

Foreign expert to oversee work of foreign oil, gas cos

By Sharier Khan

The government is going to appoint a foreign consultant in the Petroleum, Concessions Division (PCD) of Petrobangla's Operations Directorate, which monitors activities of foreign oil and gas companies working in Bangladesh, according to official sources.

PCD lacks adequate number of manpower for nearly a year now. A number of vital posts are vacant for months and the authorities have not taken any move to fill up those.

The foreign consultant is being hired under a 10 million US dollar World Bank scheme. Once hired, the highly paid con-

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Pre-polls violence in Gopalganj: 70 injured

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Nov 21: At least 70 persons were injured in a clash between the supporters of two rival UP chairman candidates at village Gopinath under Majeehat Union of Gopalganj Sadar thana last night.

According to eyewitnesses, the supporters of Hafizur Rahman Mukul and Moksum Ali — two chairman candidates in Majeehat Union Parishad elections — brought out two separate processions at 10 pm.

When the processions came face to face, both the groups chanted slogans against each other and locked in clash that continued for about five hours leaving 70 persons injured, 13 of them seriously.

The feuding groups exploded bombs, and used lethal weapons during the clash.

The seriously injured persons were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

They are: Mohor Ali, 30, Nasir Fakir, 32, Omar Ali Khan, 30, Jhumu Khan, 25, Baharuddin Khan, 10, Mamun Mollah, 18, Aroz Ali Sikder, 35, Sharuini Kazi, 17, Nazrul Khan, 28, Eklash Khan, 28, Kashem Kazi, 17, Islam Kazi, 28, and Sirajul Haque Khan, 50.

Police arrested eight persons in this connection.

Pre-polls clash
AL leader stabbed in Shailakupa, dies

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Nov 21: A local Awami League leader, stabbed during Union Parishad election campaign in Shailakupa thana on Wednesday, died at Jhenidah hospital last night.

Harun ur-Rashid, 45, was stabbed and his companion, Babar Ali, 47, a candidate for the post of UP chairman, was seriously beaten up allegedly by some BNP activists when they were returning home in Bagutia village at about 9:30 pm, police said. Babar Ali is under treatment at Kushtia General Hospital.

Harun was buried at his village home after Namaj-e-Janah this afternoon.

Shailakupa police arrested 13 people in connection with the killing.

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<http://www.dailystarmedia.com>

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Tremor jolts country: 3 killed in Chittagong bldg collapse

Star Report

At least three persons were killed and ten injured in a building collapse in Chittagong city as an earthquake rocked different parts of the country yesterday evening.

The three died when a newly constructed five storied building went under soil up to the first floor at Nanjarbagh in the port city. Rescue worker said the casualty may be higher.

The quake was felt for 26 seconds in Chittagong. It also shook Dhaka, Munshiganj, Tangail, Jessor, Chandpur, Rangpur, Bhola, Sandwip, Sitakunda, Rangamati, Cox's Bazar, Barisal, Sylhet and Jhenidah, the duration being

three to six seconds, the Meteorological office said. In some areas, it was followed by after shocks.

Originating from an unidentified place, 247 km north-east of the port city, the quake was felt in different areas of the country from 5:20 pm to 5:40 pm. But the poorly equipped Met office, whose lone seismic observatory at Chittagong remained inoperative for a long time, failed to locate the epicentre.

BSS news agency quoted Chittagong Medical College sources as saying that they gave first aid to over 100 people.

Many buildings in the port city developed cracks or get tilted, BSS said quoting fire brigade sources.

Panic stricken people scurried down their flats and high rise buildings in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country as the buildings were shaken, catching some people in their naps on the weekend or enjoying time with their families in the late afternoon.

Birds and crows returning to their nests on tree tops left their

shelters in a flurry, when the trees were shaken as dusk was approaching, their cacophony adding to the sounds of panic among people.

The Met office said the tremor was felt for four second in Dhaka at about 5:35 pm, eight seconds in Cox's Bazar at 5:20 pm, three seconds in Bogra at 5:24 pm, three seconds in Rangpur at 5:27 pm, five seconds in Bhola at 5:28 pm, five seconds in Chandpur at 5:30 pm, six seconds in Tangail at 5:30 pm, six seconds in Sitakunda at 5:25 pm, six seconds in Sandwip at 5:26 pm, six seconds in Rangamati at 5:40 pm.

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Snap polls seem inevitable

UF rejects demand for ousting DMK

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: India's ruling United Front coalition today closed ranks against a threat from its key supporter, the Congress Party, and refused to expel one of its partners even at the cost of new national elections, report agencies.

"Elections will follow," former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda said after a 90-minute meeting of the United Front coalition.

Congress had threatened to withdraw support if the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was not thrown out of the coalition.

The DMK has been accused of supporting rebels linked to the 1991 assassination of Congress

chief and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

"There is no question of dropping DMK," said Gowda, who is chairman of the coalition.

