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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 reserve 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 Shahbazpur gas field, laying a gas pipeline from Bhola to Kishitia 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 process.

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Shikdar, 13 others chargesheeted in Mouze 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.

Mujibar Rahman alias Mouze Ali, a worker of Bovera 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 Shaukat 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 reinvestigation. Inspector of DB submitted a fresh chargesheet on Thursday last accusing Shikdar and 13 others.

The other accused are Li-aquat Lashkar, Jamai Farook, Nasir Khan, Mizanur, Harun, Alkas, Nazem Sarder, Bhutto, Siddique, Shah Alam, Selim, Badisla 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."

said a top opposition leader who was present at a crucial meeting of chiefs of the four parties where the decision was taken.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote representative ARM Abdul Matin along with their aides held a 45-minute close-door meeting from 8:30pm at 29 Minto Road.

"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 See page 12 col 1

Possible private sector credit demand Strong monetary policy will be needed to tackle situation

By Staff Correspondent

Discussions 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 needed 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 CIR-DAP auditorium. It was chaired by Prof Rehman Sobhan.

National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman A Muveed 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."

See page 11 col 6

Bill on reserved JS seats for women placed

By Staff Correspondent

The government yesterday placed in the Jatiya Sangsad the much talked about bill on retention of parliament seats reserved for women.

The bill requiring an amendment to the Constitution seeks continuation of the provision of 30 reserved seats by another 10 years from the beginning of tenure of the next parliament.

But the fate of the crucial bill hangs in the balance as the main opposition party BNP is yet to decide whether it would support the bill. Passage of the bill needs support from at least two-third members of the 330-strong parliament but the ruling Awami League lacks that strength.

Placing of the bill may prove a futile exercise on the part of the government unless the opposition lawmakers boycotting parliament sessions return to the House and support it.

The ruling party had earlier planned to introduce the bill in parliament in its last session after it was cleared by the Cabinet on February 14. The bill seeks retention of the existing provision and has ignored women's bodies demand for increasing the number of reserved seats and change the mode of elections.

Thirty women MPs in the reserved quota will however continue to hold their seats till the present parliament's tenure ends on July 14 next year.

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru moved the bill seeking 14th amendment to the Constitution. It was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry for scrutiny and return to the House within four weeks.

"There shall be no seat reserved for women in the 8th parliament or in any subsequent parliament if the provision for women's reserved seats is not retained," the minister

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Opposition leader Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Mirpur Outer Stadium in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

Corrupt AL men will be tried: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has said Awami League ministers, MPs, leaders and activists who are involved in terrorism, murder, corruption and other criminal activities now will be tried after their fall from power.

"Inshaallah a nationalist government will be formed in near future. They will be tried not only for their misdeeds in last four years but also for those committed after the liberation," she said addressing a huge public meeting at Mirpur Outer Stadium in the city yesterday.

The former prime minister said BNP was in power twice in the past but did not put Awami League men on trial for their 'criminal activities' committed during the post liberation pe-

riod. This time we will do what we did not do in the past," she told the meeting amid repeated claps and slogans.

Mirpur, Pallabi and Kafur thana units of BNP jointly organised the meeting to protest 'filing of cases against a large number of local leaders and activists including Eklashuddin Mollah under the Public Safety Act'.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said thousands of oppressed people in the country are ready to file cases under PSA against AL Ministers, MPs, leaders, activists, and their relatives. "People will sue them immediately after the fall of the government".

Terrorism and corruption by See page 12 col 5

Shipu murder Journalist held instead of accused

By Staff Correspondent

Indian police in Calcutta on Thursday arrested a Bangladeshi journalist undergoing treatment there. Instead of Shafiq, one of the three accused in sensational life-killing murder case.

Sources reported that Staff Reporter of The Daily Prothom Alo Saiful Islam Dilal were having treatment for heart, liver cirrhosis and high blood pressure. He was detained, instead of the accused reportedly staying in the same hotel.

Calcutta police instead of raiding room number 70 where the accused were staying arrested Dilal from room number 72.

The sources further said Shafiq and Jubair, the two accused who had been staying in Hotel Royal had left the hotel earlier following a tip-off.

It is suspected that they were informed from Dhaka about the police raid. Earlier on Tuesday Sagor and Joy Habib were arrested in Dhaka in connection with the Shipu Murder Case.

They were taken on three-day remand. They reportedly confessed their involvement in the murder and also disclosed that Jubair and Shafiq had fled to Calcutta.

