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## UNDP quest for consensus on dev needs in CHT

By Special Correspondent

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is planning a series of workshops at district levels in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) to identify quick impact activities in a number of priority areas to accelerate pace of development, confidence building and reconciliation among all the stakeholders in the region.

Nay Htun, a UN Assistant Secretary General and UNDP's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, revealed this at a press conference yesterday before leaving for New York ending a four-day visit to Bangladesh.

"Invitations would be sent to all groups to have a consensus on development needs of the people, forge better understanding and build confidence," he told reporters on the workshops the UNDP is planning at the three districts of the CHT.

Htun had been to the hills, visiting villages and meeting a number of people including the Regional Council (RC) Chairman Shantu Larma, officials and NGO activists. "Everyone concerned welcomes peace accord. They all want peace that would bring in more development opportunities," he said about his trip to the hills.

But Htun and David Lockwood, head of the UN mission in Bangladesh and chief of the UNDP, declined to disclose the sum or size of the assistance the UNDP is planning to channelise through the government for the development of the CHT.

Earlier, before the parity, Htun held talks with the development partners of Bangladesh at the newly opened UNDP headquarters in Dhaka.

The next meeting of the donors' consultative committee would have the RC chairman and representatives from other relevant ministries, he added.

He also met Kalpananj Chakma, the minister for CHT affairs, and Abdul Matin Kharsa, minister for Law and Justice. They discussed CHT development issues and matters related to the setting up of a human rights commission and a human rights institute.

"The law minister told me that the commission and the institute would be set up soon," Htun said.

Lockwood, replying to a question whether they were going to deal straight with the RC, said that UNDP dealt with the government through the ERD to channelise its funds.

Htun identified some of the priority development needs of the hills such as water, sanitation, health and environment.

Lockwood added that the National Environment Management Plan could not touch down in the region because of trouble there. Now the sustainable management of the environment would be taken care of, including afforestation.

"We have placed funds for that," he told a questioner who pointed at the threats the environment is facing due to wholesale destruction of virgin forests in the hills that may also threaten the hill people whose life pattern is intricately related to environment.

Htun said that the whole issue of reforestation and management of the environment and conservation of forestland were discussed during his visit to CHT.



The newly built Dhaka-Calcutta bus terminal at Kamalapur in the city.

— Star photo

## Terminal ready for bus run

By Mustak Hossain

The terminal constructed for Dhaka-Calcutta direct bus service is ready for the first ever commercial bus run between Dhaka and Calcutta.

The terminal was built at the Kamalapur bus depot of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) at a cost of Taka 11 lakh.

The fully air-conditioned terminal has two passenger lobbies with two separate washrooms for women and men, a ticket counter with three cubicles and some other facilities. Customs and immigration counters are also located in the same premises.

The terminal has accommodation for 60 people at a time, in two lounges. Communication Minister Anwar Hossain inaugurated the terminal on June 24 last to facilitate passenger movement

between the two neighbouring countries.

"A private company will be assigned for cleaning and maintaining the terminal," Muhammad Azmal Chowdhury, chairperson of BRTC told The Daily Star.

"We would charge Taka 10 for each visitor who accompanies a passenger into the compound. This will reduce crowds at the facility and also help us in keeping the place clean," the chairman said.

The terminal complex is situated on a 3.5 katha land where there was a warehouse. The site now looks spruce with tiled floors and Thai aluminium window panels.

"Everything is set for the first commercial run which is being organised by the ministry of communication," he said.

However, during a visit to the bus terminal, on Tuesday,

this correspondent found it under lock and key and there was no one around.

Some people, however, were found inquiring about tickets and other related information. P.C. Talukdar, a retired bank officer who came to the bus terminal for tickets for his planned visit to Calcutta to meet relatives, left the terminal in frustration.

The BRTC authority could not start selling tickets on Tuesday for the Dhaka-Calcutta bus service as there was no ticket counter.

