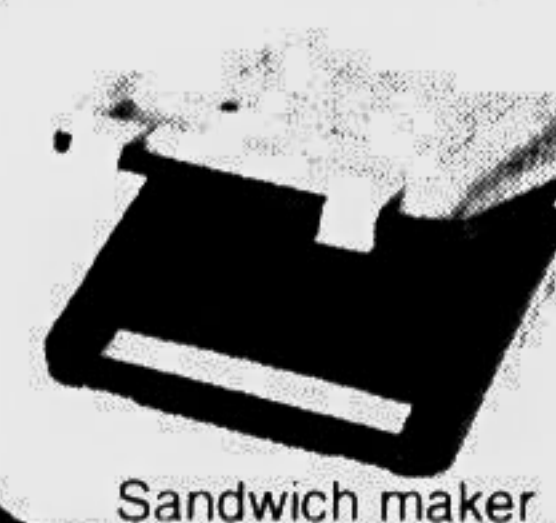


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PHILIPS

## Japan praises 3-nation Business Summit

The Government of Japan has highly praised the Business Summit meeting of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan held on January 15 under the initiative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports BSS.

In a press release issued by the Japanese foreign ministry, the Japanese government regarded the business summit as demonstration of the three countries' strong will to work at regional cooperation and trade liberalisation within South Asia.

"The Japanese government also expects that an attempt like this summit will contribute further to promote regional cooperation," said the press release made available in the city yesterday.

The Japanese government also referred to the meeting of the prime ministers of both Pakistan and India during the business summit and said this had indicated two countries' strong intention to continue the series of bilateral talks which resumed in March last year.

The government of Japan appreciates this and hopes that further progress will be made in bilateral talks in future.

## Health policy at final stage

A health policy suited to time and need is now at the final stage for approval of the government, reports UNB.

This was disclosed at a meeting of the Estimate Committee of the Parliament yesterday held at Sangsadd Bhaban with its president Dr Mizanul Haq in the chair.

Health and Family Welfare Secretary Mohammad Ali informed the committee that Food and Nutrition Policy has already been approved by the Cabinet.

The meeting discussed the overall activities and responsibilities of various departments, directorates and organisations under the Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

The meeting was also informed about the progress of different development projects under the ministry.

Committee members A S M Firoz, Prof Mohammad Abdul Kuddus, Dr T M Fazel, Rabbi Chowdhury, Sultan Mohammad Monsur Ahmed and Akteruzzaman attended the meeting.

## Survey of khas land in two hill dists soon

State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharrar yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that survey would be conducted in Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts soon to assess khas lands, reports BSS.

The state minister was responding to a supplementary question from Awami League member Bir Bahadur (Bandarban) who wanted to know the reason as to why Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts were shown blank in the district-wise list of khas lands tabled in the House.

The state minister said prior to the signing of the treaty there was no congenial atmosphere in those two hill districts to conduct surveys of khas lands.

## Fish products

From page 1  
tional bank credits to refurbish their factories to comply with the EU regulations, Mostafa said.

He said the industry, employing about one crore people directly or indirectly, is surviving on exports to US, Japan and non-EU countries.

Mostafa and some others in the industry said despite commendable steps like extending credits up to Tk 40 lakh to modernise farms, there has not been much effort to lobby in the EU to lift the ban.

The government revamped a 1989 law last year to meet the EU regulations but raised the annual charges on different counts by 100 percent that made the exports costlier and less competitive, they added.

Mostafa said that the shrimp processors, beleaguered by the EU ban, affecting 42 percent of the exports, are counting the costs of blocked exports with freezing cost and load shedding.

He said the shrimp industry needs a shot in the arm. He demanded of government that the government increase the number of factories qualifying for meeting the EU standard. At least 25 more factories have qualified, spending upto Taka two crore.

The policy must be reviewed urgently to help the industry. Mostafa observed adding that a decision on setting up of a Shrimp Development Board remained in the chillers since 1994.



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia along with other party leaders placing wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the city yesterday to mark his birth anniversary. —Star photo

## 35 injured in post-polls clash in Tarash

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 19: At least 35 people were injured in a post-election clash between two rival groups of supporters at Magura Union in Tarash thana today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash took place when the supporters of newly elected chairman of the union attacked the supporters of the defeated candidate in the morning.

Seven of the injured — Khalil, 45, Alal, 32, Rajab, 30, Jalal, 35, Gulbahar, 45, Siraj, 32, and Alauddin, 36, — were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition. Two cases were filed.

## One beaten to death in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent  
NARAYANGANJ, Jan 19: One person was killed when he was attacked by an unidentified gang at Rupshi Bazar under Rupganj thana today.

