

Unocal's campaign for export of gas protested

UNB, Dhaka
National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas Resources has strongly protested the campaign made by US giant Unocal for pipeline export of gas.

Sharply reacting to the observations of the president and managing director of Unocal Bangladesh, Scott A Barber, the committee in a statement yesterday said the international oil companies (IOCs) are trying to destroy the country's oil and gas resources and ports in the name of investment. "The opposition is creating confusion among the foreigners," she said addressing a function according to reception to her by Bangladesh community in New York on Saturday. She suggested that the opposition-meaning the Awami League go to parliament and raise in the House whatever grievances they may have.

"There is no need of exporting gas from Bangladesh to India to earn money. The international companies can invest in the sectors where human resources can be developed," they said.

The committee leaders said, another US company is trying to make an agreement for constructing a private port in Chittagong to pave the way for setting up a US base in Bangladesh.

Motia, Dr Iqbal get anticipatory bail in graft cases

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to former Food Minister Motia Chowdhury and former Awami League MP Dr HBM Iqbal in graft cases.

A Division Bench comprising Justice AK Badrul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Nazrul Islam Chowdhury heard two separate bail petitions and passed the order.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption filed a corruption case with Ramna police station on April 22 last against Motia Chowdhury and eight others for alleged embezzlement of more than Taka 13 crore concerning purchase of 35,000 metric tons of rice from India during the financial year 1998-99.

The court granted four months' anticipatory bail to Motia Chowdhury and issued rule returnable in four weeks.

The Bureau filed another corruption case with Gulshan police station on April 30 against Dr HBM Iqbal alleging that he took Taka 1.66 lakh from a person against the government rate of Taka 50 thousand for manpower export to Malaysia.

The court granted three months' anticipatory bail to Dr Iqbal in this case.

Barrister KS Nabi moved the petition for Motia Chowdhury while Barrister Rokon Uddin Mahmud moved for Dr Iqbal. Deputy Attorney General Golam Kibria stood for the state.

Police net

FROM PAGE 1
Police arrested the family members of Najimuddin Babu, an alleged criminal. They are Abdul Matin, father; Aayesha Khatun, mother; Amena, sister; Abu Taher, brother-in-law; Azimuddin Pintu, brother; and Nashrat Sultana Tuli, brother's wife.

Police also picked up Abu Zaher and Jasimuddin, lodgers at their Kathalbagan residence.

At the Begunbari residence of Alauddin, another listed criminal, police arrested his mother Shamrat Banu and sister Yasmin. Asminunnesa, sister of Ata, alleged drug-peddler and criminal, was arrested at their Nakhalpara residence.

At the Kafrul house of 'Killer' Abbas, police arrested his father Shahabuddin, mother Saleha Begum, sister Ashura Begum and nephew Anwar.

The arrested were also involved in various criminal activities, police claimed.

Soccer fans

FROM PAGE 1
was trailing 2-1 after the first half which led to postponement of the match for about 45 minutes, police said.

Situation became a bit calm when the local team equalised, but it turned wild when the visitors netted the third goal and the referee blew the final whistle.

One inspector, one sergeant and two police constables were injured seriously and admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and local police hospital.

Police lobbied at least 15 teargas shells to disperse the unruly people, the sources said.

Police also clubbed the agitated people and brought the situation under control at about 10.30 pm. The visitors won the match 3-2.

PM tells expatriates in US Project true image of Bangladesh

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia told expatriate Bangladeshis in the US that the main opposition, suffering election defeat, was orchestrating false propaganda abroad in a bid to damage the country's image.

"The opposition is creating confusion among the foreigners," she said addressing a function according to reception to her by Bangladesh community in New York on Saturday.

She suggested that the opposition-meaning the Awami League go to parliament and raise in the House whatever grievances they may have.

The prime minister called upon the expatriate Bangladeshis to project the image of Bangladesh as a moderate democratic country.

At the outset of the function, one-

minute silence was observed in memory of the victims of the September 11 tragedy in the US city.

Later, national anthem of Bangladesh was presented by child singers of the local units of JASAS, JISAS and some other cultural organisations.

