



Blocks 15&16 Ministry okays transfer of operatorship

Star Report

The energy ministry finally cleared late last week the operatorship transfer of British oil company Cairn to oil giant Shell for blocks 15 and 16, sources said.

From now on, Shell officially takes responsibilities of the two blocks that include the off-shore Sangu field.

The two oil companies struck a deal earlier this year under which Shell took over the Cairn's Bangladesh concerns from July last.

Despite a number of objections from the law ministry and Petrobangla regarding the operatorship transfer - an issue that is not addressed by the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) between Cairn and Bangladesh government - Petrobangla okayed the matter in late June.

However, the energy ministry has not yet decided on the matter. See Page 12 Col 3

BNP road march towards Sylhet postponed

The BNP has postponed its two-day road march towards Sylhet scheduled for October 31-November 1, reports UNB.

No reason was attributed to the postponement, but a party press release yesterday said a fresh date for the march to Sylhet would be announced later.

BNP will now go for road march to Comilla on November 1.

The Dhaka-Comilla-Brahmanbaria road march on November 1 will halt at Daudkandi, Chandina, Devdutta, high school ground, Companyganj, Mirpur, Saydabad, MM Khan college ground and hold rallies at these places.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia who will lead the road march will address the rallies.

Proposal to replace arbitration act, amend SEC ordn approved

By Staff Correspondent

The cabinet yesterday approved a proposal of the Law Ministry for scrapping a couple of decades-old laws on arbitration of financial disputes and enacting a fresh legislation to replace them.

According to the cabinet decision, the Law Ministry would take necessary steps to get The Arbitration (Protocol and Convention) Act, 1937, and The Arbitration Act, 1940, repealed by parliament.

The cabinet has already approved a draft bill - The Arbitration Bill, 1999 - to replace the old ones. The bill is likely to be passed soon.

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Prayer Timings

October 26

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:40	5:20
Zohr	12:45	1:30
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:32	5:37
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Election of 3 city corpns in first week of Dec

By Nurul Kabir

Election of three city corporations out of the four will be held in the first week of December while schedule for the polls will be announced this week.

The three are Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi city corporations.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Election Commission with its chief Mohammad Abu Hena in the chair yesterday, said EC Secretary Abdullah Harun Pasha.

No decision regarding election of the Dhaka City Corporation has been taken as yet.

As per law, the deadline for election of the four city corporations is December 27.

A case is still pending with the High Court on delimitation

of certain wards of Dhaka City Corporation," the secretary said. "That is why we are going to hold election of three city corporations."

The elections will be held on the same day, said another EC official. "The Commission has not yet fixed the date, but it may be December 3 or 4. In any case, elections will be held before December 7."

The election schedule will be announced before the end of this week. "May be it would be announced in a couple of days after the parliamentary by-election in Faridpur-4 constituency," the official said. The by-election is scheduled for November 27.

Earlier, the EC had invited the main political parties for exchange of views on various issues relating to election of the

Upazila Parishads and city corporations.

Leaders of the ruling Awami League, its partners in the government Jatiya Party led by Anwar Hossain Monju and Jatiya Samaitantrik Dal of A S M Rob, and the Left Democratic Front responded positively to the EC invitation.

The AL delegation suggested that election of the city corporations should be held before the Ramadan which begins in the second week of December, and the Upazila polls after the Ramadan.

JSD and JP told the EC to hold both the Upazila and the city corporation polls before the Ramadan.

The main opposition parties including BNP rejected the EC invitation. They have decided

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Power failure takes toll on mills, factories

By Staff Correspondent

Mills and factories are the worst sufferers of frequent power failure which has pushed many manufacturing units towards "sickness" and even closure, industry operators said.

The Dhaka and its adjacent areas have been suffering a shortage of 100-200 megawatts every day for the last few weeks, according to DESA sources.

