

The Daily Star

on Friday

YOUR 20-PAGE WEEKEND PAPER

VOL. IX NO. 26 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com>

MAGH 30 1405 BS

DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 12, 1999

SHAWAL 25, 1419 HIJRI

20 PAGES PLUS MAGAZINE : PRICE TAKA 9.00

INSIDE TODAY

COMMENT

AZM Obaidullah Khan
on Indonesia's divide and rule
policy in East Timor

Page 6

INTERVIEW

Director General of
Bangla Academy
Syed Anwar
Husain talks to
Mir A Zaman and
Ekram Kabir

Page 7

PHOTO FEATURE

Zahedul I Khan
captures the
camaraderie of
the Scouts
Jamboree at
Mouchak

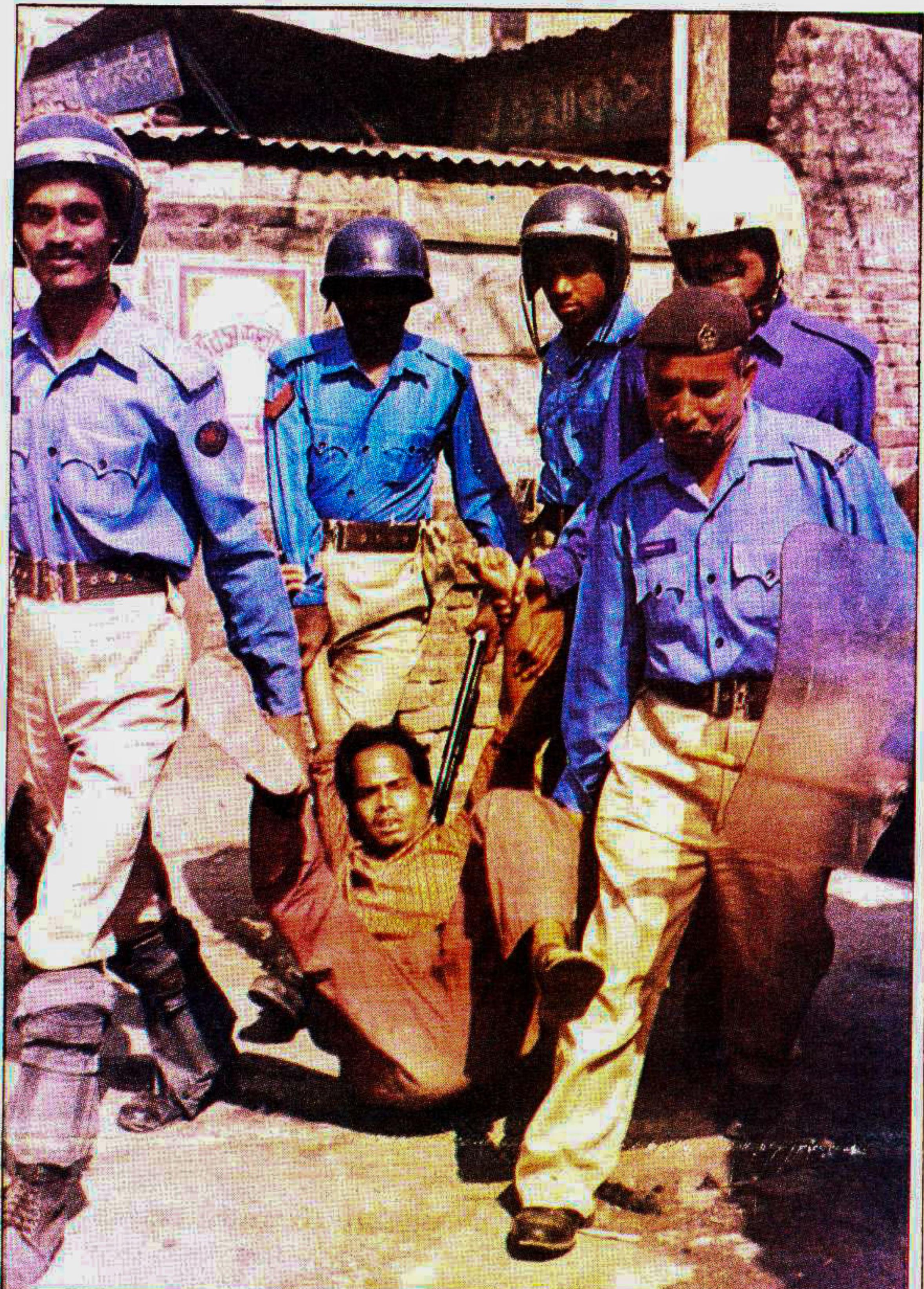


Page 7

PEOPLE
Ahmed Sofa face
to face with Ziaul
Karim, and Halima
Khatun narrates
her childhood
days to Navine
Murshid



Page 8



Time out for a picket

For this pro-hartal activist, the day of 'heroics' came to an abrupt end when police carted him off to the slammer following clashes in the afternoon. The photo was taken in the Bijoynagar area yesterday.

