DHAKA MONDAY DECEMBER 20, 2004

People's Right to Know

Options include petroleum price hike

and import duty cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The energy ministry has sought the

(BPC) in importing oil at a very high

of two options: hiking petroleum

prices, or reducing the duty on

The energy ministry has thought

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OPEN TENDERING IN PROCUREMENT

Armed Forces seek compliance waiver

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Armed Forces have sought an exemption from having to comply with the Public Procurement Regulation 2003 (PPR) concerning all purchases that it considers directly or indirectly to be related to national security.

As a result, the Armed Forces would not have to use an open tendering process before making

such purchases.

The Daily Star has learnt that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, acting as head of the Ministry of Defence,

has already agreed to the proposal.

The PPR, which is intended to create greater transparency in government purchases and prevent corruption, had been praised by donor agencies and other international bodies alike.

"The Armed Forces might face difficulties in operating procure-ment process if the Public Procurement Regulation 2003 is applicable in defence purchase. So a process is under way to formulate a separate comprehensive policy as the matter is related to national security," says a confidential report

to the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry seen exclusively by The Daily Star. The committee is expected to discuss the report today.

The report says the new policy will not be in conflict with the PPR and existing commercial rules and will take into account international

"If the government wants, it can give a waiver to the Armed Forces from the public procurement regulation. But to do so it has to enact a separate regulation which would have to be approved by the cabi-

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division under the planning ministry yesterday.

Currently, the Director General of Defence Purchase completes procurement for the Armed Forces in line with the PPR and other existing purchase rules.

Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, a former army chief and the chairman of the standing committee, told The Daily Star that the government supports the PPR but recognises that there may be a SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Mahathir flies back home, meets Hasina, Ershad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad left Dhaka yesterday after wrapping up his three-day visit with private meet-ings with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and former president HM Ershad.

During his three-day trip, Mahathir delivered a keynote speech at the first Bangladesh-Malaysia Business Forum, received an honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Dhaka University at its convocation, called on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, had lunch with senior ministers and a meeting with former foreign policy-makers. In these meetings, Mahathir

If the government does not projected Malaysia's success story choose either of these measures, the and stressed tough decision-BPC will incur an estimated loss of

Tk 2,200 crore during the present fiscal year. The corporation incurred aloss of Tk 1,131 crore in 2003-04.

Ministry seeks ways

to offset BPC losses

A major source of revenue, the finance ministry's assistance to find BPC pays more than Tk 3,500 crore a solution to the financial losses incurred by the state-owned in import duty to the national exche-Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain placed the options to Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a meeting on Saturday.

petroleum imports without hiking "We have decided to scrutinise the two options before reaching a decision," Mosharraf told The Daily Star about the outcome of the meet-

The government in the past had agreed to a World Bank proposal to adjust petroleum prices on half-

The government had made a major petroleum price adjustment on January 5, 2003. Then it adjusted the prices of jet fuel and kerosene on

May 1 this year.

Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have continued their pressure to hike petroleum prices in line with

the international market price.
A recent IFM mission asked the finance minister to hike the prices

PM pledges 25 more technical centres

BSS, Chapainawabganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government will set up 25 more Technical Training Centres (TTC) in the country that will provide training facilities to 24,000 people every year.

She expressed the hope that technically skilled manpower will attract more foreign investment in the country that will in turn generate more employment opportunity. She was addressing a meeting after laying the foundation stone of a TTC in Bargharia in Chapainawabganj.

She said although a particular political party is trying to obstruct development resorting to hartal and anarchy, her government is determined to carry forward its development activities.

The TTC, which will be set up on 11.82 acres of land, will train unemployed youths in information and communication technology (ICT) and other technical disciplines, Khaleda said.

The institute will provide training to 840 youths every year on seven trades including computer SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

The headline of the report run in The Daily Star yesterday inadvertently stated that Dhaka will send 1,542

troops to the trouble-torn region of

The Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate yester-day clarified that Bangladesh will, in

fact, send troops to various parts of

Sudan and not in Darfur as there was

no proposal for Bangladesh's send-

UN Security Council, we'll be able to

say for sure what number of troops

would be deployed in which places

of Sudan," ISPR Director Lt. Colonel

Nazrul Islam said yesterday.

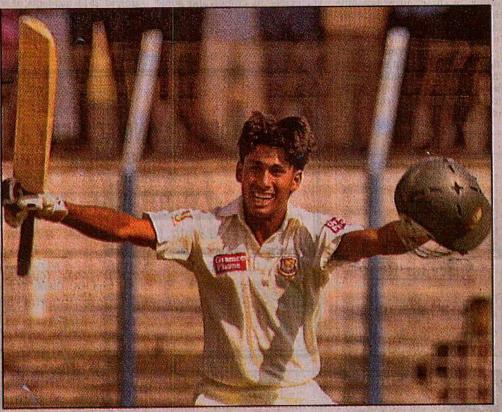
"Once decisions are made at the

Correction

ing troops to Darfur.

Darfur.

