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SEMP still in a tangle

Govt-UNDP row over resumption of funding continues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The fate of the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP) hangs in balance, with the Ministry of Forest and Environment (MoEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) yet to settle a row over resumption of funding for the project.

The UNDP would close the project in case of the ministry's failure to resume the project carried out by a number of NGOs.

MoEF and UNDP have been at loggerheads over the project since September last year following suspension of funding by secretary to the MoEF who is also the national project director (NPD).

He made allegations of 'gross irregularities' against a number of NGOs who are sub-implementing agencies (SIAs) of the US\$26m project launched in 1998. About four million dollars have been released so far.

After investigations carried out by the UNDP, an evaluation report prepared by former UNDP chief in Dhaka Erling Dessau, who gave it a clean bill, noted that there had been no major impropriety and suggested the immediate resumption of funding. It also favoured

direct payment to the SIAs, sources said. The UNDP submitted the report to the External Relations Division yesterday.

The report said the SEM is a unique and successful programme and Bangladesh could present it at the Rio plus Ten Earth Summit as a success story.

But it failed to impress the national project director, who abolished the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU), letting down 40 of its officials and employees on March 31.

The UNDP sources said, termed the action arbitrary as it was done without consultation with the agency. The UNDP favours retaining the existing staff as they feel they were trained on job for the project.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the SIAs was held last week with Khushi Kabir, chairperson of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) in the chair. The meeting expressed concern over the situation and demanded that the project be resumed and funds released immediately.

The meeting sources said the SIAs would not attend any meeting convened by the NPD and the MoEF until their demands are realised.



Policemen take position after bombs were hurled at the vehicle carrying alleged terrorist Tokai Sagar on the eastern side of the DC office on Johnson Road in the city yesterday, leaving eight people injured.

Biman's restructuring plans Officials leave for NY for tripartite talks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Biman officials are going to New York for a tripartite meeting on April 20 with its consultant the Citibank Group and the World Bank to review its restructuring and commercialisation programme under which the national carrier offered 40 per cent shares to a strategic partner.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Biman Board of Management yesterday after a review of the restructuring plan under a two-million-dollar World Bank-aided programme last year.

However, the international offering of shares in December last year received poor feedback from the prospective strategic partners on the Request For Proposal (RFP).

The Citibank Group of New York designed it for offloading the shares. Nine per cent shares were also offered to its employees and officials, and the rest was set aside for the government.

Only two airlines, the Gulf Air and the Qatar Airways submitted RFP. The Gulf later withdrew from the bid, prompting Biman to extend the deadline for RFP until June 30.

Some 5500 Biman employees and officials, who strongly opposed the proposal for conversion of the airlines into a Public Limited Company (PLC), forced alterations in the programme.

The consultants then prepared two proposals, one retaining the corporation status of the airlines and another converting it into a PLC.

Kotalipara bomb incident Mufti Hannan, 18 others indicted

UNB, Dhaka

Nineteen people including principal accused Mufti Hannan were yesterday indicted for an abortive attempt on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's life by planting bombs in Gopalganj last July.

Officials said CID police submitted the charge sheet to the Gopalganj magistrate court in connection with the planting of massive explosive devices targeting the Prime Minister.

Among the 19, five are in jail while the rest, including Mufti Hannan, are on the run.

Police said the suspects planted two powerful bombs on July 19 midnight near the Sheikh Lutfar Rahman College at Kotalipara "to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina" who was scheduled to address a public meeting there on July 23, 2000.

Meanwhile, one bomb was detected on July 20 while the other on July 24 that sent a wave of sensation across the nation.

3 Jubo League, one Jubo Dal activists held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna thana police yesterday arrested three Jubo League and a Jubo Dal activist.

A revolver was recovered from the possession of Jubo Dal activist. The arrested were identified as Kamal, 26, Hamid, 24, and Ali, 23, of Jubo League and Javed, 24, of Jubo Dal.

They are wanted in several criminal cases recorded with Khulna thana police. They are also members of the gang who are accused in Zafar Murder Case filed in February, Khulna thana OC said.

JP makes it official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ershad-led faction of Jatiya Party (JP) has warned that it would boycott all programmes of the four-party opposition alliance unless the JP faction led by Nazim Rahman Manzur is expelled from the alliance.

Acting Secretary General of the faction ABM Shahjahan, in a statement yesterday, also demanded inclusion of pro-Ershad JP in the alliance. It also referred to a fresh list of JP nominees sent recently to the liaison committee of the alliance and regretted that BNP "ignored" the list.

Kamal Murder Case Adel's ad-interim bail turned permanent

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The ad-interim bail of Jahangir Mohammad Adel, an accused in the Kamal Murder Case, was turned into a permanent bail yesterday by the Metropolitan Session's Judges Court.

