

More army promotions recommended

M ANWARUL HAQ

The Army Selection Board has recommended promotion of around 35 colonels including some from the medical corps to the rank of brigadier general and around 40 lieutenant colonels including some from the medical corps to the rank of colonel, according to a number of sources.

The board's three-day meeting ended yesterday. It was chaired by Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury.

All the major generals on active list were present at the board meeting. Those with their services placed under the foreign ministry do not sit on the board.

The recommendations will be forwarded to the prime minister through the defence ministry for final approval and promotion. The prime minister also holds charge of the defence ministry.

The promotions would be effective only after official orders, which also consider posting and place

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Exemption of PM's question-answer session baffles opposition MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The exemption of the prime minister's regular half-an-hour question-answer session from yesterday's business order in the parliament highly disappointed the opposition lawmakers.

Speaking on points of order, lawmakers from the main opposition Awami League (AL) pointed out that they would have liked to ask the prime minister questions on various issues during the nine-month rule of the BNP-led coalition government.

Acting Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui said all the lawmakers were notified beforehand that the PM's question-answer session was exempted from the day's order due to the Thai prime minister's ongoing visit here. "This issue cannot be taken as point of order," he said.

Mohammad Nasim of the AL however mentioned that the Thai premier was in Chittagong yesterday

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Four die from gas suffocation in Kushtia

BSS, Kushtia

Four people, three of them of a family, died from gas suffocation in an abandoned well in a village under Daulatpur upazila in the district yesterday, police said.

The incident occurred at Philip Nagar College Para at about 7:30 am when a teenage boy, Naheed, climbed down into the well to collect a twenty taka note, which slipped from his hand.

As Naheed's father Kamrul Islam, 40, saw that his son was not coming out of the well, he climbed down into the well. Witnessing the incident, Amjad Hossain, 40, brother of Kamrul, went into the well to rescue them, but he also failed to come out.

Later, Hafizur Rahman, 30, a neighbour of Kamrul, also got down into the well to rescue them, also could not come out of the well.

Shamsuddin Ahmed, superintendent of police (SP) of Kushtia, told the news agency that the nearly 40 feet deep well was filled with toxic gas as it was abandoned for long time.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

Hands-on media role: First line of defence against HIV
Column: JustAnother View
SH Imam

Focus 5

World Population Day: What will be the implications if we do not reach replacement fertility by 2005?

Sun Rises Sun Sets

July 11	5-19 am	6-49 pm
July 12	5-19 am	

Prayer Timings

July 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Lavish perks for MPs wilt in Hasina heat

Bills to raise allowances by 50-300pc taken off order of the day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four bills to raise remuneration and privileges for the legislators were withdrawn yesterday minutes before their introduction to the Jatiya Sangsad in the face of strong protest from Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

Two ministers were scheduled to introduce four separate bills last night proposing 50 to 300 per cent rise in allowances for the prime minister, speaker, deputy speaker, ministers, state and deputy ministers and lawmakers.

Significant enhancement was to be proposed in house rents, daily allowances, sumptuary allowances, discretionary grants and other benefits on the ground that living expenses have increased.

Minutes before the bills were to be tabled, Hasina took the floor on a point of order and protested the move, saying while people are leading a subhuman life there was no rational for such a raise.

At this stage, acting Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui informed the House that the bills had already been withdrawn from the day's business.

The Prime Minister's (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill, 2002 proposed to enhance the prime minister's monthly house rent from Tk 35,000 to Tk 50,000.

It also proposed a four-fold increase in daily allowance for the prime minister from Tk 250 to Tk 1,000.

In justification of the huge rise in allowances, the bill said that apart from rising living expenses the prime minister's activities have expanded.

