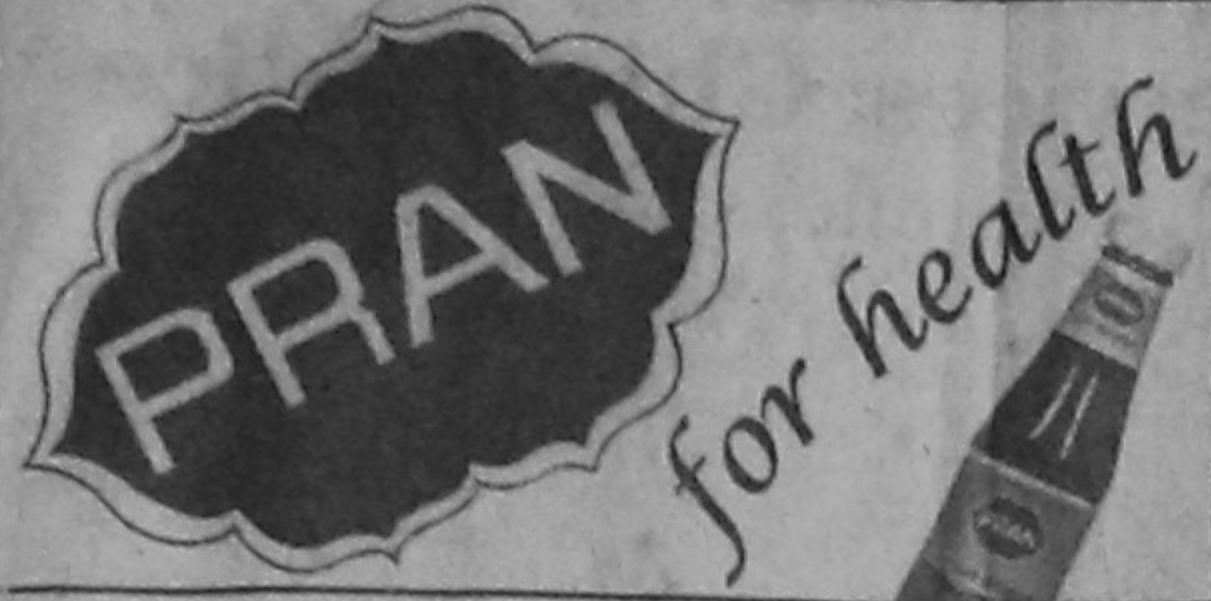


The Daily Star



VOL. X NO. 46 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 29, 2000

3rd Millennium

FALGOON 17, 1406 BS

ZILQAD 22, 1420 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : TAKA 6.00

Cabinet okays drafts of SEC act, ordn

The cabinet at its regular meeting yesterday discussed the law on Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and decided to place it again before another cabinet meeting later after certain changes, reports BSS.

Drafts of the Securities and Exchange Commission (amendment) Act, 2000 and the Securities and Exchange Commission (amendment) Ordinance, 2000 were also approved in the meeting held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Besides, members of the Council of Ministers at the meeting expressed their deep shock at the death of State Minister for Housing and Public Works Dr Md Alauddin and adopted a motion of condolence.

Foreign workers banned from entering Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28: The Malaysian government has banned foreign workers from entering the country until further notice, a report said today, according to AP.

The announcement was made by Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after he chaired a meeting of the cabinet committee on foreign workers, the national news agency Bernama reported.

He also said that foreign workers could not be employed in 138 categories of skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

The committee also decided that employers found guilty of abusing workers would be prohibited from recruiting foreign workers.

In the past few months, there have been several media reports of employers abusing foreign maids, many from Indonesia.

Businessmen in N'ganj stage protest

NARAYANGANJ, Feb 28: The country's business community staged a big protest in Narayanganj today against the political turmoil that is hitting them hard, reports UNB.

"We urged all politicians to free the country from hartial and terrorism for the sake salvaging an economy battered by such unrest," pleaded the business assembly.

Give the nation a country free from hartial and terrorism and we the business will give the nation a rich economy.

Nine national-level and 20 district-level trade bodies joined the rally, which was organised by the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Chashara Golchattar with the aim of establishing a hartial-and-terrorism-free Bangladesh.

Eleven professional groups supported the business community's move in the wake of the persistent political stand-off between the government and the opposition.

