

## 7-party Alliance calls day-long hartal in Ctg division Feb 10

By Staff Correspondent

The Seven-party Liaison Committee has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong division on February 10.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Liaison Committee held yesterday evening at Minto Road residence of the Leader of the Opposition in parliament and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia, says a press release.

It said, the hartal was called to press the demand for repealing the 'black accord' (CHT).

See Page 12 Col 8

## Indonesian FM arrives today

By Staff Correspondent

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas arrives in Dhaka on a four-day visit to Bangladesh in bid to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Ali Alatas' visit follows Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's official visit to Indonesia last September.

Dhaka and Jakarta are expected to sign an agreement on promotion and protection of investment during the foreign minister's visit, according to official sources.

See Page 12 Col 7

## Justice Khaleduddin Hossain may be made LC chairman

By Staff Correspondent

Justice Khaleduddin Hossain, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, is likely to be appointed the next chairman of the Law Commission, law ministry sources said yesterday.

A Law Ministry proposal in this regard has already been processed. The appointment is expected to be announced shortly, the sources added.

Khaleduddin Hossain was retired from the post of chief justice in 1982, through a Martial Law proclamation which said none could hold the post for more than three years.

See Page 12 Col 4

## Gen Harun to be made first envoy to Maldives

By Staff Correspondent

Major General Harun Ahmed Chowdhury is tipped to be country's first High Commissioner to the Maldives.

Chowdhury earlier served as the envoy to Zimbabwe.

Dhaka is making preparations to open a resident mission in Male shortly. After the opening of an embassy, Bangladesh will have resident missions in all the SAARC countries.

Meanwhile, the government has still not named a High Commissioner to Canada.

The absence of a High Commissioner to Canada for long six months, following the recall of M R Osmany, a former foreign secretary, is sending a 'confusing signal' to Ottawa, sources concerned said. Dhaka is one of the major recipients of Canadian assistance through CIDA.

Meanwhile, M Ziauddin, who was serving as Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, has taken over as the new Chief of Protocol.

See Page 12 Col 4

Inside Today

### Article

#### Delving into Recent Devaluation

Column: Beneath the Surface  
by Abdul Bayes  
Page 4

### Star Literature

No spines wanting!  
Death of a princess;  
and Louis Aragon's  
masks  
Pages 6,7

### International

Iraq agrees to UN inspection if embargo lifted  
Page 5

### Business

Problems at Ctg Port:  
Apparel exporters,  
ministers to sit with  
PM soon  
Page 8

## Over 4000 killed as quake jolts Afghanistan

KABUL, Feb 6: A powerful earthquake jolted Afghanistan's remote northeast this week, killing as many as 4,000 people, an Afghan official said today in the first casualty reports to emerge, says AP.

The quake hit the city of Rustaq, 280 kilometers (150 miles) north of the Afghan capital, Kabul, destroying 15,000 homes, said Sher Mohammed, a spokesman for the military alliance that controls the area.

Tremors of varying intensity rocked the mountainous area for hours afterwards, he said, speaking to The Associated Press by satellite tele-

phone.

The US Geological Survey in Golden, Colorado, put the magnitude of Wednesday's quake at 6.1 on the Richter Scale.

Mohammed said landslides at the quake's epicenter caused much of the destruction.

"The hills collapsed into each other, making a huge crater in the earth," he said.

News of the devastation in the isolated northern province of Takhar, which borders Tajikistan, reached Kabul only Friday, and details remained difficult to confirm.

Ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who

leads the anti-Taliban alliance that controls part of northern Afghanistan, including Takhar, has appealed for urgent help from the United Nations and the Red Cross, Mohammed said.

President Rabbani also called for a one-day mourning period and asked people across the Afghan nation to pray," Mohammed said.

UN and Red Cross officials in neighbouring Pakistan said

they were trying to arrange relief teams to travel to the area, but could not confirm the casualty figures.

Taliban officials in Islam-

abad said they were unaware of the quake. The Taliban, which controls the remaining 85 per cent of Afghanistan, is locked in battles with the northern opposition alliance on at least three different fronts north of Kabul and in western Afghanistan.

Compounding the destruction, Mohammed said, Taliban jets dropped cluster bombs on Talqar's provincial capital of Talqar today, injuring 12 people. The provincial capital is 40 kilometers (24 miles) south of Rustaq..

In 1991, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 killed an es-

timated 900 people in the remote mountainous regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Reuters adds from the United Nations: More than 4,000 bodies have so far been recovered following a severe earthquake in northeast Afghanistan, the Afghan UN mission said today.

Ambassador Ravan Farhad told the news agency he received the information in telephone calls from the authorities in the town of Talqar, in the province of Takhar.

Farhad represents the government of ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani which fled from Kabul, the capital,

when it was seized in September 1996 by the forces of the militant Islamic Taliban Movement.

He said the earthquake was centered on the city of Rustaq and had destroyed more than 20 villages, including six large ones.

Farhad said more than 2,000 homes had been destroyed and that the region was snow-covered and extremely cold at night.

He said an airport west of Rustaq, called Khujia-Ghar, was operating and could handle relief supplies.

Occidental gets  
DOE clearance for  
drilling exploratory  
well at Jalalabad

By Staff Correspondent

The Department of Environment (DOE) has given clearance to US company Occidental to begin drilling an exploratory well in Jalalabad under blocks 13 and 14, although its production sharing contract (PSC) is currently suspended, official sources said.

