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Meet on proposed tribal affairs ministry today

By Special Correspondent

A special meeting of high officials with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be held today to finalise the outlines of a tribal affairs ministry against the backdrop of last month's accord on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The draft will be later placed before the Cabinet for approval, highly placed sources said last night.

They said the government is

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4 sister cos of Beximco fail to repay loan instalments

Star Report

Four sister concerns of Beximco group have defaulted in repaying their loan instalments to Arab Bank Bangladesh Branch amounting to Tk 12.72 crore due on December 30 last.

These companies are Sathkira Fisheries, Pharmatek Chemicals, Khulna Fisheries, and Mrittika Ltd — had their loans guaranteed by the Beximco Group.

As such, Beximco is held liable for any default by the four companies. The total outstanding loan of these companies to AB Bank stands at over Tk 115 crore.

According to sources, these companies have written to AB Bank saying that they would

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UP chairman shot dead in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 5: A newly-elected Union Parishad Chairman was shot dead here today.

According to witnesses, unidentified assailants attacked Amir Hamid Sikdar, chairman-elect of Chakmarkul Union Parishad when he was arbitrating a dispute between two groups of local people at a tea stall at about 8 pm. He received bullet wounds in his head and died on way to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

The attackers, equipped with arms, chased the people attending the arbitration.

The body of Sikdar was sent to the sadar hospital morgue for autopsy.

No case was filed in connection with the killing till filing of this report.

Businessman abducted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 5: A businessman was abducted by armed terrorists from Baidigha area near Khatunonj in the city this evening, police said.

The victim Mujibur Rahman was abducted at 7:30 pm from his business house by the gunmen who came by auto-rickshaw, police said.

On receipt of the information, police and the detective branch launched a joint operation in the city to rescue him.

In another incident yesterday, a businessman was robbed of Taka 3.50 lakh from Lalkhan Bazar area in the city, police said.

The businessman M A Halim came under attack in the morning while he got into his car to go to his business house, police said.

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan Jan Sehri Iftar

6 6 5:18 5:29

7 7 5:18 5:30

8 8 5:19 5:31

Dhaka now to host special WC cricket

The special World Cup cricket tournament, the biggest after the World Cup, involving nine test playing nations will now be held in Dhaka instead of Sharjah, from October 26 to November 4 this year, report agencies.

The tournament, to be held on knock-out basis, aims at raising money for the International Cricket Council, which administers the game. The venue was shifted because of sponsorship problems in the

United Arab Emirates.

"There are some restrictions on sponsorship in Sharjah which will significantly reduce the income from the event," Jagmohan Dalmiya, the ICC chief, told reporters in Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal state, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the West Indies and Zimbabwe will participate in the one-day championship.

All the matches will be

played in Dhaka and the final is scheduled for Nov 3.

Bangladesh Cricket Board president and Deputy Minister for Shipping Saber Hossain Chowdhury later conveyed the message of the ICC president at a hurriedly called press conference at the BCB office here yesterday afternoon.

The BCB chief told newsmen that the ICC president talked with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and finalised Dhaka as the new venue after receiving

positive response from the head of the government herself.

"We were the first choice," Saber Chowdhury said, "but missed the bid due to weather problem. How the schedule have been partially changed as weather in Dhaka generally remains good in later part of October and early November," he said.

The ICC, in its executive committee meeting last month in Calcutta, decided to offer the event to Sharjah to organise it

in September following Bangladesh's regret, he said.

The BCB president said, "our target is to turn Dhaka into a permanent venue for international cricket and I hope ICC will consider our proposal after the Independence Cup, this special World Cup tournament and next year's Asia Cup cricket."

The detailed programme of the ICC Knock-Out World Cup will be announced after a meeting with ICC president, its chief executive and Finance and

Marketing committee chairman in Dhaka on January 16.

The ICC officials will be here during the Independence Cup cricket tournament to be held January 10-18.

Replying to a question, the BCB president said Bangladesh Betar will broadcast the running commentary of the tri-nation Independence Cup cricket and Bangladesh Television is also expected to telecast the matches live.

