

Shell to wrap up operation on low business growth

Cairn set to buy its assets

STAR REPORT

The oil giant Shell Oil has decided to sell off its Bangladesh oil and gas exploration and production concerns to its British partner Cairn Energy, being frustrated by slow market growth and lack of scope for investment.

Shell, an Anglo-Dutch company, has signed a non-legally binding letter of intent over a \$50 million deal, returning blocks 15 and 16, including the Sangu gas field, and

untapped blocks 5 and 10 to Cairn, said sources.

On Sunday, Shell informed the energy ministry and Petrobangla about the issue and announced its complete exit from Bangladesh to its 63 staffers.

Operating in Bangladesh on and off since the 1950s, Shell made a large-scale entry to the energy scenario in 1999 through the purchase of Cairn's concerns. Although Shell gave more than \$100 million to Cairn for blocks 15 and 16, Cairn

remained its partner instead of leaving Bangladesh.

At the time, Shell proposed a \$2 billion investment plan. "But we have received little attention from the government to any deal," says a Shell official.

"We submitted the best offers for six blocks in the second round block bidding and we were largely ignored. After a lot of negotiations, the government gave us two blocks," he added.

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BAC traces graft in Uttara town scheme, sues 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed 12 cases against 10 government officials on charge of siphoning off about Tk 5.58 crore from the Uttara town expansion project under Rajuk.

BAC charged them with providing compensation based on false information. They had allegedly acquired marshy lands but compensated owners as per the rate of plain lands.

BAC also found that although Tk 73,08,845 was the real compensation amount landowners were supposed to get, the officials showed the amount to be Tk 6,30,91,513.

While working with the land acquisition section of the Dhaka deputy commissioner's (DC) office, the officials arranged extra compensation of Tk 5,57,82,668 for some

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ATPs finally go under hammer

M ABDUR RAHIM

Dogged by controversy and mechanical faults, the fate of the British-made Advanced Turbo Prop (ATP) aircraft has finally been sealed with Biman floating tender for their sale yesterday.

The two ATPs were repaired and made airworthy only five months ago. But the sell-off decision was taken as the aircraft remained risky and were about to meet an accident last month. They were also lowly utilised, Biman sources said.

Because of their mechanical glitches, Biman had to keep them grounded most of the time, the source added. And as long as an aircraft keeps sitting on the ground, the loss counter keeps ticking.

Grounded for over three years,

the ATPs were brought back into operation in February after Biman engineers repaired them.

The two aircraft were introduced on domestic routes in 1990 and were grounded in late 1999 for recurring mechanical faults.

The authorities hired new aircraft for domestic routes in place of the ATPs. This even minimised the use of the ATPs, a high Biman official said.

"Even a one-hour ATP flight a day is not economically viable," he added.

On July 25, an ATP flight on Dhaka-Rajshahi-Saidpur route developed troubles in its air-conditioning system soon after take-off and it smelt burnt rubber as fuel leaked into the system. The crew had to switch off the air-conditioner to pre-empt a disaster.

The flight carrying 70 passengers, including a state minister, was diverted to Dhaka for emergency landing.

The Biman currently operates three F28s and two ATPs and uses DC-10s occasionally on seven domestic routes.

The domestic air travel market in Bangladesh became competitive with private operators offering efficient and better customer service.

The ATPs were purchased from British Aerospace for \$14 million each.

Tender schedule for the ATPs and their spare parts will be available at Biman head office and all its overseas stations from August 10 to September 10.

Mamta Uddin murder Chargesheet against AL leader, 7 BNP men

ROVING CORRESPONDENT, Natore

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Natore, yesterday submitted charge sheet in the Mamta Uddin murder case accusing seven BNP activists and one Awami League (AL) leader.

The district AL brought out a procession protesting the charge sheet and district AL general secretary Advocate Hanif Ali Sheikh told newsmen that the charge sheet was 'prescribed' by the ruling BNP.

"It is designed to save the real culprits," said the AL leader, putting the blame for the murder once again on State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman Patel.

