to consider any bail for the accused.

The hearing of the bail prayers for Latif's co-accused —

Major Emdad and Col Shamsur Rahman — was deferred till May 21 following a petition submitted by their lawyers who said they could not yet meet their clients to collect adequate information for moving the bail petitions.

Meanwhile, the Sessions Judge barred pressmen from recording the proceedings of the court on their cassette recorders and ordered the seizure of two micro cassette recorders. But those were released after the day's hearing.

Second phase of DU Senate polls held

By Staff Correspondent

The second and final phase of the 25 registered graduates' election to the Dhaka University Senate was held on the campus yesterday.

The first phase of the polls was held in 12 centres outside Dhaka Sunday last.

As many as 3481 voters out of some 5400 cast their votes from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm yesterday at the Teachers' Students' Centre (TSC) of the university.

Meanwhile, the counting of ballots was continuing till filing of this report last night, sources said.

The official results of the polls will be declared at 3:00 pm on May 6.

Sandhani office at SSMC ransacked

By SSMCH Correspondent

A group of youths reportedly belonging to the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) ransacked the office of the Sir Salimullah Medical College unit of Sandhani yesterday afternoon.

Campus sources said that the agitating youths attacked the office following a conflict between the JCD and the pro-Awami League Chhatra League.

The Principal of the college visited the spot and expressed concern over the incident.

Meanwhile, police were deployed in different spots of the college yesterday. Tension was prevailing on the campus.

The president and the secretary general of the Sandhani Eye Donation Society condemned the incident.

Search for coal

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Birapukur, Fulbari and Nawabganj thanas of Dinajpur and Mithapukur, Peeraganj and Badarganj thanas of Rangpur district.

Sources said that BHP is expected to invest about 400 million US dollars for the project with the Bangladesh government having no financial involvement.

The government will get annual leasing fees for the land during the exploration period while the company will also pay royalty for any coal extracted.

BHP is likely to complete the seismic tests by next month and go for drilling early next winter. The entire exploration work is being done with the company's own equipment and machinery.

BHP had been showing interest in coal exploration in Bangladesh since 1986 and submitted specific proposals to the government accordingly.

However, it took almost eight years for the authorities to come to a decision in this regard.

School teacher's ex-husband again placed on police remand

By Court Correspondent

Mostafa Miah, former husband of a city school teacher, who was held for four days in the Dhaka Central Jail on a fake conviction order, was placed on police remand yesterday for another four days for interrogation.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, Shahjuddin Ahmed, rejected the bail petition of the accused.

Mostafa, arrested on April 27, was produced in the CMM's court yesterday after a four-day police remand.

Police yesterday prayed for a 10-day remand but the court granted a four-day remand.

Hosne Ara Shelly, the school teacher, was arrested from her Shahjahanpur residence in the city on the night of April 23 by police on a fake conviction order for murder issued in the name of the District and Sessions Judge's Court, Rangpur.

She was set free by the CMM's Court, Dhaka, on April 27 following an enquiry.

3 die in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Three persons including a woman were killed in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A share trader Nizamuddin, 35, was killed at Mirpur when a speedy truck hit his motorbike near West Monipur at about 11 am.

Family sources said that Nizamuddin was carrying share certificates worth Taka 55 thousand and cash Taka 25 thousand.

Police seized the truck while its driver, however, managed to escape.

Meanwhile, an unknown female aged about 55 succumbed to her injuries on the way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. She received serious injuries as a bus hit her near Bangla Motor crossing in the morning.

In another incident a businessman Kazi Nuruddin Khokon, 46, was killed when a train ran over him at Khilgaon rail crossing in the afternoon.

Warrant of arrest against ex-JP MP

By Court Correspondent

A warrant of arrest has been issued against Rafiqul Islam Rony, a former MP of the Jatiya Party, for his alleged false, baseless and defamatory remarks against a high official.

The court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka, issued the warrant on Tuesday upon a petition filed by Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology.

The plaintiff stated in his petition that the accused had tarnished his image before the government and the people by making false remarks at a press conference on March 23 at the Jatiya Press Club.

Advocate Badrul Haq moved the petition on behalf of Dr Alamgir.

Prayers for rain

From Page 1

Maulana Emdadul Haq led the prayers followed by mungat at about 10:15 am.

Authorities of all mosques throughout the country have been requested to hold Ishitshkar prayers to seek blessings of the Almighty.

The current drought in many districts has severely affected standing crops while temperatures in the northern districts have soared up to 43 degrees Celsius.

Budget

From Page 1

up of the import regime. Import duty, during the last three fiscal years, has been reduced by about 36 per cent on average on all imports and the number of tariff slabs reduced from 12 to 5.

While the highest rate of operative import duty has to date come down to 60 per cent from 100 per cent in 1990-91, the average tariff rate now stands at 28 per cent.

And again, weighted average tariff has been brought down to 22 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal from 24 per cent last year (1993-94).

As for the Value Added Tax (VAT), according to a source in the National Board of Revenue (NBR), the coming budget would only focus on strengthening of VAT administration.