Gas purchase from Sangu well Country to incur \$400m loss in 15 years

By Sharier Khan

Bangladesh will incur a loss of over 400 million US dollars over the next 15 years, by purchasing about one trillion cubic feet of gas from Sangu Gas Field, now being developed by British company Cairn, according to a calculation by energy experts.

This huge loss will be incurred mainly due to the wide gap between the government-subsidised sale price of gas and the agreed purchase price from Sangu. Another reason is escalation of the Sangu Field development cost, which the Petro-

bangla has not yet agreed to.

Dollar rate fluctuation will also affect Bangladesh's share of profit.

Besides, there is a provision in the present Production Sharing Contract (PSC) under which Petrobangla pays the corporate tax of the oil company.

Cairn is expected to supply 160 million cubic feet (mmcf) of gas per day to the national grid from April next. As per the PSC, Petrobangla will pay about 9.33 million US dollars in foreign currency per month for Cairn's share of gas (which would be

126 mmcf out of 160 mmcf).

By selling 160 mmcf gas in the local market, the government will get 5.76 million dollars per month. The deficit per month will be 3.57 million dollars if local price of gas is not raised to the level of international gas price.

Bangladesh will face severe economic crisis in the next five years by paying this amount, sources claimed.

Petrobangla, which will pay this money to Cairn, will become bankrupt within 10 years

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Prokrichi postpones programme Reforms body to remove anomalies, says PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the government officials to make united and integrated efforts for achieving rapid economic growth, reports UNB.

"All of you will have to work together for the welfare of the people and rapid economic development of the country," she said while talking to the leaders of Prokrichi-BCS Central Coordination Council at her office yesterday morning.

A 40 member delegation of the Prokrichi-BCS Coordination Council called on the Prime Minister to hand over a memorandum containing an appeal to remove anomalies in

the pay scale of different service cadres created following upgradation of 329 posts of administration cadre.

Council Chairman Engr Dr MAZ Azad, presented the memorandum to the Prime Minister with a six-point charter of demand, including removal of anomalies in pay scale.

Following the meeting with the Prime Minister, the council chairman announced the postponement of their January 8 programme.

At the meeting, the PM assured the delegation of looking into their demands. She hoped that all the anomalies,

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Admin cadres form body to press demands

By Special Correspondent

About 200 members of the BCS administrative cadre yesterday formed an action committee to press their seven-point demand including immediate implementation of upgradation of 321 posts in their cadre.

The 31-member committee headed by Dr Mujibur Rahman, a deputy secretary in the finance ministry, was formed at a meeting at the conference room of the finance ministry.

Earlier, they gathered in front of the Finance Secretary's office protesting a ministry decision on Thursday to put on hold a December 21 order, upgrading 321 posts, action com-

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While roads like this one (top) linking Tejgaon railway station remained in a pitiable condition for long, the Dhaka City Corporation is busy rebuilding the well-laid sidewalks (bottom) in central Dhaka. Like the station road, all other roads in the Tejgaon area including the one leading to Kwaran Bazar, are in a bad shape. —Star photo

Saga of Radio-TV autonomy-IV Experts' body for BTV's package programmes remains a hearsay

By Reaz Ahmad

A full-fledged expert committee to examine acceptability of Package Programmes for Bangladesh Television (BTV) has not yet been formed after passage of long eight months since the state-run media started telecasting such programmes created by private production houses, according to BTV sources.

The expert committee is supposed to be formed taking its members from both public and private sectors. In its place, an incomplete and in-house committee is now in operation consisting of only three BTV officials namely, Director General Syed Salahuddin Zaki, Deputy Director General Mostafa Kamal Syed and General Manager Nowajesh Ali Khan.

A proposal to incorporate five to seven more members from a cross section of professionals including artists, technicians and intellectuals remain shelved for months due to lack of any decision.

Talking to The Daily Star, on condition of anonymity, a member of the present three-

man committee said, the committee was now overburdened with an influx of package programmes, each and every day the number of which is going up.

