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Delhi ready to talk Kashmir issue, says Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, June 4: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today said India is ready to discuss all outstanding issues, including Kashmir with Pakistan, reports PTI.

"India is ready for talks with Pakistan. We had proposed some initiatives at the Dhaka Summit ... and if Pakistan insists on discussing Kashmir, we are ready for it," Vajpayee told Rajya Sabha during question hour.

Vajpayee said India was still awaiting a response from Islamabad to its initiatives for talks and hoped there would be an early response from the neighbouring country.

"We have to co-exist in the region, whatever be our problems," he said.

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Severe congestion at Ctg port again

CHITTAGONG, June 4: The country's principal seaport at Chittagong is again threatened with imposition of surcharge due to constant container congestion that crippled normal operation of the port, reports UNB.

The foreign feeder operators have become annoyed with the present rate of operation at the Chittagong Port.

According to Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) sources, the turn-around time of the container vessel in the port has now increased to over 12 days.

The container vessels now have to wait 7-8 days in the outer anchorage for taking berth in the jetty and another 4-5 days for loading and unloading at the jetty.

The delay in the operation of container vessels is attributed to the huge stockpile of containers in the CPA shed.

The holding capacity of the port is 10,500 TEUs of containers. But at present over 13,500 TEUs are piled up in the container sheds for a long time, creating accommodation problem for fresh arrivals.

About a year ago, the CPA submitted a proposal to the Shipping Ministry for imposition of penal rent on containers remaining stockpiled in the CPA sheds for more than 28 days. But there is no decision on the proposal as yet.

The proposal was made for expediting delivery of containers, both FCL and empty, from the CPA container yards.

Due to the unexpected stockpile of a huge number of containers, the unloading of containers from the vessels is being hampered.

The unusual delay of container vessels at the Chittagong Port has annoyed the foreign feeder operators as operational cost goes up.

Last week, one Singapore-based feeder operator, Express Feeders Private Limited, faxed a message to the CPA Chairman conveying their concern at the situation in the Chittagong port.

They requested the CPA for urgent steps to improve the operation.

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No changes in office timing

The government has categorically stated that there would be no changes in the office timing, reports UNB.

"The present timing in government offices will continue," said an official spokesman yesterday.

This was reaffirmed at a high-level meeting held at the Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting noted that the present office timing is "ideal and it ensures more work and efficiency." This office timing is also in effect in the offices outside the capital.

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad, Home Secretary Shabir Rahman, Establishment Secretary Dr Shah Mohammad Farid and Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan were present at the meeting.

The spokesman said there is a consensus on the office timing among the officials. "There may be some changes," he said.

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Power generation system about to collapse

Star Report

Power generation capacity of various power plants in the country has reduced over the years and overhauling of 10 power plants that generate about 1200 mw is long overdue, according to official sources.

The 'overburdened system' may collapse anytime unless the plants are given respite from uninterrupted production to undergo normal servicing, they said.

Thirteen power plants with a generation capacity of 768 mw are out of operation for the last couple of months. These plants are now being rehabilitated.

"After every four years, the power plants are needed to be overhauled," said a highly placed source. This, however, could not be done due to shortage of power generation capacity in the country, he added.

The total power generation was 1743 mw during the peak hours on Wednesday against the projected demand for 2290 mw. Loadshedding was 547 mw on the day.

Loadshedding rose to its peak on Monday when a power plant at Ashuganj broke down, causing a power shortage of 800 mw. It broke down again on Tuesday and was repaired Wednesday.

Two power plants at Ghorashal Power Station, each having 50 mw capacity, were placed on Wednesday.

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Prof Mahmud made BUET VC not for fixed tenure

By Mizan Ali

The letter of appointment of Prof Iqbal Mahmud as Vice Chancellor of BUET contained certain provision apparently beyond the existing rules.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Prof Mahmud confirmed that his letter of appointment to the post of VC said, "The appointment was made for four years or till further order."

Vice Chancellors of universities are appointed for a fixed tenure of four years.