India, Lanka working on plan to curb LTTE

NEW DELHI, May 3: Indian and Sri Lankan leaders are working on a plan to contain a separatist uprising in Sri Lanka, diplomats said today, although the two countries maintained official secrecy over the talks, reports Reuters.

"This is a very grave situation and confidentiality is of paramount importance," Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar told Reuters when asked whether the two countries had discussed a possible role for India in the conflict.

He declined to comment further on Tuesday's talks between Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao.

But diplomats said the two leaders had discussed a likely logistical role for India in Sri Lanka's battle against intensified attacks by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas.

"Our information is that the Sri Lankan President asked Rao to what extent he could get involved," one diplomat said. "The Indian position is yet to be spelled out but the response was positive."

The talks came after the LTTE last week raised the intensity of its 12-year-old guerrilla war by downing two air force planes, killing 94 people.

Diplomats said India might

be reluctant to send troops into action against the Tigers after its failed effort to crush the Tamil rebellion when former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi sent in troops in 1987.

The Indian troops, numbering 60,000 at their peak, eventually pulled out in March 1990, after two and a half years of indecisive warfare in which some 1,100 Indians were killed. At one point, former Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa was so keen to see the back of the Indians that he was arming the LTTE to fight them.

Defence analysts and diplomats in Sri Lanka said India could help with a naval blockade and logistical support, adding that it was unlikely to commit troops to the island again.

"Sri Lanka surely could do with Indian help," a western diplomat told Reuters on Tuesday. India could mount a sea blockade for a start (to cut off Tamil rebel supplies).

"As for active measures, I do not know how much Sri Lanka is ready to ask for and how much India is prepared to give."

Declaration

From Page 1

hour. India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty saying it is discriminatory and accuses Pakistan of developing a bomb, a charge denied by Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The declaration also called upon developing countries not to impose new trade barriers such as the proposed special clause. Carpets and other exports from India and Pakistan have been affected by such legislation in Europe.

The news agency said the seven members also approved a comprehensive strategy to fight poverty in one of the world's poorest regions, home to one-fifth of the global population and prone to natural disasters.

SAARC members say they plan to eradicate poverty by the year 2002.

The Midnight File

Dalai Lama in Germany

BONN, May 3: The Dalai Lama was received Wednesday as an official guest in Germany and appealed to his hosts to intercede with China for more autonomy for his Tibetan homeland. The Nobel Peace Prize-winner is to hold talks on Thursday with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and will meet with leaders of German political parties, reports AP.

Water talks today

From Page 1

any subversive activities. Replying to another question from an Indian newsman whether the matter of illegal migration came up in the discussions between the two prime ministers, Rahman said no such issue was raised.

He told another questioner that no transit issue figured in the talks between the prime ministers.

Meanwhile, the SAARC leaders were holding a day-long retreat at the hill resort of Shimla today to discuss regional political differences and other issues.

Officials said the six leaders would use the informal occasion to discuss contentious issues. The SAARC charter bans raising such issues at its formal meetings, says Reuters.

SAARC officials said Sri Lankan president Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga flew home this morning, cutting short her stay to confront an upsurge in Sri Lanka's war with Tamil rebels.

Diplomats said she discussed the situation with Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao. But they did not say whether the two countries had talked about the possibility of jointly meeting the challenge by Sri Lanka's separatist Tamil militants.

Oil exploration

From Page 1

sources told The Daily Star, it is expected to be okayed by the last week of this month.

The PSC for Chittagong and some parts of the hill tracts — known as Block 15 — has been formulated in line with the PSC for Block-16 submitted by the same companies.

The PSC for Block-16 was approved in May last year, allowing the two companies to begin seismic survey in the Bay of Bengal off the coast of Cox's Bazar-Sandwip region from January this year.

On November 15 last year, the companies initiated the Semutang gas field. This unutilised gas field has a reserve of about 100 billion cubic feet of gas and the companies proposed to supply gas to the national grid through the Chittagong-Bakhrabad line by developing the reserve.

If the cabinet okays the PSC, it would be sent to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for vetting and the Petrobangla would invite representatives of Cairn Plc and Holland Sea Search for signing the final agreement.

Meanwhile, the seismic survey data of Block-16, which covers 1900 kms in straight measurement, has been processed completely for assimilation and analysis.

The survey was completed in March last.

The first meeting of the Joint Review Committee of US oil company Occidental and the Petrobangla was held a few days ago. Occidental, which was permitted to explore hydrocarbon reserves in Sylhet and Netrokona regions under Blocks-12, 13 and 14 about two months ago, is expected to begin seismic survey by next month, sources said.

ADP fund

From Page 1

and Family Planning Services Project (PP: 1991-97). 24 packages have been taken up so far for implementation. Only Taka 30.68 crore or 19.08 per cent of the total project cost of Taka 160.88 crore was spent during the first three years while another Taka 15.14 crore was spent during the first eight months of the current fiscal.

Out of Taka 49 crore, ADP allocation for EPI or the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (PP: 1993-95), Taka 21.65 crore or 44.20 per cent was utilised during the same period of this fiscal.

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New message next day