It has been mentioned in the charge sheet, submitted 57 days after the killing, that AL leader

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DCC check on fuel pilferage gives in to union pressure

ABDUL KADER

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday withdrew the suspension of seven drivers under union pressure, 48 hours within the launch of a drive to streamline garbage truck operation.

The Drivers, Workers and Employees Union went on a wildcat strike on Sunday in protest against the suspension a day before.

The suspension came as the unruly drivers ransacked the office of the chief conservancy officer (CCO) after authorities brought the garbage trucks under the CCO from the transport department to ensure transparency.

The strike left over 3,500 tonnes of garbage the city produces a day strewn all over the serious inconvenience of the townspeople.

The union ended the strike yesterday after the authorities climbed down on the decision.

Sources said the streamlining bid was aimed at stopping pilferage of petrol from garbage trucks.

The conservancy department wanted to launch petroleum cou-

pons for the trucks to stop pilferage. Eight hundred drivers of the DCC are engaged in garbage cleaning with 271 vehicles, of which 105 are in operation currently.

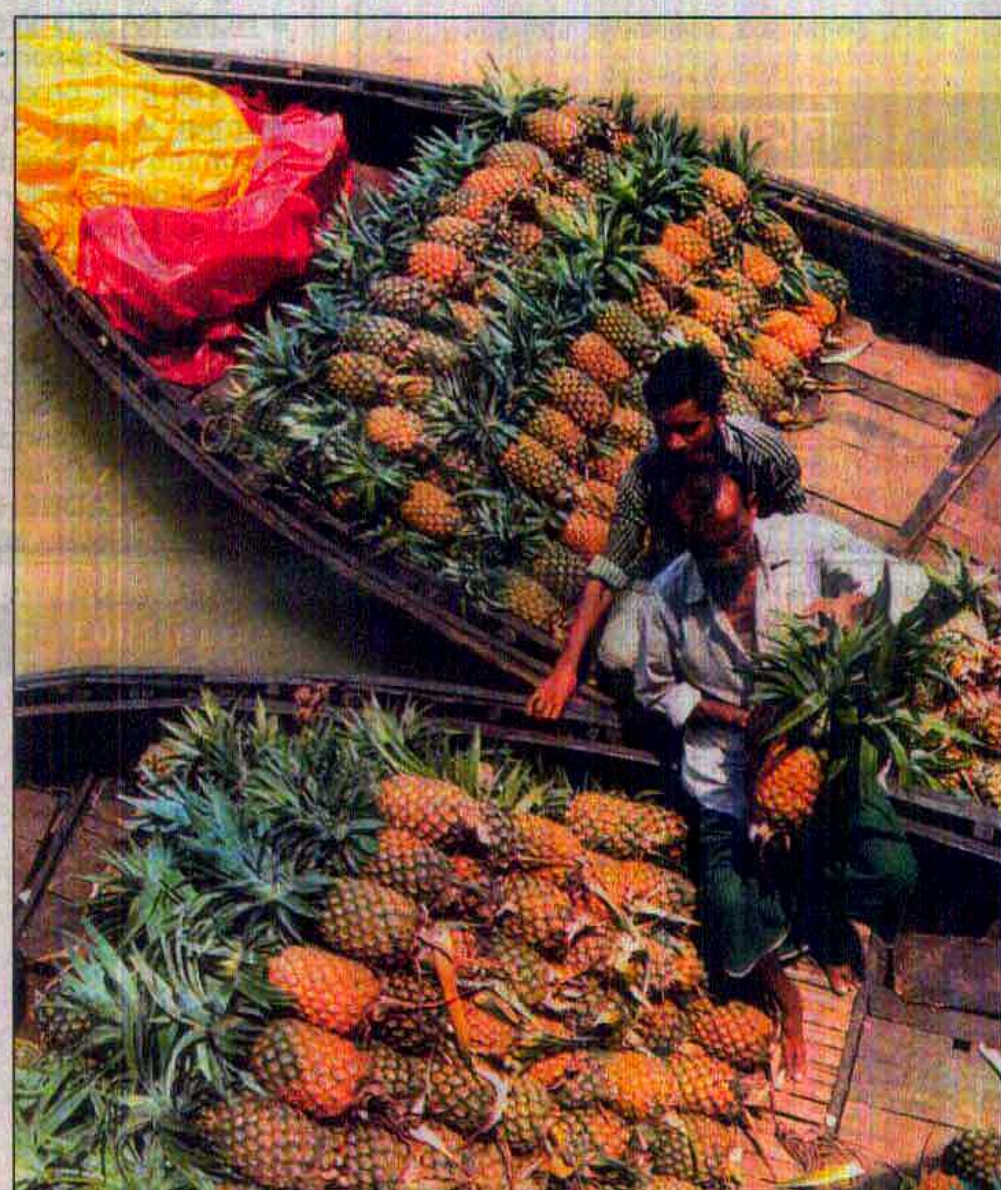
"The drivers don't want to come under the conservancy department as it will bring an end to their petrol pilferage," a DCC official said.

