

## Roundtable told 'Occidental not paying any compensation for damage to environment'

Star Report

The Occidental Oil Company has paid 'some compensation' for damages to rail tracks and roads etc but not for damages to environment after the explosion at Magurchara in Habiganj during drilling for gas on June 14, 1997. Petrobangla Chairman Mosharraf Hossain told a roundtable on energy exploration in the city yesterday.

But the chairman failed to answer queries to journalists about any compensation for damage to environment and bio-diversity in the pristine forests and tea gardens in the area. Huge balls of fire raged everything there, killing wildlife and destroying the eco-system which according to studies will take 50 years or more to regenerate.

The roundtable to explain the basics of energy exploration, the history and fundamentals of the Natural Gas Industry in Bangladesh to the media was arranged by the Bangladesh Petroleum Institute and USIS.

Salim Ullah Salim, Director, BPI and John Kinnancan, Director USIS welcomed the participants at the roundtable.

Henk Gossings, New Business Development Manager, Shell, Derrick O'Keefe, Commercial Manager, Cairn, Kurt Lindahl, Director, Business Development, Occidental, Greg Tunnel, Vice-President (Marketing), Unocal and M Fariduddin, Chief Geologist, USIS presented papers.

Asked how Occidental was leaving Bangladesh without

paying any compensation, preliminary estimates of which the government agencies put to near Tk 600 crore, the Petro-Bangla chairman said his organisation is not the regulatory body to oversee that.

Asked about the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before Magurchara well was permitted to be drilled he said that permission was given by relevant government departments as in the case of Sangu gas field off-shore in the bay where the rich fishing grounds on the Meghna estuary enter sweet waters.

Replying to another question on Shell Oil being given the exploratory rights in the Sundarbans, bloc-5, which has been recently declared a human heritage site by UNESCO the Petro-Bangla Chairman said that EIA's are part of the Production Sharing Contracts with oil companies.

Director and Chief Geologist of UMC M Farid Uddin while presenting a paper expressed the concern of foreign oil companies working in Bangladesh that the present gas consumption of the country was not enough for them to increase gas exploration activities. 'What will happen to the Bibiyana gas field? How will Bangladesh consume it? Shall the foreign companies wait for five to 10 years more to let the domestic gas consumption grow (so that the gas could be sold to domestic market)? No. The answer is pipeline export of gas,' he said.

## DU Senate polls Journalists back Ganotantrik Oikya Parishad panel

Twenty-four editors and senior journalists yesterday urged the Dhaka University Registered Graduates to elect the 'Ganotantrik Oikya Parishad' panel in the upcoming elections to the Dhaka University Senate, reports BSS.

'The importance of Dhaka University is immense in our national life and we think this panel, in respect of principles and ideals, represents the main stream of the national life,' they said in a statement.

They said this panel ardently upholds the Bangalee nationalism and the spirit of the Liberation War.

The signatories to the statement are: Advisory Editor of the Daily Janakantha, Toab Khan, senior journalists A B M Musa, Santosh Gupta and M R Akhtar Mukul, Acting Chief Editor and News Editor of The Ittefaq, Rahat Khan and Golam Sarwar, Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Haroon Habib, Ajker Kagoj Editor Kazi Shahed Ahmed, The Bangladesh Editor Zakaria Khan, Al-Amin Editor Alhaj Maqbul Hossain, The Rupali Editor Mostafizur Rahman, Poet and Journalist Mohabab Shah, Journalists Hassan Shahrar, Abed Khan, Shafiqur Rahman, Baby Maudud, news Editor of The Sangbad Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, BPI vice president G M Yakub, Secretary General Akhtar Ahmed Khan, DUJ president Altaf Mahmud, general secretary Swapan Saha and Azizul Islam Bhuiyan.

## Former chief PID photographer dies

Former Chief Photographer of Press Information Department (PID) Sayedul Haq died of old-age ailment at his Malibagh residence in the city yesterday. He was 75, reports UNB.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Sayedul Haq joined PID as photographer in 1968. He was promoted to Chief Photographer in 1982 and retired from his service in 1988, said a press release.