SHINING LIGHT



against India yesterday, the third day of the second Test at MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

CPB won't join rallies before human wall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) has decided not to join the combined rallies of the opposition parties to be held at Mongla and Sunamganj ahead of the December 30 human wall although it had joined similar rallies before the Teknaf to Tentulia demonstration.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan said instead of joining the combined rallies on December 24, the CPB leaders would hold a rally in Dhaka on the same day as part of its mobilisation programme for the

We are in a movement to overthrow the present government but that does not mean that we have formed a permanent platform of opposition, which will act from a common podium all the time," the CPB president said.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star that such decision of one of the prime allies of the combined opposition would not, however, hamper the

"Parties in the 11-party left alliance are with us in the movement to overthrow the government and they are also working round the clock to SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Car bombings kill 62 in Najaf, Karbala

Suicide car bombers yesterday struck Iraq's two main Shia holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, killing at least 62 people and wounding nearly 130, six weeks before a historic election.

Both bombs, which went off about two hours apart, exploded near crowded bus stations in a seemingly coordinated attempt to cause as much bloodshed as possible among Shias, a long-oppressed majority expected to dominate the January 30 vote.

Earlier in Baghdad, gunmen killed three Electoral Commission employees after hauling them from a car on a busy street. The bomb blasts were not far

from important shrines -- the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf and Imam Hussein mosque in Karbala.

The attacks appeared designed to provoke sectarian conflict with Saddam Hussein's long-dominant Sunni minority -- officials have seen similar motives behind previous

Shia leaders called on their peo-

ple not to reply in kind. In Najaf, the suicide bomber detonated his vehicle about 300

yards (metres) from the Imam Ali shrine, near crowds of people queu-ing for buses and taxis and not far

from busy offices.

Medical officials said there were at least 48 dead and 90 wounded in the blast, which left stunned crowds waiting in freezing temperatures for ambulances. A thick column of smoke rose from the blast site as a rare drizzling rain fell.

Police imposed a curfew in Najaf's old city. In Karbala, where a suicide

bomber stuck about two hours earlier, the main hospital said 14 people were killed and 39 wounded. A hospital official said all appeared to be civilians with many women and children among them.

A cameraman for Reuters who filmed the aftermath of the attack said the ground around the bus station was littered with dead and wounded. Flames licked at the burnt-out vehicles nearly an hour

NBR behind in

its target of income tax collection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is falling short of its target of income tax collection from the large taxpayers although it is on track dealing with other taxpayers.

Between July and November, the
NBR was supposed to collect Tk 1,718

crore in income tax, but it collected Tk 1,542 crore leaving a deficit of Tk 176 crore. The deficit is caused mainly due to the non-payments of large taxpayers.
Reviewing the tax collection

scenario at a meeting with income tax officials, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday asked the NBR to appoint auditors to look into

the files of the large taxpayers.

Expressing discontent at the overall tax collection, Saifur observed the revenue collection growth this year is only 13 percent.

"You can easily have such a reve-nue collection growth when the GDP is growing at over 5 percent. Where is the result of your efforts?" he ques-tioned the tax officials and asked them to strengthen tax collection drive.

The tax officials told the minister that they face a few impediments to SEE PAGE 11 COL 7 he would take remedial measure

Transparency in riverlink plan demanded

Veena Sikri says it is still at conceptual stage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day international conference on transboundary rivers concluded yesterday with a call for complete transparency to dispel mistrust and concerns arising out of the proposed Indian River Linking

Project (IRLP).

The conference adopted a set of nine recommendations including greater regional co-operation concerning the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GMB) river systems, adherence to the principles of equity and no harm to any country,

the sharing of data and information between the co-riparian countries and management of transboundary rivers from the 'mountain top to the

However, addressing the concluding session of the conference, SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

HEADMISTRESS MURDER **Investigators** under pressure STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The investigators are under pressure in probing Thursday's gruesome double murder at Baridhara, although they stick to the suspicion that the teacher and her daughter were killed due to a dispute over the

school managing committee.
The investigation however continued as the caretaker and two security guards of the house and two domestic helps of slain Siddheshwari Girls High School Headmistress Sabera Begum Baby were remanded for four days yester-

A well-placed source said the investigators were under pressure from government high-ups not to dig too much into the role of a former member of the school managing committee who had conflict with the headmistress.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Joy may join politics if people want

Hasina tells newsmen

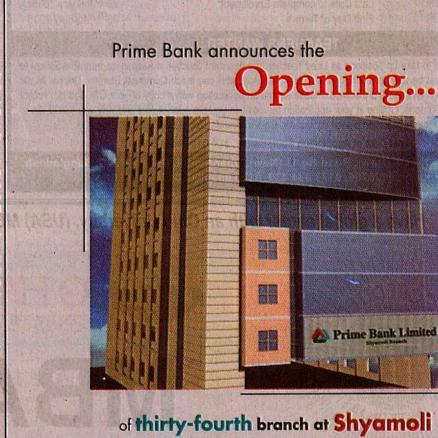
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that whether her son Sajib Wajed Joy joins politics depends on the wishes of the people. "As a mother, I will not influence

him to join politics. If he joins, he will do so in his own capacity. But it depends on the people's desire,"
Hasina told reporters at a city hotel.
Joy, nowliving in the US, is sched-

uled to come to Dhaka on December 22 on a three-week visit with his American wife Christine.

A few local dailies, referring to Joy's interview with ENA (Eastern News Agency), said that after coming to Dhaka this month, he may join the Awami League politics.



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