"Power goes off 10 times a day on an average," said Insan Ali, head electrician of General Engineering and Foundry Limited in the BSCIC industrial estate at Tongi. He said that the power supply situation had worsened recently and disruptions often continued for several hours.

"Power supply was disrupted as many as 17 times in the industrial estates on a day last week," he said. "Failure to ensure normal power supply is

causing serious disruptions in production, wastage of raw materials, loss of work hours and damage to the machines," said Anwar Hossain, owner of Selim Rabbar and Plastic Industries.

He said: "We urged the government many times to ensure uninterrupted power supply at least to the BSCIC industrial estates. But no body paid any heed to our plea."

"If the situation does not improve, many factories will be forced to stop production," he said. Only the larger industries are surviving because they have been able to set up their own power generation system.

"Others are on the verge of collapse," he said. "Earlier, our factory could produce as many as 100 tube wells every a day but now we cannot make even 50." Insan Ali informed The Daily Star.

Frequent power failure has caused a loss of around Tk 25 lakh to an engineering factory in Shyampur, Postagola in a year. "The factory is now closed and the owner is thinking to sell it off," said Abdul Hamid Bhuiya, manager of the factory, United Traders.

"It became almost impossible to continue production because we never knew when power would go off. Sudden disruptions caused loss of huge raw materials," he added.

"The factory deals with iron and steel materials which cannot be processed at a required temperature without continuous power supply. If power is off for more than one hour after crushing iron sheets, they become cold and nothing can be produced from the raw materials," Ahmed explained.

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Decision to allow TU activities

Investors at DEPZ demand 'legal protection, safety'

By Rafiq Hasan

Foreign and local investors at the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) have demanded "legal protection and safety" of their investments if trade union is allowed there, according to sources.

They made the demand yesterday while exchanging views with Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) M A B Siddique Talukder and US ambassador in Bangladesh John C Holzman on introduction of trade union in EPZ areas. General Manager of DEPZ Nafisuddin Ahmed was also present.

The meeting took place at the DEPZ auditorium at Savar

when the US ambassador made an unscheduled visit there in the morning. A large number of investors were present at the meeting, source said.

A number of investors hinted that if trade union in its present form is allowed in their factories, they will be forced to withdraw their investments from Bangladesh.

"One of the main reasons for which we set up industries in the EPZ was that it was free from all kinds of labour movement. We were never told that restriction on trade union would be withdrawn gradually," an investor told the meeting. "If conducive environment

does not exist, many foreign investors will re-think about their investment. If trade union is allowed, there should be separate rules and regulations for protection of foreign investment," he added.

The US ambassador told the investors that Bangladesh government signed an agreement with the American Federation of Labour Institutes in 1992 that restriction on trade union in EPZs would be withdrawn by 2000.

Holzman said US labour organisations are creating pressure on him to ask Bangladesh government to implement the

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Accord to be signed Oct 28

Dhaka's call to implement '74 border treaty

Bangladesh and India would sign a joint declaration specifying steps to be implemented by both the countries for ensuring smooth border management to curb all illegal cross-border activities, reports UNB.

Official sources said the accord would be concluded on October 28 capping talks at a four-day Director General-level border-coordination conference between Bangladesh Rifles and the Border Security Forces of India.

An 11-member Indian delegation led by BSF Director General EN Ram Mohan is attending the border talks that began in the capital yesterday.

According to sources, on the first day both sides at the meeting picked out non-implementation of the 1974 border treaty as the main problem for smooth border management.

The BDR delegation stressed quick implementation of the treaty. On the other hand, al-

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Show cause on CEC, Alauddin, Swapan

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Dr Mohammad Alauddin and Habibur Rahman Swapan to show cause why the CEC order vacating the parliament seats of two MPs shall not be declared passed without lawful authority and of no legal effect.

