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Sundarbans spared

The mangrove forest declared closed for oil explorers

By Sharier Khan

The government has decided to exclude the Sundarbans, a UN declared World Heritage site, from oil and gas exploration by announcing it a "ring fenced area", sources concerned said.

As per this decision, large areas of Block 5 and Block 7 would be excluded from the Second Round Block Bidding. Shell Oil is now negotiating with the government on Block 5 and Uncional on Block 7.

The decision was taken by the energy ministry recently and conveyed to Petrobangla for necessary steps.

The environment ministry has started "a study to identify the Sundarbans area, block-wise, to be excluded from exploration activities", an official said.

Earlier, the environment

ministry had told the energy ministry that oil and gas exploration activities in the Sundarbans under blocks 5 and 7 might be "environmentally hazardous to the forest".

Meanwhile, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) also sent a letter to the government requesting it to review the environmental risks involved in exploration in these blocks.

Petrobangla informed US company Unocal about the government decision during negotiations on Block 7 last week. Unocal initially responded by saying that it would negotiate on how much area should be considered "ring fenced".

Petrobangla has also unofficially informed Shell Oil about this. The company is yet to respond.

When contacted, senior

Shell official Ton Van Der Helm told The Daily Star, "The exclusion of the Sundarbans area was not discussed with us so far. We are still negotiating on blocks 5 and 10 with Petrobangla as per model PSC. The government has the authority to change the deal but it should be discussed with us."

Home to the Royal Bengal Tiger, the Sundarbans spreads over 5,770 sq km with 1700 sq km area of water bodies. There are seven big rivers, hundreds of canals, 278 species of birds, 40 species of mammals and 129 species of reptile in it.

Exploration activities involve blasting of dynamites for collection of seismic survey data, drilling and blow-out risks and pipeline construction.



Secretariat employees, agitating for higher pay and change in work hours, walk out of their office yesterday.

Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Police use baton, gas on Secretariat staff

30 hurt as employees demonstrate for pay hike

By Special Correspondent

At least 30 people were hurt when riot police charged baton and fired teargas canisters to disperse a rally of the low-paid government employees at the Secretariat yesterday.

The employees were holding the rally to press for various demands including change in office hours and 30 per cent dearness allowance.

Police said four of their personnel were injured when the employees hurled paper weight, rocks and flower pots from different highrise buildings of the Secretariat complex.

Two press photographers including The Daily Star Chief Photographer were also hurt

Ministry when two factions of employees faced each other.

They came downstairs chanting slogans where all groups gathered to listen to their leaders. But police suddenly swooped on them, witnesses said.

Officials were not available for comments. Police also declined to give details until 9:30 p.m. last night.

The action disrupted normal working for quite sometime in the Secretariat on the last day of the week. The employees are scheduled to hold a grand rally on August 3.

Other parties go mixed

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party led by Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Monju, however, supported the government decision.

India, however, said that the government should come out with a clear cut statement that it would not allow India to move its soldiers, arms or drugs using the transit facility.

Workers Party termed the government decision "one-sided". A WP press release said, "The government has protected Indian interest by ignoring the demand for multi-dimensional transit facilities."

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal leader Khalequzzaman said in statement, "The decision, if implemented, would invite Indian interference in our policies. The government is using a lame excuse that BNP had initiated the process of giving transit to India. None has the right to do anything which goes against national interest."

Dilip Barua, General Secretary of Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal, expressed concern over the government decision. The government should have held a discussion in parliament before taking a decision on such a sensitive matter", he said.

Bangladesh Khelafat Andolok also expressed concern that the government decision would eventually affect the country's independence and sovereignty.

The Shata Nagrik Committee, a forum of 100 prominent citizens, called upon the people to "resist the government decision allowing transit to India". A statement issued by Prof Emajuddin Ahmed of the committee said the decision, if implemented, would go against national interest.

Beximco fails to pay debts in debenture

By M Shamsur Rahman

Beximco has failed to pay debenture principal and interest, issued by seven of its companies.

A total of 13 companies have issued debentures which are traded in the stock markets. Of the 13 companies seven of Beximco companies have raised a huge amount of money through debentures.

Allegations are being made against all seven Beximco companies of failing to pay principal and interest to four institutions which had invested crores of taka by purchasing these debentures.

Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB), Bangladesh Shilpi Rin Sangstha (BSRS), Agrani Bank and Janata Bank are complaining that Beximco companies have failed to pay according to pledges it made in the prospectus.

A formal complaint by ICB sought help from the capital market regulator Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in taking necessary action in helping realise the outstanding debts.

The investors had made their investment in the debentures after assurances that the principal and interest amounts would be paid in due time by the companies, according to a letter of ICB.

BSRS is claiming over Tk 1.42 crore in outstanding principal and interest, while it is over Tk nine crore with Janata Bank and Agrani Bank says that Beximco Ltd failed to make the 15th instalment against its debenture loan.

Beximco companies have also defaulted in paying dividends to its shareholders. To ICB alone the Beximco group of companies owed Tk 7.28 crore.

Sex workers refusing 'foul food'

by Shaikh Nazrul Islam back from Kashimpur

Sex-workers confined at the Kashimpur vagrant home refused food provided by the authorities since Wednesday night, accusing that it is mixed with intoxicants. Besides the quality of food was low and unfit for human consumption.

They said they had learnt about the intoxicants from the cook. The motive being to make them physically weak and psychologically vulnerable.

The defiant sex workers did not take any food till 3 p.m. yesterday. After that they purchased food on their own by persuading the staff.