His body was taken to his village home in Laxmipur district for burial after a *Namaj-e-Janaza* at Malibagh Bazar Madrasah Mosque after Asr prayers.

Juba Kalyan Samity of Begumganj thana brought out a procession in the city yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of killers of Tajul Islam. Tajul, a businessman, died after he fell from a multi-storey building in the city's Naya Paltan area on May 26. — Star photo



Former president of Bangladesh Lawyers Forum Barrister Nazmul Huda, MP, presenting a crest to BNP chairperson Begum Khaleida Zia at a seminar on human rights held at the Supreme Court auditorium yesterday. — Star photo

## JS body reviews Hotel Sonargaon extension project

A meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism yesterday discussed the various aspects about the implementation of the extension project of Hotel Sonargaon, reports BSS.

The project has been undertaken to cater for the Non-Aligned Conference scheduled to be held in 2001.

The meeting directed the concerned authorities to make a report on the progress of the accepted tender regarding the extension project of Hotel Sonargaon and present it before the next meeting of the committee.

The meeting, held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, was presided over by Chairman of the Committee Bir Bahadur. Committee members Civil Aviation and Tourism and Housing and Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Shah Azizur Rahman, Mohammad Abdus Sattar, Husna Ara Wahid, Abdul Mannan, Sved Manzur Hossain, Mizanur Rahman Sinha and Kazi Mozammel Hossain (Kaikobad) attended the meeting.

## Zillur tells workshop Steps taken to innovate arsenic mitigation technology

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman yesterday said the government was pledge-bound to ensure peoples right to safe drinking water and sanitation across the country, reports BSS.

He was inaugurating a day-long National Consultation Workshop on Vision 21 for Water Supply and Sanitation organised by Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), WSSCC, ICDDR,B in the city. State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Daily Star Editor, Mahfuz Anam, DPHE Chief Engineer M Quadriuzzaman and ICDDR,B's Dr Bilkis Amin Hoque also spoke at the workshop.

The LGRD Minister said steps have already been taken to innovate arsenic mitigation technology develop infrastructure for preservation of surface water and its treatment.

Zillur regretted that mass scale arsenic contamination in groundwater is now disrupting the process of formulation of new water supply projects and he asked the researchers to explore alternative sources of safe water for the masses.

Zillur disclosed that a model would be placed before the forthcoming ECNEC meeting to create a sustainable infrastructure for preservation of rainwater.

The minister said private sector would get an opportunity to participate in the development of the infrastructure of water supply and sanitation across the country for the sake of improvement of public health and environment.

Dr Alamgir emphasised the need for mobilisation of public will and opinion to raise the rate of investment to 22 per cent of GDP for alleviation of poverty and ensuring safe water and sanitation and other basic needs.

Mahfuz Anam said strong backing from the government is essential for raising the quality of life including education and safe drinking water and sanitation services.

He said there should be a vision of the nation in this regard and that should be materialised by the state.



Newspaper hawkers of the city brought out a procession yesterday protesting attack of terrorists and extortion. — Star photo

## Hill women seek rehabilitation in CHT

KHAGRACHHARI, June 8: A group of hill women who have lost their spouses or relatives in different armed conflicts during more than two decades of insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have demanded their proper rehabilitation by the government, reports BSS.

Hill Widow Welfare Samity today submitted a memorandum to the Chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) Jyotindra Bodhipriyo Lama on behalf of the victims seeking immediate rehabilitation of the affected families.

President of the group Shikha Chakma and general secretary Hiron Bala Chakma handed over the memorandum with six-point demand to the CHTRC chairman.

The demands placed before the CHTRC include establishment of handloom industries for women, granting funds for setting up of cottage industries, enhancing educational facilities for their children, creating job opportunities and distribution of 'Khas' land among the women of the affected families.

The government has so far distributed nearly one lakh books free of cost to 500 colleges during the current fiscal to familiarise the work of creative writers among the young readers of the country, reports BSS.

