



VOL. IX NO. 23 REGD. NO. DA 781

INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

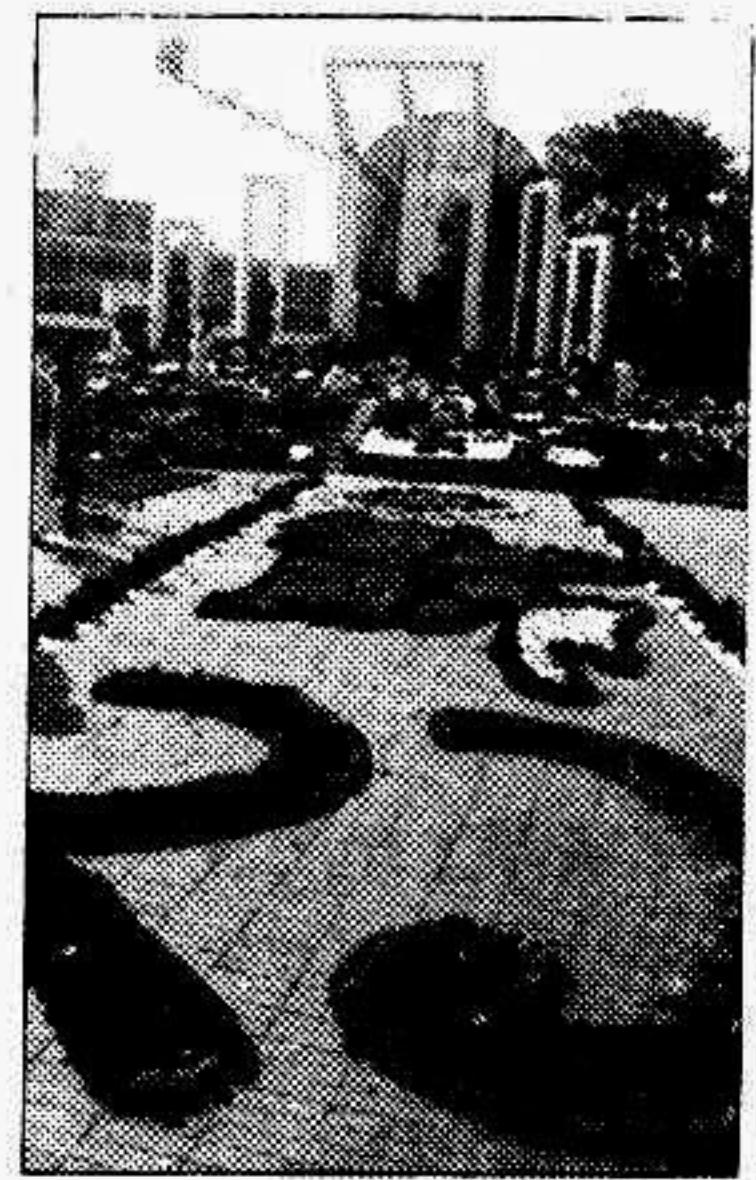
MAGH 27 1405 BS

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9, 1999

SHAWAL 22, 1419 HIJRI



16 PAGES : PRICE TAKA 6.00



Cairn winding up keeping govt, Petrobangla in dark

By Sharier Khan

In a clandestine deal, Cairn Plc, the British oil company that discovered and developed the country's first off-shore gasfield, is winding up from Bangladesh by handing over all its responsibilities and concerns to Shell Oil, sources said.

This move has been 'completed' without any prior knowledge of the government.

Petrobangla, contractually the partner and regulator of Cairn, is totally unaware of this move.

Cairn high officials yesterday announced to its local employees that the company would hand over all its responsibilities by June next and 'completely wind up' from Bangladesh.

"This is a gross violation of the contract between Cairn and Petrobangla," said one source.

Cairn signed two Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with Petrobangla on blocks 16 and 15 in May '94 and early '95 respectively. Under the PSCs, Cairn had agreed to invest in Bangladesh on a 25-year term through a series of 'conditional short phases.'

A well placed source in the private oil and gas sector said that the decision for winding up apparently followed 'severe recession' of Cairn's financial health worldwide. The stock market position of Cairn at London Stock Exchange had plummeted to a rock bottom

level.

"Cairn has wrapped up in Australia, China and Bangkok in the recent times. It is now winding up from Bangladesh by selling off its blocks to Shell," said the source, adding that the company owners were, however, making high profit from such wrap-ups.

The local chiefs of Shell and Cairn could not be contacted for their comments last night. The local adviser of Cairn, when contacted, refused to say anything on the issue.