But they did not disclose the whereabouts of Jewel, one of three accused in the case and son of Kamal Majumder, ruling party MP.

Bangladesh police made an informal request to the West

See page 12 col 1

Businessman murdered in city

By Staff Correspondent

A 60-year-old businessman was killed allegedly by his son-in-law at Dholaiapur Dipti Gali in the city on Friday night, police said.

Abdul Mannan Bepari, 60, died on Friday night when his son-in-law Abul Kalam gave him a blow at one stage of altercation as the old man asked Kalam to take care of his daughter properly.

The old man blamed Kalam for not providing minimum food to his daughter, police said.

The victim's son Billal Hossain Bepari filed a case accusing Abul Kalam of the killing, police said yesterday.

He was rushed to the Mitford Hospital at about 11:30 pm where doctors declared him dead, police said.

5 killed as bus falls into ditch in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, June 17: At least five people, including two women, were killed and 40 others injured when a speeding bus turned turtle and fell into a roadside ditch on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near Bhaluka Friday night, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the Dhaka-bound bus from Mymensingh met with the accident at Bhandabo under Bhaluka upazila at 10 pm. An unidentified woman aged about 40 died on the spot, while another unidentified 16-year-old girl died at Bhaluka Health Complex.

Of the 16 injured people admitted to Bhaluka Health Complex, seven were shifted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where three succumbed to their injuries.

Those who died at MMCH were Dulal, 30, Towfik, 22, and a 40-year-old unidentified man. Four are still being treated at MMCH and seven at Bhaluka Health Complex. Their conditions were stated to be critical.

Commentary

Soul searching moment for BNP

by Mahfuz Anam

This piece is written in the hope that BNP leadership and some of its MPs, hopefully a majority of them, will have a chance to read this piece before their parliamentary party meeting, reportedly scheduled for today. Our message is simple and direct. BNP should rejoin the parliament, not just to save its seats but also to reclaim its role as the largest opposition party ever in our parliamentary history and also to represent the 34 per cent voters who elected them in the hope that this party will represent them unconditionally and uninterruptedly.

Time has come for BNP to examine objectively and comprehensively how successfully it has played the role of the biggest opposition party during the last four years. What has it been able to give to the people in whose name it does politics? What has it done for the party since the election defeat four years ago? How successfully has it been able to put forward its views to the public and how effectively has it exposed the government for all its failures as claimed by it?

In our view, BNP has been a very unsuccessful opposition party. Given the present law and order situation, the widespread corruption, the partisanship in very sphere of administration, the failure to move the economy significantly forward, the persistent violence in educational institutions, the veiled and not so veiled attack on the higher judiciary, etc, the opposition had more issues

than it needed to create a public opinion in its favour. Instead of attacking the government for these massive failures BNP's stance, initially centred around two slogans - that AL is surrendering our sovereignty to India, and that Islam is not safe in AL's hands. Khaleda Zia's assertion that we will need visa to go to Chittagong if the CHT Accord is signed and that Hindu prayer rituals will replace 'Azan' (Muslim call to prayers) in our mosques are two of the many examples of political propaganda that has dramatically eroded BNP's credibility in the public eye.

When later these two hyperbolic slogans were replaced by the single demand of 'oust the government now', BNP's most

See page 11 col 4

26 beaten to death last month

Victims include child, schoolboy and girl

By Shaikh Nazrul Islam

At least 26 people were beaten to death in separate incidents in the capital and elsewhere in the country last month.

Of the victims, 13 were killed in and around Dhaka, nine in Chittagong, two in Feni and one each in Sirajganj and Naogaon, police reports said.

Those beaten to death included a five-year-old child, a girl of 11 and a schoolboy aged 12.

Fourteen of the victims were killed in six incidents on suspicion of being dacoits, muggers and pirates.

Two alleged pirates - Sohrabuddin, 40, and Monsur, 35 - were killed in mob beating in a launch in the Dhaleshwari river in Keraniganj Upazila under Dhaka district on May 29.

Two persons suspected as da-

coits - Anwar Hossain, 35, and Simon, 22 - were beaten to death by a mob at Sarajpur village under Sonagazi thana in Feni on May 26.

An old man named Asir Uddin was beaten to death allegedly by some neighbours as he rebuked them for teasing his daughters. The incident took place on May 25 in Sadar Upazila under Naogaon.

Jamsher Ali, 40, a mess manager, was beaten to death as he tried to prevent a young man and woman from unsocial activities at the mess in Rampura area of the city on May 24.

