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Larma takes charge of RC today

By Special Correspondent

PCJSS Chairman Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Larma will take charge of the interim Regional Council (RC) for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) today, CHT Affairs Minister Kalpanjan Chakma has said.

"Yes, he is going to sign necessary papers in this connection at 10 a.m. tomorrow", an ebullient Kalpanjan Chakma, told The Daily Star last night.

The decision was taken at a meeting between Kalpanjan Chakma and JB Larma yesterday evening at state guest house Meghna here. The meeting lasted over an hour.

The papers will be carried to JB Larma from the ministry by his aide Rupayan Dewan, it was learnt.

The Chairman of the RC, who will be given the status of a state minister, will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shortly, sources said. This will be his second meeting with the PM. JB Larma earlier met the Prime Minister on February 6.

A grand ceremony at Rangamati on May 27 will mark the installation of the Regional Council.

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Police to probe Bijoy nagar incident

By Staff Correspondent

A one-member departmental committee, led by DIG Abul Kashem Howladar of Special Branch, was formed to probe into the incidents at Bijoy nagar and nearby areas where BNP MPs were assaulted by police, police sources said.

When asked whether the committee would look into the incident of humiliating a woman BNP activist during police action at Bijoy nagar at around 10:45am, a senior police official said that it would also investigate some other untoward incidents in the area during that time.

The committee is likely to submit its report before the Inspector General of Police on May 19.

THIS THURSDAY IN Rising Stars



Meet The Three Young

ANIMATORS

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Prayer Timings

May 12	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



Atrocious! Outrageous!

(Left) The lady is an opposition activist. A female cop first acted on her. The baton-wielding male constable repeats the performance. (Right) Around the same time and in the same area, at city's Bijoy nagar yesterday during hartal hours, Motijheel thana Officer-in-Charge Rafiqul Islam repeats his own performance in previous hartals, this time on BNP MP Joyal Abedin Faruk. Former state minister Sadeq Hossain Khoka MP (on Faruk's left), the previous victim, and former minister Abdullah Al Noman look on, helplessly. Witnesses said the police action followed bombs hurled from a BNP procession they were leading towards Purana Paltan. The bombs were exploded after police had stopped the march somewhere on Bijoy nagar road.

—Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Police spoil a peaceful hartal, beat up MPs

By Staff Correspondent

In an otherwise peaceful hartal in the country yesterday, baton-wielding police beat up several BNP MPs and almost stripped a female activist of the party in city's Bijoy nagar area, triggering tension among opposition activists.

The 6am-2pm shutdown, halted normal life and business in most places but passed off without any major incidents of violence. In Chittagong, two people were injured with bullet when unidentified people fired gunshots on some pro-hartal activists.

Bullet-hit, Abdul Majid and Mohammad Kamal were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Police picked up two pickets in the port city during the hartal hours.

In the capital, the shutdown was marked by bomb explosions and damages of transports in the usual trouble spots — Shaheed Faruk Road, Naren-dra Bashak Lane, Farmgate.

Mouchak, Postagola, Press Club, Purana Paltan, Roysahab Bazar and Sutrapur areas. At least five persons, injured in these incidents, were hospitalised.

But at Bijoy nagar and Naya Paltan, police atrocities marred

Home Minister regrets

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday regretted the incidents in which some journalists were injured during hartal, reports BSS.

Talking to newsmen at his office, Nasim said "I am really sorry for the incident. I also heard about the unexpected behaviour with a woman during hartal hours." The Home Minister directed the authorities concerned to probe the matter and assured that proper steps would be taken after verifying the incident.

the atmosphere.

BNP MPs Sadeq Hossain Khoka, Joyal Abedin Faruk and Amanullah Aman were among some 20 people, who were injured during the police-BNP clashes at Bijoy nagar in the capital at around 10:45am.

Faruk was almost stripped off her sari as she tried to escape the police action. A female constable first caught her by her saree and tried to get hold of her. Then a male policeman repeated the action, putting the BNP activist in an extremely humiliating situation in public. Some other female workers of the party were also hurt in the baton charge.

