



## Occidental drilling new well in Habiganj

From Iqbal Siddiquee  
SYLHET, Feb 10: US company Occidental has started drilling of another exploratory well named 'Bibiana' well at Dighalbuk of Habiganj thana in Habiganj district.

For the task it has again engaged 'Deutag,' the German drilling company which had worked in drilling of Occidental's first exploratory well at Magurchara.

The Magurchara well had recently been declared abandoned as an aftermath of the blow-out that took place in the early hours of June 15 last year.

Occidental this time maintained secrecy while starting drilling at the remote village at Dighalbuk. The company began drilling at the Bibiana well.

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Transport workers' clash creates traffic jam on Dhaka-Aricha Rd

SAVAR, Feb 10: A clash between two rival groups of transport workers created traffic jam on Dhaka-Aricha highway today, reports UNB.

Police said the clash began when members of Dhaka-Aricha Transport Workers Federation, an offshoot of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Federation, beat up an worker of their rival group on Monday following a dispute over subscription.

Sources said the Federation used to take Tk 20 as toll from each vehicle on Dhaka-Dharmrai highway but they recently doubled the amount.

During the two-hour long fight from noon, the rival groups chased each other on the road, forming the long queue of vehicles from Nabiganj to Savar.

To control the situation, four platoons of riot and reserve police rushed to the spot.

Local people said a tense situation is prevailing in the area.

## 5 shot dead in Tripura

AGARTALA, Feb 10: In the first major incident of violence this year, five members of a non-tribal family have been shot dead in West Tripura by the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) which has given a call for polls boycott, police said, reports PTI.

In another incident, three CPI (M) activists, including the brother of state Health Minister Bimal Sinha, were abducted yesterday in Dhalai district by militants of National Front of Tripura (NLF), which has also given a call for boycott of polls, they said.

ATTF militants stormed Samail Padamabill village, Ramchandraghat constituency, represented by Chief Minister Dasarath Deb, last evening, set ablaze houses, and fired at villagers, killing the five members of the family, including children, the police said.

Uzbek FM due on Friday

Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Kamilov arrives in Dhaka on Friday on a two-day official visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

This will be the first ever visit to Bangladesh by a Foreign Minister from Uzbekistan.

He will hold official talks with his counterpart Abdus Samad Azad on Saturday.

During his stay, Kamilov will make courtesy call on President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

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PCJSS Chairman Jotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma handing over his gun to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the arms surrender ceremony at the Khagrachhari Stadium yesterday.

—Star photo by AKM Mohsin

## 739 Shantibahini guerillas lay down arms on first day

# A farewell to arms

From Shehab Ahmed

**KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 10:** He gave her his gun and in return Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presented PCJSS Chairman Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma with a bouquet of white roses, marking the end of the decades-old insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts today.

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manding self-rule in the CHT.

Later PCJSS Chairman JB Larma told reporters that the Shantibahini has ceased to exist after the beginning of the process of surrender.

Their field commander Ushatian Talukder said they were saying "farewell to arms. No more bloodshed." He expressed the hope that there would be peace and stability in the region from now on.

The Shantibahini guerillas who earlier marched into the stadium with their field commander Ushatian Talukder and took their seats on chairs in the field, stood in attention when the Prime Minister

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## CHT accord to create unrest, says Khaleda

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia called upon the Bangladeshi expatriates in various countries to stand beside the people at home, reports UNB.

Begum Zia was speaking at a gathering of Bangladeshi nationals, working in Saudi Arabia, at the Royal Palace Hall in Makkah on Monday afternoon, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

She said the door of BNP is always open for those who want to join the party when the country

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## Shantibahini automatically disbanded, says Larma

**KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 10:** Chairman of Parbatya Chattang Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma today said with the formal laying down of arms, Shantibahini stands automatically disbanded, report agencies.

The Shantibahini becomes automatically disbanded with the laying down of their arms, Larma said, "it's a relative matter and depends on subsequent developments."

Asked about the prospect of restoration of peace in the hill tracts following the surrender of arms, Larma said, "it's a relative matter and depends on subsequent developments."

He told a correspondent that the PCJSS might now emerge as a political party to 'protect and promote the cause of the tribal people.'

said, "We have not rebelled against the government. We fought for the realisation of our legitimate rights."

Shantibahini was the armed wing of the PCJSS, headed by Shantu Larma.

Asked about the prospect of restoration of peace in the hill tracts following the surrender of arms, Larma said, "it's a relative matter and depends on subsequent developments."

When the Metropolitan Sessions Judge will be posted, the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, will cease to exercise jurisdiction over the sessions cases in the Dhaka metropolitan area.

At present the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka is trying the Bangabandhu murder case. The trial is expected to be concluded.

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BNP brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the CHT accord.

—Star photo

## Hartal paralyses Chittagong Divn

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 10: Normal life was almost paralysed in the port city and its surrounding areas following the day-long hartal today.

Hartal was also observed in other districts of Chittagong division, barring Khagrachhari, according to reports reaching here.

