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Opposition calls 8-hr hartal today

By Staff Correspondent  
The BNP-led opposition alliance goes for an eight-hour hartal across the country today to protest 'electricity, water and gas crises, deterioration of law and order, terrorism and government's failures in different sectors'.

The general strike will begin at 6 in the morning and continue till 2 in the afternoon.

BNP and its major alliance partners Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote had simultaneously called the hartal at separate public rallies in the city on May 3.

To mobilise support for today's shutdown, leaders and workers of the opposition parties staged demonstration at and brought out torch processions from different parts of the city yesterday evening.

Activists of BNP and its front organisations, as part of

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Top WDB officials flee Rajshahi for fear of life?

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, May 10: Some officials of Rajshahi Divisional Office of Water Development Board including the Superintendent Engineer and the Executive Engineer have left the city along with their families following alleged threat on their lives by some persons for contracts.

Normal work at the office and fields have almost been stopped following this, WDB sources said today.

The sources claimed that the persons belonging to the ruling party were pressing the officials

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Stock market showing signs of maturity, say analysts

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### Prayer Timings

May 11	
Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15 4-20
Zohr	12-45 1-30
Asr	4-45 4-55
Maghrib	6-30 6-33
Esha	7-55 8-10

Source: Islamic Foundation

## THIS WEEK IN Rising Stars

Get Ready For Thursday Fun



Meet The Three Young ANIMATORS

George Clooney  
in superstars



## Larma agrees to take over as RC chief

By Special Correspondent

The Parbatty Chatogram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) yesterday announced that its Chairman Jyotirindri Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma would take charge of the interim Regional Council (RC) for Chittagong Hill Tracts.

In a press statement, the PCJSS said that it took the decision in view of "assurance by the Prime Minister to speed up implementation of the CHT peace agreement and amend the relevant clauses in the three hill district council (amendment) act, 1998 and Bandarban hill district council amendment act, 1998, when those were passed by the parliament".

The government gave an assurance to amend the inconsistencies in the budget session of parliament last year and later in September. But there had been no steps and the government announced the 22-member RC "in violation of the

clauses which run contrary to the CHT agreement, it said.

PCJSS said the CHT Regional Council Act, 1998, was duly passed by the parliament in May last year. But there had been some inconsistencies in the three hill district council (amendment) acts—Rangamati hill district council amendment act, 1998; Khagrachari hill district council amendment act, 1998 and Bandarban hill district council amendment act, 1998, when those were passed by the parliament.

The government gave an assurance to amend the inconsistencies in the budget session of parliament last year and later in September. But there had been no steps and the government announced the 22-member RC "in violation of the

agreement" on September 6 last year, the statement said.

PCJSS raised demands for removal of the inconsistencies and held discussions with the government a number of times, including a meeting with the Prime Minister by JB Larma on February 8 and advisor to the PM Dr SA Malek on March 23.

Following the meetings, the PM gave an assurance to amend the inconsistencies and speed up implementation of the CHT agreement, said the statement which was faxed to The Daily Star after 10 last night.

Earlier in the afternoon, Shantu Larma arrived in the city from Khagrachari by road with his close aide Gautam Chakma.

Before leaving Khagrachari—

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## Another 7 lose their bank directorship

By M Shamsur Rahman

Seven more directors of three commercial banks yesterday lost their positions by a court order.

The directors including President of FBCCI Abdul Momin, who was a director of National Bank Limited (NBL), lost their cases after a High Court division bench discharged their petitions challenging notices for their removal from the boards of the respective banks.

The others who lost their directorships are Moazzem Hossain, AKM Abu Taher and Abu Taher Mia of National Bank Limited, Bajal Ahmed of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) and Mohammad Yakub and Habibur Rahman of Pubali Bank.

Earlier, in 1995, the central bank had served notices on the defaulting directors of different banks saying that they must repay their overdue loans, failing which they would lose their seats on their respective boards.

Twelve of them including Momin went to the High Court

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**Health Policy**  
**'Mere approval requires no extra money'**

By Nurul Kabir

The Cabinet okayed the National Health Policy yesterday only after the Health Minister succeeded in convincing his Cabinet colleagues that mere approval of the policy would not require extra money.

Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf told The Daily Star that the policy had been formulated in the light of people's right to healthcare facilities, guaranteed by the Constitution.

The Cabinet meeting, held yesterday afternoon with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, also agreed in principle to a law passed to create a Rural Poverty Alleviation Foundation very soon.

Once passed by parliament, the stock had been recovered from a rented house in Gabtoli Puranpara of the town.

Police said one Tutul, who had rented the house from one landlord named Salaiman Mridha, was absconding. They suspected that Tutul ran one of several "wholesale" spirit shops in the town from the rented house. The seized liquids would be sent for tests at the Mahakhal laboratory in Dhaka, police said.

Narsingdi police were still looking for "several other" suspects. They were found preparing files for handing over the case to a CID team that has been assigned to investigate.

## They all knew about it but 'happa' kept them silent

By Morshed Ali Khan back from Narsingdi



Seized plastic containers with 'rectified spirit' being unloaded from a police van in Narsingdi yesterday.

—Star photo

Liquor tragedy

Death toll now 118

The death toll in the Narsingdi liquor poisoning rose to 118 yesterday with six more deaths reported from Narsingdi and the capital Dhaka, reports BNS.

Tansen, 40, of Bajitpara in Narsingdi was one of the latest victims who died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the early hours of yesterday. The other five deaths occurred in different areas of Narsingdi.