The United Front (UF) core committee today authorised Prime Minister Gujral to send a letter to Congress President Sitaram Kesri stating that his party's (Congress) demand for dropping the DMK from the government was not acceptable.

Kesri today declined to comment on the United Front's rejection of the party's demand for sacking the three DMK ministers.

"How can I react just on the

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Sonia agrees to lead Congress?

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: Sonia Gandhi, the enigmatic widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi, has agreed to try to lead India's Congress(I) Party back to power if the country's minority coalition government collapses. The Times of India newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Sources in the Congress said

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'I hope to live in peace in my homeland'



Tribal refugees returning home, walking down a 90-foot wooden bridge on the Feni river at Tabalchhara yesterday.

— Star photo

Commentary

Endless rhetoric but no real debate

By Mahfuz Anam

In a statement in Munshiganj last Tuesday BNP chief Khaleda Zia shifted from her previous position of calling for a hartal on the very day that an accord is signed with the PCJSS to 'going for a tough movement after examining the accord'. Her new position differs from the old one to the extent she now acknowledges the need to at least look at the Accord before condemning it as a 'sell out'.

Supposing for argument's sake, she is right on both counts. In that case we are forced to say that she has contributed to this 'treachery' by reducing the whole discussion on this vital issue into a battle of rhetoric rather than a debate on substance.

From the very beginning Khaleda Zia went to the rhetorically extreme of claiming that Sheikh Hasina was out to turn Bangladesh into a 'vassal state of India'. According to her, Hill Tracts, Chittagong and its port, the districts of Feni and even Sylhet would be handed over to India as a 'payment' for helping the AL to power. She has repeatedly claimed that June '96

election was rigged and that 'victory was snatched away from her grips' through false voting, ballot stuffing and flawed counting process which took place with the collusion of the Election Commission. She did not spare the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman whose impartiality she questioned from the very moment she lost the elections.

In every meeting ever since her defeat in the elections, Khaleda Zia has been telling the people that AL government is 'selling' out Bangladesh to India, that our elected government is nothing more than a stooge in the hands of our neighbour and that neither our freedom nor our independence is at all safe in the present government's hands. So 'start a movement to oust this subservient government'. Regardless of the election verdict, the Constitution of

the Hill Tracts region, where hundreds of people, including members of the armed forces, have lost their lives.

The problem has become a barrier to the country's stability and economic progress, she said and sought cooperation from all, including political parties and other organisations, for an early solution of Armed Forces Day.

The CHT problem will be resolved under constitutional framework maintaining the integrity of the country, Hasina said.

"Our government has taken sincere and effective steps to resolve the long running problem."

The Prime Minister said for

last two decades a war-like sit-

'Hartal if CHT accord beyond constitutional provisions'

From Staff Correspondent

BNP and six other political parties at a joint meeting yesterday resolved that they would go for tough movement programmes including hartal if any accord on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) signed beyond constitutional provisions and compromising national sovereignty.

The meeting, held at the Minto Road official residence of Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad and BNP chief, was chaired by BNP standing committee member Abdus Salam Talukdar, says a press release.

Leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party (ZM), Democratic League, JAGPA, PNP, and NDA were present.

The meeting discussed in

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PM tells Armed Forces

CHT issue must be solved politically

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said a political solution to the longstanding Chittagong Hill Tracts problem is just around the corner, reports UNB.

"We have reached the doorstep of a solution of the CHT problem through discussion with Santibahini realising the fact that political solution is the real solution..." she said at a reception at Senakunja in the evening on the occasion of Armed Forces Day.

The CHT problem will be resolved under constitutional framework maintaining the integrity of the country, Hasina said.

"Our government has taken sincere and effective steps to resolve the long running problem."

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somewhat improve then.

The 210 MW fifth unit of Ghorashal power plant was shut down on October 15 for overhauling which will take 45 days. This means it will not start operation before December 1. The Energy Ministry has asked the Power Development Board to speed up the overhauling work.

The 210 MW third unit of Ghorashal plant went out of order three days ago due to some technical problems. Sources said the problems have not yet been determined and it is yet to be seen.

Now the level of loadshedding is no less than 500 MW per day, the sources said. The current demand for power is 2100 MW.

It is rather unusual to have such power disruption in winter season," observed an energy expert.

While almost all areas of the city are experiencing loadshedding everyday, the power supply situation in the rural areas is even worse.

This loadshedding will continue up to the first week of December and the situation would

improve after a fruitful meeting between Shipping Minister and concerned bodies at Port's rest house last night, port officials said.

Loadshedding: No early wayout in sight

Star Report

The level of loadshedding in the country will remain around 500 MW till March-April next, according to energy experts.

This level of loadshedding had severely affected the economy and disrupted normal life during March-April this year.

The government had repeatedly assured the people earlier that the power supply situation would improve by July-August last.

But in the last one month, the disruption became as severe as that in March-April last as three large power generating units remained inoperative due to technical problems, sources said.

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ALCATEL

CONTRACTING

FRENCH WEEK IN DHAKA