Cairn had also jointly submitted bids with Shell Oil on six blocks in the second round block bidding. Shell-Cairn was offered only one block — Block

5. Originally small company, Cairn discovered the Sangu gasfield in Block 16 in early '96. Following the discovery, Cairn brought in two financially strong partners — Brown and Roots of USA and Shell Oil of UK-Netherlands — to develop the field.

After it started developing the gasfield early in '97, sources said that it was spending recklessly. Sangu had been one of the major investments of Cairn worldwide.

The financial crunch of Cairn began early last year when international oil price nosedived and share prices of

See Page 12 Col 1

A discussion meeting on "Life and Literature" marking the birth centenary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was held at the Bangla Academy yesterday evening.

Presided over by Prof Rafiqul Islam, the function was addressed by Dr Karunamay Goshami, Prof Shafiquddin Ahmed and Habibullah Siraji. Prof Sharawar Hossain presented the keynote paper.

The Bangla Academy authorities will also observe the birth centenaries of five other famous personalities of the country. They are Jibanananda Das, Kazi Motahar Hossain, Bokal Chand Mukhopadhyay, Abul Mansur Ahmed and Mohammad Barkatulla.

Meanwhile, the Academy authorities have postponed all its traditional programmes for today and tomorrow due to 48-hour countrywide shutdown that begins today, sources said.

However, the book fair will remain open, the sources added.

A total of 34 new books have been introduced at the fair yesterday.

Cabinet condoles death of King Hussein

The Cabinet yesterday adopted a resolution expressing deep condolence at the death of King Hussein-bin-Talal of the kingdom of Jordan, reports APB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting held at her office.

The resolution said that the brotherly people of Bangladesh had been deeply shocked at the demise of the King.

Munajat was also offered for the salvation of the departed soul.

The Cabinet resolved that a three-day mourning will be observed in the country and the national flag will be kept at half-mast as a mark of respect to the departed Jordanian King. Besides, a draft agreement on operating modalities of transit cargo between Nepal and Bangladesh was approved at the Cabinet meeting.

'91 gunshots at Hasina: One arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Detectives arrested a man yesterday, who was reportedly fired gunshots at the then leader of the opposition in Parliament and the incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the city's Kathalbagh area in 1991.

Police identified him as Wahiduzzaman.

He was arrested from the city's Free School Street in Kathalbagh at around 3:30 pm yesterday.

Police also said that the arrested man was earlier accused in several other cases with Gulshan, Ramna, Motijheel and Dhanmondi thana.

Inside Today

Article

President's Initiative: Some Questions

by Nurul Kabir
Page 4

Focus

Death of King Hussein and its implication in the region
Page 5

Prayer Timings

| February 9 | | |
|------------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | Azan | Jamaat |
| 5-24 | 5-28 | |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-10 | 4-20 |
| Maghrib | 5-55 | 5-58 |
| Esha | 7-10 | 7-20 |

Source: Islamic Foundation



People throw flowers to the motorcade carrying King Hussein's coffin as it passes by yesterday in Amman, before the monarch's funeral.

— AFP photo

Last respect to Hussein

AMMAN, Feb 8: King Hussein of Jordan was buried today to an emotional farewell from a nation steeped in grief and from a galaxy of world leaders who came to pay homage to a pivotal force for peace in the Middle East, reports Reuters.

Hussein's body, wrapped in a white shroud according to Islamic custom, was lifted from his coffin by army officers and lowered into a grave at the Hashemite family cemetery in the grounds of Amman's main compound of royal palaces.

His 37-year-old eldest son Abdullah, sworn in as king on Sunday some three hours after Hussein's death, stood stiff and silent, head bowed, as flag-bearers laid over the grave.

Hamzah named Crown Prince

AMMAN, Feb 8: King Hussein's favourite son Prince Hamzah, half-brother of the new king Abdullah, was named as Jordan's Crown Prince in a royal decree issued yesterday, reports Reuters.

Hamzah, 18, is King Hussein's fourth son. His mother, Queen Noor, is King Hussein's widow.

The decree was read out on Jordan Radio, which said the decision was taken in accordance with the late king's wishes.

Enmities and divisions were momentarily put aside as dignitaries from around 75 countries, some of them still at war, joined in a poignant tribute to

one of the 20th century's best-known statesmen.

Among them were a large delegation from Israel, led by President Ezer Weizman, and a mourning party from the Jewish state's Arab for Syria, headed by President Hafez Al-Assad.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, recovering from a bleeding ulcer, defied his doc-

tors to attend the funeral. Iraq, Libya and Sudan, all at odds with the United States and with Hussein's policies of peace with Israel, also sent delegations.

