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Petrobangla

From Page 1
PSC monitoring background. There might be some foul-play in the selection," said one source.

"One of these companies was established only two years ago. One company has experience of inspection of oil companies only. One is only experienced in geological survey, another runs a training institute and another does not have any international exposure," the source said.

The original evaluation criterion includes major activities of the bidder, general experience, clients' lists, involvement in PSC activities in the last five years, CVs of expatriate and local expertise etc.

"It is interesting that Petrobangla's criterion is so tough that a company like Arthur Andersen - which was government's consultant in the Second Round Block Bidding - did not pass," said another source.

Petrobangla sources said that in the beginning, hiring of foreign consultants to help the government monitor foreign oil and gas companies was resisted on the plea that it would be suicidal as foreign consultants would fail to see Bangladesh's perspective. However higher authorities went ahead with the bid to hire foreign consultants.

"The criterion was set ideally to ensure that the foreign consultant would be thoroughly experienced in sub-monitoring," said the Petrobangla source.

Four companies are currently working in blocks 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 23. These companies are Occidental, Cairn, Oland and UMC. Due to lack of manpower, Petrobangla is finding it hard to monitor the activities of these companies in these blocks. Besides the government is going to award at least five more blocks to a number of foreign companies under the second round block bidding although it does not have any preparation to deal with them.

5 blocks

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At the same time, the government is also finalising a gas pipeline contract with Unocal on unsolicited basis. A Petrobangla high official has been given responsibility for this.

Sources said that the negotiations are likely to be lengthy as all details would be discussed by the government and the companies before the final contracts are signed.

There is a chance that negotiations with US company Pangaea may not produce any result as its financially powerful partner OMV has backed out from the negotiations. Although Pangaea submitted proposal for Block 8 all alone, the government asked it to bring in a financially solvent partner.

Pangaea, a small company having no background or experience, had brought in Austrian company OMV. But OMV backed out from the deal saying that it would only agree to work if it is given more than one block.

No decision has yet been taken about blocks 9 and 11. Negotiations on these two blocks are one of the main reasons for the government's delay in finalising the second round block bidding, the sources said.

Bijoy Utshab

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Bibartan, Doyel, Udichi, Monglu and Sangkritik Union presented chorus and solo patriotic songs and poets recited self-composed poems yesterday.

Another stage named 'Lokoj Mancha' and fair styled 'Mukjuddaha mela' have also been set up at the university playground. Artists from different parts of the country presented Baul songs.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places wreath at the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Mirpur in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Martyred intellectuals

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People from all walks of life thronged memorials at Mirpur and Rayerbazar mass graveyards in the city and placed wreaths and offered *fateha* for eternal peace of the souls.

State-run Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television broadcast special programmes highlighting the significance of the day while national dailies brought out special supplements.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to the memory of the martyred intellectuals by placing wreath at the Martyred Intellectuals' Mausoleum at Mirpur in the morning. After placing wreath, she stood there in solemn silence as the military band played the last post.

The PM was then joined by her cabinet colleagues, Awami League leaders who also placed wreaths. She also went round different sections of the mausoleum including the mass grave. Hasina also offered *munajat*. DCC Mayor and hundreds of AL activists were present.

Later, the PM went to Rayer Bazar where country's intellectuals were killed by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators. She went through similar rites.

The PM also placed wreath at the portrait of the father of the nation Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban in the morning on the occasion of the Martyred Intellectuals Day. Ministers and central leaders of the AL were present.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia placed wreath at the intellectuals memorial at 10 am and offered prayer for the eternal peace of the departed souls. BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, MK Anwar, Mirza Abbas and hundreds of others accompanied the party chairperson.

Bangladesh Post Office issued a set of 16 commemorative stamps in memory of the intellectuals. Special prayers were organised in all mosques, temples, churches, pagodas and other places of worship across the country.

The government, political parties, student and socio-cultural organisations, professional groups and educational institutions chalked out various programmes, which also included placing of wreath, discussion and musical soiree.

The Jatiya Press Club, which took the initiative to observe the Intellectuals Day in 1973, held a discussion meeting in the afternoon.

Teachers, officials and employees of Dhaka University, DUTA and Shilpakala Academy placed wreaths at the memorials.