A group of photojournalists, taking snaps of the scene, and some reporters covering the incident, also fell prey to police wrath. Police used batons on them after an altercation. Motijheel thana Officer-in-

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Govt let loose police & terrorists: Opposition

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the BNP-led opposition alliance have alleged that the government let loose police and terrorists to resist yesterday's countrywide half-day hartal.

Addressing a joint press briefing at BNP central office in the city yesterday afternoon, they alleged that like in the past, police resorted to indiscriminate baton charge and firing, and lobbed teargas shells at pro-hartal leaders and activists without any provocation.

They also said a number of female leaders and activists were assaulted by police during the hartal hours. Police also beat up a number of reporters and press photographers.

The opposition leaders demanded immediate resignation of the government and announcement of mid-term polls. BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the government was putting pressure on newspaper editors to refrain

from printing photos showing the police assault on women activists.

He said the hartal programme would have been completely peaceful had police and Awami League activists not created anarchy and unleashed terrorism. He demanded trial of the policemen who resorted to repression on women.

Bhuiyan also demanded immediate and unconditional release of all opposition arrested leaders and activists and compensation for those injured in police and terrorist attacks.

The BNP secretary general warned, "The fate of the government will be terrible and the government must have to quit in the face of tough movement if it does not resign immediately."

City BNP convenor Sadeq Hossain Khoka MP at the briefing claimed that police and Awami League terrorists launched attack on opposition

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Tofail warns Khaleda about Ershad

By Nazmul Ashraf

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed says BNP chief Khaleda Zia should be careful about Jatiya Party leader HM Ershad because he is "a vindictive person who does not forget anything".

"Ershad is taking revenge on both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition leader Khaleda Zia as the two together spearheaded the campaign for his downfall. Ershad is a man who does not forget anything," said the minister, the influential party president member, speaking to The Daily Star at his Hare Road official residence yesterday.

"This man is taking the revenge in two ways — creating problems for the government of Sheikh Hasina and destroying Khaleda's party in the name of anti-government movement," he said, commenting on the combined opposition agitation. "I would like to warn the BNP leader that she should be

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Khaleda warns Crisis will deepen if upazila, city corp'n polls held unilaterally

By Staff Correspondent

Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has said the current crisis in the country will further deepen if the government tries to hold unilaterally upazila and city corporation elections like the recently held municipal and Meherpur-1 by-polls.

In a statement yesterday, she congratulated people for observing the hartal peacefully and said the government has failed to resolve people's problems, yet it is not stepping down.

The government in a bid to divert people from mass movement has laid the bait of upazila and city corporation polls, the BNP chief said.

But Jatiya Sangsad elections should have to be held ahead of all other elections to rescue the country from the current national crisis. This opportunity for national elections should have to be created through resignation of the gov-

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Intern doctors at RMCH on fresh strike

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, May 11: Intern doctors at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital began an indefinite strike again today, protesting assault on one of their colleagues allegedly by some attendants of a patient.

The victim, Dr Munira Parvin was allegedly beaten up by the attendants of a female patient who died yesterday at Ward No 160. A similar incident occurred at the hospital on April 29.

The intern doctors at the hospital had gone on strike for an indefinite period on April 29 after Dr Sabul, an intern, was assaulted by the attendants of a patient.

The doctors rejoined their duties only yesterday after an 11-day non-stop strike following fruitful talks with the authorities concerned.

Chhatak blast Jagadish on two days' police remand

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 11: CID today took the Sylhet district Jubo League Joint-Convenor and Ward Commissioner of Sylhet pourashava Jagadish Chandra Das on a two-day remand.

Jagadish was arrested by CID police from his house at Brahmanashan area early hours of yesterday in connection with the bomb explosion at the house of AL MP Muhiyur Rahman Manik at Chhatak. He was produced before a Magistrate's Court of Sunamganj yesterday.

The CID team began interrogating Jagadish this afternoon which continued till filing of this report, said an official in Sunamganj district. CID ASP Anisul Islam is being assisted by inspectors Gopal and Enayetur Rahman.

The CID's prayer for taking Abu Lais, a cousin of the MP, on remand will be heard by the court tomorrow, the source added.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet district Jubo League at a meeting this afternoon protested the arrest of Jagadish and demanded his immediate release.