Asked why did he accept such an appointment letter, Prof Mahmud said, "I thought this is the standard practice but later found it to be otherwise."

The VCs of Dhaka University were appointed for a fixed tenure of four years.

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BNP protests case against Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP organised a public rally in the city yesterday protesting submission of chargesheet in a corruption case against party chief and former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Begum Zia has been charged with malpractice in the recruitment of 287 sub-inspectors of police while she was prime minister. The then home minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury is also involved in the case.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case in 1997 and submitted the chargesheet in the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) on Wednesday.

Addressing the rally at Ramna Batamul, city BNP Convener Sadek Hossain Khoka MP alleged that the case was "based on falsehood" and submission of the chargesheet was aimed at flogging the current agitation by the opposition.

"No conspiracy can foil the movement..." he said, adding that the people would give a befitting response to the filing of the "conspiratorial" case against the BNP chief.

Khoka demanded immediate withdrawal of the case and warned the government of "dire consequence" if it was not done.

Later, a procession was brought out and it paraded different city streets.

PM on N-tests by India, Pakistan We should remain alert in the wake of changed situation

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a cautious remarks yesterday said that all the countries in the region should remain alert so that peace is not disturbed by the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan, report agencies.

"If the region goes for the arms race, the poverty-stricken people in South Asia will be the worst victim," she said while talking to the Overseas Correspondents' Association of Bangladesh (OCAAB).

The OCAAB executive committee led by its president Zaglul

226 plots in Uttara : 230 applications by Rajuk employees

By Staff Correspondent

More than 230 Rajuk employees have applied for 226 plots put up for sale at the Uttara housing complex recently, sources said.

The Rajuk Employees Union is currently demanding that each of the employees' application be considered favourably. The trade unionists, to drum up support for their demand, even brought out several processions in the Rajuk Bhaban. Their action included work abstention for one hour over the last few days.

Sources said after Rajuk invited applications for plots in the newly developed area of Uttara few months ago, it received 13,500 applications from the public. As per law Rajuk has to hold a lottery to pick the beneficiaries.

An official in the Rajuk's land section said that the unionists had agreed to call off their agitation programme after a series of negotiations on Wednesday.

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Shazneen murder Shoni Ram may be produced in court today

By Staff Correspondent

Carpenter Shoni Ram, one of the six people allegedly involved in Shazneen murder in Gulshan on April 23, is likely to be produced before the CMM's court today.

Besides, the CID investigators yesterday interrogated supervisor Badal and Shoni Ram, both of whom were taken on two days remand.

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Residents of Kaettuly area brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding smooth supply of water, gas and electricity.

— Star photo

Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was shot dead by a gang of assailants at Malibagh under Ramna thana in the city yesterday.

Syed Shafiqul Haq alias Khokon, 28, sustained fatal injuries in his chest when a gang of about five shot him near the Abhijatrik Club in West Malibagh at about 5 pm, police said.

Khokon was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Hospital sources said Khokon's elder brother Syed Bashirul Haq held a group of lo-

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Chetia produced in court, charge framing July 9

By Court Correspondent

Anup Chetia, the arrested leader of United Liberation Front of Assam, and two of his companions were produced in the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, yesterday.

Chetia prayed to the court for granting them political asylum.

The court observed that the prayer should be sent to the Home Ministry through the jail authorities.

The court also fixed July 9 for framing of charges against Chetia and his companions in two cases filed with Mohamudpur thana.

Yesterday the court sat to frame charges against them for specific cases of illegal entry.

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Foreign currency worth Tk 57 lakh recovered from Biman's purser

By Staff Correspondent

Customs officials at the Zia International Airport recovered foreign currencies worth about Tk 57 lakh from a chief purser of Biman when he was preparing to fly to Bangkok yesterday afternoon.

Officials said the purser, Khalilur Rahman, was handed over to the Cantonment thana in the evening.

Besides, the customs surveillance wing at ZIA in two separate drives recovered gold ornaments and bars worth about Tk 35 lakh yesterday morning and late Wednesday night.