Bus dacoity in city

Dacoits swooped on a BRTC bus in broad-day light at Kona para in the city's Demra area and looted money and valuables from the passengers yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said at least eight dacoits boarded the Dhaka-bound bus from Narsingdi in the guise of passengers from Kona para at about 3:30 pm.

The dacoits looted cash and valuables worth over Tk five lakh from the passengers at gun point.

BNP candidate

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and ADM, Pabna told this correspondent that the Election Commissioner had asked him to submit the probe report by today (Monday). Though the magistrates could not turn up due to transport strike, he said, the presiding and assistant presiding officers were present, who in their written statements claimed that the election in those 15 centres were held 'free and fair' and also peacefully.

District BNP president Rafiqul Islam Bakul, Habibur Rahman Tota, Maj (ret'd) Sultan Ahmed, Qamrul Hasan Mintu and Ferdous Alam Khan were present at the press conference.

Manzur Quader

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At this point, according to the FIR, Quader asked Hasan to give his identity. As Hasan said that he was a deputy director of the SEC, Manzur Quader directed his guards to detain the SEC officials with the car, the FIR said.

At one stage, Manzur Quader punched him pulling the collar of his shirt. Later, the guards beat Hasan indiscriminately as directed by Quader and dragged him out of Prominent Housing premises, the FIR said.

They also detained the director (Legal) and the car inside the Prominent Housing Complex.

Being informed, the family members of Sajjad Hasan appeared at the spot. Quader and his people allegedly misbehaved with the family members and kept them stranded there for about one and a half hours.

It was alleged in the FIR that Manzur Quader made indecent remarks about the SEC. Sajjad Hasan and the director (Legal) somehow managed to leave the spot and went to office after three hours.

Quader is a former state minister under General Ershad.

JP-led 8-party alliance soon

Seven smaller parties have decided to form an alliance with the Jatiya Party of former president H M Ershad to launch an 'oust-government' movement, reports UNB.

An initial parley on floating the 8-party alliance was held yesterday morning at the Baridhara office of the JP chief with leaders of three parties.

JP sources said they expressed their 'full confidence in the leadership' of JP Chairman Ershad in the meeting, which decided to hold a press conference to launch the alliance.

Anti-government programme of the proposed alliance will be announced at the press conference.

BGMEA

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"Even a few days back, Qudus introduced Sikdar as the group's new presidential candidate," one source said.

Asked, Nurul Haque Sikdar said that one should not breach his commitment.

"It's not democratic," Sikdar said. "He should stick to his promises made nine months ago."

Business sources said that Sikdar threatened to form a third panel against Qudus.

He, however, said that he would like to see Sammilita Parishad, which Qudus now leads, field a single panel in the coming election.

"We are working for the purpose of keeping our panel united but if we fail to reach a compromise then I would contest and give my own panel," Sikdar said.

Qudus could not be reached for his comment.

Two panels exist in BGMEA politics, the other being the so-called Forum led by Anisur Rahman Sinha and Anisul Haque.

Qudus-led Sammilita Parishad swept the last election, which gave it the required majority to form the cabinet.

With the adoption of new rules in July this year, the entire 27-member executive committee will retire.

The new committee would be elected for a two-year term.

The last date for filing nominations is January 25. There are around 2000 voters this year, against last year's 1600.

Security cover for Dilip Kumar

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: India's Supreme Court today asked the central and Maharashtra governments to immediately provide security cover to celebrated actor Dilip Kumar and some others who have petitioned to the court with regard to the controversial feature film 'Fire,' reports BSS.

The order follows a mention made to the court with regard to the action by scantily-clad Shiv saiviks outside the residence of Dilip Kumar in Mumbai on December 12.

Nearly 150 Shiv Sena workers, many of them wearing only shorts, on Saturday staged a demonstration outside the Pali hill residence of Dilip Kumar.

Many demonstrators shouted slogans and stripped off their shirts to protest against what they alleged was the actor's 'support to nudity.'

Arsenic

From Page 1

of contamination was much less," he observed.

Nayem Wahara of Disaster Forum, Oxford, suggested options like moratorium on sinking of new tubewells, and to find out alternative sources like surface water.

He said water is 100 per cent safer in Sylhet as surveyed by Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. Wahara also called for storing rain-water for use during dry months.

Prof R Wilson of Harvard University dwelt on ecodegradation in Bangladesh and possible assistance from the university in coping with the problem.