60 Cairn employees put under Shell's disposal

By Sharier Khan

Services of some 60 employees of British oil company Cairn has been put under the disposal of Shell Oil which is taking over Cairn's operation in blocks 15 and 16 including the Sangu gasfield by July next.

Cairn is also in the process of handing over to Shell its movable and immovable assets which are legally owned by the Petrobangla, sources said.

After July, Cairn may retain a small office to run technical operations under Shell.

The sources also said that despite warnings from experts that the government and Shell was heading towards a legal crisis over ownership in blocks 15 and 16, neither the Petrobangla nor the government took any step so far.

When asked about the legal crisis, a Cairn high official said, "If the government does not approve the change of operation in these blocks by July, we will make an arrangement with the government so that normal interactions continue till it is solved legally."

He admitted that Petrobangla was not informed prior to taking the decision to

transfer the ownership although it was a partner. But he argued that there was scope in the PSC for such change of partnership and ownership. "It is practised internationally," he said requesting anonymity.

The British company notified its decision to Petrobangla and Energy Ministry few months ago, after taking the decision.

Commenting on the situation, a Petrobangla official said, "Cairn does not seem to be concerned whether the government is accepting the decision or not. It seems we have no choice."

A political and business lobby is now trying to influence and resolve several critical legal issues which Shell will 'inherit' from Cairn after July. These issues include: transfer of Holland Sea Search shares, owned by Cairn till early '97, to Shell; subsequent transfer of 50 per cent share of Cairn to Shell; and making Shell the "operator."

Besides the PSC-related legal issues, there are other vital unresolved issues with Cairn, including the Sangu budget.

Cairn and another oil company, Halliburton Brown and Roots, erected the unmanned platform in the Bay of Bengal, laid 50 km pipeline under the sea and constructed a gas processing plant at Chilmipur. Chittagong under a programme for development of offshore Sangu gas field. They first submitted a 188 million US dollar budget with 25 million dollars as contingency fund. But later, they submitted a revised budget of 264 million dollars. Petrobangla rejected the budget, terming it "grossly inflated and false". Cairn has not yet given up its claim.

Besides, Petrobangla accused Cairn of "unauthorised and excess expenditure and putting deliberate, inflated and distorted statement of expenditure and accounts". It also charged Cairn with "buying a 25-year-old rig at much higher price without prior approval and refurbishing it at enormous costs". These charges against Cairn are still unanswered.

In a recent meeting, high officials of Shell Bangladesh told the Petrobangla Chairman that Cairn would settle all these

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Chittagong Steel Mills Workers reject 'pay-off' decision, to stage hunger strike today

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, May 11: The agitating workers and employees of Chittagong Steel Mills have rejected the government's 'pay-off' decision, mill sources said.

The workers and employees, numbering about 600, stuck to their agitation programme, demanding reopening of the mill, CBA sources said.

"We have rejected the government's 'pay-off' decision. We will continue our movement till our demands are met," said Nazimuddin Chowdhury, General Secretary of the CBA.

"We want reopening of the mill immediately. The mill can be run profitably if the authorities inject a working capital of Tk 40 crores," he said.

"We opposed government's pay-off decision earlier also," he added.

The agitating employees and workers will stage a mass hunger strike at the Shahid

Minar here tomorrow protesting the pay-off decision.

They have also called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong on May 13 to press their demand that also include payment of outstanding salaries.

They have been agitating for about a month now to press their demands.

Chittagong Steel Mills, the country's largest manufacturer of steel products, was closed three months ago with a burden of over 500 crores taka loans because of continuous losses.

The mill had been incurring losses since 1991. It incurred a loss of about Tk 70 crore per year, failing to compete in the local market due to high cost of production, mill sources said.

The government in a letter on May 5 asked the management of the mill to take preparation to implement the pay-off decision.

60 passengers still missing 13 more bodies found in sunken launch

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, May 11: Thirteen more bodies were recovered today from the sunken launch, 'ML Dweep Kanya', raising the death toll to 37.

The launch was fully salvaged today, four days after it sank in the river Meghna with more than 300 passengers on board. The vessel was towed to lishaghat in Bhola at about 4.45 pm yesterday.