Meanwhile, the bail of Zobayer Adel, also accused in the same case was extended till April 18 by the CMM's court Dhaka.

They were granted bail on April 1 and 4 as Hena Adel, wife of Adel died on April 1.

The judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa granted them bail to attend the namaj-e-janjana of Hena.

City dwellers suffer without power in scorching heat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Severe power disruption, scorching heat and traffic jam throughout the day caused unbearable sufferings to the city dwellers yesterday.

The demand for power shot up due to the heat wave, resulting in overloading of transmission lines.

Loadshedding rose to 120 MW during peak hours yesterday, which is one fifth of the total power consumption of the city. Besides, there was low voltage.

The highest temperature in Dhaka was 35.4 C and the highest in the country was 37.8 C in Rajshahi yesterday. Meteorological office said temperature is likely to remain almost unchanged today.

Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday generated 2800 MW of power against the country's requirement of 2875 MW. PDB officials said.

PDB has been directed by the Prime Minister's Office to keep loadshedding in the capital at the minimum possible level.

But Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) has failed to keep power crisis at a tolerable level during the last few days. Loadshedding was nearly 100 MW

on Saturday.

Yesterday, the worst affected areas included Baridhara, Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Tejgaon, Khilgaon, Moghbazar, Kamalapur, Mirpur and most areas of in the old part of the city.

DESA officials said that power disruption in Baridhara, Gulshan and Banani was due to overloading of 132 KV Bashundhara-Tongi transmission line while overloading of 132 KV Ulon-Haripur transmission line caused disruption in Dhanmondi, Tejgaon, Moghbazar and Khilgaon areas.

Meanwhile, sufferings of power consumers in Dhaka Electric Supply Company's (DESCO) command area Mirpur have been increasing. Loadshedding in the area was nearly 30 MW yesterday.

The crisis in Mirpur area started on February 13 when a 132/33KV transformer of Mirpur grid sub-station caught fire and was damaged. It is yet to be repaired or replaced while routine loadshedding of 12 to 18 MW continues for more than one and a half months.

When asked, a DESA official said it will take about six months to replace the transformer.

Bangabandhu Murder Case Defence challenges trial at civil court

BSS, Dhaka

The defence in Bangabandhu Murder Case yesterday challenged the civil court's authority to try the August 15, 1975 plot leaders since the accused belonged to the army during the massacre as the "outcome of an army mutiny."

"According to article 5 and 139 of the Penal Code none of the accused of the case can be tried in a civil court. The civil court has nothing to do (even if) the military court does not take any action against the accused," for the mutiny, Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman told the single judge court of Justice Fazlul Karim.

He added that the permission, which was obtained from the army authorities to try the "former army officers" could not justify the civil trial since they all belonged to the army during the August 15 killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family members.

The army chief gave his clear-

ance for trying the "former army officers" but during the incident they were all in "active army service," Advocate Khan said.

The defence plea came on the 20th day of the hearing of the case before the third High Court judge to decide the fate of six of the 15 accused including Khan Saifur's client former Lieutenant Colonel Muiuddin Ahmed (artillery) in view of the split verdict by the previous bench.

The defence lawyer claimed that his client's arrest, confinement and trial was "illegal" since he was detained on the very first day of his retirement leave (LPR) by civilian authorities without the permission of army authorities as required by the law.

"His confinement is still illegal," Advocate Khahsaid.

The defence counsel also claimed that the prosecution witnesses who testified in the case were involved in the August 15, 1975 killings and for that they could be