Nasir Hossain Montu, general secretary of the union, said: "We have proposed to the CCO to take control of the transport department by becoming its managing director if he wants to bring transparency to the sector."

"The drivers will not go under the conservancy department."

Some drivers, however, said transfer of the transport pool to the conservancy department would give them fourth class employee's status instead of the current third class.

Commander Shohel Farruqi, chief conservancy officer, refused to make any comment on the suggestion.



ROAD GIVES WAY TO RIVER: Hawkers run business from boats on the Buriganga River after their eviction from Sadarghat launch terminal in the wake of the capsizing of MV Nasrin-1 in the Meghna at Chandpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Normalcy returns as customs men call off strike for 15 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Normalcy returned to customs offices yesterday after the striking staff yesterday joined work.

Bangladesh Customs Excise and VAT Executive Officers Association called off its indefinite strike for 15 days following assurance by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman of addressing its 'legitimate demands'.

The association called the strike on Saturday at the Dhaka Customs House and Internal Container Depot (ICD) demanding an end to what it called harassment of tax officials by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC).

It also demands empowerment of tax officials and withdrawal of 12 cases filed against some customs men for alleged tax evasion.

The work stoppage created a deadlock in external trade and the business community sought government intervention.

During a visit to the Dhaka Customs House and ICD yesterday, this correspondent found the officials and clearing and forwarding agents busy releasing goods.

JCD, BCL deadlocked over DU strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The face-off between two student fronts at Dhaka University got a new edge yesterday, with one vowing to push ahead with its strike until rehabilitation of its activists to dormitories and the other pressing its rival to backtrack first.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the main opposition party Awami League, enforced the indefinite strike to protest Thursday's overnight attacks on its leaders and activists by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) men.

The BCL leaders told the university authorities by phone that they would consider ending the strike after their activists were allowed back to the campus and rehabilitated to their halls.

"We want to gather on the cam

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3 die from gas poisoning inside septic tank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three construction workers died of gas poisoning after they got down into a septic tank at Kawa in city's Uttara yesterday.

Eyewitnesses said Baker, 35, Mizan, 18, and Dojahhan, 18, went down to clean the septic tank inside the compound of the house of one Abdul Halim at around 10:30am.

Mizan was the first to get down into the tank and the two others went down to rescue him after hearing his feeble cry for help.

As none of them came out even after a long time, the other workers informed the landlord who immediately called fire fighters.

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Salary of CEC, ECs stopped on audit objections

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The salaries of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and three election commissioners (ECs) for July have been held up due to audit objections to drawing salaries and pensions of previous jobs simultaneously.

The office of the comptroller and auditor general (CAG) asked CEC M A Sayed and ECs Saifur Rahman, M Munser Ali and K M Mohammad Ali to deposit to the exchequer the pensions they drew in 'violation' of the existing rule.

But the top election officials did not respond to the July 29 request of the CAG, leaving it in the lurch over the monthly salary issue.

According to the service rule, if anyone joins state positions after retirement from public service, their pensions remain stalled until completion of the post-retirement jobs.