Some 20,000 businessmen carrying festoons, white flags and chanting "No hartial," no

See page 11 col 7

Our new numbers

19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215
Phones : 812 4944, 812 4955
& 812 4966
Fax: 812 5155

Inside Today

Article

For an Early SAARC Summit

by AMM Shahabuddin

Page 4

Focus

The right of return, at last; An extra day

Page 5

Business

Transcom taking over Pepsi

Cash-strapped India seen en route to tough budget

Pages 6, 7

Prayer Timings

February 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:30
Zohr	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:30	4:45
Magrib	6:00	6:05
Esha	7:30	8:00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Unocal's plan for gas pipelines upto Delhi, Andhra

Star Report

US oil company Unocal has revealed its plans to lay an underwater natural gas pipeline from Bangladesh to Andhra Pradesh in India and another surface pipeline to Delhi through Calcutta.

Unocal is operating in blocks 12, 13 and 14 in the country and negotiating for the controversial Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) that seeks setting up of a gas pipeline to bordering Kushtia. It is also seeking Block 7 under the Second Round Block Bidding.

The Indian newspaper said, "Unocal's preliminary findings indicate that it is a commercially viable exercise. Power and fertiliser plants in

Calcutta last week revealed the plans that involve an investment of over 1.2 billion US dollars.

Roger Beach said natural gas consumption in India is rising rapidly. By the year 2005, the demand is expected to triple and reach 56 billion cubic metres. If the proposed pipelines up to Delhi and Andhra Pradesh materialise, Unocal would play a pivotal role in creating the infrastructure and marketing Bangladesh's gas in India.

The Indian newspaper said, "Unocal's preliminary findings indicate that it is a commercially viable exercise. Power and fertiliser plants in

Delhi and Calcutta regions will need about 1.45 billion cubic feet of natural gas a day while Andhra Pradesh has a secondary market of about 300 million cubic feet a day. Andhra's demand is in addition to the gas produced from ONGC (Indian oil company) fields in the Krishna-Godavari basin."

It quoted Roger Beach as saying that Unocal had identified 140 to 200 billion cubic meters of natural gas in blocks 12, 13 and 14 in Bangladesh. The newspaper said that international experts believe Bangladesh's gas reserves could be three to five times higher

than its' current level of 280 to 340 billion cubic meters.

It said, "While Unocal's Production Sharing Contract (PSC) only entitles it to sell the gas produced from these reserves within Bangladesh, Mr. Beach said the company was exploring the possibility of exporting the gas to India with local authorities. The gas exports will help stimulate economic growth in Bangladesh."

"Mr. Beach added that at a later stage - once the Bangladesh gas pipeline to India is commissioned - even the possibility of transporting gas from Unocal's reserves in Myanmar to India's eastern re-

gion can be explored.

"Currently, the American giant is actively pursuing three ventures in India. The first is the 200 MW liquid hydrocarbon/gas based power plant in Bidadi, Karnataka.

The second is a consortium chosen by Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation to develop a 1800 MW power plant and a 2.5 million tonne LNG facility at Ennore.

The third venture has Unocal partnering Maytas and IJM of Malaysia for development of the Gautami 359 MW power project in Kakindanda, Andhra Pradesh.



Parents of Mohammed Hira, who was stabbed to death at Mir Hazaribagh area, wailing over his body at DMCH yesterday.

— Star photo

Amendments to PSA Omission of criminal action against police proposed

By Mian Ali

The proposed amendments to the Public Safety Act (PSA) could not be placed before the cabinet meeting yesterday and are likely to be put up at the cabinet meeting next week, sources concerned said.

The amendments are now under scrutiny by the home ministry.

The draft amendments were finalised at a meeting yesterday, chaired by Home Secretary MM Reza and attended by Additional Law e officials of both the ministries.

In Section 13 (4) of the PSA, a provision has been included so that an accused may be treated also as a witness.

Besides, in Section 14 (3), a

seeking anonymity told this correspondent last night, "The draft proposed omission of the provision relating to criminal action against police officials for concealing fact or negligence to duty in investigating a case under the newly enacted PSA".

But the provision regarding departmental action has been retained.

In Section 13 (4) of the PSA, a provision has been included so that an accused may be treated also as a witness.

Besides, in Section 14 (3), a

A highly placed source

One stabbed to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

An employee of a shop of iron and steel products was stabbed to death by a group of miscreants near Mir Hazaribagh in Demra yesterday police said.

The victim was identified as Mohammad Hira, 22, son of Rashid Sheikh of 70C, North Mugga. The killing was sequel to previous enmity, relatives of the deceased said.

He was grabbed by the miscreants at Mir Hazaribagh while he was going to his place of work at about 10:00 am and stabbed indiscriminately in the chest. The miscreants were led by one Hazrat.

Hira was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died at about 12:00.

See page 12 Col 5

Opposition announces fresh programme

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday announced a two-week long series of demonstration programmes beginning tomorrow to mobilise public support in favour of its demand for immediate resignation of the government and scrapping the Public Safety Act (PSA).