Education Ministry sources said the first phase of the Taka 4.18 crore books distribution programme has already been completed while the second phase is likely to be completed by the end of this month.

They said in the second phase a set of 467 books on different subjects would be distributed to equal number colleges.

The subject of the books range from the Liberation War, national history, life and works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to classical Bangla literature, economics and development, dictionaries, autobiographies, environment, fine arts and translation of world literature.

A 10-member selection committee, comprising literateurs, government officials and representatives of public libraries, selected the books written and published by over 200 writers and 150 publishers.

## BNP reacts

From Page 1

seen throwing files in the air and a few others were heard abusing the minister. Some of them left their seats to come forward. It was a near pandemonium situation.

The minister continued to speak. He criticised the BNP for its 'cantonment origin', questioned the party's commitment to parliamentary democracy, its 'cultural standard' and so on. Aware of direct radio broadcast of the proceedings, the minister was also giving a live commentary on what the BNP lawmakers were doing.

Earlier, Tofail argued that he spoke on Monday on behalf of the Home Minister who was absent from the House, while the Opposition raised objection to BTV coverage of the home minister's speech.

Some Treasury Bench members stood in favour of the minister and shouted back.

The BNP members were demanding of the Chair to switch off the minister's microphone. The minister said he would not stop till the Opposition stopped shouting and hurling abuses at him.

Meantime, Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid announced that he would give floor to BNP leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Saifur Rahman after the Commerce Minister.

At one stage the Deputy Speaker requested the minister to finish. But the minister continued to criticise the BNP and said the protest by its lawmakers was a 'deliberate attempt to make the parliament ineffective'. He finished demanding a ruling from the Chair on the Opposition's 'unparliamentary behaviour'.

Finally, the microphone was given to Saifur Rahman. Visibly disappointed, Saifur announced his party's walkout protesting Tofail's 'insulting remarks' which, according to him, were made in violation of rules.

As soon as Saifur announced the walk-out at 12:11 pm, the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House till 9:30 this morning.

Neither Leader of the Opposition Begum Zia nor the Deputy Leader Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury went to the House yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was not present during the noisy scene.

## JS tidbits

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'Is your question meant for the (communication) minister or the prime minister? I find both of them here,' asked a prompt Speaker, trying to correct the elderly Jamaat lawmaker. But he did not respond.

Taking the floor, Hasina said in a jovial mood, 'Perhaps, he (Rahman) is one of those who don't like to see me as the prime minister. I read in newspapers that many (in the opposition) are trying to strip me off my portfolio.'

BNP lawmaker Abdul Wahab complained of slow progress in the construction of a bridge in his Jhenaidah constituency and asked Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Monju whether he would speed up the task.

The rate of progress now is the same as it was during your time (BNP rule),' Monju quipped.

The Speaker intervened to suggest that the minister install a 'speedometer' to measure the rate of progress.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader was dabbling with the beard of State Minister for Religious Affairs Nurul Islam when they met on a walkway in the Treasury Bench.

Quader was seen fiddling with Islam's beard for quiet some time and telling him something as the session was in progress. The white-bearded minister gave his younger colleague a pat on the back. What they talked about could not be known.

## Block Bidding

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was still on. Political and Petrobangla lobbies favouring Tullow are still trying to find a big partner for it.

Big oil companies like Chevron, Taccoco, Mobil and Petronas which showed interest earlier have lost interest in gas blocks because of the government's cold response to their proposals, the sources claimed.

Shell and Unocal are set to take over most of the active gas blocks. Shell has purchased British company Cairn's concerns in blocks 15 and 16 and Unocal has purchased Occidental's concerns in blocks 12, 13 and 14.

Okland is selling 80 per cent of its concerns in Bangladesh to Tullow. UMC is also selling its concerns to Ocean Energy. There are rumours in the sector that Ocean Energy would be taken over by Unocal very soon.

## Paula Jones' husband files for divorce

LOS ANGELES, June 8: Paula Jones' husband has filed for divorce, citing irreconcilable differences with the woman who accused President Bill Clinton of sexual harassment, reports AP.