The dead was identified as Fazlul Haque, 40. He was severely beaten up when he was setting up his make-shift shop at the bazar, police said. Haque was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 4 am today.

A case was filed with Rupganj thana by the victim's father in this connection.

## Bus dacoity on Dhaka-Kapasia road

GAZIPUR, Jan 19: Gunmen in the guise of passengers boarded a minibus and looted the valuables of the passengers in broad day light on Dhaka-Kapasia road in Sadar thana today, reports UNB.

Police said the robbers swooped on the passengers when the Dhaka-bound minibus from Kapasia was passing by Rajendrapur crossing at about 10 am, leaving at least 10 people injured.

The dacoits made off with the booty at Porabari near the National Park. A case was filed with the local police.

## Plan to drill

From page 1  
ronment or under any valid contract, official sources said.

The production sharing contract (PSC) with Occidental for blocks 13 and 14 was supposed to be terminated naturally on January 11 as per contractual terms for its failure to fulfil the work commitment during the three-year initial exploration period.

The government has not yet announced the termination of the PSC but it is now seeking legal advice from two lawyers regarding the fate of the PSC.

The company has notified the government about its plan to go ahead with the drilling work in Jalalabad although the PSC is yet to be extended.

As per the terms of the PSC, Occidental sought clearance from the Directorate of Environment (DOE). But the DOE did not clear the US company's plan since its contract in these blocks have not been extended.

Quoting Section 4, paragraph 2 of the Petroleum Act, 1974, a source said no one can conduct any such exploratory activity in Bangladesh without prior consent from the government. "Therefore, what Occidental is planning to do is totally illegal," he added.

## Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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## 'Zia was architect of modern Bangladesh'

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday described late President Ziaur Rahman as an architect of modern Bangladesh who, they said, introduced a new dimension in politics, reports UNB.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia attended the discussion organised at her 29 Minto Road official residence, marking the 62nd birthday of Ziaur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The speakers recalled the glorious activities of Ziaur Rahman and termed him a successful soldier, freedom fighter as well as a successful statesman.

Chaired by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the meeting was addressed by Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury. Dr Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain, Barister Moudud Ahmed, M K Anwar, Jatiya Press Club President Rezauddin Ahmed, DUTA President Prof Yusuf Haider, Supreme Court Bar Association General Secretary Jainul Abedin, DU teacher Prof Aftab Ahmed and Prof Jahanaara Begum.

Calling Zia a great reformer of politics, the BNP Secretary General said Zia proclaimed independence in 1971 and he had fought actively in the Liberation War.

Bhuiyan accused the present government of tarnishing the image of Ziaur Rahman in many ways. "It will never be possible to make anybody great by dishonoring other," he said.

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said Ziaur Rahman had united all the tribal people in the country by introducing "Bangladeshi nationalism".

He said many people are apprehending that by signing the CHT accord the present government will be forced in the future to sign more agreements like "Bangabandhu Andolan" amidst pressure by the secessionists.

Later, Begum Zia distributed prizes among the winners who took part in extempore speech and art competitions organised last year on the occasion of the 61st birthday of Ziaur Rahman.

## Clash in BB

From page 1  
his office room.

The motive behind the attack could not be known immediately. Insiders alleged that supporters of a faction of the Bank employees, defeated in the last CBA election, made the attack saying that the GM did 'injustice' in some administrative matters. However, they did not specify the injustice.

The agitated employees demanded immediate removal of the GM from his post. They shouted and used abusive words after Shamsuddin took shelter inside the Governor's room.

The CBA leaders rushed to the spot on hearing the incident. At that time, the attackers had an altercation with their rivals who were reportedly supporters of the CBA.

At one stage, they chased each other and were locked in a scuffle. They exchanged bricks in which some employees were injured. However, the clash was stopped by Motiheel police who rushed to the spot.

An assistant manager of the Bank filed a case with Motiheel thana in connection with the incident. None was, however, arrested.

Cause 57 of the Banking Company Act of 1991 prescribes two years' imprisonment and a fine of Tk 20,000 for resorting to such violent activities and disrupting normal work in a bank.

The dacoits made off with the booty at Porabari near the National Park. A case was filed with the local police.

The company has notified the government about its plan to go ahead with the drilling work in Jalalabad although the PSC is yet to be extended.

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Quoting Section 4, paragraph 2 of the Petroleum Act, 1974, a source said no one can conduct any such exploratory activity in Bangladesh without prior consent from the government. "Therefore, what Occidental is planning to do is totally illegal," he added.

Occidental officials were resisted several times by hundreds of local people when they

## Gasfield abandoned

From page 1  
plating to drill a new exploration well at a new location about five to six kilometres off the Magurchhara.

