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Remedial measures for Magurchhara gas well Govt has to bear over 70pc of additional expenses

By Sharier Khan

The government may have to bear the major portion of the cost of remedial measures for the Magurchhara gas well disaster, caused due to alleged negligence of Occidental, as the government has not taken any official decision on the probe committee report.

Official sources said that Occidental recently placed a revised budget for its operation in Magurchhara gas well (Moulvibazar-1 exploratory well) for approval of the Petrobangla. The revised budget proposes an expenditure which is more than four times the original eight million US dollar budget.

Once this budget is approved, as per the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) between the government and the Occidental, Bangladesh will have to bear more than 70 per cent of the additional expenses for remedial

measures for the blowout. However, this additional cost will be recovered later from gas production and sales by Occidental in that block, the sources said.

Earlier, Occidental had repeatedly promised to pay for all the damages caused by the explosion.

As a probe committee report on the explosion appears to be 'successfully gagged', speculations are widespread among officials of the Energy Ministry and Petrobangla that Occidental's negligence was responsible for the Magurchhara blowout.

As per the Production Sharing Contract, if a blowout occurs in the normal course of operation, both the parties would have to share, among other things, the cost of the disaster.

However, "if the operator is found to be responsible for a

blunder, it will have to bear all costs required for remedial measures," the PSC says.

The government had formed a five-member probe committee following the June 14 Magurchhara gas field blowout. But the probe committee report did not reach anyone concerned with hydrocarbon exploration excepting the Energy Minister, the secretary of the Ministry and five other officials of the Ministry and the Petrobangla who are members of the committee. Neither did the Ministry announce any decision nor it gave any guideline on the Magurchhara issue, the sources said.

Now, in the absence of this report and any decision, Petrobangla, which approves the revised budget for an oil and gas company, cannot reject the budget of Occidental. Instead, Petrobangla will have to ap-

prove it as per the terms of the PSC, the sources said.

Following the June 14 Magurchhara disaster, Occidental had chalked out rehabilitation programmes for the local people and the forestry and it had agreed to pay compensation to the tea gardens affected by the explosion.

After the report was submitted some three months ago, the Energy Minister repeatedly told the press that whoever was responsible for the disaster, would not be spared. If Occidental was responsible, it would have to compensate for the damages done, he had said.

Occidental, which signed two PSCs for blocks 12, 13 and 14 covering the Surma valley, has already spent over 30 million dollars for remedial measures in Moulvibazar-1 well in Magurchhara which is under



The authorities have begun implementing the Dhanmondi Lake Development Project. The polluted water is now being pumped out. — Star photo by Amran Hossain

India proposes jt meet to finalise direct bus service accord

The Indian government has requested Bangladesh government for a joint meeting for finalising the proposed agreement on direct bus service between the two countries, according to official sources.

An official letter sent by the Indian government last week also proposed that the meeting could be held in the capital of either country.

Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Dev Mukherjee is learnt to have met Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju on November 10 to communicate the request, the sources added.

Sources in the communication ministry told The Daily Star yesterday that they have already sought directive from the Prime Minister's office in this regard.

See Page 12 Col 1

2 more dredgers for Aricha ferry channel

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is deploying two more floating dredgers in addition to six already in operation to keep Aricha-Daulatdia and Aricha-Natakola ferry channels navigable.

Talking to The Daily Star, BIWTA Chairman Abdul Mannan Howlader said, "We have hired two powerful dredgers from Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB). One of those is about to start operation and the other is expected to arrive at Aricha by the end of this week.

The existing dredgers of BIWTA stationed at Aricha had started operation on August 30, around two months ahead of the normal schedule every year during the dry season. About Tk four crore is likely to be spent for the dredging operation in the area during this season.

Howlader said, "We have deployed there six out of the eight BIWTA dredgers as a priority

See Page 12 Col 3

UN, US arms inspectors leave Baghdad US orders second aircraft carrier to Gulf

U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf

The Aircraft Carrier Nimitz, its air wing and ship carrier group.

