

## SONADIA DEEP SEA PORT Debate over feasibility report tomorrow

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

A deep sea port can be set up at Sonadia channel in three phases till 2055 at an estimated cost of Tk 60,000 crore with the first phase completed by 2016, says a feasibility study.

The first phase of the port in the offshore island of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar would cost Tk 13,000 crore under public-private partnership (PPP) financing, said the draft final report of the techno-economic study.

A Japanese firm -- Pacific Consultant International -- that conducted the 31-month study since June 2006, submitted

the report in February mentioning that the deep sea port would be established on a more than 220-hectare area.

The draft report said the port would revolutionise Bangladesh's trade through sea routes with the South Asian region. And it would help transport of goods to India's seven south-eastern states, Kolkata port and Haldia port, Nepal, Myanmar as well as to Kunming province of China.

Meanwhile, the report would be placed for an open discussion in the capital tomorrow.

All the stakeholders along with members of the technical committee and staffs

related to the study and representatives from different government organisations would participate in the deliberations at Sonargaon Hotel and give their views on the study.

Sources said the deliberations might throw light on if there are scopes to reduce the cost of completing the first phase.

They pointed out that as per the draft final report two 'break-waters'-one 1,950 metres and the other 2,250 metres- are required to be constructed at the mouth of Sonadia channel to protect the deep sea port from tidal upsurge and waves.

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This computer-aided design shows the deep-sea port that could be built at Sonadia channel of Moheshkhali in Cox's Bazar in three phases at an estimated cost of Tk 60,000 crore. PHOTO: COURTESY

## PILKHANA CARNAGE 6 more BDR men confess to involvement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six more members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday confessed to their involvement in the February 25-26 Pilkhana carnage before magistrates.

Metropolitan magistrates Rashedul Kabir and Dilara Alo Chandana recorded the confessional statements of the six.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested 15 more BDR members in connection with the case yesterday.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police

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## Cross-border crimes go up after carnage

It's dropping fast, says BDR DG

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Cross-border movement of criminals, and trafficking of illicit goods including small arms increased alarmingly in the days following the events in Pilkhana Headquarters of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), observed an internal security report.

The national security is likely to be affected by the recent development, and trafficking of illegal weapons might rise taking advantage of it, the report cautioned.

Director General of BDR Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam however told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday that the number of illegal cross-border activities has been dropping fast

with the increasing activities of the border security force, initiated lately.

"Our border patrol activities have increased with the passing of time. We've tightened the control on the border areas resulting in arrests of illegal intruders, and seizure of illegal goods," he observed.

The internal security report, submitted to the highest authorities of the government in early April, observed that the post-BDR mutiny time has been marked by sharp increase of different illegal activities across all frontiers of Bangladesh. It identified the illegal activities as trafficking of women and children, and illicit narcotics, and smuggling of arms and ammunitions.

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## KHALEDA'S HOUSE JP won't object to any legal, transparent action

CU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) will not have any objection to the cancellation of allotment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's house at Dhaka Cantonment if it is done through a legal and transparent process, said acting JP Chairman barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud yesterday.

"None is above law. But it should be done legally," Anisul told reporters at a views-exchange meeting at the Chittagong Club in the port city.

He said they came to know about the issue through news items published in various newspapers but the matter is not yet clear to them.

Replying to a question, he

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## KHALEDA'S CANTT HOUSE ISSUE BNP may go for 2-way strategy

Rallies in dists, upazilas today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP high-ups differ on how to counter the government move to evict its Chairperson Khaleda Zia from her cantonment residence, said party sources.

While some prefer launching a movement to force the government to cancel revocation of the allotment of Khaleda's house on Shaheed Mainul Road in Dhaka cantonment, others think a legal battle will be the best course since the organisation is not ready yet for a movement.

Talking to The Daily Star, several leaders said setting about a movement before reorganising the party would do more harm than good.

They observed that much of the rank and file believe the efforts to revamp BNP down to the grassroots level should be completed first.

In the interim, there should be programmes to mobilise public opinion against the government's decision.

In early February, the party took some steps to shake off the effects of its drubbing in the December 29 election. It is expected

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Govt will not tolerate any chaos

Home minister warns

UNB, Dhaka

The government would not tolerate any chaos over the cancellation of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence, said Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday.

Speaking at a function of Mujib Kalam Parishad at Mirpur, she alleged that some are trying to create unrest in the country capitalising on the issue.

"We will not tolerate any agitation to create chaos...it will be dealt with a strong hand," she said.

The minister said the government would take action against those trying to fish in the troubled water.

She said the cabinet made

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## DMC reopens today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Academic activities will resume at Dhaka Medical College (DMC) today after a 10-day long unscheduled closure following a fierce clash between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Talking to The Daily Star, DMC Principal Dr Kazi Din Mohammad said three college hostels were opened for students yesterday as classes and examinations will resume today.

The decision of reopening the college was taken Wednesday at a meeting of the college academic council.

The authorities declared the institution closed sine die on March 31 following the clash that left college unit BCL top leader Abul Kalam Asad Rajib killed and 20 others injured at Dr Fazle Rabbi Hostel of the college.

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## Dhaka's move for JWG on counter-terrorism

Meeting tomorrow to finalise strategy

HASAN JAHID TUSHER and M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Bangladesh is looking forward to set up joint working groups (JWG) with a number of countries including the UK and US for tackling terrorism, money laundering, and human trafficking through sharing of information and counter-terrorism training.

As a part of the move, the government will hold a meeting tomorrow at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to finalise its strategy to form a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism (JWGCT) with the British government.