"We have to spend three to four hours twice a week in scrutinizing all these package programmes in addition to our day to day routine work," he said.

There are provisions for 'Sitting Fee' and 'Refreshment Allowance' for committee members but none of them could draw those so far due to policy bindings. As a full committee has not yet been formed, the 'Package programme Policy' does not permit drawing of money from a fund raised for this purpose.

According to the policy, private producers have to deposit a sum of Tk. 5000 in an account at TV Wing in National Broadcasting Authority (NBA) for scrutinizing of each programme submitted before the committee and all necessary expenses are supposed to be paid from that account.

While talking with some private producers, this correspondent got an impression that they felt strongly about the necessity of a full committee so that 'technical' and 'aesthetic' aspects of the programmes could be better evaluated.

"Presently, there is no technical expert or artist in the committee who can understand the technical or aesthetic qualities in our programmes," said a package programme producer.

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Cases against ULFA leader, 2 others filed

By Staff Correspondent

Three cases were lodged with Mohammadpur thana in the city against Anup Jetia alias Golap Barua, the said general secretary of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and two of his accomplices yesterday.

Meanwhile, the CID is likely to take up the cases against the three 'Indian nationals,' now detained at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Police said Sub-Inspector Farid Ahmed of Mohammadpur thana filed the cases against them on charges of illegal stay in Bangladesh and for possessing forged passports and foreign

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Dhaka to open three more diplomatic missions soon

By M Anwarul Haq

Dhaka is taking preparations to open three more diplomatic missions shortly.

An embassy will be opened in the Austrian capital of Vienna, according to diplomatic sources.

Logistic work is already underway to implement an earlier government decision to open full-fledged resident missions in the capitals of the Maldives and Jordan.

The new mission in Vienna will have ambassadorial level representation. With this, Bangladesh will have 46 ambassadorial level missions and 10 sub-missions.

It is learnt that the government might close down the embassy in Nairobi, capital of Kenya, while proceeding to open Vienna mission. Dhaka closed its embassy in Harare recently, capital of Zimbabwe.

Dhaka's decision to open a mission in Vienna came almost six months after the Austrian government expressed its desire to provide free accommodation for the Bangladesh embassy.

Vienna's importance as a diplomatic hub is internationally acknowledged. After New York and Geneva, Vienna houses the headquarters of several important UN and international agencies. The UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), UN Social Issues Secretariate and the Inter-governmental Agency on Narcotics and Drugs are headquartered in Vienna.

With the opening of the Vienna mission, Bangladesh's ambassadorial-level missions in Europe will rise to 12.

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SEC to lift circuit breaker to revive capital market

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi and M Shamsur Rahman

In a major move to revive the market, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has decided to withdraw the circuit breaker, which will allow stock prices to jump or fall beyond the now-imposed band.

But a "case-to-case" review will be there for scrips behaving abnormally.

The decision will take "immediate" effect after certain formalities by the bourses, according to a senior SEC official.

Two officials, one each from SEC and the stock exchange, will jointly monitor the market and decide on applying a circuit breaker when a particular scrip will rise or fall against market fundamentals.

"It was a necessary step," the

SEC official said, explaining the regulators' prompt response to brokers' plea made yesterday. "It is a bold decision to revive the market."

A 10 per cent across-the-board band was slapped more than a year ago when the market was going through dramatic ups and downs. The market wasn't behaving still, resulting in a reduction of the band to five per cent. It was again raised to 10 per cent when the index kept falling.

The prices would, however, be allowed to fluctuate more when companies would make price-affecting disclosures such as announcement of dividends, right or bonus shares, expansion or mergers. The validity

would remain for three days within such price-affecting announcements.

"In international markets, in the US for instance, circuit breakers are used only in individual cases when they are behaving peculiarly," the official said, giving the rationale behind the SEC decision.

Similarly, when prices will fluctuate abnormally, for example without any price-sensitive disclosures, the monitors will intervene based on a general guideline framed by the SEC.

DSE councillors, frantically looking for ways to prop up the bearish market, had a meeting with the SEC supremos yesterday.

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