The BRTC chairman's response to the ticketing problem was: It will be sold by the lease transport company Shyamoli Paribahan.

State-owned BRTC will get a premium from the private transport operator Shyamoli Paribahan.

## \$100m will be needed for Kafco

From Page 1

originally by June but unlikely to be ready before late August or early September. The delay has been attributed by sources to "delays in obtaining permission from Kafco's foreign lenders for IFC's employment as financial adviser."

All the parties in the Kafco project other than the Japanese shareholders and Japanese banks in the commercial lenders' consortium wanted IFC," one source said, explaining.

In presence of two IFC representatives, the company's board will discuss the financial restructuring plan today, Fateh said.

But where will the money come from?

Asked, Fateh said there would be attempts to tap different sources. He spoke of several options such as new financing from new shareholders or existing shareholders, or refinancing from commercial lenders.

The company started off with US\$ 125 million in equity, which has drastically decreased due to losses to well below US\$ 90 million in October last year.

The US\$ 100 million or so is needed to repay Kafco's debts, payments of which are overdue in some cases because of the company's liquidity problems.

Kafco owes US\$ 150 million in outstanding debts only to a syndicate of Japanese banks led

by Tokyo's Export Import Bank (Eximbank), a governmental agency. The Japanese bank has been writing to the government of Bangladesh that it make good on its guarantee on the Eximbank loan.

The main reasons of the cash crunch are the direct and indirect losses caused by the poor construction of the plant. The losses are estimated to have been about US\$ 120 million in lost production because of plant-related problems.

IFC in its preliminary report dated April 12 has made issue more than clear.

"In FY1998, the mechanical and gas supply problems caused sales volume of ammonia and urea to drop by 32 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively, relative to FY 1997 sales volumes."

"Together with the drastic downturn in average FOB prices (25% decline for ammonia and 36% for urea relative to FY 1997), the problems at the Plant had a severe adverse impact on sales revenues (47% decrease relative to FY 1997 sales), on operating profit (about 80% decline relative to FY 1997) and on cash generation before debt service which fell 31% to about US\$ 45 million relative to FY 1997."

"With senior debt service of about US\$ 60 million, Kafco had to draw on other cash sources to avoid default, further weakening its liquidity problems," the IFC report said.

Meanwhile, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, who has told the foreign shareholders that a final decision on company's major disputes such as the commercial settlement proposed by the general contractor, met with two IFC officials Tuesday. The minister in a meeting with shareholders on March 7 said the government, the largest shareholder at 43 per cent, would wait for the IFC report to make crucial decisions on the trouble-infested company.

Replying to a question from M Moslem Uddin (AL-Menshing), he said that 20 tenders have been accepted initially for consideration. The matter is now under process at the high government level, he said.

**JS told**  
**Tenders called to set up private TV channels**

State Minister Information Abu Sayeed told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that tenders have been called to set up TV channels at private initiative, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from M Moslem Uddin (AL-Menshing), he said that 20 tenders have been accepted initially for consideration. The matter is now under process at the high government level, he said.

Denying the allegation that he is political biased in rounding up the terrorists, Nasim claimed that some AL activists had also been arrested in the ongoing combing operation of the police.

Accusing the BNP of providing shelter to criminals the home minister said that he was "serious about dealing with political criminals with an iron hand." "Please, do not issue statements in favour of criminals when they are arrested," the minister requested the opposition. Besides, the home minister blasted the BNP for the 'misrule' of Khaleda Zia's government.

The home minister, however, did not have anything to say about the BNP allegation of his failure to arrest the gunman who had chased BNP activists on the surface of the capital city during the last January 26 hartal.

In his 25 minute speech, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim claimed that with his taking over of the ministry, law and order had already started improving.

Strongly defending the police, he criticised the opposition members of 'trying to disgrace the members of law enforcing agencies who are fighting, even staking their lives in their fight with terrorists'.

House that the government of Khaleda Zia had decided to buy the MIGs. "We are just maintaining the continuity."