Announcing the fresh programmes at a press briefing of the Central Liaison Committee at 29, Minto Road in the evening, BNP Senior Vice-chairman M Shamsul Islam MP said the opposition will announce tougher action programmes if the government does not accept the demands immediately.

The programmes are: formation of All Party Action Council (APAC) in all district and thana headquarters between March 1 and 6, combined public rally in all thana headquarters from March 6 to 14, joint workers meeting of the alliance at 29, Minto Road on March 7 and

See page 11 Col 4

50 hurt in stray incidents during day-long hartal

By Staff Correspondent

The opposition's country-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal paralysed normal life but passed peacefully with the exception of some stray incidents of violence.

At least 50 people were injured in sporadic incidents of violence and clashes in Dhaka and other parts of the country.

In capital Dhaka, at least 25 people were injured in separate incidents of clashes, attacks and bomb explosions at Farmgate, Bijoynagar, Green Road and Motijheel areas. Police arrested six people on charge of exploding bomb in the city during the shutdown.

A procession of Tejgaon thana unit of BNP was allegedly attacked by police and Awami League activists near Holy Cross College at Farmgate at about 10 a.m. leaving about a dozen injured.

See page 11 Col 7

First PSC may be signed with Pangaea tomorrow

'Very positive negotiations' over Block 8

By Sharier Khan

The first Production Sharing Contract (PSC) under the Second Round Block Bidding for oil and gas exploration is likely to be signed tomorrow with American oil company

Pangaea. The Energy Ministry and Petrobangla had "very positive negotiations" yesterday with the company over Block 8, an authority source said.

Unlike other oil companies negotiating for different blocks, Pangaea did neither seek any modification in the Model PSC and extension of the three-year Initial Operation Period (IOP)

nor put any pressure to allow export of gas.

"Instead, Pangaea turned out to be the only company in the bidding that stuck to its original proposal for Block 8. It proposed to conduct seismic survey in 1000 km area and drill a well during the IOP," the source said.

The Energy Ministry and Petrobangla had "very positive negotiations" yesterday with the company over Block 8, an authority source said.

Unlike other oil companies negotiating for different blocks, Pangaea did neither seek any modification in the Model PSC and extension of the three-year Initial Operation Period (IOP)

nor put any pressure to allow export of gas.

"Instead, Pangaea turned out to be the only company in the bidding that stuck to its original proposal for Block 8. It proposed to conduct seismic survey in 1000 km area and drill a well during the IOP," the source said.

The statement of the boycott is mere pretext to withdraw in the light of overwhelming evidence which has come through prosecution witnesses," he said.

"It is aimed at giving an impression to the world community that the court is biased and they are not being given a fair chance. But contrary to that throughout the proceedings, they have never called it biased."

Chief Public Prosecutor Raja Qureshi said the defence counsels' decision would not delay

See page 11 Col 8

All lawyers for Sharif decide to pull out of case

the case.

"It is not going to cause any delay and I think it is a matter of eight to ten days of proceedings," Qureshi said.

"The statement of the boycott is mere pretext to withdraw in the light of overwhelming evidence which has come through prosecution witnesses," he said.

"It is aimed at giving an impression to the world community that the court is biased and they are not being given a fair chance. But contrary to that throughout the proceedings, they have never called it biased."

Chief Public Prosecutor Raja Qureshi said the defence counsels' decision would not delay

See page 12 Col 6

BTTB monopoly in V-SAT goes Internet to be cheaper, faster

By Staff Correspondent

The government has ended the monopoly of Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) in V-SAT, paving the way for cheaper and faster Internet use.

A high-level meeting at the Digital Data Network (DDN) services would be started soon for high speed data transmission. BTTB would announce a tariff structure for DDN by March 15.

With the decision taken yesterday, cost for Internet use is now likely to come down to one fifth of the existing cost of Tk 2 per minute during peak hours and Tk 1.00 to Tk 1.50 during off-peak hours. It will also facilitate a speed of two mega bytes per second (Mbps) instead of the current speed of

64 kilo bytes per second (KBPS). Under the new arrangements, the government will get an annual fee of 3,500 US dollars from a company for hiring of V-SAT and each company will fix their monthly cost by negotiating with the companies concerned.

The meeting decided that Digital Data Network (DDN) services would be started soon for high speed data transmission. BTTB would announce a tariff structure for DDN by March 15.

With the decision taken yesterday, cost for Internet use is now likely to come down to one fifth of the existing cost of Tk 2 per minute during peak hours and Tk 1.00 to Tk 1.50 during off-peak hours. It will also facilitate a speed of two mega bytes per second (Mbps) instead of the current speed of