Launched: May 13, 1972
Commissioned: May 3, 1975
Propulsion system: Two nuclear reactors
Speed: Over 30 knots
Overall length: 1,092 feet
Overall width: 252 feet

Nimitz self defense measures:

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- Three Close-In Weapon System mounts with search and track radar, and six-barrel, 20-millimeter Gatling gun.

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USS Zumwalt (DDG 105)
USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51)
USS Kidd (DDG 57)
USS Spruance (DDG 61)
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USS Truxtun (DDG 63)
USS Meade (DDG 64)
USS Barry (DDG 65)
USS Johnston (DDG 66)
USS O'Brien (DDG 67)
USS Caron (DDG 68)
USS Paul F. Foster (DDG 69)
USS Hopper (DDG 70)
USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 71)
USS Benford (DDG 72)
USS Ingersoll (DDG 73)
USS Anson (DDG 74)
USS Spence (DDG 75)
USS Lamme (DDG 76)
USS Blandford (DDG 77)
USS Johnston (DDG 78)
USS O'Brien (DDG 79)
USS Caron (DDG 80)
USS Paul F. Foster (DDG 81)
USS Hopper (DDG 82)
USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 83)
USS Benford (DDG 84)
USS Ingersoll (DDG 85)
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Carrier air wing

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F-14B Tomcat (12)
F-15B Eagle (12)
F-16B Fighting Falcon (12)
F-18B Hornet (12)
F-19B Stealth (12)
EA-6B Prowler (12)
F-4U Corsair (12)
F-100 Mustang (12)
F-105 Thunderbolt (12)
F-106 Delta Dagger (12)
F-107 Arrow (12)
F-108 Arrow II (12)
F-109 Arrow III (12)
F-111A Aardvark (12)
F-117A Stealth (12)
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Seven years of DUCSU No accounts for Tk 34 lakh expenditure

Office bearers of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) could not submit accounts for Tk 34.06.804 they drew from the university funds during the last seven years.

According to official sources in the university, the DUCSU office bearers had drawn Tk 49,57,845 till 1996-97 and an additional amount of Tk 6,40,000 for the university's platinum jubilee celebrations, making the total amount Tk 55,97,845.

But DUCSU office bearers submitted accounts for Tk 21,91,041 under different heads and failed to submit accounts for Tk 34,06,804. The DU officials said.

However, DUCSU office bearers in their accounts submitted to the university authorities showed that they had

drawn Tk 43,94,500 from the university.

The term of the present DUCSU, elected on June 6, 1990 for one year, expired in June, 1991. Since then there has been no DUCSU election.

But the university authorities allocated funds for DUCSU every year and sometimes additional amounts were allocated.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal had won all the seats in the DUCSU election held in 1990. Amanullah Aman was elected Vice President and Khairul Kabir Khokon General Secretary. DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman was elected member of the Jatiya Sangsad thrice.

A total of Tk 1,22,000 was drawn in the name of the VP till 1996-97, but accounts were submitted for only Tk 20,000.

A total amount of Tk

See Page 12 Col 1

The Daily Star on the internet
<http://www.dailystarnews.com>

Inside Today Article

Rural Household Budget: Rich vs Poor

Column: Beneath the Surface
by Abdul Bayes
Page 4

Star Literature

Art: Oriental modernity: Should we have a different view?; A jester in the court of literature: Dario Fo; and The legacy of Alfred Nobel
Pages 6 & 7

Business

Stock market witnesses bearish week
Page 8

LC finalises report Registration of service marks proposed

The Law Commission (LC) has finalised its report on amending the Trade Marks Act, widening the scope for registration of the service marks, officials said.

The provisions of the Merchandise Marks Act 1889 and the Trade Marks Act of 1940 are set to be replaced by the proposed new Act, said an official adding that the draft act along with the report of the LC is expected to be submitted to the government shortly.

The new Act will be an embodiment of the salient features of those two Acts into a single Act along with some new provisions to meet the exigencies of modern times," he said.