When contacted DG of the Social Welfare Services Mir Shahabuddin yesterday claimed that this was not true. "As far as I know they have been taking food", he claimed.

The DG also refuted reports in the media that the sex workers were physically assaulted.

"We tried to manage them in a proper manner but they are unruly. They have no patience to listen to the authorities. Considering the circumstances we are planning to hand them over to their respective guardians" he said.

He was surprised that journalists and social workers were so concerned about a few sex workers who are 'safely' sheltered in a government home.

When asked why they only picked 267 sex workers out of 4000, he replied "I have been asked to rehabilitate them and we are concerned only about those in the vagrant home".

The sex workers yesterday brought out a procession inside the vagrant home protesting against physical torture and sealing of a opening beside the home's door through which the sex workers used for talking to journalists.

This correspondent found several pimps roaming around the vagrant centre yesterday in a bid to contact the sex workers.

The sex workers evicted from the Tanbaraz and Nimbolt brothels at Narayanganj on July 22, have been housed in the Kashimpur vagrant home, Gazipur, 52 kilometres north off the capital.

Clinton fined for contempt of court

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., July 29: A federal judge today ordered US President Bill Clinton to pay 90,000 dollar for contempt of court for denying having sex with Monica Lewinsky in his testimony in the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit, reported Reuters.

US District Judge Susan Webber Wright ordered Clinton to pay extra lawyers' fees caused by his "false, misleading and evasive answers that were designed to obstruct the judicial process."

Wright used strong language in setting the punishment for Clinton, which followed an April ruling in which she found him in contempt for a January 1998 deposition in the Jones case.

The court takes no pleasure in imposing contempt sanctions against this nation's president and, no doubt like many others, grows weary of this matter," Wright wrote in her order.

"Nevertheless, the court has determined that the president deliberately violated this court's discovery orders, thereby undermining the integrity of the judicial system, and sanctions must be imposed to redress the president's misconduct and to deter others who might consider emulating the president's misconduct," the judge wrote.

A female NGO worker who went inside the home, told The Daily Star that every inmate was carrying a stick to protect them from probable attack.

This correspondent found several pimps roaming around the vagrant centre yesterday in a bid to contact the sex workers.

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Tofail

From Page 1

for Commerce of Bangladesh and Pranab Mukherjee, former Commerce Minister of India.

Article VIII of the agreement said, "The two countries agree to make mutually beneficial arrangement for the use of their waterways, roads and railways for commerce between the two countries and for passage of goods between two places in one country through the territory of the other."

Tofail also referred to the SAPTA agreement signed in 1994 by the BNP government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

According to Article 12 of the SAPTA agreement, "Contracting States agree to undertake appropriate measures for developing and improving communication system, transport, infrastructure and transit facilities for accelerating the growth of trade within the region."

About the opposition of BNP to the cabinet decision that approved examination of the proposal of transhipment of Indian goods through Bangladesh, Tofail said, "BNP is an immoral political party... when it is in power it does one thing but speaks totally opposite while in the opposition. They are opportunists."

Tofail said the government has appointed consultants to study the economic feasibility of transhipment of Indian goods through Bangladesh and also what arrangements could be made for that.

Asked about the timing of the transhipment, he said, "It will take time. The cabinet has just agreed in principle to examine the matter, now questions of negotiations, infrastructural development, routes... lot of many things are still left out."

About the opposition allegation of possible transportation of Indian army, arms and ammunition through Bangladesh, Tofail said, "Question does not arise. Agreement will be only for transhipment of commodities."

Making a counter-allegation of possible transportation of Indian army, arms and ammunition through Bangladesh, he said, "Rather the BNP government had agreed to give transit facilities for everything including transportation of arms and ammunition in the name of goods" in its 1980 agreement.

OCAS ReUnion 2000

3rd Re-union of OCAS is scheduled in next winter. Members address database under process. All ex-cadets, ex-teachers & ex-faculty members of S.C.C. are requested to contact OCAS immediately. OCAS annual dinner scheduled in 6th August, 1999. Please contact at your earliest.

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Old Cadets Association of Sylhet

বিদ্যুৎ বক্সের বিজ্ঞপ্তি

যোড়াশাল তাপ বিদ্যুৎ কেল্লের গ্যাস সরবরাহের ব্যবস্থা

চাহিদা প্রক্ষিতে তিতাস গ্যাস ট্রান্সমিশন এবং ডিস্ট্রিবিউশন

কোং লিং যোড়াশাল বিদ্যুৎ কেল্লে স্থাপিত আরএমএস-এর

সাথে ১৬ বাস্টার ১০০০ পিএসআই নতুন পাইপ লাইনের

সংযোগ প্রদানের ব্যবস্থাগ্রহণ করেছে।

উক্ত কাজের জন্য আগামী ২৯/৭/৯৯ ইংব্রেক্স তিতাস

১২-০০ টার পর থেকে উক্তবার রাত ১২-০০ টা পর্যন্ত

যোড়াশাল বিদ্যুৎ কেল্লে ৬৫০ মেগাওয়াট বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন

বক্স থাকবে। ফলে উক্ত বিদ্যুৎ ঘটার জন্য সাম্প্রতিকলীন পিক

আওয়ারে দেসার আওতাধীন এলাকায় সর্বেক্ষ ৫০০ মেগাওয়াট

লোশেডিং হতে পারে। এ ছাড়া দিন বাতের অন্য সময়েও

যুক্ত মাত্রায় লোশেডিং অপরিহার্য হয়ে পড়বে।

সমানিত পাথকবন্দের উক্ত সাময়িক অনুবিধির জন্য বিদ্যুৎ

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বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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