The company has preliminarily selected the spot which is situated at Kalapur in the Majidhee Tea Estate area, about four kilometres off from the Moulvibazar-Srimangal Road.

Occidental has also completed the design of the proposed new well, the source said, adding that a private construction firm will be instructed to begin the preparatory work for construction of the drilling pad on the new location within a week.

Meanwhile, hundreds of local people were found engaged in collecting scraps from the burning-out well and around the burnt-out area for the fifth day today. They are working hard to collect the metal scraps, even those that had gone under soil following the huge explosion that occurred in the early hours of June 15 last year.

Officials of Occidental on Saturday asked some local people to collect scraps from the damaged well through diagonal drilling and immediately after this the company started transportation of the huge machineries and equipment from the location, abandoning the gas field area without informing any of the authorities like district administration, Railway or Petrobangla, sources alleged.

It caused strong resentment among the people of the nearby areas who suffered due to the explosion. Occidental did not even repair the Bhanugachh-Srimangal Road, pay compensation money to the Khasias or the tea gardens.

Meanwhile, gas leakage through many points near the burnt-out well continued yesterday. Bubbling of gas on the pondlike spot at the eastern side of the well and that on the northern side of the nearby rail track was clearly visible yesterday afternoon.

Occidental began drilling of the relief well on its third location at Magurchhara with a view to sealing the burnt-out well from October 6 last year. The company completed the task by capping the mouth of the damaged well through diagonal drilling and immediately after this the company started transportation of the huge machineries and equipment from the location, abandoning the gas field area without informing any of the authorities like district administration, Railway or Petrobangla, sources alleged.

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## Biman to procure two aircraft, JS told

Biman Bangladesh Airlines plans to take lease of two aircraft in the current fiscal year, parliament was told yesterday, reports UNB.

One aircraft will be procured for operating in the domestic routes and another wide-bodied plane for carrying Hajj pilgrims, said State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Engr Mosharraf Hossain while replying to a starred question of Master Mujibur Rahman (AL-Shariatpur).

On a separate question from Tajul Islam (AL-Comilla), he said the government and the Biman Management would take necessary steps to expand the fleet as per recommendations of the Fleet Planning Committee of Biman.

A six-member enquiry committee has been investigating the F-28 accident which occurred at Sylhet on December 22, the minister said, adding that the extent of damage can be ascertained after submission of the enquiry committee report.

He said the damaged F-28 aircraft is not repairable according to preliminary observation by the insurance company which agreed to pay the total compensation money for the accident.

Engr Mosharraf said steps have been taken to provide compensation to the passengers of the ill-fated aircraft through the insurance company both for physical injuries and mental sufferings.

## Cabinet meet held

The regular weekly meeting of the Cabinet was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting, said an official handout.

## Policy formulated for distribution of farm khas lands: Minister

State Minister for Land Rashed Mosharraf yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that present government had formulated a national policy for distributing farm khas lands in 1997, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Awami League member Md Wazid Uddin Khan the state minister said national level, district level and thana level farm khas land distribution committees had already been formed to properly distribute those lands among landless, destitute and cripple freedom fighters.

Responding to supplementary question from member Hazi Md Selim, the state minister informed the House that measures were taken to recover illegally occupied khas lands across the country.

## JS discussion

From page 1  
their abstention from Parliament.

Other business transactions during yesterday's brief sitting include, introduction of a bill by Finance Minister, and a one-hour question-answer session.

The bill, styled 'The Comptroller and Auditor General (Remuneration and Privileges) Bill, 1997', seeks to provide the Comptroller and Auditor General with 2.5 per cent higher salary than that of a secretary of the government.

There would be no income tax on the payable salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Under the provisions of the Bill, he would be provided with a full-furnished house, and other facilities and privileges as enjoyed by a Secretary.

Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria in a statement said that the bill was aimed at simplifying the complex procedures of the fixation and settlement of salaries and remuneration of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The bill also seeks to repeal the Comptroller and Auditor General (Remuneration and Privileges) Ordinance, 1976, but included an especial provision of giving monthly salary at the rate of Tk 10,762.50 from January 1 to June 1995 and Tk 11,275 from July 1, 1995 till the enactment of the bill.

The two-hour sitting, chaired by Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury was adjourned at 1.10 pm. The House will resume at 11 am today.

## Young man

From page 1  
ately.

Severely injured Wahed was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on duty doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Hospital sources said the gang of about four youngmen fired on Wahed when he was standing at New Siddique Bazar at about 7.30 pm. The still unidentified killers left the spot running at once.

None was arrested or no case was lodged with Shabubagh thana in connection with the murder till filing of this report last night.