— Star photo

CHT impasse nearing end?

By Special Correspondent

Shantu Larma, chairman of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), continued to have discussions yesterday with officials following up his talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday to break the impasse on full implementation of the CHT peace accord.

He is staying in town for some more days to continue the discussions, sources said. He has deferred his trip to Calcutta where he was scheduled to go for treatment, as chances of a fruitful conclusion of the talks have

brightened, the sources added. The sources said his talks with the Prime Minister had a positive impact on his standoff with the government on the interim Regional Council of which he was nominated as Chairman last October.

He had raised a number of problems like release of former military activists of PCJSS and withdrawal of cases against them, nomination of his representatives on the 22-member RC, resettlement of Bengalis and rehabilitation of refugees repatriated from India.

He had also demanded enhanced powers for the RC, which he said would play a pivotal role in administering the CHT.

He also called for amendments to the three hill district council acts and accused a section of government functionaries of holding back the implementation of the CHT treaty signed on December 2, 1997.

The sources said Shantu Larma would be given the status of a state minister when he takes charge as RC Chairman as per the treaty provisions.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Today's *The Daily Star* on Friday includes a 4-page supplement on US Trade Fair and a one-page supplement on Rotary International. We regret that regular items such as *Insight*, *Nation*, *SAARC* and *Yektalk* have been dropped due to space constraints.

dom. For many, on the other hand, it was the first chance to socialise after three long days of isolation.

However, when the cherished freedom came, a large number of truckers with their long-stranded lorries carrying essentials like fresh vegetables rushed towards capital through Jatrabari from various eastern directions and others through Gabtali from northern districts.

With life swinging back to normalcy, usual traffic jam started staging a comeback. Honking cars, buses, tempos and so many other modes of transports joined long tail of a big traffic queue at Sayedabad. Poor rickshaw-pullers who had their three good days of free roads over again found the Dhaka streets too difficult to negotiate with.

Despite its innumerable negative implications, hartals have at least one very important positive side, a middle-aged passenger on a rickshaw was heard saying. It is only hartals that can offer us comforts on the city streets. No traffic jam, no smoke - no pollution.

Energy sector deals struck with US

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and the United States yesterday signed three agreements to develop an energy information system, conduct a gas utilisation study and provide technical assistance in the implementation of US company Unocal's Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP).

At a press conference at Petrobangla yesterday, visiting US Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs of the Department of Energy Calvin Humphrey, said that the US government would provide 8.80,000 US dollars for the studies and technical assistance programmes under these agreements.

Of these agreements, technical assistance in WRIP is the only project-oriented scheme.

The assistance in the WRIP is aimed at helping Bangladesh conduct its negotiation procedures in smooth and transparent manner as the Unocal hammered project is very complex in nature, said US Ambassador John C Holzman at the press conference.

State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam, Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Acting Secretary for Power GM Mandal, Additional Secretary of Energy Syed Tanvir Hossain, and other high officials from Energy Ministry, Petrobangla and Bangladesh Power Development Board were present in the signing ceremony.

Humphrey, describing the

salient features of the agreement, said that by implementing the Energy Information System with the help of Energy Information Administration of USA, Bangladesh would have an up-to-date and detailed database on its energy potentials.

The Gas Utilisation Study was actually signed late last year and the US government had fixed 0.4 million dollars for this project. The study undertaken by US agency James Chemical Engineering, now gets an additional fund of 1.67,000 US dollars.

The study, expected to be completed in a few months, would highlight a wide range of priority projects for making the country's gas sector more significant in the economy.

Under the third agreement, the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) would provide consultation services to help implement the WRIP project.

US Ambassador Holzman explaining the third contract said that the Unocal's WRIP was a complex and unusual project. "It needs transparency and Bangladesh needs to protect its interest. That is why we are providing expertise to look into WRIP component and help Bangladesh in its negotiations," he said.