**Ministry of Law and Justice**

The opposition members alleged that the judiciary, especially the lower judiciary, cannot work independently due to the continuous interference of the administration run by Awami League. They also criticised the government for its failure to meet its election pledge of separating the judiciary from the executive wing of the state.

In reply, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs' Abdul Matin Kharsu told the House that the government of Sheikh Hasina was committed to the rule of law, and "therefore believes in the separation of judiciary."

"The services of the magistracy has already been handed over to the Supreme Court and appointments and transfers are being done in consultation with the Supreme Court," the minister said. "There would be no allegation against the lower courts, if the Supreme Court performs the responsibility of monitoring them."

He, however, stressed the need for ensuring accountability of the judicial officers. "Without accountability, the independence might be counter productive."

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury adjourned the sitting at 4:35 pm to resume again at 9:30 this morning.

## Jamuna Bridge reopens, traffic jam eases

By Ranesh Maitra

The traffic jam at Aricha and Natakholia ferry ghats eased yesterday morning.

The authorities also reopened the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge to traffic after more than 72 hours. The bridge was closed following a clash between the police and transport workers of Bogra on Sunday.

The sudden closure of the bridge compelled the vehicles from northern districts to look for an alternative route via Natakholia (Nagarbari)-Aricha ferry ghats causing a severe traffic jam. Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on both sides of the bridge mounting suffering of thousands of Dhaka-bound passengers.

While coming to Dhaka on Tuesday from Pabna, this correspondent witnessed the plight of passengers as about 750 vehicles including buses, coaches and trucks remained stranded since morning. Only two BIWTA ferries were seen carrying the vehicles from Natakholia ghat to Aricha ferry ghat. A similar traffic jam gripped Aricha ferry ghat as the vehicles from the eastern districts bound for the northern districts were also not being able to cross the river due to shortage of ferries.

This correspondent reached Natakholia ferry ghat at 5 pm on Tuesday. Despite a desperate bid to contact the police and BIWTA men, none was found during his stay for long four hours at the ferry ghat where the length of the queue appeared to be nearly 7 kilometres long.

Miseries of the passengers

**Dock workers call off strike**

CHITTAGONG, June 30: The four dock workers' unions of Chittagong port called off their proposed indefinite strike tomorrow, after a meeting between the union leaders, owners and port authority, reports BSS.

**Bus service**  
From Page 1

It was not possible the following day as the file after approval of the Prime Minister remained missing for hours and the invites didn't respond to the offer of a journey by buying tickets.

Later July 1 was fixed as fresh date. But, officials said, it was again deferred as the Indian side preferred further delay in view of incessant rain.

## PM forces Speaker

From Page 1

Amid outcry from the BNP lawmakers, the House leader asked the Chair how could he entertain the request for a personal explanation on the day the budget was passed. "I was elected to three parliaments, but never I saw such a practice. It has set a bad precedence."

Sensing that B Choudhury attempted to clarify his position regarding a 'controversial' remark he made earlier, the prime minister claimed none in her party made untrue statement about him.

She accused Choudhury of doing an 'unpardonable crime' by comparing Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia with Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM). "His comment has sparked off stormy protests across the country. None will now accept that he defends his position."

Responding to a remark from the Treasury Bench about formal education of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, B Choudhury told the House on Monday that formal education was not always necessary. In this context, he said, "The greatest human being of all times, Ahmad Mustafa, Muhammad Mustafa, Hazrat Muhammad (SM) himself was an ummi (illiterate)."

In a press statement yesterday, B Choudhury said he never compared Khaleda Zia with Prophet Muhammad (SM), as claimed by the House leader and some ministers.

In response to the PM's protest against giving the floor to B Choudhury, the Speaker said he was given the floor as per the convention that the deputy opposition leader was allowed to speak in the absence of the opposition leader.

"Since objection has been raised by the Leader of the House, I think," the Speaker could say this much as Hasina rose again.

