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Mig purchase JS body defers discussion

By Staff Correspondent

The parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of defence yesterday deferred its scheduled discussion of the controversial purchase of eight MIG-29s by the government to July 28.

According to meeting sources, chairperson of the parliamentary body cut the meeting short on the insistence of ruling party leader and chief whip of parliament Abul Hasnat Abdullah, yesterday. Abdullah argued that he had business in the House that was disposing of some private members' resolutions, sources added.

Admitting that the discussion on the MIG purchase has been deferred to July 28, chairman of the parliamentary body and a ruling party legislator Maj Gen (ret'd) Shafiqullah MP told The Daily Star that the issue would be the first item on the next meeting's agenda.

But a BNP member on the See Page 12 Col 7

Transport strike

Transport strike yesterday paralysed road communications in different routes across the country, reports UNB.

However, traffic via Bogra resumed yesterday afternoon and the transport strike called in Barisal division was not observed.

Public life in Kushtia was seriously affected as a 72-hour transport strike passed its second day yesterday.

The strike was called in the district and other districts of Khulna and Barisal divisions to protest the imposition of VAT and new taxes on spare parts of motor vehicles.

It coincided with a four-day See Page 12 Col 1

Inside Today

Article

Zero Minus Fifty-two

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi Page 4

Focus

Liberation and Beyond

By JN Dixit Page 5

Prayer Timings

July 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-15
Johr	12-50	1-25
Asr	4-55	5-05
Maghrib	7-00	7-05
Esha	7-55	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

No clarification from Cairn

Law Ministry approves transfer of operatorship

By Sharier Khan

The Law Ministry has okayed transfer of Cairn's 'operatorship' in oil and gas blocks in the country to oil giant Shell, sources said.

The approval, given on Sunday, makes Shell Oil full operator in blocks 15 and 16 including the Sangu gasfield and allows British company Cairn to formally wind up from Bangladesh.

The approval was given at an 'unprecedented pace' and clarifications earlier sought by the government from Cairn regarding change in operatorship was 'ultimately ignored', the sources said.

All but four employees of Cairn left Bangladesh by July 1.

Local employees of Cairn have been transferred to Shell Oil which has now started looking after blocks 15 and 16.

The sources claimed that Cairn spent 'huge resources' behind a local lobbyist to 'end its Bangladesh chapter as quickly as possible'. The lobbyist, who was also an agent of an American oil company 'provided undue benefits to some high officials of Petrobangla, the Energy Ministry and the Law Ministry'.

As a result of the 'lobbying', many of Cairn's pending budgets, which were awaiting clarification and government review, were passed. These include Cairn's Operation Budget

for 1999 and another one million dollar budget for shifting of office from Baridhara to IDB Bhaban in Agargaon.

The Law Ministry's approval for transfer of operatorship also 'makes a major amendment to the complicated oil and gas exploration agreement document', called the Production Sharing Contract (PSC).

It paves the way for Occidental like Cairn, sold all its concerns in Bangladesh including its operatorship in blocks 12, 13 and 14 to Unocal last month. A similar deal was made by Okland with Tullow regarding blocks 17 and 18. Tullow has purchased 80 per cent of See Page 12 Col 8

Bangladesh Festival opens today

LONDON, July 6: All is set for holding the first-ever grand Bangladesh Festival here tomorrow at the Durbar Court of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her British counterpart Tony Blair will formally inaugurate the three-week long extravaganza of Bangladeshi culture in the afternoon.

During the visit, the Prime Minister will have talks with Tony Blair.

For the three weeks beginning July 7 Bangladesh will be transported culturally to more than 20 UK venues, including some of London's most prestigious arts centres like Queen Elizabeth Hall.

The festival is likely to attract over three lakh Bangladeshis living in the UK and about 50 thousand western visitors.

Economic decisions

Rich, poor both must have a say: Hasina

LONDON, July 6: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today pleaded for involving both rich and poor countries in reaching important economic decisions which affect the lives of all humankind, reports BSS.

"In this global village, it is inconceivable that one corner of the village will prosper and flourish while the rest of the village is in flames, she said while addressing a gathering at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Speaking on "Bangladesh looks to the 21st Century," Hasina said, good governance requires that the global village as a whole must prosper. "This is my agenda for the first decade of the new millennium for both Bangladesh and for our global village," she said.

"Good governance in the 21st century will require that we develop a set of human rights as

well as duties and responsibilities for the international community as a whole."

Referring to Bangladesh's experiences as the spokesman for the 48 least developed countries for the last two decades, the prime minister said, globalisation has adversely affected economic growth in the overwhelming majority of the LDCs. The number of poor in the world has increased, not decreased during the last decade of this century.

Applauding the decision of the recent G-8 summit in Cologne to write off debt worth 100 billion dollars, Hasina pleaded that all the debts of the least developed countries should be written off without delay. They should also be allowed to export their products duty free as was promised during the ministerial meeting in See Page 12 Col 4

3 young men murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

Three young men were murdered within a span of seven hours in the city.