It was the biggest congregation of kings, presidents and prime ministers since the funeral in 1995 of Israel's peace-making prime minister Itzhak Rabin.

Hussein, whose reign spanned 47 turbulent years, died on Sunday of lymphatic cancer at the age of 63. He was the Middle East's longest serving leader.

His coffin, draped in the Jordanian flag, was borne to his final resting place on a gun carriage from the throne hall of the Raghdan Palace, where US President Bill Clinton, three of his predecessors and a host of national leaders paid their last respects.

In a remarkable show of solidarity, most of them walked behind the flower-decked carriage, preceded by a military drum and pipe band and an honour guard of Bedouin sol-

See Page 12 Col 3

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See Page 12 Col 3

CEC Abu Hena says

Govt-opposition talks can end deadlock

By Staff Correspondent

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena has called upon the government to have an effective dialogue with the opposition parties with a view to ending the crisis born out of their boycott of the ensuing municipal elections.

"I have recently requested some senior leaders of the ruling party and the government to have fruitful discussion with the mainstream opposition parties to end the crisis," said Abu Hena while talking to a group of journalists at his office yesterday evening. "I once again request the government to have an effective dialogue with the opposition."

Explaining, the CEC said that the Commission had announced the election schedule

See Page 12 Col 6

"Legally, the municipal polls have nothing to do with the political parties. But practically, it is very difficult to ensure a free, fair and peaceful elections without positive involvement of all political parties concerned," the CEC said and added, "I do not feel comfortable with the present situation."

However, the CEC believes that there are still scopes to defer the date of elections. "In that case, government has to secure a High Court order."

Explaining, the CEC said that the Commission had announced the election schedule

See Page 12 Col 6

By DU Correspondent

misuse of students' money by the authorities and spending more on miscellaneous heads than for academic purposes have contributed to the ongoing stalemate at the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB). The authorities had closed the institute sine die from December 31 amidst students' agitation against alleged corruption including nepotism, mis-

management and raising of the tuition and other fees.

The students demanded that the institute be reopened and a sound policy be introduced to run it.

They alleged that Tk 12 lakh was spent instead of Tk 3 lakh as the authorities sent a 10-member delegation to the South Asian Finance Accounts (SAFA) conference in Sri Lanka in place of a three-member

office of the National Council to the sixth floor, the students claimed.

They also alleged that the authorities financed a four-member private delegation's participation in the silver jubilee festival of Chartered Accountants Institute in India.

Though the charges under various heads have been increased over the years, the authorities are yet to take any ef-

fective step for improving the standard of education.

The latest annual report of ICMAB shows that the lion's share of internal resources comes from the students' fees though the authorities spend only a little for them.

On the other hand, a major portion of the resources is spent for non-educational heads like furniture, conference, seminar and publication.

According to the report, students of the institute provided Tk 10,234,532 in the 1997-98 session.

This was the highest ever, 82.09 per cent of the total income of Tk 12,466,959 in the session. But the expenditure for the students was only Tk 3,051,375, 18.05 per cent of the total expenditure of Tk 16,474,949.

The report also showed that See Page 12 Col 7

Misuse of funds led to stalemate at ICMAB

By DU Correspondent

Business leaders demand Enact law to ban hartal

Top business leaders yesterday called for enacting appropriate laws in the Jatiya Sangsad to ban hartals as these are destroying the country's economy, report agencies.

They appealed to the President to take initiative to bring the government and opposition across the table to resolve the current standoff. They also discussed submission of a memorandum to the President by the business community.

They also asked the ruling and opposition parties to either resolve disputes through dialogue or compensate for the business losses.

See Page 12 Col 3

Khaleda hints at boycotting JS session

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia yesterday gave a hint about boycott of Parliament session in course of their current movement as she saw the country's situation 'murky and anarchic,' reports UNB.

"Time may come when we will have to decide whether it is worthwhile sitting in the House as we are not allowed to speak on the current socio-economic and political situation in the country," she said.

Addressing a representatives council of city Zia Parishad at Engineers Institution auditorium in the evening, Begum Zia alleged that the country was infested with terrorism, anarchy and troubles. "Wherever we cast eyes, we find a dark and disastrous situation."

The lawmakers of BNP had dethroned their resignation letters with Begum Zia following party standing committee meeting's decision on July 22.

See Page 12 Col 5

5 hurt, vehicles damaged as pickets clash

By Staff Correspondent

At least five persons were injured in clashes during campaign for and against hartal in the city yesterday.

Besides, a number of motor vehicles were damaged in different parts of the city during the clashes.

The injured four were identified as Gaurango, 27, Shafiq, 35, Motahar, 40, and Atiqur Rahman 22. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.