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CHT bills BNP protests govt's 'double standard'

BNP has asked the government to withdraw the cases filed against party leaders and workers as per four-point agreement signed between the government and the opposition, reports UNB.

An emergency meeting of BNP standing committee here last night observed that the government, instead of withdrawing the old cases, had started issuing arrest warrants or filing new cases against BNP activists.

The meeting called the government a subversive one and accused it of being involved in a 'deep-rooted conspiracy' to give legal coverage to the CHT accord that has been rejected by the people.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, chaired the meeting at her official residence at 29 Minto Road, said a press See Page 12 Col 4

CHT bills likely to be placed in JS today

By Staff Correspondent

The government is likely to introduce four bills in the Jatiya Sangsad today to provide legal cover to the CHT peace agreement, sources in the Parliament Secretariat said.

The current session of the parliament resumes at 10 this morning after a 10-day recess on account of Eid-ul-Azha.

The bills, including one on the formation of a Regional Council for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), were approved by the Cabinet on March 30.

Three other bills are to seek amendments to the existing local government councils of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban

hill districts.

Meanwhile, the main opposition BNP and its allies have called a half-day hartal across the country for Wednesday to protest the government attempt to legalise the CHT accord, which they have termed unconstitutional.

The government signed the agreement with the PCJSS on December 2 last year, ending more than two decades of armed insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The government move to pass the bills in the parliament has angered the BNP, which earlier demanded for a general discussion in the House on the CHT issue.

Shortly after the CHT bills were submitted to the Parliament Secretariat and copies were distributed among the lawmakers on April 3, the BNP standing committee met urgently to discuss its position on the matter.

The following day, BNP also met its partners in the seven-party alliance and called a countrywide hartal in protest against the government move to legalise the CHT accord.

The hartal was originally called for April 13 and was later shifted to April 15. Again, the alliance revised the hartal programme yesterday, reducing its duration from dawn-to-dusk to a half-day one.

7-party reduces Apr 15 hartal hours because of SSC exams

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led seven-party alliance has reduced its dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal on April 15 to a half-day programme.

The hartal was called earlier to protest the government move to "legalise" the CHT agreement.

The government is likely to place four bills in the Jatiya Sangsad today to provide legal cover to the agreement.

The decision to reduce the hartal hours was taken as the SSC examinations commence on April 16, according to a resolution adopted at an alliance meeting yesterday at the Minto Road official residence of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia.

Chaired by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the meeting also resolved that the programme of April 13 demonstrations throughout the See Page 12 Col 6

Oil and gas exploration Richardson to press for more involvement of US cos

By Staff Correspondent

Influential US politician Bill Richardson, a close aide to President Bill Clinton who has the rank of a cabinet minister, will press for greater participation and involvement of leading US companies in gas and oil exploration when he meets government leaders during his two-day visit to Dhaka, according to diplomatic sources.

It is learnt that US companies have been putting tremendous pressure on the US government to compete aggressively for the opportunity to explore and develop Bangladesh's potential gas reserves.

About Richardson's trip to Bangladesh, The Washington Post in an article on Friday said that the US Ambassador to the UN will try to "defuse tension in hopes of furthering sta-

bility and prospective American interests in Bangladesh's enormous gas reserves."

A foreign ministry official without elaborating said Richardson's visit is "highly significant as it would be re-negotiating US business interest in Bangladesh, besides improving bilateral ties. US interest in the oil and gas sector is well-known."

US companies are also pressing for export of gas to neighbouring countries, particularly India.

US Ambassador in Dhaka John C Holzman recently told members of the American Chamber that US companies have long believed that Bangladesh held significant reserves of gas. But they would not invest huge amounts unless

they were confident of an accessible and reliable market for it. He also suggested that Bangladesh needs to decide immediately about the export of gas.

In a revised schedule, Richardson will arrive in Bangladesh tomorrow morning at 6:40.

Diplomatic sources said Richardson is making the current whirlwind trip to seven Asian countries, including Bangladesh as a 'de facto special emissary' of President Clinton, who is a close friend of him. They noted that Richardson's clout with Clinton and his status of a cabinet minister makes the trip to any Asian country individually important.