"Rule 274 (right to reply) can't come at this stage. There is no such precedence," she said, drawing further shouts from the BNP lawmakers, still on their feet.

A visibly embarrassed Speaker then told the deputy opposition leader amid shouts from both the benches, "I've been told that there is a convention (of not allowing personal explanation on the day of passage of the budget), I'll allow you another day, not today, please speak tomorrow."

The PM stood up for the third time to advise the Chair to adjourn the session and discuss the matter in today's Business Advisory Committee meeting.

Accordingly, the Speaker adjourned the session at 4:30 pm, announcing that he would allow the deputy opposition leader to

coming from the northern districts became acute as the restaurants at the ferry ghat failed to supply food to the hungry passengers. Many of them even could not manage a glass of pure drinking water. There was also no toilet nearby.

The BIWTA officials, however, arranged for three extra ferries to remove the jam. This improved the situation slightly but they had to work for more than 14 hours at a stretch to restore normalcy.

## PM's Visit

From Page 1

of the official visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister to the United Kingdom. But she will stay back till July 14 to attend other programmes and functions, some arranged by the expatriate Bangladesh community in the UK.

Sheikh Hasina during her official tour will be lodged at the Claridge's Hotel.

Those listed as eminent persons and are due to accompany the Prime Minister are Ajmina Siddiqi, Khondoker Mashrur Hossain, Begum Saima Hossain and the prime minister's grand daughter, Aleeza Hossain, sources said.

The business delegation includes FBCCI President Abdul Awal Minto, BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha and DCCI President M H Rahman, besides Salman F Rahman, Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain, Anisul Huq, M A Munim and Mahboob Jamil.

The selected journalists accompanying the Prime Minister are Abdur Rashid Talukder, Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Abu Musa Hasan, Mahmud Hasan and Aini Elias. This will be the first official visit of Sheikh Hasina to the UK. She had earlier visited Britain in 1997 to attend the CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting). She is visiting England at the invitation of the British Prime Minister.

The two prime ministers will hold official talks at 10 Downing Street, the official residence of Blair prior to the opening of the festival. British Secretary of State Robin Cook is expected to call on the Bangladesh Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is scheduled to return back on the morning of July 15.

speak on Rule 274 today. Angered by his decision, the BNP MPs shouted 'no, no' in a stormy House.

Earlier in the morning sitting, the BNP deputies staged a brief walkout protesting "lengthy" deliberation by Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed.

The BNP MPs started shouting at Tofail as he was retorting to the opposition allegations during discussion on their cut-motions on the demand for grants for the Prime Minister's Office.

As the BNP lawmakers returned after six minutes, Chief Whip of the Opposition Khondoker Delwar Hossain requested the Speaker to limit the ministers' time while replying to the cut-motions, as he limited the time for the opposition MPs.

Opposing this, Hasina said the ministers needed time to reply to each and every point raised by the Opposition.

The Speaker agreed with her but requested the ministers to be brief while replying to the opposition lawmakers' points.

## Judiciary

From Page 1

one banner and do the needful, premised on the constitution," said Dr Kamal.

Prof Sariful Islam Chowdhury, currently engaged in garnering public opinion against felling of trees at one of the last remaining parks in the city, the Osmani Udayan, told the audience that how pathetically, "Our common property like rivers, water bodies and forests are vanishing while the state was doing nothing and unscrupulous individuals benefited from illegal land grabbing."

Barrister Tania Amir described the plight of people seeking justice, particularly women, who are illegally being kept under so-called 'safe custody'. She cited some bitter experiences of the victims.

Other discussants, including spontaneous participants from the audience also shared a common concern at alleged corruption in the lower judiciary, lack of people's confidence in the sub-ordinate judiciary, systematic misuse of Special Powers' Act for years, and curtailing press freedom on the plea of 'contempt of court'.