The freedom fighter army

## Cohen tells Chinese military officials

# US would prevail as an Asian power

BEIJING, Jan 19: US Defence Secretary William Cohen told China's military Monday it could work with Washington or against it, but either way the United States would prevail as an Asian power, reports AFP.

Cohen called it a "fundamental choice" in a well received speech to military officers here at the Academy of Military Science, a government research center.

"We can work together toward our common interest, or we can work against each other," he said. "The United States will succeed on either path."

However, Cohen's meetings here with China's top military leaders appeared to have set the stage for expanding military ties with a country it squared off against less than two years ago over Taiwan.

He and Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian signed a maritime military consultative agreement that seeks to avert unintended conflicts at sea by opening regular channels of communications between the US and Chinese militaries.

## Aporadh Jagat editor's bail prayer rejected

By Court Correspondent

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday refused the bail prayer of Kazi Shamimul Huq, editor of the weekly 'Aporadh Jagat'.

He was arrested after a report on the personal life of Bipasha Hayat, a renowned artiste and TV personality, was published in the magazine's 13th edition.

Abul Hayat, father of Bipasha, lodged an 'Ejhar' with Ramna thana alleging that Shamimul Huq and his gang claimed Tk 50,000 from him on December 24 last, which he refused to pay. They then threatened to publish a report against Bipasha. They went on to published the report which is false and defamatory, he said.

Police arrested Kazi Shamimul Huq on January 9. He has been detained under the Special Powers Act.

The agreement is the first of its kind between the US and Chinese military.

China offered Cohen fresh assurances that China would not supply anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran.

And in a spirit of openness, the Chinese military gave Cohen and a small delegation of Americans an unprecedented tour of the Beijing Air Defence Command Centre, which controls the surface-to-air missiles that defends Beijing from air attack.

Under the agreement, US and Chinese delegations led by a general or admiral will meet once a year to discuss issues such as maritime security measures, procedures for US and Chinese warships to communicate, search and rescue operations, and interpretations of a common maritime 'rules of the road'.

It also foresees working groups and special meetings in which naval issues can be dealt with.

With China developing a "blue water" navy capable of operating throughout the Pacific, US military analysts anticipate a greater potential for incidents at sea in contacts with US warships.

As our naval and air forces have more contact, this agreement will increase understanding and reduce chances of miscalculation," Cohen said at the signing ceremony.

"The agreement demonstrates the maturing relationship between our militaries," he said.

Cohen made clear that Washington and its allies in the region want an open and cooperative relationship with the Peoples Liberation Army, as it transforms itself into a modern military power.

He called for more exchanges of military officers in areas such as strategic nuclear missiles, defense environmental matters, and affairs involving prisoners of war and service members missing in action.

But he also warned China against selling arms to Iran, and said it needed to do more to win the confidence of Washington.

Official Secrecy Act sent to Law Commission

The Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs yesterday sent the Official Secrecy Act to the Law Commission to make it updated, reports BSS.

This has been done as per the commitment made by Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru at a seminar of crime reporters at the Jatiya Press Club recently, said an official source.

## Contempt of court Hearing against Sharif begins

ISLAMABAD, Jan 19: The Supreme Court began a hearing today into 19 contempt of court charges, including one against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reports AP.

Sharif's removal from power. The charge against Sharif stems from statements he allegedly made about the Supreme Court chief justice at the time, Sajjad Ali Shah.

In Pakistan it is a crime to criticise the judiciary.

The contempt charge, which was filed late last year began a political and judicial imbroglio that had many people in Pakistan fearing a military takeover.

The impasse was eventually breached after Shah was removed from power and the president, who sided with the chief justice, resigned.

The contempt charge against Sharif remained pending despite Shah's removal.

On Monday a seven-member Supreme Court bench began its hearing. It also will hear contempt charges against another 18 people, including former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, and several politicians. Many of the contempt charges were filed during Benazir's term in power, but were never heard by the court.

It's not known when a court decision can be expected.

## Akhteruzzaman says he's ready to face action

The outspoken BNP lawmaker, Major (ret'd) Akhteruzzaman, has said that the suggestion he made for returning to Parliament was aimed at ensuring the interest of the party and the nation.

The BNP MP, elected from a Kishoreganj constituency, caused furore in the BNP hierarchy by writing an open letter recently to his party high command with a set of arguments that BNP should go back to Parliament and build movement in and outside the House.

"I did not make the statement with any motive to revolt against the party. I have just expressed my personal opinion to the party leadership," Akhteruzzaman told UNB yesterday.

When his attention was drawn to Bhuiyan's warning, Akhteruzzaman said, "I thought (while writing the letter) that it will be in the interest of the party and the nation. Now, I am ready to face any action if the party thinks that I have done any anti-organisational activities."