His packed itinerary for the See Page 12 Col 4

Holiday mood prevails

By Special Correspondent

The city is likely to return to normalcy today after five days of Eid holiday.

But there were hardly any signs yesterday that it was receding back to life.

Eid holiday mood prevailed all over the city and elsewhere in the country.

There had been three days of Eid holiday which was added with the normal weekend, making it a five-day holiday.

It helped a vast majority of city dwellers go to their village homes.

Some people took extra leave. They are probably coming back today.

See Page 12 Col 8

Cairn's enhanced budget for Sangu field may be okayed

Star Report

The government is considering approving the much-talked-about enhanced budget of British company Cairn for developing the Sangu gas field, making the cost of gas from Sangu costlier than estimated earlier, sources said.

Cairn is also trying to get a Tk one crore budget approved by Petrobangla for the inauguration ceremony of the Sangu gas field later this month.

At the outset, the Sangu field will officially start to supply 60 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf) to be national grid, gradually increasing the supply to 160 mmcf. Earlier it was planned that Cairn would start with 160 mmcf gas supply, but the government requested it to start with 60 mmcf.

Sources said that as per Cairn's original budget for the Sangu gas field development approved by Petrobangla a couple of years ago, the cost was fixed at 188 million US dollars. In this budget, 25 million dollars were allocated for contingency purposes.

However, as Cairn started to make significant progress in developing the Sangu gasfield within a record time of two years, it placed a revised budget showing that Sangu development required 264 million dollars. This revised budget was rejected by Petrobangla in December last saying that Cairn was not authorised to spend so much money and that the company must keep its revised budget close to the original.

Cairn came back with a revised budget of 247 million US dollars. This was again rejected by Petrobangla.

Now, Cairn has apparently convinced the government about the rationale of its enhanced budget. It is likely that the budget would be approved in the coming month.

A Cairn spokesman told The Daily Star recently that it was Cairn's mistake to estimate the budget at 188 million dollars. "Cairn was not aware of various cost factors when it first submitted the budget. As it started working on the Sangu field, Cairn came to know the real costs. And this enhanced budget reflects the true costs."

He said, the Sangu gas field See Page 12 Col 6

4 murdered in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Apr 11: Four persons including a Union Parishad member were killed by armed miscreants in the district last night.

