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**DU ARABIC DEPT
Three 'immoral'
teachers finally
getting job**

DU CORRESPONDENT

A section of teachers of Arabic Department at Dhaka University (DU) have alleged that the appointment of three lecturers at the department was finalised under political consideration.

The BNP-Jamaat-backed administration appointed the three 'immoral' candidates under political consideration, alleged a senior teacher of the department.

The candidates are 'immoral' as all of them hid information about getting two degrees from two different institutions simultaneously, a practice which is illegal, alleged the teachers.

The decision of appointing the three candidates as lecturers was made at a Syndicate meeting on Saturday. However, the appointment process was stalled for over a year after it gave rise to controversy.

A committee selected the three as lecturers on January 14 last year against two advertised posts. All the three candidates obtained degrees simultaneously from the

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**THIRD ROUND BLOCK BIDDING
Govt weighs today tender
proposal for exploration**

SHARIEF KHAN

The caretaker government's cabinet body today considers the energy ministry's proposal to float the third round block bidding for oil and gas exploration in off-shore blocks as an urgent solution for impending gas supply crisis from 2011.

The bidding will offer eight shallow-water blocks and 20 deep-sea blocks—each having exploration area between 3,000 square km and 7,000 square km.

If the cabinet approves the proposal, Petrobangla would go for publicity on Wednesday, sources said.

However, this proposal has been toggling between the cabinet and the cabinet's purchase committee and the energy ministry for the last two months. The cabinet body earlier discussed the proposal and forwarded it to the purchase committee and the purchase committee sent it to the energy ministry to

scrutinise it further before submitting it back to the cabinet.

The original proposal as it is being submitted to the cabinet today, remains substantially unchanged, sources said.

"The most important issue is how the government would handle the third round bid," said a well-placed ministry source.

"We hear that the government may not stage international road shows to attract oil companies and the only road shows being planned are going to be held in Dhaka. This would be a blunder," he said.

Bangladesh had previously held three road shows in Dhaka, London and Houston during the second round block bid and in London and Houston in the first round. "Even a large country like India is currently planning to hold road shows in five spots for its upcoming bidding. Road shows are not pleasure trips... it's business promotion for Bangladesh," he added. "In fact, if

the government does not promote this bid, we will not get good offers and our whole effort will be wasted."

Third round block bidding has become very important as Petrobangla's forecast shows a grim picture of gas supply shortfall beginning from 2011. With energy demands rapidly increasing, Bangladesh has no option but to tap all its potentials immediately.

The government is going for only off-shore blocks, as a court injunction bars bidding of on-shore blocks. Gas from off-shore blocks will be obviously costlier than that of on-shore blocks because of higher exploration and development expenditure but presently the government has no choice.

"We also need to have the legal issue resolved to ensure exploration in the on-shore blocks," said an official of Petrobangla.

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**Hasina case sent
to special court
for fast disposal**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The case against detained former premier Sheikh Hasina and seven others for taking bribe of Tk 3 crore in connection with the installation of a power plant in Khulna was transferred yesterday to the First Special Court at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar MP Hostel.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court allowed the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to interrogate detained former law minister barister Moudud Ahmed and former state minister for energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain at the jail gate in connection with the Niko graft case.

Besides, former president and Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad and his wife Rawshan Ershad were granted bail in a theft case filed by Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in January 2006.

HASINA CASE

After scrutinising the case docket (CD) and other relevant documents, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque transferred the case for its quick disposal.

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**WB initiates move to
integrate South Asia**

Aims at improving regional trade, power links

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) has kick-started a consultation process for South Asian regional integration to improve trade and power links, and to better manage water resources in the least integrated region of the world.

Visiting WB Vice-president Praful Patel revealed the initiative yesterday after meeting the finance and foreign advisers as part of a trip that includes visits to Nepal and India to identify common grounds for regional projects on trade, water management, energy, and infrastructure, which may be funded by the bank.

Patel told reporters that the region is the least integrated in the world, and better connectivity will boost the already formidable growth rates in South Asian countries, as studies have shown a significant link between improved

regional integration and rising growth.

"We have done the analysis and we have found hydro-power, trade, and water management as key areas," Patel said adding that the bank is willing to fund and provide technical assistance for future projects.

"I am going to Nepal and India to hold consultations to identify concerns and priorities," he said adding, it is the beginning of the region taking concrete steps in achieving 'win-win' scenarios for the countries.