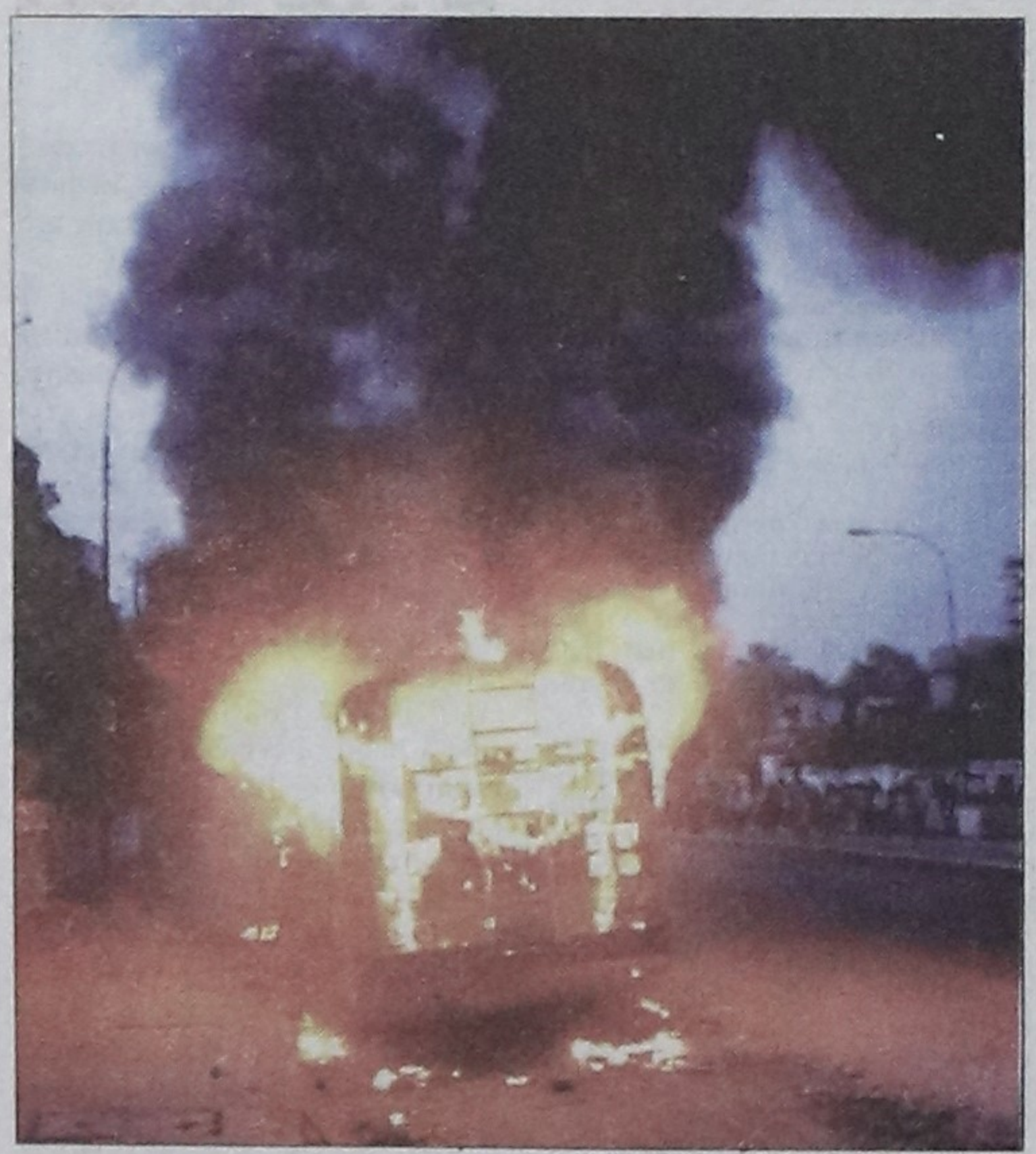
accused in a martial law court but they could not appear as "witness" in the civil court.

Advocate Khan said three army personnel Bangabandhu's son Sheikh Jamal, Colonel Jamil and Nayek Shamsu were killed during the massacre along with several civilians while the accused were all in active service.

Therefore, it is not possible to separate the "civilian offence" from the "military offence" and carry out the trial in civil court, he said.

The defence said the provisions of punishment for "plot to murder" was clearly cited in the article 32 of the Army Act, which deals with "army mutiny" and so the punishment under Articles 34 and 120 (B) of the (civil) Penal Code was not required.

Senior Advocate Serajul Haq is leading the prosecution team comprising special prosecutor Anisul Haq and Deputy Attorney General Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik.



A bus was set alight at Kamalapur in the city yesterday on the eve of the 72-hour hartal starting today.

PVC caution falls on deaf ears

Health ministry refuses to resort to safer, cheaper alternatives

NAIMUL HAQ

The Health Ministry, despite being cautioned about the precarious impact of using toxic chemicals in polyvinyl chloride (PVC), is still reluctant to revert to safer, cheaper alternatives available in the world market.

An increasing number of hospitals and medical equipment providers across the globe are phasing out the use of PVC plastic, a chemical which is used in various medical products and may cause damage to vital human organs and the environment.

Baxter International, Inc., a leading producer of IV (intravenous) bags in the United States, Universal Health Services, Inc., America's third largest hospital management company, and Kaiser Permanente,

America's biggest non-profit health maintenance organisation, are a few of the companies replacing PVC plastic with safer options.

Alternatives to PVC bags, known as polyolefin, are available and it is cost-effective. A US manufacturer B. Braun McGaw, has fetched 20 per cent of the US market with its polyolefin IV bags. US company Baxter Healthcare also exports non-PVC bags to Europe.