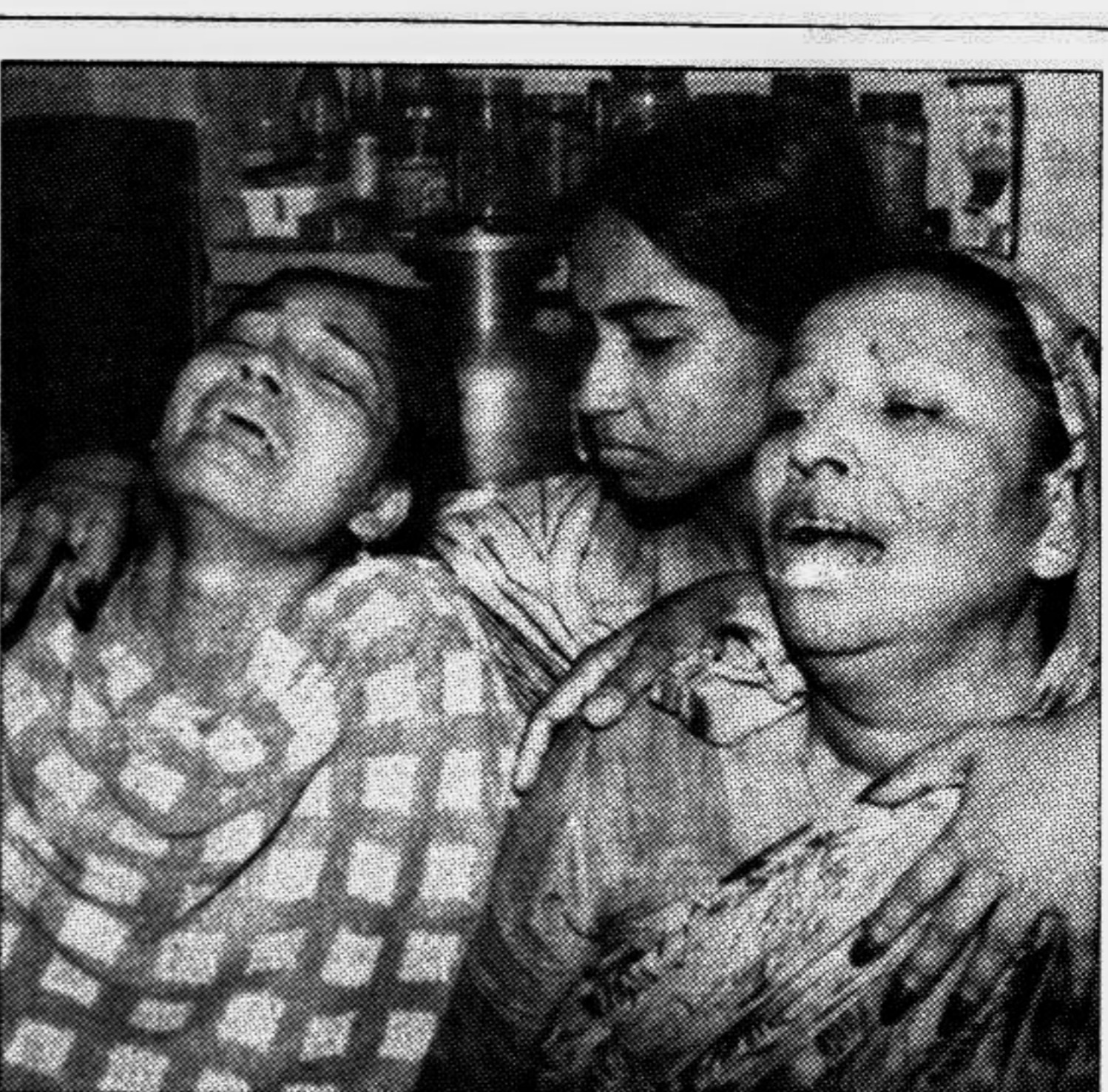
The victims were identified as Amanullah 45, and Joyanal, 40, both from village Hafania under Alamdanga thana, Abul Kalam Azad Beltu, 35, a UP member of Jurapur Union Parishad in Damurhuda Thana, and Sharifuddin Jhontu of village Mahajanpur in Meherpur thana.

All of them were shot dead by the miscreants between 11 and 12 PM last night.

The motive behind their murder could not be known immediately.

According to Alamdanga police, Amanullah and Joyanal were called out by their residences and later shot dead by the armed miscreants.

UP member Abul Kalam Azad was shot dead at Bha- See Page 12 Col 3



The wailing mother and sister of Aslam Sardar who was killed in the city yesterday. —Star photo

Schoolgirl raped in Rajendrapur

GAZIPUR, Apr 11: A schoolgirl was raped in Rajendrapur of the district on Friday night, reports UNB.

Police said the victim — a student of Class IX of Gonobhaban High School — was taken by bus driver Abul from Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area of Dhaka city.

The girl was taken to a house at Rajendrapur and then to a nearby jungle, where she was repeatedly violated by Abul and four of his accomplices.

The rapists left the girl in a critical condition at about 4 am today.

She reached Joydevpur (thana with the help of Bangabandhu Manobhadhakar Sangrakhan Kendro of Nayanpur and lodged a complaint identifying Abul and one of his accomplices, Siddique.

Joydevpur police did not file any case as, according to them, the place of occurrence is under the jurisdiction of Sreepur thana.

They, however, visited the spot and kept the girl under their custody.

Samad Azad meets Saudi Crown Prince

Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday met Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah, according to a message received in the city, reports UNB.

The foreign minister lauded the arrangements for Hajj, including the fire-proof tents this year.

On bilateral issues, the Crown Prince reiterated to further widen and deepen the relations between the two countries.

He hoped that the government and all others would take all measures to improve the law and order situation so that people of Bangladesh could prosper economically and improve the quality of life of the people.

Azad conveyed to him the greetings of the President and the Prime Minister.