All the bodies recovered today were found trapped inside the hull of the launch. Most of them were decomposed. Out of 13, only two were identified. They are Babul, son of Nasir Majhi of Kalkeni village and Faruque, son of Anisul Haq of Char Laurance in Ramgati of Laxmipur district.

The unidentified bodies were also taken to lishaghat for mass burial at Biswa Road.

More than 60 passengers are still missing, according a sur-

vivor. Around 100 passengers were believed to have swum ashore when the launch capsized amid severe storm at 11:30 am on Saturday.

Eleven bodies were recovered from char areas of Laxmipur Sunday and more 13 from the sunken launch yesterday.

The launch, when salvaged by Hamza, was found more or less in good condition. It has a small cabin on the roof above the deck and can carry a maximum of 175 to 200 persons, BSS quoting DC of Bhola said.

Police have seized the launch.

Meanwhile, the government today constituted a three-member probe body headed by Mohtashim Abdul Haq, Principal Officer of Meron about Tk 50 lakh from the contractors as ensuring them that they would 'manage' contracts for them.

Introduction of the new system was a result of pressure from some local bigwigs in the ruling party, they said.

But the WDB officials felt in an odd situation when the WDB Contractor Association also pressed them for the contracts involving Tk 15 crore.

WDB sources said that the armed terrorists were visiting the WDB office and the WDB colony.

Police have been deployed at the WDB office and the WDB

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Armed terrorists attack Rajshahi WDB office

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, May 11: Some armed terrorists again attacked and ransacked the divisional office of Water Development Board here today.

They also took away some keys of office rooms, WDB officials alleged.

Meanwhile the top WDB officials, who earlier left the city with their families following alleged threats on their lives by some persons for contracts, did not return till today.

Some sources in WDB office however claimed that the WDB officials themselves created the opportunity for the "terrorists" to press for awarding contracts for renovation of Rajshahi Town Protection Embankment.

"They (officials) cancelled the lottery system of judging tenders and introduced the previous system of lowest rate with five per cent below or above. Some contractors took the new system as an opportunity to

press the WDB officials for giving them work", one source said.

"They contacted highly placed persons in Dhaka and Rajshahi to get contracts".

An Awami League source claimed that some AL leaders in the city had taken about Tk 50 lakh from the contractors as ensuring them that they would 'manage' contracts for them.

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WDB sources said that the armed terrorists were visiting the WDB office and the WDB colony.

Police have been deployed at the WDB office and the WDB



Bangladesh play last warm-up match today

By Sports Reporter

Bangladesh will take on Northamptonshire County Cricket Club today in their last official warm-up match at Northampton, some 75 miles from London.

It is the same venue where Bangladesh will play their last World Cup match against Pakistan on May 31.

Bangladesh, after their creditable 12-run triumph over Middlesex on Monday in their second official warm-up match, moved to Northampton from North London yesterday to prepare for today's match.

Bangladesh also won their first official warm-up match against Essex county by five runs on May 8.

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Manjur Kader placed on 2-day police remand

By Staff Correspondent

Major (ret'd) Manjur Kader was placed on a two-day police remand by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday.

Special Branch of police arrested Manjur Kader on Monday under Section 54 of the CrP.

Manjur Kader is likely to be given detention soon as an accused in a case filed with Mohammadpur thana, police said.

Police yesterday sought remand for five days while lawyers defending Manjur Kader filed a bail petition and another petition for cancellation of remand prayer.

Metropolitan Magistrate Narayan Chandra Das granted remand for two days for interrogating Manjur Kader and rejected both the prayers.

Shazneen murder Court to hear statement of informant on May 24

By Staff Correspondent

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday fixed May 24 to hear the informant's statement in the Shazneen rape trial.

Prosecution lawyers yesterday submitted a prayer for time saying the informant and other witnesses could not appear before the court due to hartal. Judge Tapan Kumar Rudra agreed and gave the new date.

The accused six also were not produced before the court due to the hartal.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23 last year. The investigating officer of the murder case, ASP Mujibur Rahman of CID, had lodged a

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