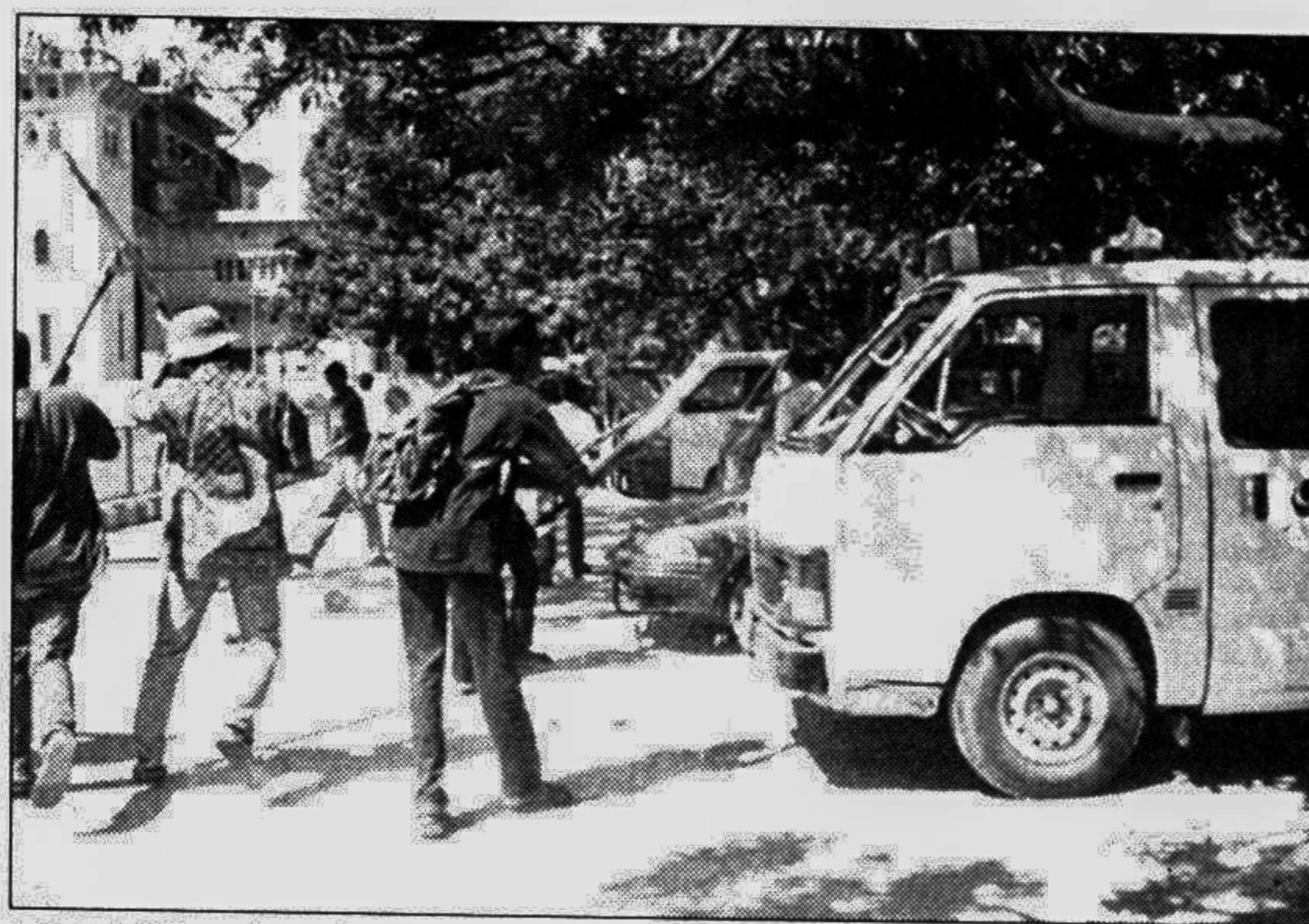
The CEC passed the order on October 11 that the parliament seats of Alauddin and Swapan stand vacated with "immediate effect."