Organised by Sarbojonee Nagorik Sangbardhana Committee, the function was addressed, among others, by Mohadev Sarkar, Mevel Gomej, US Congressman Joseph Crowley and President of the Bangladesh Society Dr Moinul Islam Mia.

Addressing the function, Khaleda criticised the past Awami League government for its misrule saying that the economy of the country had collapsed amid corruption, irregularities and violence.

BNP moves to talk

FROM PAGE 1

a private visit to the United States and is expected to return home on May 23.

The two leaders agreed to have follow-up talks soon in a bid to do the spadework for the planned talks, sources close to them said.

Commenting on the government move, Hamid told the Star that his party would like to discuss everything - from 'political persecution' to 'misrule' by the coalition government and the conditions of the AL to join the parliament.

"We will also explain the reason for our staying off the House and will seek resolution to the crisis," he said.

The AL lawmakers and the central leaders may either meet separately or jointly before the parliament goes to its next session on June 4. The planned meeting would finalise the party position on joining the Jatiya Sangsad, party sources said.

The government move for a dialogue and the AL plan to resign from parliament would also come up for discussion in those meetings, they added.

The BNP move for the much-talked about dialogue came six days after PM's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury announced that the government would offer the AL to have formal talks to take it to the parliament. Chowdhury's announcement was made soon after the president summoned the parliament into its budget session.

However, the deputy opposition leader was skeptic about the move by S. Q. Chowdhury, whom he blamed for constantly shifting positions. But sources believe Abdul Hamid has accepted Mannan Bhuiyan's offer seriously.

Still, the sources observe that the two sides will have to remove the odds standing in their way before the much-expected talks can take place.

Whatever may be the fate of the proposed dialogue, it is believed that the AL would join the forthcoming parliament session at least briefly to keep its seats in the House, which will fall vacant if the next session sits for more than 34 days and the party continues boycotting it.

According to law, an MP's seat will fall vacant if he or she remain absent from the House for 90 consecutive working days. Until the last session, the AL MPs remained

absent for 56 days. Since the AL started its boycott, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar asked the opposition party time and again in the House to join the proceedings. On one such occasion, the speaker suggested a dialogue between the chief whips in the treasury and opposition benches.

But unlike the speaker of the last parliament, late Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, Sircar never offered himself to broker such a dialogue.

Besides, the BNP secretary general had talks on telephone with the deputy opposition leader twice earlier to initiate a dialogue for ending the stalemate.

In late March, Bhuiyan phoned AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman inviting his party to discuss Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's proposal to have portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and late president Ziaur Rahman along with that of the head of government hung in public offices.

Her proposal followed the parliament's scrapping of the Father of the Nation's Portrait Act that sparked street agitation by the AL. However, the AL set three conditions including retrieve the portrait law for its sitting across the table.

UNDP mission to review CHT situation

BSS, Rangamati

A three-member mission of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) arrived in Dhaka yesterday to see the overall Law and Order in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The mission led by Dr J W Tecu Bottema will review the CHT situation until May 15 towards restoring the development activities in the region. Other members of the mission are Michael Heyn and Mr Proshenjit Chakma, official sources said here last night.

Earlier, a three-member diplomatic mission during an overnight stay here took stock of the overall Law and Order in the CHT by exchanging views with the local authorities, government officials and the journalists.

Smoky hospitals

FROM PAGE 1

that turns carcinogenic when burnt in the gas-fuelled devices.

Researches in the UK and the USA show the fumes from burning materials like plastic syringes, blood and saline bags, plastic tubes, plastic medicine and tablet holders, bottles and gloves damage heart, respiratory and central nervous system, reproductive organs, kidneys, digestive tracts and skin in humans.

Contacted earlier, Ralph Ryder, a leading toxicologist in the UK, said any PVC material when burnt produces dioxin and furan, known to cause cancer in lungs and liver, damage male reproductive organs and cause neurological imbalance when inhaled for long.

The burning of PVC releases heavy metals into the environment besides producing dioxin and furan, researchers told The Daily Star. It produces at least 75 by-products, including phthalates, benzene, toluene, xylene and naphthalene, and releases numerous ultra-fine particles of less than one micron in the environment.

Sources said all toxic wastes collected from the departments of the hospitals are burnt in the incinerators.