Occidental's PSC for these blocks was supposed to be terminated 'naturally' on January 11, last as the US company failed to fulfil any of the work obligations in its three-year

See Page 12 Col 5

## Chhatra Moitree leader shot dead in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 6: Former president of the district unit of Chhatra Moitree was shot dead by unidentified assailants yesterday.

The victim Alok Kumar Dey, 28, was killed near his residence at Bankipara under Daulatpur thana at about 11:30 pm. A passer-by, identified as Moni, 35, also received bullet wounds during the attack.

The gunmen fired at the Chhatra Moitree leader when he was washing hands with water from a tubewell near his residence.

See Page 12 Col 5

## 10 hurt as Indian nationals launch fresh attack on villagers

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Feb 6: At least 10 people of the frontier village of Diar-Khidirpur under Motihar thana of the district were injured, three of them seriously, in a fresh attack by Indian nationals allegedly backed by BSF personnel yesterday afternoon.

One of the seriously injured, Bhutia Mia, 27, was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. His condition is stated to be critical.

BSF sources said when some villagers of Diar-Khidirpur

See page 12 Col 1

## Anup Chetia to be produced in court Mar 12

By Staff Correspondent

The court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, has fixed March 12 for producing Anup Chetia alias Golap Barua in the court, said Anila Khan a lawyer of Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights yesterday.

Producing Chetia in the court, however, will be subject to the report to be submitted by the jail authorities regarding his physical condition and recovery from blood dysentery, she added.

See page 12 col 1



Stalls at the Bangla Academy premises are being readied for the Ekushey Book Fair beginning today.

— Star photo

## General amnesty for Shantibahinim

The government yesterday declared general amnesty for the armed members of Patriotic Chattogram Jano Sanghati Committee (PCJSS) and others who will surrender all the arms and ammunition in their possession, control or supervision, reports BSS.

The general amnesty will be effective from the date of surrender of arms to the government, said an official announcement.

Under the amnesty, criminal cases and arrest warrants and 'hukum' against the members of PCJSS would be withdrawn.

There will also be exemption

of punishment against the members who had been convicted in absentia following trial. And legal steps would be taken for the release of those members who are still in prison.

The amnesty will also be applicable to all those permanent residents of CHT involved in PCJSS activities in the past.

According to the schedule, first group will surrender arms on February 10 at Khagrachari Stadium, second group on February 16 at Baghaichhari High School ground, third group on February 22 at Bardham High School and fourth group on February 28 at Dudukchhari.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of opposition BNP, has threatened to prevent the PM from inaugurating the book fair saying "she has lost all rights to come to the DU

### PM opens Ekushey Book Fair today

By DU Correspondent

The Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela begins today on the Bangla Academy premises.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the book fair at 10:30 am. The PM is also expected to lay the foundation of Ekushey Bhaban at the Academy premises.

Organised by Bangla Academy in association with Bangladeshi Book Publishers' and Distributors' Association, the fair will continue till February 28.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of opposition BNP, has threatened to prevent the PM from inaugurating the book fair saying "she has lost all rights to come to the DU

See Page 12 Col 2

## 25 lakh MT food deficit likely this year

By Reaz Ahmad

Government's Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice over the last nine days has not created any impact on the price situation in the market.

Market sources said rice price is unlikely to fall immediately unless the OMS programme is expanded up to the current level and more outlets are opened. The price hike was due to low production of Aman crop, they said.

Meanwhile, the government is going to float tenders tomorrow for import of three lakh metric tons (MT) of foodgrains, sources in the Food Ministry said.

In addition to these three lakh MT, a decision to buy two

lakh MT more was also taken at a recent high-level meeting on food planning, the sources said.

Food deficit was 21 lakh MT in fiscal 1996-97. Giving a very conservative estimate, one source feared, the deficit in the current fiscal may be more, around 25 lakh MT, unless the upcoming IRR-Boro harvest is "extraordinarily good."

The strain of meeting the food import bill will be on the country's hard-earned foreign exchange reserves. Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury, when asked to comment said, "Our government will not take any risk on food. To us, lives of the people

See Page 12 Col 4

See page 12 col 1

## Arrest of BCL leader sparks violence in Ctg: 10 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 6: At least 10 persons including three police personnel were injured in incidents of violence that broke out in different parts of the city after the arrest of a Chhatra League leader this evening, police and witnesses said.

About eight persons, including a member of the PM's family, Sheikh Helal were present in the advisor's room at the PM's office during the firing. The others were Union Parishad chairmen, police sources said.

The investigation team was preparing a list of addresses of the persons. Police officials hoped that they would be able to

See Page 12 Col 4

## OMS fails to lower rice price in Sylhet

From Iqbal Siddique

SYLHET, Feb 6: The Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice, launched by the Food Department with a view to keeping the rice price under control, could not attain success in the Sylhet region.

Even 30 per cent of the allotted rice could not be sold during the last 10 days in Sylhet town.

When contacted, an official source informed that the Food Department took initiative to sell rice at the fixed rate of Tk 12.50 per kilogram in the Sylhet town. But the sale point at Ambarkhana area had to be closed due to space constraint, he said.