In Monday's filing, Stephen Jones also asks for joint legal and physical custody and joint visitation of the couple's sons, Stephen, 6, and Preston, 2.

The couple separated in February, and the boys currently live with their mother in Cabot, Arkansas, according to the filing in Los Angeles Superior Court.

## Wanted: Exorcist, Urgently

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tant start, looked the familiar Tendulkar of old.

Just when the hard work was done, Tendulkar inexplicably hit one down mid-off's throat. Pakistan had their foot in the door, especially when Jadeja too surrendered meekly. Enter Azharuddin with the most obvious albatross hanging round his neck. It was a Gladstone sort of situation. Cometh the hour, and for once India found its man, in the most improbable person of its beleaguered captain. David played a cultured knock before throwing it all away. Azhar had to team up with Robin Singh, India's poor man's Lance Klusener, to try and make a match of it. The two ensured India had a reasonable total. More importantly, Azhar found his touch and his elusive form, to post his first fifty of the competition.

Pakistan for some obscure reason struggled in the field. The fielding was ordinary, the bowling of Shoaib Akhtar and Saqlain Mushtaq just about par with park amateurs. The two strike bowlers gave away 122 runs between them for just one slog over wicket. For the skipper, who bowled admirably for his own spell, this was heresy in the ranks. Still, 227 was gettable, especially in view of India's pedestrian bowling. Pakistan, however, proceeded to make a mockery of pre-match predictions. Wasim Akram 'practised' all the wrong moves. I was not the only one eating crow last night.

Indian bowling was a revelation, its fielding quite extraordinary. The bowlers bowled to a plan, and the field-

ers held everything that came their way. Ramesh excepted. Azhar led from the front in the taking two blunders in the slips. Azhar would of course be the first to admit, he was helped in no small measure by some very shoddy and inept batting. The sight of Inzamam labouring for over 90 deliveries for just 41, sums up the Pakistani approach. Prasad enjoyed himself hugely with some cheap wickets, while Srithan provided the usual breakthroughs.

Ever since the Bangladesh match, Pakistan have been on a downward slide. Three defeats in a row mean something is grossly wrong somewhere. Unless they can get it right before the next match, the Pakistani dream just about runs the risk of turning sour. At this stage, after having come so far, that would be the unkindest cut of all. But, Pakistan as so often in the past, have no one to blame but themselves. They are the prisoners of their own shadows, and their own enemies. The far.

India have now placed themselves, firmly and fairly in the laps of the gods. There is just that faint glimmer of a light at the end of the tunnel. They have left it too late though. The light may just be the train coming in. India have a match to play, so do Pakistan. Suddenly, their matches have acquired a peculiar significance. Whilst we wait and watch what might happen, spare a thought for the shell-shocked Pakistanis. Will they be able to fight the demons that Bangladesh have let loose after them? Remember, that really was the beginning of the end.

## New army brigade

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het Division. She told the House that SSC and HSC examinations would be held under the Sylhet Education Board shortly.

Besides various infrastructure development programmes, extension of Sylhet Osmani Airport, new power plants, 300-bed female hostel of Sylhet Osmani Medical College, seven labour welfare centres for tea workers, development of Shahjalal Science and Technology University are underway.

In reply to a supplementary by Dr Rustam Ali Farazi (JP-Pirojpur), the Prime Minister said a new education board would be set up in Barisal and start functioning simultaneously with the Sylhet Education Board.

## Smuggling

The Prime Minister also called for united move by MPs and agencies concerned to stop cross border smuggling from India to protect the local market.

Replying to a supplementary from Kazi Shah Mozammel Hossain (Kaikobad, JP-Camilla), she said Camilla is considered as the safe haven of smugglers. She said nearly 7,000 people

were arrested on charges of smuggling in last three years — 1,998 in 1996, 3,669 in 1997 and 1,423 in 1998.