Later, a panel of young lawyers comprising Omar Sadat, Tanjilul Alam, Afzal Hossain, Turin Afroz and Khaled Hamid and people from a packed audience also made queries on issues of legal procedures and public interest litigation and interacted with the experts.

## 0.5pc loss in GDP

From Page 1

the power sector like a business enterprise is one of them," McKechnie pointed out.

"In countries like India, the energy sector is being unbundled by corporatising, forming regulatory mechanisms in order to ensure level playing field for all parties, and finally shifting assets from public sector to the private sector. Bangladesh is also going the same way," he said.

Focusing on the government's performance in power sector, the WB official said that PDB and DESA incurred a loss of 150 million dollars in 1998 representing a combined (PDB and DESA) system loss of 31 to 33 per cent.

This is a bit alarming. The government was making some improvement regarding system loss for some years. But in 1998, in the system loss level increased slightly again," he added.

The system loss of PDB and DESA in 1994 was 19.2 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. It fell down to 17.7 per cent and 30 per cent respectively in the following year, 17 per cent and 29 per cent respectively in '96 and 16 per cent and 27 per cent respectively in '97. "In 1998, PDB's system loss climbed up to 16.5 per cent and DESA's system loss climbed up to 28 per cent," McKechnie said.

"It is difficult to say why system loss has increased. It is widely known that the causes of system loss are theft, technical reason and low rate of investment in this sector," he pointed out.

He praised the government's achievement in negotiating the Meghnaghat and Haripur private power projects saying that the prices of these projects were among the world's lowest. "By global standard, the pace of negotiation of these projects is actually satisfactory."

But he maintained that in many other sectors the government was slower than expected.

Regarding repayment of bills to private power developers and Production Sharing Contract (PSC) operators, he emphasised that improvement of electric revenue collection would help address the repayment issue to a great degree.

He added that private power projects should be expanded side by side with the improve-

ment of the sector's financial condition.

The World Bank believes that Bangladesh should seriously consider export of gas in order to increase export earning. Alastair J McKechnie said that the government was cautious about gas exports although Bangladesh had abundant gas reserve.

"But the government is conscious that it is a depletable resource. It wants to be sure about sufficient reserve before deciding to export," McKechnie added. "Much of this gas is not proven yet. But the potential increase is very high."

The World Bank official pointed out that the gas production-reserve ratio of Bangladesh was 35 years, while for Canada, this figure stood at 12 years and for Russia it stood at 91 years. "Bangladesh is in the middle-line," he concluded.

"India is a potential buyer of Bangladesh gas," he said. "I think the government should seriously consider this."

Answering to a question whether WB subscribed to a study on the impact of gas export on Bangladesh before deciding on the politically controversial issue, the WB director said that there was an on-going USTDA funded study that might address the issue.

**Prothom Alo editor, publisher get bail**

Editor, publisher and two others of the Bangla daily 'Prothom Alo' were granted bail after they surrendered before a Metropolitan Magistrate's court on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Matiur Rahman, Mahfuz Anam, M Zakaria Khan and Sanaulah, editor, publisher, printer and special correspondent respectively of the newspaper surrendered before the court following a complaint by Barrister Rafiqul Huq.

On May 19, the newspaper published a report based on two allegations of professional dishonesty brought by the Bangladesh Bar Council against Barrister Rafiqul Huq.

Barrister Huq, terming the news as false and defamatory, filed a complaint with the metropolitan magistrate accusing five people.

**BSF firing**  
From Page 1

Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia has strongly protested the killing of a Bangladeshi national by the Indian Border Security Force at Halaughat border in Myensamari.

In a statement yesterday, she said the BSF not only illegally crossed into Bangladesh but also gunned down a Bangladeshi citizen. They have committed a serious crime, she added.

Begum Zia said the Indian BSF has gunned down 52 Bangladeshi nationals and seriously wounded 73 others in the past three years of Awami League rule. Besides, the BSF frequently crossed into Bangladesh illegally, looted cattleheads and launched attacks on innocent villagers during the same period, she said.