The court also asked them to show cause why the drawing of salaries, allowances, other benefits and expenses received

by Dr Alauddin and Swapan during their tenure shall not be declared without lawful authority and why they shall not be directed to refund the salaries, allowances and other benefits to the state exchequer.

The division bench comprising Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury and Justice M A Aziz further directed the Secretary, Cabinet Division and Secretary, Parliament Secretariat to submit all records relating to salaries, allowances and other benefits received by Dr Alauddin and Swapan as ministers to the

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Agitated DU students damaging vehicles on Dhaka Medical College Hospital campus in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Dumping of waste Mir Nasir lodges case accusing Mohiuddin

CHITTAGONG, Oct 25: City BNP President Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin today lodged an FIR with Kotwali Thana accusing CCC Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury of dumping garbage in front of his house, reports UNB.

Huge quantity of garbage has been dumped in front of the ex-mayor's Gazi Shah Lane residence on Sunday and was not removed till this evening.

The BNP leader, however, requested CCC Secretary Solaiman Chowdhury over telephone to remove the filth from the area.

Meanwhile, activists of City BNP and Uttar Zilla BNP gheraoed the City Corporation office for half-an hour in the evening demanding immediate removal of the garbage.

The organisations also jointly held a protest rally at the Nasimonia Bhaban and brought out a procession.

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Over 70 vehicles damaged

DU student's death at DMCH sparks violent protest: 10 injured

By DU Correspondent

Several hundred students of Dhaka University yesterday went on the rampage on the Dhaka Medical College Hospital campus protesting the death of a fellow student due to alleged negligence of doctors.

At least 10 students were injured in a chase and counter-chase between the DU students and a section of DMCH employees. The students damaged about 70 vehicles parked on the campus, police and witnesses said.

Some doctors were also injured when they tried to resist the students from damaging their cars. DMCH Director Brig (ret'd) Badrul Manir claimed while talking to The Daily Star later.

Monir Hossain, a student of Marketing Department of DU, died at the DMCH on the night of October 19. He was admitted to the hospital the same night for treatment of tonsillitis.

Campus sources said the students, numbering about 300, brought out a morning procession on the DU campus at about 11 am and marched towards the Central Shaheed Minar to hold a condolence meeting there.

Trouble began when some employees from inside the DCMH threw brick bats on the students who were then burning effigies of doctors at the Shaheed Minar at about 11:30 am.

The agitated students started damaging parked motor vehicles.

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Low turns into 'depression'

The low over the Gulf of Thai and adjoining areas intensified into a 'depression' at 6 pm yesterday and has moved into the Andaman Sea, reports UNB.

The centre of the depression is at 1270 kilometres south-south-east of Chittagong port and 1440 kilometres south-east of Khulna town, the Storm Warning Centre here said.

The depression is likely to intensify further and move in a north-westerly direction. Maximum sustained wind within 44 kilometres of the depression centre is about 40 kilometres per hour, rising to 50 kmph in gusts or squalls.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been asked to hoist distant cautionary signal number one. Fishing boats and trawlers in the north Bay and deep sea have been advised to come close to the coast and move with caution so that they can take shelter at a short notice.

Gabtol bomb 'a hoax'

By Staff Correspondent

The "suspected bomb" found near the counter of an inter-city bus at Gabtoli in the city Sunday night was a 'hoax', senior police officials said last night quoting experts of the army bomb squad.

The bomb experts found a small container full of brick chips in the bag containing the "suspected bomb", police said. Another fake bomb was earlier recovered from the lift of a twelve-storey apartment building at Kalabagan in the capital on October 12.

AKM Shamsuddin, the DMP Commissioner, suspected involvement of a certain quarter behind these incidents. "We are yet to identify the group," he said. Police have been put on maximum alert across the city.

Asked whether there was any chance to involve the auxiliary and paramilitary forces in strengthening the police vigilance, he answered in the negative.

The fake bomb wrapped with scotch tapes and fixed with a watch and two dry cell batteries was put in a polythene bag near the bus counter at about 7:00 pm

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