The Prime Minister said smuggled goods worth about Tk 121.46 crore were seized in 1996, about Tk 155 crore in 1997 and about Tk 133.55 crore in 1998.

She pointed out that regular patrolling and checking were on by the BDR personnel within the five-mile border area. She said that activities of the intelligence department, police, navy, coast guard and customs have been stepped up to check smuggling across the border.

## Power plant

She further said that the government had a plan to set up a 210-MW power station at Goalpara in Khulna.

Unocal, a US based company, has applied to construct the power station under the western Region Integrated Project she said while replying to a question from Kazi Sikandar Ali of Khulna.

Besides, she said another company from Czechoslovakia has also expressed its interest to set up a power plant.

The Prime Minister said both the proposals were being examined.

## Pre-budget meet with Kibria Krishak League for doubling agri subsidy

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria yesterday called upon the leaders of Krishak League to mobilise public opinion in realising agriculture loan, reports BSS.

The Finance Minister said this when a delegation of Bangladesh Krishak League led by its president and State Minister for Land Alhaj Rashed Mosharraf called on him at his office for pre-budget discussion.

He said the government would take necessary measures for proper distribution of agricultural loan. It would also continue its assistance for improvement of the agriculture sector, he added.

The delegation members proposed the Finance Minister for doubling subsidy in the agriculture sector in the coming National Budget.

They also recommended not to increase the price of agri inputs including fertiliser and diesel and suggested measures for establishing agriculture-based industries.

The delegation stressed the need for taking steps for direct procurement from the peasants of their produce to ensure fair price of agricultural products.

The Krishak League leaders expressed satisfaction over the government's proper step in distributing agricultural loan that resulted in bumper boro harvest.

They urged the minister for involving the representatives of Krishak League in the concerned committees to strengthen the supervision and monitoring of fertiliser distribution and agricultural loan.

General secretary of Krishak League Harun-ur-Rashid Haolader, Krishak leaders M A Wadud, S M Faruk, Badiazaman Badsha, Sarwar Wadud Chowdhury, Dilara Harun, MP, Anwarul Islam Chowdhury, MP, and Mahmuda Shaoghat, MP, were, among others, put forward various proposals during the meeting.

The Finance Minister gave a patient hearing and assured the Krishak League leaders for inducting their representatives in the agricultural loan distribution and collection committees.

## Project to stop erosion of Padma awaits approval

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak yesterday told the Parliament that a project is now awaiting approval of the government for protecting towns and land from river erosion of the Padma, reports BSS.

Making statement on a call attention notice by Treasury Bench Member Col (ret'd) Shawkat Ali, the minister said the project would cost Taka 52 crore for construction of embankment along the river Padma.

Razzak said that the greater Surma Project covering a gross area of 13,000 hectares with scope for irrigation to 4,000 hectares, 1800-km embankment and 6 water control structures at a cost of Taka 9.93 crore is under implementation. The project is scheduled to complete by June 2001.

## 3 wanted criminals held, 2 revolvers recovered in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested three wanted criminals and recovered two revolvers from their possession from Sabujbagh area in the city yesterday.

Sabujbagh Thana police arrested Shah Alam, a wanted criminal and son of late Salauddin, a resident of Sonamiah Road of Sabujbagh.

A special squad of police arrested Shah Alam and recovered a revolver from Sabujbagh area at about 4:30 pm yesterday. Meanwhile, in a raid Sabujbagh police arrested Ripon, son of Abdur Razzak of Muggdapa. He was a wanted criminal in six cases.

In another raid police arrested Bhuto, son of Sukkur Ali of Jatrabari under Demra thana in the city.

Police said Bhuto was a wanted criminal in five cases. Separate cases were filed with Sabujbagh thana in this connection.

Meanwhile, Mirpur police arrested four dacoits and recovered revolvers and lethal weapons from their possession at the early hours of Monday.

Police identified them as Jahir, Jasim, Redoy and Iqbal. Police said the gang gathered at Pirbagh and was taking preparation for committing a dacoity at Mirpur.

Separate cases were filed with Mirpur thana in this connection.