About one and half months ago, the opposition leader said, a group of Indian national under direct protection of BSF entered Bangladesh and damaged an under construction culvert of Bangladesh Water Development Board on river Muhari in Feni district.

## JS tidbits

By Nazmul Ashraf

If you please pull off the home minister's *panjabi*, honourable Speaker, you will find as many as 19 stab marks on his person. He received the stabs in front of the Pabna Sadar Hospital. None dared to come to his rescue. It was me who rushed from Rajshahi with bags of blood to save his life.

BNP lawmaker Rafiqul Islam Bakul disclosed the story of his former colleague in the Awami League in parliament yesterday. He did not, however, mention when the incident occurred.

Home minister Mohammad Nasim, who was present in the House, did not object rather he was seen laughing after the narration. Before the mirth died down, the opposition deputy angrily asked the home minister: How many of the assailants (of the incident) were arrested. How can a home minister protect others, when he can not arrest his own attackers?

Bakul then charged the minister with carrying firearms in a helicopter from Dhaka to Jessore and claiming that he was recovering from surrendering terrorists. The BTV publicises this kind of crude mockery in a sanitised manner."

Another BNP MP Mozammel Haq also claimed that the so-called drive had resulted in the recovery of a few rusted and out-of-order firearms. The sophisticated and operative arms are still in the possession of terrorists, he claimed.

The home minister challenged Bakul and BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who also made similar comment in the House the other day, inviting both to the forthcoming July 2 arms-surrender ceremony in Khulna.

"I offer you a (free) helicopter See page 11 Col 5

## JS passes national budget

From Page 1

30 lakh and 47 thousand for the PMO on various grounds. They claimed that money from the PM's relief fund goes only to the AL leaders and activists.

Referring to PM's month-long 'personal tour' to the United States in October 1997, the opposition members also questioned the PM's 'sense of responsibility'.

Responding to opposition contentions, Commerce and Industries' Minister Tofail Ahmed, on behalf of the Premier, told the House that the BNP had no moral right to question Sheikh Hasina's sense of responsibility. "Khaleda Zia chaired only one meeting of the ECNEC, out of the 121 during the BNP rule. On the other hand, Sheikh Hasina has already chaired 54 meetings of the body, out of the 55 held so far."

Defending Hasina's US tour, Tofail said: "A sensitive mother, she went to the States to attend to her daughter who was expecting a baby. She did not take nine beauticians with her, which Khaleda did, during one of her foreign tours."

Replying to the BNP allegation of Hasina's nepotism in using PM's Relief Fund, Tofail reminded the Opposition that Khaleda's government allocated Tk 25 lakh each to the 166 BNP legislators of the fifth parliament after the opposition members had resigned.

**Home Ministry**  
Later, some two dozens of BNP and JP legislators moved cut motions on a home minis-

istry demand for a grant of Tk 1,457 crore 99 lakh and 31 thousand. The opposition members refused to allocate the money for "those members of the law-enforcing agencies who are busy stripping clothes of female opposition activists, murdering brilliant boys like Rubel in the name of interrogation, dumping corpses in rooftop water tank after killing people, raping women and children in 'safe custody', beating up opposition MPs in the streets, making money illegally and so on."

They also accused the government of 'inhibiting the best police officers to act independently' and attributed the failure of containing the alarmingly deteriorating law and order situation mainly to the 'political bias of the home minister'.

Referring to the home minister's 'boastful announcement' that he would arrest terrorists even from beneath the earth, some opposition MPs teased him for his failure to arrest the gunman who had chased BNP activists on the surface of the capital city during the last January 26 hartal.

In his 25 minute speech, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim claimed that with his taking over of the ministry, law and order had already started improving.

Strongly defending the police, he criticised the opposition members of 'trying to disgrace the members of law enforcing agencies who are fighting, even staking their lives in their fight with terrorists'.