All incinerators, each weighing 1,500kg, were purchased from the UK under assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for waste disposal in hospitals. Each device manufactured by Techtrul, a UK-based company, has a capacity of burning 35kg waste (wet) an hour. But in the case of paper and other dry materials, it can burn twice the amount of wet waste.

The oven chambers generate heat up to 300 degree Celsius.

"None of the hospitals has permission to operate the incinerators,

as bulk of waste the hospitals generate consists of plastic materials and is highly polluting," said Md Reazuddin, director (technical), the DoE.

The department could initiate the process of filing lawsuits against the violators, he said. "We have to inspect and verify whether they are burning PVC or not. If incineration involves only burning non-PVC, we don't mind but burning PVC threatens public health," he added.

Last Thursday, Director of the DMCH Brigadier General Md Nazmul Huda claimed that the hospital has been burning very little plastic materials. By contrast, operators of the incinerators told this correspondent that they burn all kinds of waste, including plastic.

"The waste comes in buckets and we throw them all in the oven chambers," said Monirul Huq, an operator. "The waste mostly contains syringes, plastic tubes and medicine strips, gloves and plastic bottles."

Director of the CMCH Brigadier General Shafi Alam claimed that the CMCH was never commissioned to burn waste. "Now we are dumping the waste in ordinary bins," he said.

The ideal hospital waste dumping involves segregation of PVC and non-PVC and sharps, metals with chemicals at the disposal point and recycling the PVC material for reuse. Such practice is globally recognised.

Unfortunately, the government has no official hospital waste disposal guidelines. However, such guidelines have recently been prepared at the initiative of the Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST), World Health Organisation and other agencies engaged in hospital waste management.

Rocket fired at bldg housing US forces in Pakistan

AP, Peshawar

A rocket was fired at U.S. special forces hunting remaining Taliban and al-Qaida fighters in Pakistan's remote and deeply conservative tribal belt, but missed its target, causing no injuries and little damage, a local official said yesterday.

It was the second time in two weeks that a rocket was fired at the building, a vocational school in Miran Shah, near the Afghan border, where about seven Americans working with Pakistani troops in the semiautonomous area are believed to be bunking.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said two rockets had been hooked up with timers in a wooded area less than a kilometer away and aimed at the school.

The first was fired about 10:25 pm Friday and hit a sports complex between 150 and 200 meters away from the school, he said, causing little damage. The second was set to be fired at 2:25 am Saturday, but was found and defused by authorities.

Reached by phone in Miran Shah, the official said it was not known who was behind the attack. "We are trying to find the culprits," he said.

The "big bang" brought locals out of their houses, fearful they were under attack, said one resident, Mujdaba Khan. "People were worried about what happened."

Early on May 1, a rocket was fired at the same school but struck a building about 300 yards away. No

one was hurt in that attack the first time US forces came under fire since they began operations in the hostile region in recent weeks.

Rude awakening

FROM PAGE 1

decide to deploy paramilitary BDR in the capital and set up check posts on different important roads. A police-BDR joint combing operation may also be okayed.

Meantime, a detective agency report said six to seven top criminals, who maintain links with both the BNP and the police, enter the capital in the evening, commit crimes and leave the city by morning. Killers of the recently slain criminal ward commissioner Sayedur Rahman Newton also belong to one such group.

Detectives observed that unless these criminals were immediately arrested more crimes would be committed.

The police failure to nab any of the 23 top wanted criminals and the unhindered participation of criminals in the recent city corporation polls have also worsened the situation, intelligence agencies have reported.

Meantime, Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury told the UNB last night that a malicious design may be there behind the outbreak of criminal activities to destabilise the police department and the government as well.

JCD, BCL leaders

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan Ali, owner of the mess, also said some youths killed Pintu and fled the area soon after the incident.

Although Pintu had no post in the JCD, he was actively involved in politics and was staying on the campus even after completion of his study, sources said. He was involved in extortion from markets and shops in the area and killed following a row over sharing of the illegally collected tolls, the sources said.

But the JCD sources said Pintu was a victim of internal conflict in the JCD's college unit.

The arrest of three JCD activists in possession of firearms on the campus last week might have led to the killing of Pintu who had a hand in the arrest, said a JCD leader.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy. A case was filed with Dhanmondi Police Station.