In reply, the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of the custodian of the two holy mosques and his greetings to the President, Prime Minister and people of Bangladesh.



A trader checks a cattle horn amidst a pile, collected during the Eid-ul-Azha. Exporting a tonne of horn fetches him Tk 9,000. Huge quantities of horns are collected during the Eid-ul-Azha. —Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Young man shot dead at Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: An alleged terrorist was shot dead by his rivals following a dispute over sharing of extortion money last night.

Police said Kajal Biswas, 25, had come under attack by his rivals at around 11.30 pm last night at the Ice Factory Road. The victim succumbed to bullet wounds on the spot.

Police said Kajal was accused in a number of criminal cases.

UNB, however, reported that Kajal was an activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Secretary of Mukta Bihanga Club in Railway Station colony.

The agency quoting police said the killing might be sequel to an internal feud in the local student body.

Family sources and residents of the colony said Kajal was called out of his residence at 5 am by a group of four or five armed men. They drove him about 90 yards away, close to See Page 12 Col 1

Brothers' Union Club official murdered

By Staff Correspondent

Joint Secretary of Brothers' Union Club and a city Awami League leader, Aslam Sardar, was stabbed to death by some unidentified persons in front of the club at Gopibagh yesterday afternoon.

Aslam, 30, was Vice-president of AL unit in Ward No 30.

A gang of about six persons attacked him some ten yards east of the club when he came out of the club at about 3 pm. The assailants stabbed him with sharp weapons like chapatti and knives and fled away, police said.

Critically injured Aslam was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). He died there at about 4 pm, our DMCH correspondent reported.

Aslam, son of Abdul Alim Sardar of Maniknagar, was the father of a five-year-old girl.

Police suspected that the killing was sequel to previous enmity over establishing

Woman raped at Mirpur

By Staff Correspondent

A woman was raped at Mirpur in the small hours of yesterday, police said.

Quoting the complaint filed by the victim, police said that the lone accused in the case broke into the victim's home located at the Godara Ghat slum near Dhaka Zoo at around 2 am.

The culprit could not be arrested till last night. Mother of three children, the victim was sent to police custody.

One shot dead in Bandarban

BANDARBAN, Apr 11: A

tribal man was shot dead by an unknown assailant near Roangchhari thana bazar this morning, reports UNB.

Police said Monghola U Marmar, 35, was shot from behind at 6:15 am when he was going to the bazar at Panna. He died on the spot.

Police suspected previous enmity over land as the motive behind the killing.

Violence, crimes grip Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: The port city remained tense from the beginning of this month due to increase of violence and other incidents of crime.

Sporadic gunfire, killings, looting and rampage even during the Eid holiday jolted the city and its surrounding areas, creating panic among the people.

BDR and police were kept on alert here to maintain law and order, administration sources said.

Police and witnesses said three people including a jeweller were killed and several others including a police constable were bullet-hit in separate incidents during the Eid holiday from April 7 to 9.

Besides, during rampage by BCL activists in different areas, a large number of passing vehi-

cles were damaged.

On April 7 at 2-15 pm, four armed miscreants attacked a jewellery at K C Dey Road and looted gold ornaments and cash.

The gang also shot dead the jeweller, Noreesh Chowdhury, 50, at one stage of looting and fled by the same car, police and witnesses said.

The killing sparked off tension in the city while gold traders brought out a procession and held a protest rally. Police is yet to arrest anybody in this regard.

On April 9, two villagers were killed and several others bullet-hit when a group of youngmen, identifying themselves as BCL activists of MES College unit, launched a pre-dawn attack on the house of one Humayun, an accomplice of

Shibir-backed terrorist Nasir, at Mondakini village under Hathazari thana, police said.

SP of Chittagong M A Rauf told this correspondent that about 40 activists had gone to Mondakini at 5 am by microbuses from the city's MES College to launch the attack.

But when villagers in their hundreds raised a hue and cry and resisted the attack, the armed activists opened indiscriminate fire, killing two persons. The two were identified as Md Ismail, 23, and Nurul Alam Belal, 20.

Several others suffered bullet wounds, police said.