The victims were identified as Mamun, 14, son of Habib Mian of Dhalkanagar under Shyampur thana, Abdullah Tuhin, 24, son of Abdul Wadud Faraji of west Agargaon under Mirpur thana. The identity of the other one is Masud, aged around 30.

Police and hospital sources said that the first incident took place during a cricket game at IG Gate bank colony Monday at about 5:30 pm. While playing with his friends, Mamun had a quarrel with Amjad and Kashem, who are brothers.

The two hit him with a cricket bat. After Mamun fell to the ground, they slammed his head on a nearby iron water pipeline.

Mamun was rushed to the See Page 12 Col 3

Shazneer Murder Case

HC directive to frame charges against Shahid, Parveen

The High Court yesterday directed the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Adalat, Dhaka, to frame charges under the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain, 1995 (Woman and Child Repression Prevention Act), against accused Shahidul Islam and Parveen in the Shazneer Murder Case, reports BSS.

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mohammad Abdul Karim and Justice ABM Khairul Haque also stayed further proceedings of Shazneer Murder Case pending in the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court No 1, Dhaka.

The court gave the directive after hearing two separate appeals filed by Latifur Rahman, father of Shazneer, and accused Parveen, maid servant of the house.

Latifur Rahman prayed for a directive of the High Court to the trial court to frame charges See Page 12 Col 7

Hartal called in Ctg today to protest arrest of ex-BCL leader

By Staff Correspondent

A Z M Nasir, a leader of the ruling Awami League's Chittagong city unit, was arrested by Dhaka Metropolitan Police from a hotel at Tophkhana Road in Dhaka around 1:10 am yesterday.

A former central committee vice president of AL's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League, he was wanted in seven criminal cases including that of a triple murder in which a doctor was also killed. The incident took place on October 18 1993 at Chittagong Medical College.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from Ramna police station arrested Nasir from Hotel De Palace where Nasir was staying for the last few days.

Nasir was produced in the CMM's court yesterday and was later sent to Dhaka Central Jail. See Page 12 Col 1

Occidental set to drill well without DoE clearance

Star Report

US oil company Occidental has taken preparation to drill an exploratory gas well at Kalachhara near the Magurchhara gasfield site next week without any environmental clearance, sources said.

The US company that has sold all its concerns in Bangladesh to Unocal, another American company, has already mobilised drilling equipment at the site, located six kilometres off the Magurchhara site in Maulvibazar under Block 13.

Occidental's poor operations at Magurchhara ended in a massive blow-out in the night of June 14, 1997. According to estimate by oil and gas experts, the blow-out damaged a gas structure worth 200 million US

dollars. The Department of Environment also demanded Tk 612 crore compensation for environmental damage.

An Occidental official, when contacted, however claimed that the company "obtained all necessary clearance".

But Petrobangla sources said that Occidental was hurrying with its drilling programme at Kalachhara without environmental clearance.

The reason for the hurry is that Occidental is contractually obligated to complete the drilling by December 31', said a source.

Occidental's Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with the government for blocks 13 See Page 12 Col 7

Erosion takes serious turn in 4 dists

The river erosion in Munshiganj, Manikganj, Tangail and Jamalpur districts took a serious turn yesterday following the rise of water levels in different points of the river Padma and Jamuna, officials said, reports BSS.

"River erosion due to strong current in the river Padma and Jamuna caused a serious damage and affected hundreds of people in these districts," local administration sources said.

A vast area in Shibhalaya and Ghior thanas under Manikganj district, Bhuapur under Tangail district and the Munshiganj town protection embankment are under serious threat of river erosion due to the incessant rains and strong current in the river Padma and Jamuna, the sources said.

Sources from Tangail said that strong current in the river Jamuna threatened a vast area of the Bhuapur thana in the district. See Page 12 Col 4

Wholesalers now buy goods from border towns Smuggling cripples Moulvibazar

By Reaz Ahmad

In last week, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sought civilian help in curbing smuggling.

Talking to a group of newsmen on Monday, Moulvibazar Merchant Association (MMA) leaders claimed that business plunged to an all-time low over the last couple of months as smuggled goods ranging from spices to powder milk, edible oil, sugar and lentils flooded the domestic markets.

MMA president Md. Enayetullah said "auction manipulations" were destroying the trade and commerce of the country. "Once our BDR personnel confiscate smuggled goods, customs authorities make arrangement for auction and buyers of the goods are given certain time to sell those goods in the open market. But, using the same auction papers time and again, the smugglers' syndicate markets a lot more of

smuggled goods than was auctioned by showing them to be auctioned goods," explained Enayetullah.

The 1200-member association that covers 8,000 wholesale shops at Moulvibazar said that the 373-year old wholesale business hub of the country has been reduced to only a wholesale market for capital Dhaka and its periphery while the rest of the country depends more on easily accessed smuggled goods.

Besides, Moulvibazar is now infested with perennial problems like severe traffic congestion, power failures and poor telephone services.

For over two months, almost 80 per cent telephone lines the shops here have been out of order as underground wires were cut "accidentally" while work was in progress for installing digital telephone lines.