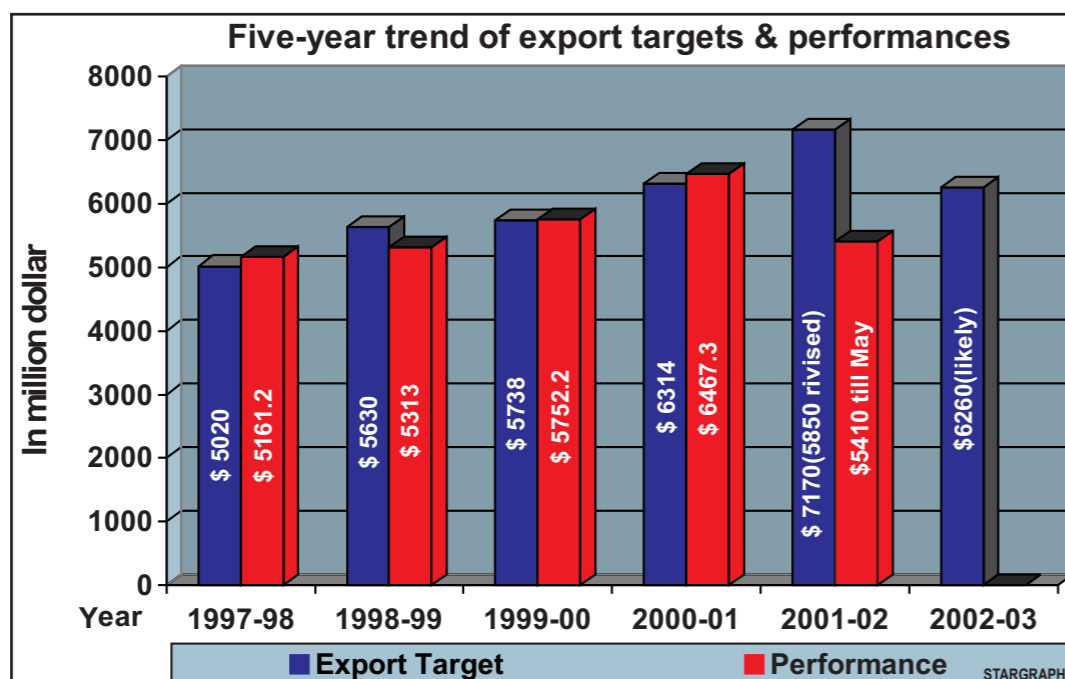
The Speaker and Deputy Speaker (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment) Act, 2002 proposed increase in sumptuary allowance to Tk 6,000. Currently, the Speaker gets Tk 5,000 and the Deputy Speaker gets Tk 3,000.

Besides, the bill proposed a three-fold increase in daily allowance for both

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Settling for less

Export target likely to be set at nearly 13 per cent lower than previous year's



MONJUR MAHMUD

For the first time, the government is going to settle for an export target lower than the previous year's.

According to commerce ministry sources, the export target for FY03 may be set at US\$6.26 billion, 12.7 per cent lower than the original one of last fiscal's.

Acting Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui said all the lawmakers were notified beforehand that the PM's question-answer session was exempted from the day's order due to the Thai prime minister's ongoing visit here. "This issue cannot be taken as point of order," he said.

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SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Why, asks PM

Probe ordered into Petrobangla's delay in Magurchhara blowout claim

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has instructed the energy ministry to form a judicial probe committee to find out why the government in the last five years refrained from lodging compensation claims from the US oil company Unocal-Occidental for damaging the Magurchhara gas structure.

During a meeting with the state minister for energy, she asked the probe committee, headed by a retired judge, to give a chronology of the Magurchhara disaster and its aftermath along with the reasons that led the Petrobangla to sign the

supplementary agreement with Unocal-Occidental, sources said.

The prime minister at the meeting also instructed the ministry to review the Energy Policy 1995 and reinforce domestic gas metering.

As per her instructions, the judicial committee would also verify whether the former energy secretary Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury played any role in shelving the Magurchhara Blow-out Probe Committee Report of 1997 that blamed Occidental's negligent operations and faulty drilling practices for the explosion. Occidental was later taken over by Unocal.

The state minister later con-

veyed the prime minister's instructions to the Law Minister Moudud Ahmed. The law minister said he would form the judicial probe committee with a retired judge within a few days, sources said.

Since the US oil company rejected last week's compensation claim of US\$685 million by Petrobangla, for damaging the gas structure of Magurchhara, the state minister for energy felt there should be a judicial probe committee to find out why the previous government did not place this claim earlier.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina raised the Magurchhara

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Gas body to sort out rift on export

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee on Utilisation of Gas will hold further meetings to settle differences among its members over the gas export issue, sources said.

Due to a difference of opinion, the committee members are yet to sign the report that reached its final stage at a meeting Tuesday. However, the meeting ended inconclusive amid objections raised by three members.

The next meeting will be held on Saturday. And more meetings will be held next week, if necessary. The final report will be submitted to the prime minister after all members sign it.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Thai PM spends busy day in Ctg before flying home

BSS, Ctg

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was given a red-carpet welcome when he arrived here yesterday morning for a daylong stay on the concluding day of his three-day official visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan received the Thai leader when he alighted from a Royal Thai Air Force special plane at the Amanat Shah @ International Airport at 11.30 am. A girl presented him a bouquet.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, State Minister for Environment and Forest Zaful Islam Chowdhury, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and high civil and military officials were present.

Premier Thaksin is accompanied by a 59-member entourage.

Shortly after his arrival, the Thai prime minister was briefed at the airport conference hall by State Minister for Civil Aviation Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin on the unique geographical location of the port city and its economic potentials.

The Thai leader and members of his entourage were shown the operations and activities of the Chittagong Port, facilities at the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia sees her Thai counterpart Thaksin Shinawatra off at the Zia International Airport yesterday. Shinawatra flew back to the Thai port city of Chiang Mai with a stopover at Chittagong.