The BNP-led Seven-Party Alliance called the hartal in Chittagong division protesting the agreement under which the Shantibahinim today started to surrender their arms.

BNP and Jamaat supporters organised rallies and processions in the city.

Police and witnesses said, no untoward incidents were reported in the city and surrounding areas, excepting some cracker blasts in the morning.

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## Arms surrender a drama, says Mannan Bhuiyan

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday warned the government of a serious unrest if the so-called peace agreement with the tribal insurgents is not scrapped, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at the Institution of Engineers to demonstrate against the CHT accord, the BNP leader said the entire nation has rejected the accord that jeopardised the country's interest.

The BNP and its allies observed hartal yesterday in Chittagong Division and staged demonstrations in all other parts of the country demanding cancellation of the accord.

Mannan termed the government as a stooge of an alien power and said it must be ousted from the power through a mass

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## Call to create a South Asian think tank

By Staff Correspondent

Participants at a 'brainstorming session' hosted by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) felt that South Asia urgently needs a regional centre of excellence.

They felt that such a centre can assemble the wealth of professional resources available in South Asian countries to complement the ongoing process of regional cooperation. They supported the creation of a South Asian think tank.

According to a press release, the 2-day brainstorming meeting which concluded in the capital yesterday, was participated by leading regional scholars and representatives of UN agencies. It was presided by eminent economist and policy

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## Rice price high in India Importers in N-dists can't meet demand for short supply

From Inam Ahmed and Reaz Ahmad

BOGRA, Feb 10: Rice importers in the northern districts are trying to make quick profit out of the current crisis, but it has become difficult for them to procure rice upto the level of demand in the country as India is also facing rice shortage.

"There is a huge demand for the rice throughout the country and we are getting orders everyday," said Aslam Abu Saleh, a rice importer of Joypurhat. "But the problem is that even the Indian suppliers are unable to meet the demand, India also is facing a rice shortage."

At the Nagarbari ghat, trucks mostly carrying rice, have been beeling for miles,

rice is also high in India, around 220 US Dollars a ton of coarse rice. But, even that is not easily available.

Meanwhile, traffic congestion at the Nagarbari ferry terminal pushed up transport costs by about Tk 4000 a truck from Dinajpur to Chittagong in the last week, disrupting supply of rice from the northern region.

The decision was taken at the first ASEAN-India senior officials' meeting (SOM) here which reviewed the ASEAN-India relations in political, strategic, economic, cultural, and other functional areas of cooperation.

The two sides also reviewed the rapidly growing economic and commercial ties in the mutually identified areas of cooperation like trade, investment, tourism, infrastructure, human resource development and people-to-people contacts.

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: India and the nine-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) today agreed to further strengthen defence cooperation and intensify dialogue on regional security for peace and stability in the region and to establish a plurilateral security order, reports PTI.

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## Privatisation process: None of 56 SOEs handed over

By Rafiq Hasan

Shipyard, will be handed over to the Army and the Navy respectively.

The official said frequent policy changes also slowed the pace of privatisation process. Though the government is committed to accelerate the privatisation process, it recently signed an agreement with the Sramik Karmachari Oliya Parishad (SKOP) not to go for a massive privatisation drive, he mentioned.

To make the privatisation process smooth a legal framework has been drafted and it

will be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad shortly," he said.

The process was being delayed further due to government's new order to separate the adjacent surplus land of the SOE concerned from its factory building while making assessment of its properties and liabilities before going for privatisation.

There are many age-old industries which have vast land property, even up to 100 acres, the official said. After separation, this land would be developed for new industrial plots.

The enterprises are Royal Textile Mills and Deshbandhu Sugar Mills in Narasingdi, National Ice Factory in Kishoreganj, Asrafia Oil mills in Khulna and Bangladesh Can Company in Chittagong.

The government is offloading its shares of 9 industries through the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh.

In those enterprises, the government owns 10 to 96 per cent of shares. These include Reckitt and Colman BD Ltd, National Tubes Ltd, Usmania Glass Sheet

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Proposal to enhance salaries of judges  
By Mizan Ali

The Law Ministry has proposed an increase in the salaries of the judges of the High Court Division and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, according to official sources.

A proposal prepared by the law ministry was sent to the finance ministry last week, the sources said.

The salary of the Chief Justice has been proposed at Tk 22,000 per month as against the existing Tk 14,300.

The salary of the Appellate Division judges has been suggested at Tk 21,000 instead of the present Tk 13,650 per month.

The salary of High Court judges has been proposed at Tk 20,000 instead of the current Tk 12,650 per month.

There are 35 judges in the High Court Division and five judges in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

The pay scale was revised for the government employees recently with effect from July 1 last year in which the salary of secretaries was raised to Tk 15,000 from Tk 11,000.

Setting up of Metropolitan sessions court may be delayed

By Staff Correspondent

Establishment of a Metropolitan Court of Sessions in the city may be delayed by two to three months, according to sources in the law ministry.

Once the MCS is set up, all the sessions cases in the Dhaka metropolitan area, now being