Adding to his points, Calvin Humphrey said, the power and gas tariffs proposed in WRIP needed to be rationalised and a fair price should be ensured.

Humphrey, describing the

WRIP as a 750 million dollar scheme that focuses on the development of the Shahbazpur gas field, the setting up of a series of power plants and the building of pipelines in several regions of the country. While Unocal claims this project to be sound, Bangladeshi experts believe that it is risky for Bangladesh and that the country would lose billions of dollars from it. Even the World Bank has been opposing the project.

Replies to questions whether the USA was pushing Bangladesh to export gas, US Energy Delegation leader Calvin Humphrey said, "the goal of our discussions was not to push gas export. We are here to help Bangladesh develop its energy sector. We're not here to dictate anything."

"But, all possibilities of gas utilisation should be seen," he added.

Focusing on the second round block bidding, Calvin Humphrey noted that the Americans were concerned about the second round bid.

"If its process is transparent and if a level playing field is ensured, then I am sure some competent US companies can come here to compete."

I feel confident that the second bid would go forward and there will be a level-playing field for all," he said.

State Minister for Energy Prof Rafiqul Islam said that it was more important to extract

natural resources for its economic use than leaving those alone. "That is why our Prime Minister has created a congenial atmosphere for foreign investment in this sector," he said.

Meanwhile, UNB adds, despite differences with the government, BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has said she will extend total support in developing the country's energy sector.

The assurance of the opposition leader came at a meeting with the US delegation at her official residence yesterday evening.

"I am satisfied. The discussion was fruitful," Humphrey told a correspondent.

Ambassador John C Holzman who was standing by his side said, "United States does not, in principle, support hartal. I have told Begum Khaleda Zia that hartal is not the justified way to ventilate grievances".

This will be followed by a three-day negotiation with US company Unocal for block 7.

Pangaea, another company, which was issued a LOI for block 8 has been invited to a three-day discussion from February 26.

Multinational Shell Oil has been invited for negotiation on block 5 on February 28. Shell has responded to Petrobangla's invitation saying that it would discuss block 10 in addition to block 5. Otherwise, if indicated, it was no longer interested in the negotiations.

Second round bidding for gas blocks starts again

Star Report

Petrobangla has invited the oil companies which were issued Letter of Intent (LOI) for five blocks to a second phase of negotiations beginning on February 17, a well placed Petrobangla source said.

With this move, the process of second round block bidding for oil and gas exploration in the country resumes after nearly half a year.

Earlier in December, Petrobangla had invited these companies for negotiations. But they all regretted.

This time the negotiations will begin with US company Enron discussing technical components of Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for blocks 3 and 6. Petrobangla allocated six days for discussions with Enron.

This will be followed by a three-day negotiation with US company Unocal for block 7.

Pangaea, another company, which was issued a LOI for block 8 has been invited to a three-day discussion from February 26.

Multinational Shell Oil has been invited for negotiation on block 5 on February 28. Shell has responded to Petrobangla's invitation saying that it would discuss block 10 in addition to block 5. Otherwise, if indicated, it was no longer interested in the negotiations.

Prayer Timings

February 12

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-25	5-29
Jumma	12-15	1-30
Asr	4-10	4-20
Magrib	5-58	6-02
Esha	7-10	7-20

Source: Islamic Foundation

Second round bidding for gas blocks starts again

Star Report

Petrobangla has invited the oil companies which were issued Letter of Intent (LOI) for five blocks to a second phase of negotiations beginning on February 17, a well placed Petrobangla source said.

With this move, the process of second round block bidding for oil and gas exploration in the country resumes after nearly half a year.

Earlier in December, Petrobangla had invited these companies for negotiations. But they all regretted.

This time the negotiations will begin with US company Enron discussing technical components of Production Sharing Contract (PSC) for blocks 3 and 6. Petrobangla allocated six days for discussions with Enron.

This will be followed by a three-day negotiation with US company Unocal for block 7.

Pangaea, another company, which was issued a LOI for block 8 has been invited to a three-day discussion from February 26.

Multinational Shell Oil has been invited for negotiation on block 5 on February 28. Shell has responded to Petrobangla's invitation saying that it would discuss block 10 in addition to block 5. Otherwise, if indicated, it was no longer interested in the negotiations.

Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company Limited

Uttara Bank Bhaban, 15th Floor, 90-91 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000

Applications should reach no later than February 22, 1999. The position for which an application is made should be clearly marked on the envelope. Each application will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Canvassing for a candidate shall be considered a ground for disqualification of that candidate.