Police arrested two JCD activists - Selim and Nayan - on the campus on suspicion.

The BCL leader was shot dead in Badda area last night.

Police said Siddhartha Sarkar, general secretary of Tejgaon College Students Union, and four others were injured as unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets on a microbus they were travelling in. They were returning from Badda after attending a Chhatra League conference there.

The on-duty doctor at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) declared Sarkar dead on arrival.

Of the injured, Saiful Islam, assistant general secretary of the BCL Titumir College unit, was admitted to the DMCH. Others bullet-injured were passers-by.

A source said unidentified assailants attacked the microbus. But another source said Sakar was

Traffic police on extra duty to combat crimes in city

UNB, Dhaka

Traffic police have been given extra duty to combat the growing incidents of crime in the city.

Officials at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) headquarters said traffic police were engaged at 23 city points yesterday mainly to check vehicles. Number of such points will be increased today.

They said the traffic police, reinforced by extra police personnel, would check motorbikes, microbuses, taxicabs and, in certain cases, autorickshaws.

AL seeks fresh polls

FROM PAGE 12

the accident. Other AL presidium members including Tofail Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Motia Chowdhury, Zillur Rahman and Abdul Hamid were present.

Samad Azad alleged that although the shipping minister visited the spot two days after the accident, he spent less than one hour there and did not even go to Shaitnal where hundreds of bodies were taken.

He also castigated Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for flying to the US without ordering urgent mea-

sures to recover the dead.

Speaking on the occasion, AK M Jahangir, AL lawmaker from Patuakhali, said people were very angry as the bodies were disfigured beyond recognition.

There were no representatives from the BIWTA or any government offices to hand over the bodies to their relatives, he alleged.

Speaking on the occasion, Suranjit Sen Gupta alleged that the government was also trying to suppress facts about the killing of a Hindu priest in Khagrachhari and a Buddhist monk in Chittagong.



The Women Entrepreneurs Association accorded 13 successful mothers a reception on the International Mothers' Day yesterday at Hotel Agrabad in Chittagong.

Rice supply

FROM PAGE 12

The resumption was an outcome of the government's renewed assurance to the rice traders and truckers that rice-laden trucks would get police escort on Naogaon-Dhaka highway. Earlier, another such assurance by the inspector general of police on April 30, fell flat when highway robbers looted a rice truck on Tuesday last, slaughtering its driver near Bangabandhu Bridge.

Rice traders said they would go on strike in case of any recurrence of rice truck looting.

"We'll go for hartal if any more rice trucks are looted on the highways," said Syed Md Obaidur Rahman, proprietor of Nobabi Traders, a rice wholesale shop at Mohammadpur Krishi Market.

Another trader said unless the government takes the issue seriously and does the needful, rice traders would go for greater movement programme.

In last seven months, 15 truck drivers and helpers were killed while highway robbers looted several dozens of rice-laden trucks in the country.

Meantime, Parija variety of rice was yesterday selling at TK 440-480 a maund, Pajiam at TK 600-620, Nazirshail (new stock) at TK 570-580, Nazirshail (old stock) at TK 620-630 and Polao variety TK 650-750.

Monk murder

FROM PAGE 12

government, they claimed. A local leader of the ruling party loyal to the influential BNP leader however said, "My leader never harbours terrorists."

"My leader or our party are not influencing police in any way regarding the murder case. It's the failure of police that Aziz is not arrested yet."

Additional SP (north) of Chittagong Aurongzeb Mahubb, when contacted said, "We are trying to nab Azimul Haq, the prime suspect in the monk murder case, following allegations from different quarters. "As he (Aziz) is absconding, we have arrested his father and are interrogating him", he said.

Wife, 2 sons

FROM PAGE 1

them that his wife and two sons were abducted by some unidentified people few days back and could not be traced since then. Police arrested him.

The bodies were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

Rahman had rented the house on May 5 and was looking for job since then, police and his neighbours said. He had worked as a driver in Saudi Arabia and returned home about one and a half years back, they said.

A case was filed in this regard.

Sundarbans

FROM PAGE 12

ing of fast-growing species of timber and firewood can be encouraged to stop indiscriminate felling of trees of rare species.

They felt the need for other alternative income-generating schemes to divert people from over-exploitation of forest resources.