Sayed served as the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Munser and Mohammad as district judges and Saifur as home secretary prior to joining the Election Commission.

The EC is now trying to resolve the issue through consultation with

the government.

"The CEC is trying to make an appointment with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman to discuss the issue and arrive at a conclusion," Election Commissioner M Munser Ali told The Daily Star yesterday.

The CEC and ECs are drawing pensions and salaries both at once since taking the Election Commission assignments, ignoring the rule, a CAG official said.

On March 17 last year, the CAG's office told the Election Commission Secretariat that if Saifur Rahman wanted to receive the total amount of his salary, he had to adjust his gross pension by depositing the amount he had drawn.

The instruction will also be applicable to the CEC and other ECs, it said, citing a finance ministry decision.

"It's unfortunate that the Election Commission is not going by the rule when all other constitutional bodies including the Public Service Commission are obliging it," a senior CAG official said.

Sayed joined the Election Commission as the CEC on May 23 and Saifur on June 25 in 2000. Munser and Mohammad joined on April 19, 2001.

All 10 accused in Feni BCL leader murder case acquitted

BSS, Feni

The Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Feni, yesterday acquitted all the 10 accused in Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Elias Hussein Elin murder case.

Judge Mohammad Shahjahan, after hearing arguments of both the prosecution and the defence and examining the documents, acquitted the accused as the murder charges brought against them was not proved.

According to the prosecution, the BCL leader was killed in an attack by some unidentified assailants in front of the Central High School here on February 10, 1999.

The victim's brother Rahim Hossain filed a case with Feni Police Station the same day accusing 13 BNP leaders and workers of the murder.

The investigation officer of the case submitted charge sheet against 10 of the 13 accused on June 30, 1999.

Those acquitted of the murder charge include district JASAS General Secretary Fazlur Rahman Bakul, district Chhatra Dal President Kamrul Hasan Masud, Chhatra Dal leaders Moshfiqur Rahman Pipul and Kafiluddin Mamun, Sechasebak Dal leader Shajahan Siraj and Juba Dal activists Chowdhury Anwar Hossain Tuhin, Russel and Titu.

SHAZNEEN CASE

Cross-exam of PWs winds up after 119 hearings

Self-defence of accused on Aug 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The recording of statements and cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses in the Shazneen case were complete yesterday after a long-drawn process involving 119 hearings.

Two special tribunals for prevention of women and children repression recorded depositions and cross-examination of the witnesses. Meanwhile, the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday fixed August 10 for test (self-defence) of the accused in the case.

After completion of cross-examination of the Investigation Officer (IO) Mojibur Rahman, additional superintendent of police, CID, Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah fixed the date.

Mojibur Rahman, the 23rd prosecution witness in the case, was cross-examined by lawyers of the five accused -- Hasan, Badal,

Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- for about four and a half hours yesterday.

During the cross-examination, Mojibur Rahman told the court that he had investigated the case and submitted the charge sheet against the accused.

Replying to a question, the IO said Hasan behaved indecently with Shazneen which he (IO) came to know from the statements of the witnesses during investigation.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Mahub Ahmed, Arfan Uddin Khan and Salma Khanam appeared for the state and advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajol, MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Islam and Mizanur Rahman defended the accused.

The trial of the case began with the deposition of Mojibur Rahman, who was also the complainant of the case, on July 9, 2000.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur

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Chehlum



Chehlum of Saam Ruslan Anando, the only beloved son of Mr. Fazle Selim and Mrs. Rukhsana Selim, beloved brother of Shahneela Nawsheen and Rudmeela Nawsheen and a student of the European Standard School, Dhanmondi, Dhaka will be held today on Tuesday, August 5th, 2003 after Maghrib prayers at 1/10, Block D, Lalmatia, Dhaka. Relatives, friends, and well-wishers are requested to attend the chehlum and pray to almighty Allah for salvation of the departed soul.

Bereaved parents and sisters of
Saam Ruslan Anando
Tel: 9137608; 9137609

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