The same day at 6 pm, police arrested 16 activists of BCL from Nandankanon area immediately after a fight between two factions of the organisation.

See Page 12 Col 5

Nasir sent to jail, massive hunt for his accomplices

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 11: Police began a massive hunt for nabbing other members of the Shibir-backed 'Nasir Bahini' and to recover sophisticated arms possessed by them.

Meanwhile, the ring leader, Nasir, arrested by police on April 6 from the Chittagong College hostel, was sent to jail after interrogation by police.

Police gathered some important information during interrogation of Nasir known as a millionaire terrorist accused in at least 26 criminal cases including murder, abduction and extortion.

Police sources said Nasir would be brought under remand again for further interrogation.

Many cos unwilling to float IPOs fearing undersubscription

By M Shamsur Rahman

A continued bearish trend in the secondary stock market has scared many companies seeking to raise funds from the market, fearing undersubscription.

Despite receiving the regulators' consent, over Tk 328.32 crore in Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) are in the pipeline waiting for the market to improve for the last six months.

During the period, 20 companies received consent from the SEC to float shares worth Tk 357.37 crore. Of them, only five companies seeking to raise Tk 29.05 crore went public. The market overwhelmingly ac-

BAU to confer hony DSc on Dr Borlaug

Star Report

Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) will confer Doctor of Science (DSc) degree on Nobel laureate Dr Norman E Borlaug, a world renowned agronomist, during his forthcoming visit to Bangladesh, according to official sources.

Dr Borlaug is scheduled to pay a four-day visit to Bangladesh beginning from April 15. During his stay in the country, the octogenarian agronomist specialising in wheat research and plant pathology, will deliver a lecture on 'Food Security in South Asia' at the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council on April 16.

On the following day, Dr Borlaug, a former consultant of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and ex-director of the wheat programme at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, will visit Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) at Joydevpur.

On the last leg of his visit, BAU will confer an honorary degree on him at its My-mensingh campus. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to be present on the occasion, the sources said.

Myanmar to be asked to take back rest of Rohingyas

By Reaz Ahmad

Repatriation of the remaining 21,000 Rohingyas is expected to begin soon after the foreign minister level talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the city next week.

At the April 16 talks, Bangladesh will press for early resumption of the long stalled repatriation process, official sources said.

Myanmar Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw will arrive in the city on April 16, on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh. He will lead a four-member delega-

tion. Talking to The Daily Star, both government officials and UNHCR officials gave the impression that some 21,000 Myanmar nationals, living in two refugee camps in Cox's Bazar were willing to go back home.

Some 2.5 lakh Myanmar nationals, known as Rohingyas, crossed into Bangladesh in 1991 and 1992 to escape persecution by the military junta at home.

After repatriation of over two lakh Rohingyas over the years, the process came to a halt

Official talks next week

in June last year amidst violent protest by refugees unwilling to go back home.

The last regular bi-monthly meeting between Bangladesh and Myanmar on refugee repatriation was held in Jan. '97.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury hoped that with the resumption of bilateral talks between the two countries, the process of repatriation would

Official talks next week

start immediately.

Myanmar government had earlier issued clearance for some 7,000 refugees, out of the 21,000, but, gave an August 15, 1997 deadline for completion of repatriation. The list of another 9,000 refugees was forwarded to Myanmar months ago, but necessary clearance was yet to be issued.

Official sources said that at the ensuing talks, Bangladesh will urge Myanmar

to extend its previous deadline and provide all refugees with necessary clearance so that repatriation process could begin soon.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which had first facilitated repatriation talks, is now facing severe fund crisis in catering services to refugees in Cox's Bazar, said sources.

Talking to this correspondent, UNHCR officials in Dhaka also expressed optimism about early resumption of refugee repatriation.

W Van Hovell, UNHCR Rep-

resentative in Bangladesh, had earlier said that unless the repatriation process resumed soon completely on voluntary basis, UNHCR would have to seek funds from donor countries.

Meanwhile, following a police raid and arrest of some trouble mongers at Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar recently, hundreds of Rohingyas both in Kutupalong and Nayanpara refugee camps had registered their names with UNHCR and repatriation officials, expressing their willingness to return home.

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