At least 30 persons are fighting for their lives in Dhaka Medical College Hospital and in different areas of Narsingdi. Our Narsingdi Correspondent adds: Those who died in the district yesterday are Kanai Das, 55, of Rail Sweeper Colony, Milon Miah, 38, of Char Sujapur under Shubrapur thana, Ali Akbar Tota, 40, and two others aged about 40 and 55.

Local police recovered 40 litres of spirit from a hidden store at Puranpara under Narsingdi Sadar. The owner Sulaiman Mridha is absconding. Police opened the two homeopathic shops, Azad and Kashem Homeos, which were earlier sealed off, and collected samples. The samples were sent to Dhaka for laboratory test.

Chhatak blast

Sylhet Jubo League leader arrested

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, May 10: CID arrested Jagadish Chandra Das, a Ward Commissioner of Sylhet Pourashava, and Joint-Convenor of the district unit of Awami Juba League, in connection with the bomb explosion at the house of AL MP Muhibur Rahman Manik at Chhatak, official sources said.

A special team led by ASP of CID Aminul Islam raided the house of Jagadish at Ponitola here at about 2 AM today. The team took him to Sunamganj and produced him before a magistrate's court there.

The magistrate sent him to Sunamganj district jail hajat.

CID prayed for a 5-day remand, but the court allowed a 2-day remand. CID will take him on remand shortly, the source said.

They further said Jagadish is accused in at least 26 criminal cases including six under Explosives Act. CID has gathered evidence regarding his involvement in the bomb blast incident in the house of the MP.

Rubel murder

Charges against 14 framed

By Court Correspondent The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge yesterday framed charges against the 14 accused in Shamim Reza Rubel murder case.

Of the 14 accused, 10 were present at the court yesterday during the charge framing of the case.

The court fixed June 7 for cross-examination of the witnesses.

Shamim Reza Rubel was killed at the Detective Branch office at the city's Minto Road by DB police on July 23 last year.

## Hearing on *suo moto* ends, verdict Thursday

## State can take away hartal right for greater interest'

By SC Correspondent

Hartal is not a fundamental right, but a civic right which can be taken away by the state for greater public interest, the High Court was told yesterday during hearing on the *suo moto* rule regarding pro-hartal and anti-hartal activities.

Appearing as intervenor at the leave of the court, Dr Akbar Hamid further said, "Hartal can never be peaceful because it never was and never will be." A call for hartal is always conceived by people as threat of violence, he said.

A Division Bench of the High Court concluded the hearing yesterday and fixed Thursday for pronouncement of judgement.

Apart from Dr Akbar Hamid, Attorney General Mahmudul Islam on behalf of the Home Secretary, *amici curiae* Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan and Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and Barrister Abdur Razzaque, on behalf of a group of journalists, also submitted affidavit-in-opposition.

The Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, also submitted affidavit-in-opposition. Barrister Abdur Razzaque, on behalf of a group of journalists, also submitted affidavit-in-opposition.

Dr Hamid said, Article 39 (2) (a) of the Constitution clearly speaks about freedom of speech and expression, but these are subject to reasonable restriction which are: (a) the security of the state, (b) friendly relations with foreign states, (c) public order, (d) decency or morality, (e) contempt of court,

ter Shawkat Ali Khan and Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar *amicus curiae*.

Upon receiving the rule, both Zillur Rahman and Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan appeared in the case and submitted their respective affidavits-in-opposition through Advocate Mahbub Alam and Barrister Moudud Ahmed respectively.

The Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, also submitted affidavit-in-opposition. Barrister Abdur Razzaque, on behalf of a group of journalists, also submitted affidavit-in-opposition.

The minister arrived here last night and held a marathon meeting with the leaders of dock workers of Chittagong port from 11 pm to 3 am today. After the meeting, the minister returned to Dhaka.

In the meeting, a financial committee headed by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping was formed to assess the possible extent of damage due to setting up of the proposed

CHITTAGONG, May 10: Chittagong port workers have postponed their 24-hour strike programme scheduled for today till May 30.

The postponement followed an assurance from State Minister for Port and Shipping Motazzal Hossain Maya, in a meeting at Chittagong Circuit House last night that their demands would be taken care of, meeting sources said.

The minister arrived here last night and held a marathon meeting with the leaders of dock workers of Chittagong port from 11 pm to 3 am today. After the meeting, the minister returned to Dhaka.

In the meeting, a financial committee headed by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping was formed to assess the possible extent of damage due to setting up of the proposed

CHITTAGONG, May 10: Chittagong port workers have postponed their 24-hour strike programme scheduled for today till May 30.

The seven-member financial committee was formed as per demand of the leaders of dock workers, the sources informed.

Besides, the minister also assured of placing the demands for installation of Newmooring terminal by the government and procurement of 142 equipment.

The minister arrived here last night and held a marathon meeting with the leaders of dock workers of Chittagong port from 11 pm to 3 am today. After the meeting, the minister returned to Dhaka.

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CHITTAGONG, May 10: An ASI of police has been sentenced to life imprisonment today for rape of a teenage girl.

The Special Court of Md.

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From Staff Correspondent

About 60 of the passengers, mostly fish traders, were rescued by fishing boats several hours after the launch capsized being caught by a storm in the midstream at about 11 am on Saturday.

Survivors told the agency that most passengers were trapped inside the cabin of the launch, while some others who jumped into the river drowned as there was no boats around to rescue them due to the storm.