

## 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 Magurjhara in Habiganj during drilling for gas on June 14, 1997. Petrobangla Chairman Mosharrif 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 everywhere, 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 Kincannon, Director USIS welcomed the participants at the roundtable. Heng Goslings, 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, UMCs 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 Petrobangla chairman said his organisation is not the regulatory body to oversee that.

Asked about the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before Magurjhara 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 Petrobangla 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 Ganotantri Oikya Parishad panel

Twenty-four editors and senior journalists yesterday urged the Dhaka University Registered Graduates to elect the 'Ganotantri 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 Bangladeshi 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 Bangladeshi Editor Zakkaria Khan, Al-Amin Editor Alhaj Maqbul Hossain, The Rupali Editor Mostafizur Rahman, Poet and Journalist Mohadeb Saha, Journalists Hassan Shahriar, Abed Khan, Shafiqur Rahman, Baby Maudud, news Editor of The Sangbad Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, BDU vice president G M Yakub, Secretary General Akhtar Ahmed Khan, DUJ president Alfaq Mahmud, general secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Jatiya Press Club general secretary Swapan Saha and Azizul Islam Bhuiyan.

Brandishing firearms Dipu and his accomplices assaulted Kamrul, former VP of Dhaka College, Kamrul has not returned home since the incident. 'I heard from some of the witnesses that the gang took Kamrul with them while leaving the scene,' Sazzadul Huq said.

The on duty officer of Uttara Thana acknowledged the allegation made by the assistant attorney general except for the fact that the leader of the gang was the state minister's son.

But the ADC (north) when contacted over telephone last night said that he had heard that such a case had been filed with Uttara Thana, accusing the state minister's son.

The state minister, however, was not available for any comment last night. The father of the victim lodged a case with Uttara Thana accusing Dipu and unidentified others Monday.

**Dhaka, Moscow to sign trade agreement**

Bangladesh and Russia will sign a bilateral trade agreement and an agreement for avoidance of double taxation, reports BSS.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed is expected to fly to Russia to sign the agreements.

Inviting the minister to Russia, Ambassador of Russian Federation Evgeny Pavlovich Ivanov yesterday hoped that these agreements would be a turning point in strengthening bilateral relations, especially expediting Bangladesh exports to Russia.

Accepting the invitation at his office, Tofail said Bangladesh has bright prospect to export many items, including RMG, leather, frozen food and other manufactured goods, which would be opened up after signing the agreements.

Recalling the contribution of Russia during the liberation war of Bangladesh, he said, Russia helped us a lot.

## Gang of youths assault one at Uttara

By Staff Correspondent

An assistant attorney general's son was allegedly assaulted by a gang, which included the son of a state minister, in front of a Shopping Complex at city's Uttara area Saturday evening, police said.

Family sources of Kamrul Islam, 38, son of the Assistant Attorney General Sazzadul Huq, alleged that Kamrul has been missing since the incident.

The assistant attorney general while talking with The Daily Star last night alleged that the gang led by Dipu, son of State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, attacked Kamrul in front of London Plaza at Uttara Sector No 3 at around 7 pm.

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 Mosharrif Hossain, Shah Azizur Rahman, Mohammad Abdus Sattar, Husne Ara Wahid, Abdul Mannan, Syed Manzur Hossain, Mizanur Rahman, Sina and Kazi Mofazzal Hossain (Kakobad) attended the meeting.

## 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 and present it before the next meeting of the committee.

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

Mofazzal Hossain 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.

## 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 people's 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 Quadiruzzaman and ICDDR,B's Dr Bilkis Amin Hoque also spoke at the workshop.

The LGRD 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.

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## Hill women seek rehabilitation in CHT

KHAGRAKHARI, 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 memorandum to the Chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) Jyotirindro Bodhipriyo Larma 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, handloom industries 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.

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