Describing India as the world's most energy hungry nation, he said regional integration could tap into Nepal's potential for producing 85,000 megawatts (MW) of power while its current capacity stands at less than 5,000 MW.

Patel said the region also has a myriad of water problems including both droughts and floods,

requiring a more coordinated management of waterways similar to the successful joint-management of the Indus River basin by India and Pakistan.

"We (WB) can play the role of convening by having these countries on common ground and perhaps with different priorities. We can finance regional projects like we have done in other parts of the world," he said.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters that the two sides talked about deepening Bangladesh's engagement in the region and that the country was the first to start the initiative for regional integration through South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) mechanisms.

WB also signed an agreement with Bangladesh on a \$100 million quick disbursing credit, to allow the government quick access to the

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**SIDR ASSISTANCE
Australia to
provide
A\$6.5m more**

UNB, Dhaka

The Australian government will provide a further A\$ 6.5 million to help the people affected by Cyclone Sidr, which caused widespread devastation in November last year.

Building on an initial contribution of A\$ 3 million, this new funding brings Australian relief for Cyclone Sidr to A\$ 9.5 million, said a press release yesterday.

"Australia's additional funding of A\$ 6.5 million will help meet immediate needs through provision of food to 800,000 people, upgrading water and sanitation facilities and distribution of nutrition supplements for over 50,000 women and children," said Australian High Commissioner Douglas Foskett.

"The funding will also support rehabilitation of damaged schools in the affected areas," he said.

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PHOTO STAR

Authorities seal off a number of containers with inedible rice at Chittagong port. Pakistan government sent it as food aid for Sidr victims.

**PAK SIDR AID
Containers
full of rice
found rotten
at port**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Several containers of damaged rice received as aid for Sidr victims are being held in Chittagong Port while officials await further guidelines from higher authorities.

The damaged rice was among the food aid received from Pakistan. The containers are stocked in yard no 3, 7 and 10 of Chittagong port.

Pakistan sent a total of 2500 tonnes of rice in 120 containers that reached Chittagong port last week. Out of this a total of 71 containers were opened formally on Sunday when rice in 20 containers was found to be water-soaked and giving out a stench, sources in the Food Department at Chittagong port said.

The matter was communicated

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**Pakistani hostage
drama ends**

**Militants set free 250 pupils
after tense talks**

AFP, Peshawar

Heavily armed militants took around 250 children hostage at a school in Pakistan yesterday but freed them after tense negotiations with tribal elders, the interior ministry said.

Rebels armed with rocket launchers holed up at the school in the remote village of Domail in North West Frontier Province after a failed attempt to abduct a local official that left one of their men dead, they said.

Police surrounded the building while tribesmen negotiated with the insurgents, who had demanded safe passage in exchange for the release of the pupils, aged between eight and 12.

"They have surrendered themselves to the local jirga (tribal council) along with their weapons and released the children," ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told AFP after the seven-hour drama ended.

Asked if Pakistani authorities had agreed to the militants' demands, Cheema said: "They are still with the jirga and it is now between the jirga and local police."

State television said the government had agreed to their demands to go free.

Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz told AFP earlier that around seven "terrorists" had taken between 200 and 250 children hostage.

Police also said they had received orders to pull back from the building.

"We have received a radio message that we should withdraw and

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**Thaksin ally
elected new
Thai PM**

AFP, Bangkok

Thai lawmakers elected Samak Sundaravej, an ally of deposed premier Thaksin Shinawatra, as the nation's new prime minister yesterday, restoring civilian leadership after 16 months of military rule.

Samak, a veteran politician in his own right, is widely expected to try to clear the way for Thaksin to return to Thailand.

The election of such a close ally cements a stunning political turnaround for Thaksin, who was toppled by the military in September

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Prayer Timing

January 29

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:35	6:10
Zohr	12:30	1:15
Asr	4:15	4:30
Maghrib	5:46	5:50
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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Dhaka-Chittagong				Chittagong-Dhaka			
Flight No.	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No.	Days	Departure	Arrival
4A 301	Daily	0830	0920	4A 302	Daily	0945	1035
4A 303	Daily	1800	1850	4A 304	Daily	1915	2005

Dhaka-Sylhet				Sylhet-Dhaka			
Flight No.	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No.	Days	Departure	Arrival
4A 401	Daily	1100	1145	4A 402	Daily	1210	1255

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