Sajeda Khatun was beaten to death by one of her neighbours following an altercation. The incident took place at Khas Kaulia village under Chowdhali Upazila in Sirajganj on May 23.

A 12-year-old schoolboy,

Abu Balzid Mohammad Munit, was beaten to death allegedly by some fellow students for a trifling matter on May 18. Munit was a student of Matrichhaya School at Madhubagh in Maghbar area of the city.

Two alleged dacoits were killed in mob beating at Gazipur on May 18. The incident took place when a gang of eight dacoits looted Tk 9.5 lakh from the cashier of Nishat Tea Mills, who drew the money from a Sonali Bank branch at Gazipur.

Two persons - Hari Mohan Barua and Saito Barua - were beaten to death by a mob at Dharmapur in Fatikchhari, Chittagong, on the same day. The incident was reportedly a sequel to killing of one Kashem Chukider two months ago.

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10 injured as AL, BCL factions clash in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 17: At least 10 people were injured in two separate clashes between two factions of Awami League and its student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Hathazari and Boakhalhi Sirajul Huq Degree College today, police and witnesses said.

Police said two factions of Awami League clashed at Hathazari near Chittagong University at 2:30 pm over formation of a party committee. At least five people were injured in the clash.

Both the groups chased and counter-chased each other during the clash, police said.

In another clash between two groups of BCL at Boakhalhi Sirajul Huq Degree College at 11:45 am today left five students injured, police said.

34 lower caste Hindus massacred in Bihar

PATNA, India, June 17:

Gunned dressed in black stormed a village while its residents slept early today, shooting and killing 34 people, mostly women, children and old men, after a gunbattle with a lower-caste community in eastern India, police said, reports AP.

Fifteen people were wounded in the shooting.

The attackers, identified as members of an upper caste militia backed by rich landlords, fought a gunbattle with several armed villagers for two and a half hours before the residents ran out of ammunition, said MV Rao, police superintendent of the Aurangabad area in Bihar state where the massacre took place.

Then the assailants stormed several homes in the village of Manpur, lining them up outside and executing them with gunfire, Rao said.

"This is the handwork of the Ranvir Sena," Rao told The Associated Press, referring to the upper caste militia.

Caste violence often flares up in Bihar, India's poorest and most lawless state, when the Ranvir Sena and Maoist guerrillas of the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Center, who say they represent the underclass, carry out revenge attacks on villagers. Scores die each year.

"We were sleeping and suddenly the firing started," said Anupama Devi, 68, whose two daughters-in-law were killed in the attack. "I ran out and screamed, 'Why are you killing us?'"

"Shut up, we have come to take revenge," Devi quoted one of the attackers as shouting back.

Satyendra Singh, 23, whose brother was killed, said some of See page 11 col 6

Fresh talks to work out terms for accord on pvt port terminal

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, June 17: The government has started re-negotiation with US company Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) to work out new terms and conditions for a draft agreement allowing installation of a 500 million dollar US-funded private container port near Chittagong port, sources concerned said.

World Bank consultants have been engaged by the government to act as facilitator in the re-negotiation for a private container port of international standard.

Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority CPA (CMA) Modore Golam Rabbani told this correspondent, "Re-negotiation is on to streamline the terms and conditions for allowing installation and operation of the proposed private container port here."

Some port officials were involved in the re-negotiation

process to look after the interests of Chittagong port, he said. If an agreement could be signed between the government and the SSA, construction of the container port will start next year.

A series of meetings between government officials and SSA officials in this regard were held so far at the Ministry of Port and Shipping. Meeting sources said that the previous terms and conditions were be-

ing recast by scrapping some of those in a bid to provide control of Chittagong port over the private container port in respect of its operation.

The previous terms of allowing the private container port on build, operate and own (BOO) basis with authority to acquire land on 99-year lease might be recast.

Besides, installation of a container terminal at Pangao on the other bank of the Burig-

anga river at Pagla near the capital might be dropped, the sources said.

The container port of SSA, if installed, will be equipped to handle 600,000 containers annually. The government gave the go-ahead for this single largest US-funded project about two years ago against the backdrop of congestion at Chittagong port.

Chittagong port last year handled about 400,000 contain-

ers against its capacity to handle about 200,000 containers annually and its container cargo increased by 25 per cent every year, port sources said.

The private container port was likely to be commissioned by 2001, but in the face of resistance from some 20,000 dock workers of Chittagong port, the project could not be started. The 22 trade unions of Chittagong port formed an alliance to resist

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June	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
18		6-48pm
19	5-12 am	

Prayer Timings

June 18

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1-00	1-30
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation