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## WRIP talks suspended

By Staff Correspondent

The government has decided to suspend negotiations on the Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) of US oil company Unocal.

The decision was taken at a high level meeting chaired by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister on Wednesday.

Sources said that the Unocal proposal, which generated a lot of criticism, lacked a feasibility study as well as a solid gas resource study, sources said.

The government decided to suspend the on-going negotiations as Unocal is unwilling to undertake a gas reserve study to back up the economics of the project, they said.

The WRIP aimed at developing the Shalbazar gas field, laying a gas pipeline from Bhola to Kushtia and setting up of four power plants in the south-western region of the country.

A couple of months ago, American consultant Parsons, appointed under US government assistance, scrutinised the WRIP and pinpointed some serious loopholes in the project's pricing components, investor's risk and the economic rationale.

Unocal had been pursuing the WRIP since mid '97 through an unsolicited negotiation pro-

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**Shikdar, 13 others charged with Shikdar, 13 others charged with**

**Murder Case**

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 17: Sonadanga thana police submitted the chargesheet in Mouze Ali Murder Case accusing 14 people including Ershad Shikdar.

Mujib Rahman alias Mouze Ali, a worker of Boyra CSD, godown was allegedly gunned down by Shikdar and other accused on October 10, 1994.

His wife Hamida Begum filed a murder case with Khalishpur thana on the same night as complainant.

The then IO of the case Shawkat Ali Khan, OC of Khalishpur thana submitted chargesheet against six people on November 11, 1994 dropping the names of Shikdar and his armed cadres.

Later, this case was transferred to DB for re-investigation.

Inspector of DB submitted a fresh chargesheet on Thursday last accusing Shikdar and 13 others.

The other accused are Li-

lakut Lashkar, Jamai Farook,

Nasir Khan, Mizanur, Harun,

Alkas, Nazem Sarder, Bhutto,

Siddique, Shah Alam, Selim,

Batolia and Ashraf Mia.

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## Opposition to join JS session 'for a few minutes'

By Staff Correspondent

In a major policy decision, the BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday decided that their lawmakers would join the Jatiya Sangsad session, not to lose membership on the ground of 90-day absence from the House.

However, the alliance is yet to decide when they will join the JS session.

"We may join the session any day for a few minutes and sign the attendance register."

"We will not give the government the scope to cancel our JS membership," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told newsmen after the meeting.

"We will not allow the government and the Speaker to implement the conspiracy to curb membership of opposition MPs."

BNP will now hold a meeting of its Parliamentary Party at

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### Possible private sector credit demand

## Strong monetary policy will be needed to tackle situation

By Staff Correspondent

Discussants at a dialogue on the proposed budget yesterday observed that although there had not been any inflationary pressure despite heavy government borrowing, a much more careful monetary policy will be need in case of a private sector credit demand next year.

They also said that it should be closely scrutinised why the private sector did not respond this year, leaving the banks saddled with excess liquidity despite huge borrowing by the government.

They also felt that more pragmatic steps should be taken to realise high tax-GDP ratio so

that fiscal deficits could be kept low.

They were speaking on the first day of a two-day dialogue on 'State of the economy and governance: Budget responses 2000', organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue at the CIRDAP auditorium. It was chaired by Prof Rehman Sobhan.

National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman A. Muqeem Chowdhury said that because of corrupt people instated in the board, it was difficult to run the administration to meet the target.

He also reasoned that fall of prices of goods in the interna-

tional market and slow PSI implementation led to shortfall in meeting revenue target.

Earlier, speaking as chief guest Finance Minister Sams Kibria sharply reacted to the observations made by CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, saying that his presentation was not balanced and "deliberately ignored the positive aspects of the economy."

The economy is doing well and some of its aspects are doing quite good," said Kibria, while reacting at the dialogue. "I am disheartened by the objectivity of the reports."

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