Enayetullah, Sher Moham- See Page 12 Col 1

Dacoity at DU teacher's residence

By Staff Correspondent

Dacoits looted gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 6 lakh from the residence of the dean of the law faculty of Dhaka University in the early hours of yesterday night.

Police said the gang of twelve masked dacoits entered the bungalow of Professor Ershadul Bari by cutting the grill of the study room at about 3:15 am yesterday. The gang first entered the room of the professor's son Tanin and at gun point tried to tie him up. When he tried to escape he was man-handled by them.

The gang then entered the room of the professor and also tried to tie him up. When he cried for help the gang hit him on the back. The dacoits seized the keys of the cupboard and took away gold ornaments, watches and a camera worth more than 6 lakh takas.

The son of the professor was See Page 12 Col 8

BNP won't accept 'fake' voter list, ID cards

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said her party will not accept the 'fake' voter ID cards and voter list now being prepared and warned of launching movement if it is not stopped.

"We cannot accept the voter ID cards and the voter list because these are being prepared in a pre-planned way to manipulate and rig future elections," she said.

She was addressing a function at her official residence, marking the joining of BNP of some Jatiya Party workers of Matlab, led by AB Mohiuddin Hossain, Chandpur district Jatiya Party leader and former chairman of Matlab upazila.

The BNP Chairperson alleged that the Election Commission, at the instruction of the government, was preparing the voter ID cards and the voter list in such way that they can easily rig the polls. See Page 12 Col 2

Discrepancies have been detected between voters' names and their photos in the new ID cards and the EC is preparing two voter lists as it did in the last general elections, she claimed. "BNP was defeated in the last general election due to fake voter list and casting of false vote," she claimed. "We will not allow this to happen again."

Begum Zia alleged that the CEC was the mastermind and said he must quit immediately.

The BNP chief said her party will soon launch a massive movement against the CEC, preparation of false voter ID cards and list and compel the government to prepare fresh ID cards and a list.

The Leader of the Opposition alleged that the ruling Awami League was hatching conspiracy against the country and religion. All its activities prove that it wants to make Bangladesh a province of India See Page 12 Col 2

Need for 'common ref law' stressed

Star Report

Workshop on right to information

Bureaucratic tangle and illiteracy are major obstacles to right to information, which is key to transparency and accountability, needed for smooth functioning of democracy in South Asian countries.

This was observed yesterday by participants at a three-day international workshop on 'Right to Information in South Asia', organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

Media representatives, legal experts, teachers, scholars, social workers and human rights activists from the South Asian countries are participating in the workshop that began at a city hotel on Monday.

They underscored the need

for a 'common reference law' for the right to information, giving priority to the interest of the silent majority.

In the morning, there was a panel discussion on constitutional and legal provisions related right to information in South Asian countries, compared to those in some other countries. This was followed by another session on 'right to information and media freedom'.

Later, the participants dwelt on preparing a set of recommendations for the SAARC governments, basing on the recommendations adopted at the Commonwealth Law Ministers conference held at Trinidad and Tobago in May this year.

The recommendations will be presented at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference to be held at Durban, South Africa, in November this year. Maia Daruwala, Director of CHRI said, summing up the discussions.

Among others, Barrister Tania Amir, Fakhruddin G. Ebrahim, former law minister of Pakistan, Deepika Udagama from Sri Lanka, Bharat Upreti from Nepal, Abha Joshi and Vikram Khub Chand from India, Ghazi Salahuddin from Jang group of newspapers in Pakistan and Mahrez Anam, editor of The Daily Star participated in discussion. Fakhruddin Ebrahim said See Page 12 Col 6

TUs call strike at Ctg Port today

CHITTAGONG, July 6: Dock-Bandar Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad, a combine of 22 labour organisations at the Chittagong Port called an eight-hour strike tomorrow to realise their demands, reports UNB.

The shutdown at the main maritime port of the country will begin at 8 am, the labour leaders announced, ignoring the request from the Shipping Ministry for putting off the action programme. See Page 12 Col 2

Fierce fighting in Kargil, no sign of pullout

KARGIL (India), July 6: Pakistani shells slammed into an oil tanker truck convoy on a crucial Indian highway today as fierce fighting over Kashmir mountain peaks continued despite an agreement in Washington that Pakistan withdraw forces from India's side of a cease-fire line, report agencies.

US President Bill Clinton's meetings with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had

raised hopes of a speedy end to the two-month battle in the snow-capped Himalayas.

But India says there has been no sign of withdrawal and no letup from nearly ceaseless shelling from both sides of the 1972 cease-fire line that divides Kashmir between the two nuclear powers.

"We are not aware of any pullback. Our operations are continuing," a senior Indian

army official said. "In all sectors operations are continuing. There is no relenting."

"A final decision would be made after the prime minister returns" home, Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf was quoted as telling the Jang newspaper in Islamabad. "The Mujahideen will be requested to change their positions (but) it still has to be seen what their See Page 12 Col 2



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