Airport sources said Biman's

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T&T director held for possessing illegal arms

By Staff Correspondent

A director of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board and a former official of the National Shooting Federation, Mir Daulat Hossain, was arrested on charge of possessing illegal arms yesterday.

Police said Mir Daulat, a former Secretary General of the National Shooting Federation, was arrested following an order by the officer-in-charge of the Arms Licence Department.

Mir Daulat went for entry of a licence of a single-barrel gun of one TIM Nurunnabi, in violation of the country's Arms Act 1924.

According to clause 79 of the law, one has to have authorisation letter if he wants to register someone else's arms. Mir Daulat did not have any authorisation letter from Nurunnabi, a senior police official told The Daily Star last night.

Later, Daulat was handed over to Kotwail police and a case was filed with in this regard. Police are likely to produce him before the CMM's court today.

Newspaper report 2 accused killers of Bangabandhu now in Canada

Two accused killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are now living in Canada, according to the reports of Canadian newspapers, reports BSS.

The Vancouver-based South East Asia Post and the Province newspapers in their recent reports said, "Two Bangladeshi army officers wanted in connection with the assassination of the country's president and family have obtained Canadian citizenship."

Quoting diplomatic sources, the reports said the alleged killers, captain Kismet Hashem and Lieutenant Nazmul Hossain Anwar have homes in the Quebec and Ontario provinces.

The reports quoted Bangladesh Deputy High Com-

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SAARC Summit Lankan FM due tomorrow with invitation letter

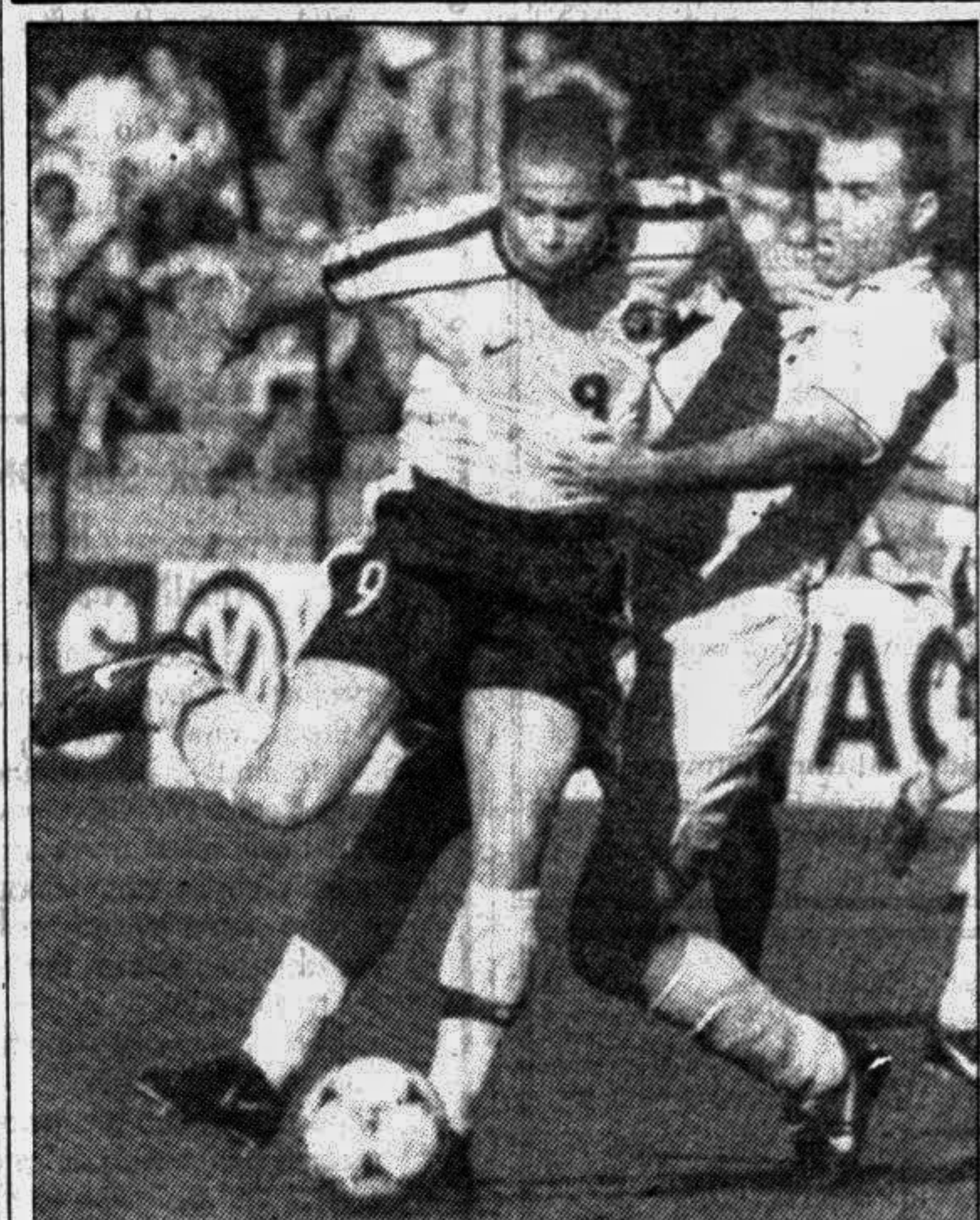
Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadrigamar will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will receive his Sri Lankan counterpart at Zia International Airport.