Registration of service marks and collective marks have been proposed in the new Act," the official said, adding

See Page 12 Col 4

the decision was taken under pressure from some local political leaders who wanted the present truck terminal at Mohammadpur bus stand to be shifted immediately.

The DCC engineer condemns the decision and said "under the existing law, none has the right to fill up a natural canal, moreover, I consider it an insult to our martyred intellectuals."

Farid Uddin Ahmed, another architect and designer of the memorial expressed his surprise at the decision and said, "The original plan of the memorial envisages keeping

Remain alert against any bid to foil UP polls: PM

TUNGIPARA, Gopalganj, Nov 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today requested the Election Commission to take strict measures against any indiscipline in the union and village council elections for ensuring free and fair polls, reports UNB.

"You (EC) will have to take all steps so the elections can be held in free and fair atmosphere and people can exercise their voting rights without any hindrance," she said addressing the inaugural function of the Tungipara Health Complex this morning.

The Prime Minister said the quarter, which is trying to foil the ongoing peace process in Chittagang Hill Tracts, might

See Page 12 Col 5

Hasina thanks Khaleda

TUNGIPARA, Gopalganj, Nov 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today thanked Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia while unveiling the plaque of the local thana health complex, reports UNB.

"I thank the Leader of the Opposition for laying the foundation of the health complex during her tenure," she said at the inaugural function of the newly built Tungipara health complex.

Former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia in 1994 laid the foundation stone of the health complex at Tungipara, the ancestral home of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

JS standing bodies to be formed tomorrow

By Reaz Ahmad

Thirty-five parliamentary standing committees on various ministries will be constituted tomorrow, keeping posts vacant to accommodate 113 MPs belonging to the opposition BNP, sources in the ruling Awami League said.

BNP continued to abstain from participating in the proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsad since August 30, the opening day of the last session of the parliament.

The seventh session of the Jatiya Sangsad which began on November 2 is scheduled to be prorogued tomorrow. The House sits at 4 pm tomorrow, Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) is also scheduled to meet tomorrow prior to the JS sitting.

The sources said hectic backstage parleys over the last two weeks failed to forge an amicable settlement between Awami League and BNP over formation of the standing bodies.

Secretary General of BNP Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, when contacted, told The Daily Star last night that though the ruling party sought names of BNP lawmakers for the committees, his party was not willing to give the names till a solution of the existing crisis.

He said, after receiving the Home Minister report on BNP's list of "political cases," we told them (AL) that cases against all our MPs and those against all

AL has no right to stay in power, says Khaleda

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Nov 14: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has called upon the people to unite to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the country as, she said, the government has proved to be a complete failure in running state affairs and resolving people's problems.

She said, "this government has no right to remain in power as it has been isolated from the people for its undemocratic, subservient and anti-people activities."

It has been proved that the independence, sovereignty, economy, culture and people's fundamental rights are not safe in the hands of this government, Begum Zia said.

The Leader of the Opposition

See Page 12 Col 7

Indian minister, army Gen killed in chopper crash

NEW DELHI, Nov 14: Indian junior Defence Minister N V N Somu was killed today when his helicopter crashed in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, the United News of India (UNI) said, reports Reuter.

The news agency said a major-general of the Indian army and two crew members also died in the accident which occurred at 8:30 am in the mountainous state close to the Chinese border.

Somu, the Minister of State for Defence, was a member of southern Tamil Nadu state's regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party that is one of the constituents of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's 15-party United Front coalition.

President KR Narayanan, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi and a host of other leaders have condoled the death of Somu.

Albright to stress strengthening of democratic institutions

By M Anwarul Haq

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, during her forthcoming visit to Dhaka, will stress making the Jatiya Sangsad effective and strengthening democratic institutions in the country while addressing a gathering of MPs, academics and intellectuals, according to diplomatic sources.

Invitations are being sent out to all the 330 MPs by the US embassy to attend the lecture at the Sonargaon Hotel ball room in the morning of November 20. Besides, a list of 400 intellectuals, academics, NGO leaders, businessmen, lawyers and journalists is being drawn up for inviting them to the occasion, sources close to the embassy said.