Peer-Reviewed report, released on July 7, 1999 by the Lowell Centre for Sustainable Production at the University of Massachusetts, evaluated more than 100 studies on a plasticiser called di-ethylhexylphthalate (DEHP) that is used to make plastics (PVC) soft and flexible.

Because the plasticiser di-

Economic ties between Bangladesh, Myanmar hold immense potential

Speakers tell seminar in the city

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday said that the cost of non-cooperation between Bangladesh and its eastern neighbour Myanmar is much higher given the strategic geographical location of the two countries.

Besides, it is sapping the immense potential of development of economic relations that will be of mutual benefit.

The seminar on Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations was organised by the Center for Strategic and Peace Studies at the CIRDP Auditorium in the city.

The speakers felt that the two neighbours should not lose any time and the opportunity to link their economies and act as a land-bridge between two strategic parts of Asia sandwiched by the two most populous nations of the world—China and India.

Presided over by the Center's Executive Director Major General Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, Bir Pratik, the session was moderated by Ambassador

Anwar Hashim.

Two papers were presented at the seminar, one on A Friendly Myanmar for Bangladesh: Necessity and Reality by Md. Obaidul Haque of the faculty of International Relations, Dhaka University while the other on Myanmar-Bangladesh Strategic Security Concerns Keeping in View the Quadrangular Relationship among China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh by Brigadier General (ret'd) Syed Jahangir Kabir, a former Defence Adviser at the Bangladesh embassy in Yangon.

Both papers argued that Myanmar, once known as the rice bowl of Asia, has vast untapped resources of timber, agricultural surplus, sweet and sea water fish, cotton, mineral products like copper, gold, silver, tin and coal, precious stones, and oil and gas. Its vast unexploited lands can be utilised also to set up joint venture manufacturing plants and Special Economic Zones.

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SALE NOTICE

M/S AL-AMIN COMPLEX (PUBLIC) LIMITED, NAWABBARI ROAD, BOGRA

Mortgaged land of M/S AL-AMIN COMPLEX (PUBLIC) LIMITED, NAWABBARI ROAD, BOGRA will be sold by the Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) on cash payment and on "as-is-where-is basis" for realising BSB's arrear loan and dues of Tk 339.92 lacs as on 31.12.1999 plus additional interest and other expenses until realisation of this amount from the company and its Director as per Article 34 of BSB Order, 1972 (PO No 129/72) read with BSB (Direct Sale of Mortgaged Property) Rules, 1980.

- Bangladesh Shilpa Bank will not assume any legal obligation whatsoever on behalf of the company and/or its Directors in respect of any dues/claims of Government and/or Autonomous bodies such as local Municipality, PDB, REB, Land Revenue and other Creditors.
- The following persons are the Director of the company:

(a) Mr Md Rafiqul Islam	Managing Director
(b) Mr Md Alamgir Hossain	Director
(c) Mr Md Shahinoor Rahman	Director
(d) Mr Md Helal Uddin	Director
- Statement of collateral mortgaged Assets:
All that piece and parcel of land measuring a total area of 0.3942 acre under Mouza-Sutrapur, PS Bogra Sadar, District-Bogra, JL No 82, Khatian No- (old) 1207, 1210, 1211, MRR No 1705, 1709, 1710, Mutated No 4739, 4740, 4741, 4742, Plot No 1707 together will all superstructure made or to be made thereon and the right of using gas, water, electricity, main or any drain or sewerage where the said premises & the machinery, plant and electrical equipment etc made or to be made thereon.
- Tender schedule containing the details of the assets and properties may be obtained from the Law Department-1, BSB, Head Office, Dhaka on cash payment of Tk 250/- (Taká two hundred & fifty) only (non-refundable).
- Intending tenderers/buyers may drop their tenders/offers in sealed cover alongwith earnest money (refundable) @ 5% of the quoted value in Bank Draft/Pay-Order in favour of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank, in the tender box kept at the above mentioned department on 30.04.2001 by 12.00 noon.
- On acceptance of offer, the successful bidders/tenderers shall have to deposit 50% of the bid or tendered money within 7 (seven) days and the balance within 30 (thirty) days from the date of acceptance of tender. In case of failure in making payment of the bid amount within stipulated time, the earnest money or the tender money (as the case may be) shall be forfeited and the mortgaged property may be resold. The mortgage assets will be handed over to the successful bidder(s) by the Bank on fulfilment of the conditions.
- Tender will be opened on 30.04.2001 at 12-30 PM at the aforesaid department in presence of the tenderers (if any). For further information, if any, the undersigned may be contacted. Bidders may purchase the above mentioned immovable property in a lot or separately.
- The BSB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender/offer without showing any reason.

Dy General Manager
GD-314 9556682