Kadrigamar will hand over a letter of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, inviting her to attend the coming SAARC summit in Colombo.

Sri Lanka is the host of the 10th SAARC summit which is scheduled to be held from July 20 to 22, Colombo, which earlier proposed to advance the date by ten days, now seems to maintain the original schedule, foreign Office sources said.

Kadrigamar will call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed before he leaves for New Delhi on Sunday on a similar trip, sources said.



Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo (left) challenges for the ball with an unidentified Andorran player during a friendly match between Brazil and Principality of Andorra on Wednesday in Paris suburb Saint Ouen. — AP/UNB photo

France '98
COUNTDOWN
5
Days Away

Brazilian players in low spirits

ST OUBEN, France, June 4: Brazil worked through their dramatic loss of 1994 World Cup hero Romario but failed to get a stern final test for France '98 Wednesday, getting first-half goals from Giovani and Rivaldo in an easy 3-0 victory over Andorra, reports AP.

Giovanni and Rivaldo scored in the 26th and 27th minutes and Cafu completed the scoring in the 53rd minute as Brazil coasted in their final warm-up match before the World Cup opener against Scotland June 10.

Bebeto took the place in the starting lineup for Romario, who was cut from the squad Tuesday after re-injuring his

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Small power plants in pvt sector may soon become a reality

By Toufique Imrose Khalidi

An electronics goods dealer at the Dhaka Stadium market has tied up with fellow businessmen to form a group of 10. Together they have planned to set up a small power plant at Chandpur to cover up for almost the entire demand-supply gap in the district.

The entrepreneurs are hoping to exploit the big gap, estimated to be around 13-14 megawatts. The district needs about 28 megawatts, and the PDB and REB together can supply only 14-15 megawatts.

Their idea may sound ambitious but is fast becoming a reality. A 10-megawatt plant, which they plan to install in the small town and are capable of making it in less than 90 days from the day it is cleared by the authorities, is awaiting approval at the Power Cell.

The enterprising sponsors do not appear as smart as the powerful local agents of big international companies with big plans. Nor do they have the access to the corridors of power, seen nowadays as prerequisite to get a big deal through.

But they are the ones who have been able to convince one of world's top power plant manufacturers.

Caterpillar, the global power major which is the second biggest manufacturer in the United States after aircraft giant Boeing, may be their partner in the 10-megawatt project.

"If everything goes right, the whole process should not take more than 6-7 months," says a senior Power Cell official, "including the process of issuing a license."

The Chandpur men are one of six groups who have so far presented their cases with the Cell. Two of them, including the one from Chandpur, have been forwarded by the Prime Minister's Office.