Currently, Britain provides counter-terror training, and finances and organises counter-terror research by local think tanks. The proposal for setting up a JWG came from the UK side during the immediate past caretaker government's regime.

Home ministry officials said they will also hold a meeting on April 27 to finalise a strategy for a JWG with the US. Sources in an intelligence agency told The Daily Star that the US is

going to arrange a seminar on counter-terrorism within a very short time in India, which will be attended by a Bangladeshi high official.

Gradually the government will soon form JWG with Australia and Russia too. "We will sit on April 12 to finalise the strategy for a joint working group with the UK. We will gradually set up joint working groups with Australia and Russia too," Home secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder told The Daily Star last night.

He said counter-terrorism, border security, money laundering, funding of militant organisations, human and drug trafficking, political asylum, and consular access facilities, among others will come in discussion at tomorrow's meeting.

"At the meeting we will decide how may we approach combating terrorism, and after finalising our strategy we will inform the British government," he said adding that the meetings of the JWG will be held first in Dhaka and then in London gradually.

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## Criminal killed in 'shootout'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal was killed in a shootout between his cohorts and Rab members at Dakkhin Keraniganj in the city early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Nasiruddin Suman alias Kosai Nasir, son of Nazim Kosai of Kaliganj village.

He had been accused in at least 17 cases on various charges including murder and extortion, said Rab.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-10 arrested Nasir from Purba Choral on Thursday.

"During interrogation, Nasir told Rab personnel that he had hidden illegal arms and ammunition at a place near Nazirabagh Residential Project at Dakkhin Keraniganj," Rab said.

When the Rab members took Nasir to the spot at about

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## INSTALLATION OF GTCL COMPRESSOR Chevron's controversial partnership proposal

SHARIER KHAN

As fund crisis keeps the government indecisive about installing three gas compressors to boost pressure and quantity, American oil giant Chevron reiterates a proposal to install a compressor station in the national grid in Muchai owned by Titas Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL).

The operator of Bibiyana, Moulvibazar and Jalalabad that supplies 45 percent of the country's total gas production has suggested forging a partnership with GTCL.

Chevron's partnership proposal suggests that finance for this compressor station will come under the Production Sharing Contract (PSC), to be approved by the Joint Management Committee (JMC) with Petrobangla.

This means that the financing will be "cost recoverable". Chevron will recover the cost from gas sales from Bibiyana gas field under PSC for block 12.

But the PSCs with Chevron do not allow it to take part in the national gas distribution sys-

tem, or partnership with GTCL, Petrobangla sources say.

"Besides, it will unduly give Chevron the authority to control major chunk of the country's gas distribution system. This will definitely create a number of serious legal complications over the authority and ownership of the compressor station and the distribution pipeline," observes an official.

"Chevron has no business with the GTCL's project or any project of the national companies," the official says.

On the other hand, a Chevron official said installing a compressor in partnership with GTCL in Muchai falls within Chevron's PSC area.

"Chevron Bangladesh has been operating our existing gas fields in full compliance with the PSC it signed with Petrobangla and the government. The Muchai compression project is one of the key enablers covered under the PSC to expand the country's total gas production which will benefit the country as a whole and the industry," he added.

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## Tk 1,000CR DEPOSITED AGAINST UTTARA, PURBACHAL PROJECTS Rajuk cashing in on delay in plot allotment process

HELEMUL ALAM

Over one lakh plot seekers of Rajuk are now frustrated with the dilly-dally over starting the plot allotment process under its Uttara Model Town (third phase) and Purbachal projects while over Tk 1,000 crore deposited money against the plots remains idle under Rajuk authorities pending selection of plot winners.

But Rajuk is getting full benefits from the huge amount of money in the form of interest thanks to the delay while the plot seekers lose about Tk 60 crore which they could earn as interest against their deposited money, sources at Rajuk said.

Over one lakh plot seekers submitted applications with the sums stipulated against different sizes of plots under two projects--Uttara Model Town (Third Phase) and Purbachal New Town Project--from November 25, 2008 to March 10 this year, said Sukumar Chandra Saha, mem-

ber estate of Rajuk, adding around 1.67 lakh forms were sold during the time.

Most of the applications along with the money have been submitted before January 12, said another Rajuk official.

The deposited money will be over Tk 1,000 crore as on an average Tk 1 lakh had to be deposited against a plot by over one lakh plot seekers, Rajuk sources said.

Applicants were given assurance of a transparent result by last December and they were to get back their money by the next two months if they failed to get the plot.

But the present government has extended the form submission time till April 30 that has created doubts about transparency in the plot allocation process, said many plot seekers.

The frustration is higher among those plot seekers who submitted the money by taking loans. Now they cannot withdraw their applications for the money, they

said. The last date for procuring forms is now April 29 while submission date is April 30 instead of January 14 and January 15. Earlier Rajuk fixed the date of procuring forms and submission on December 17 and December 18, 2008 respectively.

"I could earn around Tk 6,000-7,000 in interest if I kept my Tk 1 lakh in fixed deposit (FDR) scheme of a bank for six months," said a plot seeker from Pallabi area.

"Every month I am paying Tk 2,500 as interest on an organisation against Tk 50,000 loan," said Omar Faruk, a resident of Mir Hajirbagh, who applied for a 3-katha plot under Purbachal project.

He said he took the risk as he heard that everything will be done transparently by one month and it could take hardly two months to get back his deposited money if he fails to get the plot.

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Residents of Dhanmondi form a human chain between Road-7 and the bridge on Road-8 yesterday urging the authorities to make the area free from traffic jam and noise pollution. Dhanmondi Residential Area Welfare Association organised the programme. PHOTO: STAR