Walter Kosmus from Austria, S Sharma of World Bank, New Delhi, and project director of WB-DPHE Arsenic Mitigation Project Farid Uddin Ahmed Mia took part at the second technical session, presided over by S A K M Shafique, chief engineer of Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE).

Some 150 delegates, including water experts, researchers, university teachers, representatives from NGOs and government agencies, medical practitioners and journalists are taking part in the workshop.

Frozen food exporters fear loss, seek help

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 14: Frozen food exporters will incur a loss of about Tk 130 crore in the current financial year on the current stocks in 46 factories as prices of shrimps have slumped by 30 to 40 per cent in the international market.

Stating this, president of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BFFEA) Golam Mostafa today urged the government to give subsidy to the exporters to survive.

He also urged the government to provide Tk 300 crore for setting up hatcheries.

The price fell due to over-supply of shrimps in the world market.

False cheque

From Page 1

to give legal cover to the activities of Bangladesh Handloom Board, 21 years after its creation through an ordinance in 1977.

According to law, the then government was supposed to gazette the decision immediately after promulgation of the ordinance. But it was not done in a period of more than two decades. Most of the cabinet members found it to be an 'innocent' mistake and concluded that the mistake went unnoticed by all the past governments.

The Cabinet decided that a fresh ordinance, giving retrospective effect to the Handloom Board's previous activities, was necessary to give legal cover to it. In this regard, the Cabinet has referred a Textile Ministry proposal to the law ministry for vetting.

Once it is vetted by the ministry, the Cabinet will give its final approval, sources said.

The Cabinet also approved the holiday list of government, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies for the year of 1999.

market and export by neighbouring countries on the basis of consignments instead of L/C, he told a press conference here.

He informed that Bangladesh shrimps are facing a tough competition from India, Thailand and Indonesia which made massive devaluation of their currencies.

"They are exporting shrimps at lower prices threatening survival of the frozen food sector in Bangladesh," Mostafa added.

He pointed out that there has been 30 per cent to 100 per cent devaluation of currencies in the major shrimp producing countries in Asia against Bangladesh's 12 per cent.

Shrimps worth Tk 337 crore are now stored in the 46 factories and banks are refusing fresh loans as the owners could not repay loans.

Out of total 123 factories in this sector, 77 are now closed after incurring a loss of about Tk 150 crore, he said.

Bangladesh yearly earns about Tk 1500 crore by exporting frozen foods cultivated in over one lakh hectares of land, he said.

Former president of BFFEA Syed Mahmudul Huq was also present at the press conference.

Body to probe B'baria incident

The government has formed a six-member enquiry commission on Brahmanbaria incident, reports UNB.

The commission, headed by Chairman of the Administrative Appellate Tribunal Justice D M Ansaruddin, will probe the ransacking, looting and arson at B'baria town on December 7.

Seven chargesheeted

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the investigation officer and the informant of the case Mujibur Rahman told The Daily Star at the CID office yesterday.

As many as 74 including Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman have been named witnesses in the rape charge sheet, he said.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, a ninth grader at Scholastica and the youngest daughter of Transcom supreme Latifur Rahman, was found dead in a pool of blood in her bedroom of their Gulshan residence in the late evening of April 23.

The first case in this connection was lodged by the victim's father with Gulshan thana accusing domestic help Shahid of the murder and the others.

CID's Mujibur Rahman later lodged the rape case with the Gulshan thana on September 4 when he was "convinced that Shazneen had been raped before she was killed".

After the gruesome murder, CID took over the investigation on April 27.

The CID investigation revealed that Hasari, a contractor in charge of renovating Latifur Rahman's residence, was the "mastermind behind the rape and killing of Shazneen."

Hasan also instigated the other accused into committing the rape and murder of the victim, the charge sheet said. The contractor had Shahid do the act and others abet him, the charge sheet said.