The euphoria was generated by the recent government announcement to allow small power plants in the private sector.

Depending on the potential market and load growth, the small plants will be allowed on a build-own-operate basis, says the Cabinet-approved policy guidelines for small plants, which deal with such critical issues as fuel supply, power off-take and prices.

In any part of country, the sponsors are free to choose "plant of any configuration" that is compatible with the local power system.

The plant owner can buy fuel from any source if gas is not available from state companies (Petrobangla distribution subsidiaries) on a commercial basis. The nearest gas supplier will charge at the same rate as that for international power producers. But the plant owner will be asked to pay if there are any extra expenses for the necessary transmission facilities.

Unlike the big producers from whom the government is obligated to buy power, the small plant sponsors will have to find their own customers by themselves. They may also need to build their own distribution and transmission infrastructure if existing systems are not available for use. The small plant sponsors will need to pay "wheeling charges" to the owner (PDB, DESA or REB) of such facilities.

The government will dictate the prices if the small plants are selling power in areas covered by the three state distribution agencies. For other areas, prices will be determined by the plant sponsors and the consumers under the regulatory control of the government.

With these guidelines in place, major plant suppliers such as Caterpillar are discussing projects with local partners from different parts of the country. Last week, a delegation

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US-Bangladesh Business Council formed in Washington

From Govinda Shil

Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Deputy Minister for Shipping, Safer Hossain Chowdhury, MP, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah Harun and US Ambassador to Bangladesh John C Holzman were present at the inaugural ceremony of USBBCC.

The Council will advise the top policy-makers of the US government, according to documents distributed here. The Council will also help the US government adopt appropriate policies to enhance US business activities in Bangladesh.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh John C Holzman told The Daily Star that he was happy with the commencement of the Council. "It has a bright prospect," he said.

Officials of the US State Department, Departments of Treasury, Commerce and En-

ergy attended the inaugural function of the Council.

The founding members of the Council include Enson Oil and Gas International, Occidental Oil and Gas Corporation, Halliburton, Unocal Bangladesh Limited, Union Texas Petroleum, SN Corporation, American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, AEC Corporation, American Express Bank Limited and Perigine.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed inaugurated the USBBCC Wednesday saying that the Bangladesh government will extend all cooperation to the US companies.

"We have big domestic market for gas. After meeting the local demand, we may think of exporting gas," he told the US company executives at the dinner Wednesday.

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US to actively consider raising Bangladesh's garment quota

From Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, June 4: The US government would actively consider the issue of increasing the quota for Bangladesh apparel exports to the US market.

The US communicated to Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed when he met US Under Secretary for Economic and Agricultural Affairs Stuart E Eizenstat here on Wednesday.

The US official said that despite some difficulties, the US government would definitely try to enhance Bangladesh's garment quota, meeting sources said.

"The US has certain difficulties to increase quota for any country, but since Bangladesh has an impressive record on tackling the child labour problem the US government would

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Fresh clash at CU: 10 hurt 3 Shibir activists, one of BCL arrested

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 4: Police arrested three activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir and one activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in a raid on two residential halls at Chittagong University last night.

The raid followed a fresh clash between the activists of the two groups in which ten students were injured.

Police said the four activists were arrested on charge of their involvement in criminal activities.

The arrested three Shibir activists were Fazlul Hoque, Tajul Islam and Nasirullah Siddique while the BCL activist was identified as Abul Kalam Azad.

Chittagong University authorities later imposed a ban on holding rallies and processions on the campus.

The clash occurred at about 10 pm on Wednesday after an altercation between the supporters of the two rival student bodies over occupying of seats at Shahjalal Hall, according to UNB.

Four rooms of the hall were ransacked during the trouble.

The CU unit of Chhatra Shibir today held a press conference at its office while Chhatra League organised a protest rally at the New Market Square blaming each other for the incident.

At the press conference, Shibir leaders accused the university authorities of reneging their commitment to ensure that their activists will not be harassed on the campus.

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