According to a message received in the city last night, a senior spokesman of the State Department in Washington, while explaining the purpose of the US Secretary of State's mission to Dhaka, said yesterday

"She (Albright) will deliver a major address on democratic values and the democratic process."

The spokesman also said Madeleine Albright will confer with officials regarding efforts to develop Bangladesh's energy resources.

Prior to her arrival in Bangladesh, the US Secretary of State will be visiting Pakistan and India.

The State Department said her visit to the subcontinent "signals the re-engagement of the United States with the countries of the region."

The last visit by a US Secretary of State to India and Pakistan was by George Shultz in 1983 while that to Bangladesh was by Henry Kissinger in 1974.

She will arrive in Dhaka from Delhi on November 19 for a 17-hour trip.

Albright will reach Dhaka by a special aircraft at 9 pm and

See Page 12 Col 4



Madeleine Albright

5 arrested from Dhalpur on 3-day remand

By Staff Correspondent

Five persons, arrested during an arms recovery drive in the city's Dhalpur area on Thursday, were placed on three days' police remand yesterday.

Meanwhile, police sub-inspector Rezaul Karim who sustained bullet injury at the time of raid was improving. He is undergoing treatment at the Razarbagh Police Hospital in the city, police said.

Demra police said that the arrested people — Raza Miah, Abdul Malek, Saiful, Shajahan and Marium, were produced in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday.

See Page 12 Col 7

Canal in city being filled up to set up truck terminal

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is filling up a natural canal, linking two rivers, next to the under-construction martyred intellectuals' memorial at Rayer Bazar to set up a truck terminal over an area of five acres.

This has evoked criticism from people of different walks of life and has also threatened livelihood of hundreds of farmers, boatmen and traders dependent on the canal.

The Tk three crore earthfilling work has started with more than 100 truckloads of earth already dumped at the site.

The canal, locally known as

Haikkar Khal, serves as a link between the river Turag on one side and the Buriganga on the other. It also provides water to hundreds of acres of crop land.

Besides hundreds of traders from nearby villages use the canal to bring their merchandise to the city markets by boat through Mohammadpur and Rayer Bazar. Boats from far flung areas also use the route to carry different commodities to the city.

Talking to this correspondent, a number of engineers, architects and intellectuals expressed their surprise as to how the DCC could take a decision to

construct a truck terminal beside the memorial.

"A truck terminal is bound to destroy the environment in that area which is meant to be visited by children, men and women to pay their respect to the intellectuals martyred during our War of Liberation, it's an unfortunate decision," said Jami-ul-Shah, an architect and one of the designers of the Tk 12 crore memorial project to be completed in two years. The very existence of the terminal there would keep the visitors away from the site, he thought.

An engineer of the DCC said

the skyline of the area intact and creating a green belt around it." He suggested immediate imposition of restriction on building heights and other haphazard constructions in that area for maintaining a healthy environment.

About DCC project, an official said they were constructing the truck terminal in phases. "We have funds constraint, so right now we are filling up two-acre stretch of the canal, then gradually we will fill up the whole five-acre stretch and then do the brick works," he said.

Asked why they have chosen such a site for a truck terminal, DCC's Acting Chief Engineer Shaiful Islam said, "We are developing the site and there is no such canal on the spot."

Asked whether he had visited the site he replied in the negative but said he had assigned someone else to do so and there was no report of a canal. "Okay, I will go and see for myself if there is a canal," he added.

He continued, "don't worry, we are developing the site and eventually we will turn it into a low cost housing project for the poor people."

Biman's showcase on cabin crew for carrying banned items

By Staff Correspondent

The Biman Authority last week served a showcase notice on one of its cabin crew for his alleged attempt to pass various goods worth about Tk 1.25 lakh through the Zia International Airport (ZIA) violating the rules last month.

The crew, aged about 35, was caught by the customs officials at ZIA with the goods, including banned medicine and chemicals when he arrived here from New York in mid October. Biman sources said.

The seized goods included 29

See Page 12 Col 7