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafirul Islam Chowdhury and UNDP deputy resident representative Yannick Glemarec also spoke at the function, chaired by Environment and Forest Secretary Sabuhuddin Ahmed.

A similar workshop was held in Kolkata last month.

As part of the common deal, Minister-in-Charge of Forest, Government of West Bengal, Jogesh Barman, and State Minister of Forest Maheshwar Murmu visited Nilkamal, Karamajal and adjacent areas of the Sundarbans on Bangladesh side in February.

Shahjahan Siraj is expected to visit India shortly to meet with his counterpart to finalise a cooperation plan.

Ted Turner's UN Foundation (UNF) will fund the deal once it is finalised. Meanwhile, UN International Partnership Trust Fund (UNIPF) and UNESCO have provided US\$100,000 and \$20,000 respectively for the preparatory process.

JS women's seats

FROM PAGE 12

crucial election promises. She referred to similar problems facing direct elections of Union Parishad members and Pourashava commissioners from the women's quota.

The coalition government earlier weighed several options about the constitutional provision of the women's reserved seats.

The immediate-past Awami League government introduced a bill in the last parliament seeking continuation of tenure of the 30 reserved seats for women for another ten years, but the bill lapsed as the then BNP-led opposition did not support it.

The lapsed provision of choosing 30 women MPs by the House virtually made women lawmakers a choice of the treasury bench.

The bill on women's seats is being readied apparently to enable the treasury bench to have the entire quota at its disposal.

The ruling coalition also discussed another option that all parties represented in parliament would share the women's quota of 30 or more in accordance with their strength.

The third arrangement was in line with the original commitment of the BNP that needed a radical change in the number and the mode of election of women MPs. It suggested that either geographical territories or population of the country determine the constituencies of women lawmakers and that such MPs be elected through popular vote.

The issue of women's share in parliament spawned political debates during the tenure of the last AL government when the constitutional provision on the matter was nearing a lapse.

Then, different political parties and women's organisations came up with a variety of suggestions. Direct election of such MPs and increase in the number featured high in different public debates and discussions. The frontline women's bodies took to the streets to press their demand for direct election of women lawmakers by raising their number to 64 -- one from each district.

The AL government also had a series of consultations with the

agitating women activists who had their views incorporated into the parliamentary standing committee report on the bill introduced in the last parliament. However, such views did not find their place in the provision of the bill, although the government agreed to accommodate any suggestions once the opposition had supported its move.

Despite appeals from the women's rights organisations, the BNP refused to help pass the AL-sponsored bill arguing that the opposition party was not consulted on the contents of the bill. The AL kept the bill pending for more than a year in abortive bids to get support and incorporate views of the opposition.

Commanding more than two-thirds members in the House, the ruling coalition will now find no difficulty in passing the planned bill whatever measures it provides.

The parliament had 15 seats reserved for women in ten years since the country's independence. The number was later raised to 30 first for the following ten years and again for another ten. The fourth parliament had no reserved seats and so has been the case with the present one -- both for the absence of constitutional provision.

Ten killed as train derails in India

AP, New Delhi

Thirteen coaches of an express train derailed early yesterday in northern India, killing at least 10 people and injuring more than 100, news reports said.

The Shramjeev Express went off the tracks near Lucknow, 350 kilometers east of New Delhi. The train from New Delhi was bound for Patna, the capital of eastern Bihar state, Press Trust of India news agency quoted railroad officials as saying.

The accident occurred when most passengers were sleeping. The injured were taken to nearby hospitals, the news agency said.

The cause of the accident was not immediately known. (Details on page 9)

Altaf: Tongue

FROM PAGE 1

that once an incident of crime takes place the government tries its best to arrest criminals quickly.

However, there has been no noticeable police drive in the last four days or before to arrest criminals that may complement his rhetoric.

The most bizarre comment however came during his visit to Naushin's residence last Friday. "Life or death are in the hands of Allah... Allah has taken back His creature", philosophised the home minister, to the utter shock of the nation and enraging even his cabinet colleagues.

And, he defended himself on an occasion Saturday saying that he did not say anything wrong.

In fact, Altaf gave the nation an impression of what he was capable of soon after he was sworn in on October 10.