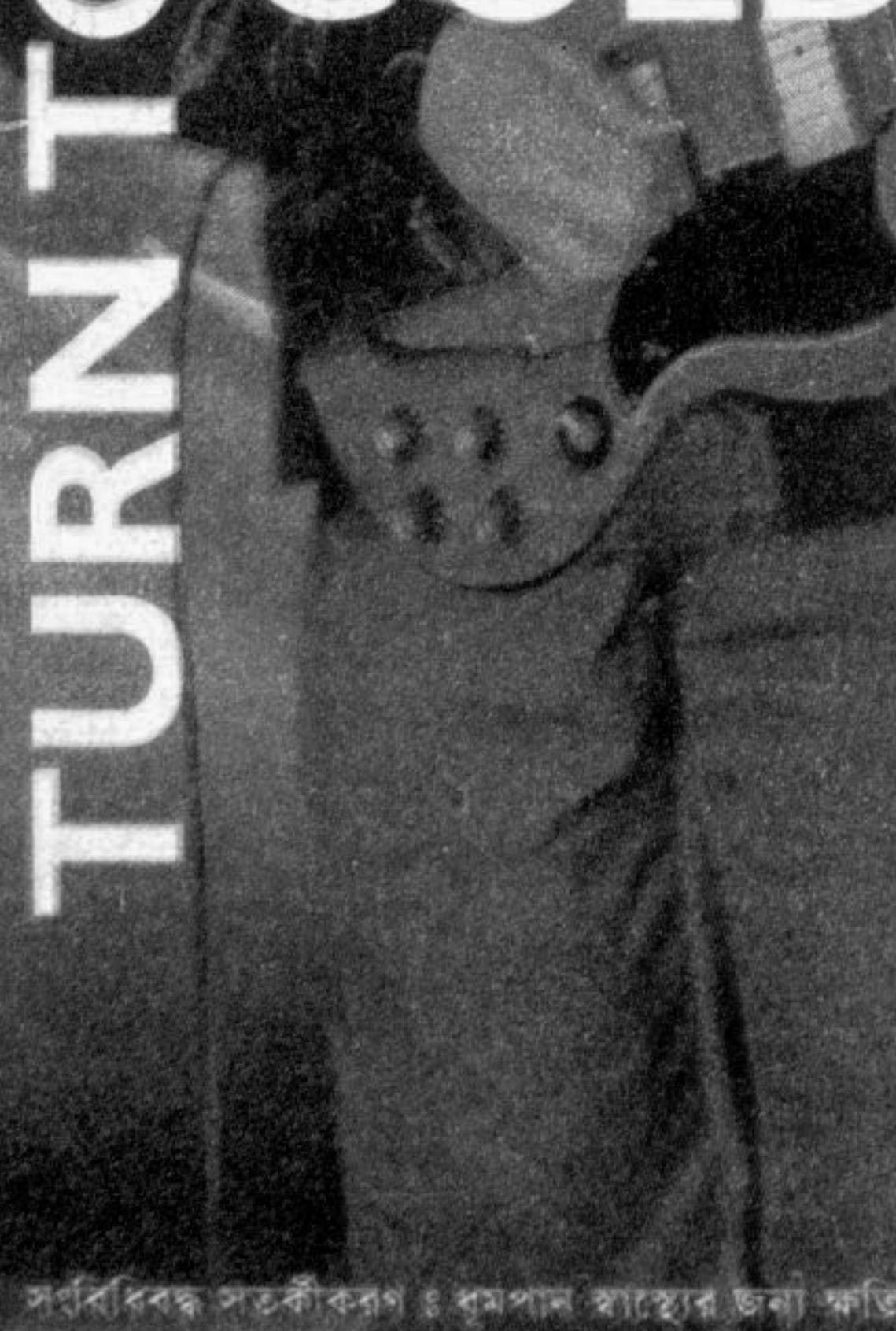
Through the investigation and statements by the accused and the witnesses, it is primarily proved that Shahid, in collaboration with the accused

"When Hasan also somehow came to know about the plan of disclosing his misdeed to Latifur Rahman, he took steps in collaboration and collusion with his assistant Badal, Shahid (the helper of head cook), carpenter Shani Ram, security guard Humayun and the two maids -Parveen and Minu," the charge sheet said.

"It is Hasan who instigated Shahid to rape and kill Shazneen in collaboration with others fearing damage and dishonour if his misconduct is reported to Shazneen's father and to satisfy his desire for vengeance," it said.

The autopsy report of the victim also shows that Shazneen was raped in an injured condition before she was killed. The accused Shahid, Humayun, Parveen and Minu cited names of other accused and gave confessional statements to the Investigating Officer and later to a Magistrate that they were involved in the killing and rape of Shazneen, the charge sheet said.

TURN T GOLD



BENSON & HEDGES

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