PHOTO: PID



Shazneen case Latifur Rahman cross-examined for two hours

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Latifur Rahman, second prosecution witness in the Shazneen Rape Case and father of the victim, was cross-examined for two hours in the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah adjourned the hearing till August 1.

The lawyer for principal accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid cross-examined Rahman.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

During the cross-examination, Latifur Rahman told the court that before the incident, Shazneen was talking on the phone with her friend Abed. Suddenly, Abed heard her telling someone, "Why have you entered my room without knocking." Then, Abed heard her screaming, Rahman said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Jolting omen

Frequent tremors in Ctg forebode major earthquake, warn experts

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

The frequency of tremors jolting the port city and its adjoining areas in the last one year and a half one of those measuring as high as 5.1 on the Richter scale signals a major earthquake any time, experts have cautioned.

Substantiating this apprehension, one expert said, "Similar type of signals were received before the catastrophic earthquakes in California (US), Kobe (Japan) Bhuj in Gujarat (India) and in Turkey."

Sources in the seismic observatory here said 61 tremors hit Chittagong during the period January last year to June this year. Of the tremors, 23 occurred in the first six months of this year as against 15 during the corresponding period of last year (2001).

The latest earthquake, on June 30, measured 5.1 on the Richter scale while all other tremors were of the magnitude of 3 to 4 on this scale. Many more tremors of low

magnitude could not be recorded by the seismic observatory as it lacks modern equipment, the sources said.

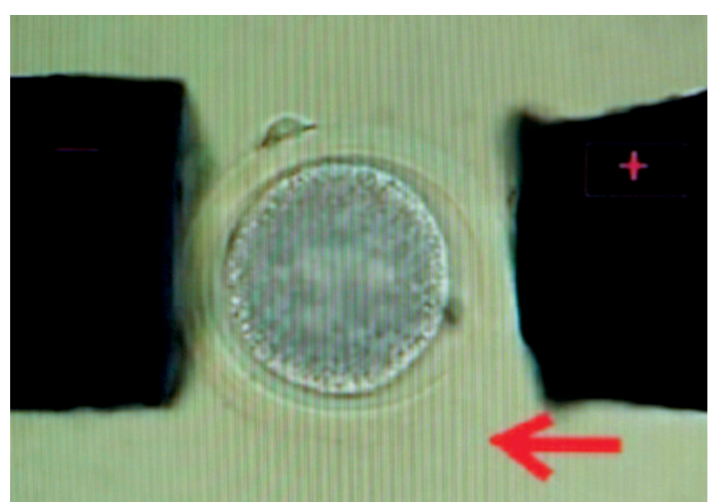
Talking to this correspondent, convenor of the earthquake engineering research centre at the Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) here Jahangir Alam said "such frequent tremors signal a major earthquake in Chittagong".

He went on, "Obviously there is a high risk of a disaster here. A major earthquake hit this region in 1897. It was preceded by many tremors of mild and moderate magnitude. So, we cannot rule out the possibility of recurrence of a similar disaster here."

Alam, who is also head of civil engineering department at the BIT, said the tremors frequently shaking Chittagong had their epicentres in Bangladesh-Myanmar border near Cox's Bazar coast and the Bay of Bengal or Bangladesh-India border along Assam and Tripura.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Human clone on cards



The fusion process of cloning by the human cloning company, Clonaid, which made a presentation at a medical industry trade show in Tokyo yesterday.

AFP, Tokyo

A team of scientists from Clonaid, a human cloning company linked with the Raelian movement, were working with "10 to 20 clients" on the firm's human cloning project, an official from the company said yesterday.

"We chose them from a client list of a couple of thousand people," said Thomas Kaenzig, vice president of Clonaid.

"We are working with about 50 surrogate mothers," he said, adding that the company would present some results of its project "in a couple of months time".

Kaenzig was speaking at the first International Bio Expo Japan, a medical industry trade show that showcased products and services from about 250 Japanese and foreign exhibitors, including Du Pont and Roche Diagnostics.

Clonaid showed off its "embryonic cell fusion system", which, Kaenzig said, creates the stable electronic pulse required to develop human embryos to the blastocyst stage.

That is the stage generally about five or six days after fertilisation at which the embryo is made up of about 100 to 150 cells.

The device, the RMX 2010 which resembles a car battery, and is for sale at 9,000 dollars, was manufactured by BioFusion Tech Inc. of South Korea, a Clonaid affiliate established about two months ago.

The "2010" designation reflected the hope that cloning would be

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Mahbub still clean in Titas eyes

SB finds evidence against millionaire meter reader

STAR REPORT

The Special Branch of Police has gathered substantial evidences of irregularities against the millionaire meter reader, Mahbubur Rahman. But the Titas gas authorities still refuse to take any disciplinary action against him.

Rather, the state-owned gas transmission and distribution company is now on a 'mission' to shield the corrupt employee from allegations of malpractice reported in several national news dailies.

Titas formed an inquiry commit-

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1