

Unocal starts drilling of two Bibiyana wells next month

Rig to arrive Chittagong port within a week

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

US Company Unocal will start drilling two production wells in Bibiyana Gas Field in Nabiganj upazila in Habiganj district next month.

A rig from Dubai for the drilling operation will reach Chittagong port within a week, company officials told this correspondent on Thursday.

Movement of the rig from Chittagong to the North Pad of Bibiyana will be started in the second week of October.

The company would drill at least six wells there. German company Deutag has already been contracted for the drilling, the officials added.

This will be a major work by

Unocal, which will involve 230 million US dollars.

There are two old gas wells in the North Pad of Bibiyana, drilled by another US company Occidental in 1998. Occidental sold its assets to Unocal and left Bangladesh after the blowout in Magurchhara Gas field in Moulvibazar in the early hours of June 15, 1997.

Unocal is hopeful of starting production in Bibiyana gas field by the end of next year. This is considered the richest gas field in the country.

Initially, 200 MMCFD gas would be supplied to the National Gas Grid. By the end of 2008, the company would raise the production to 400 MMCFD,

which would be the optimum production there, the official said.

Work on laying of a 47-kilometre pipeline from Bibiyana gas field to the North-South pipeline (National Gas Grid) at Muchhai in Habiganj would also start soon.

The Prime Minister's office last month approved acquisition of 140 acres land in of Habiganj and Moulvibazar districts for laying the pipeline, the sources said.

Keeping the target in view, preparatory work for setting up a 500 MMCFD gas processing plant at the South Pad of Bibiyana gas field has been started, the company officials said.

Schoolboy kidnapped from IU campus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

Criminals abducted a school student from Islamic University (IU) campus on Thursday and demanded Tk 50,000 ransom.

The victim is Al-Amin 12, a student of class V at IU Laboratory School. He is the son of Hasan Ali, a fourth class employee of IU.

According to a case filed by Hasan Ali with IU police outpost, one Sumon, son of Moulana Abu Bakkar of Saikupa upazila in Jhenidah, picked up Al-Amin from the campus at about 1:pm.

Latter, he demanded Tk 50,000 for his release.

When contacted, the duty at IU police outpost said they were trying to rescue the boy.

As many as 57 people were abducted in the district since January. The victims includes school and college students, businessmen and farmers. Thirteen of them were killed and 11 are still missing. The rest bought their freedom.

Organised gangs and outlawed party cadres are involved in the incidents, police said.



Jono Udyog and Save Chittagong, two environmental organisations, formed a human chain in front of Chittagong Press Club yesterday protesting bus fare hike.

AL won't go to polls without reforms: Razzak

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Awami League leader and former minister Abdur Razzak MP yesterday said his party will not participate in the next parliamentary election if reforms to the caretaker system and the Election Commission (EC) are not made.

Polls will not be free and fair without the reforms proposed by the 14-party opposition alliance, he said and called upon the people to rally round AL to realise those.

The BNP-Jamaat government is planning to hold as "farical" polls under the existing caretaker system without reforming the EC only to cling to power, he alleged. The people under the leadership of the opposition alliance will foil the motive, he said while addressing a public meeting at Champaknagar High School playground in the Sadar upazila.

"This government has to be removed from power as it is protecting the perpetrators of the August 17 bomb blasts across the country and other blasts earlier", he said.

This government, in its four-year tenure has branded Bangladesh abroad as a country of religious zealots, he said, adding peace will not return till they are in power.

He also criticised the government for politicising the administration and the EC. He also demanded cancellation of the recent appointment of JCD and Shibir activists as election officials.

The failed government has no right to remain in power, the front ranking AL leader said.

With Abul Kalam Buiyan in the chair, the meeting was addressed by, among others, bureaucrat turned politician and AL central Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and AL Finance Secretary Prof Ali Ashraf Khan.

Rural rationing in N-dists now to begin October 7

900 ultra poor to be covered instead of 450 in each union

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Distribution of rice to the ultra poor in eight northern districts at subsidised rate under government's Rural Rationing Programme (RRP) will now begin on October 7 instead of today, announced earlier.

The programme has been rescheduled to cover 900 people instead of 450 in each union, planned earlier, according to Nilphamari Sadar Thana Controller of Food (TCF) Abdul Wahed.

The RRP is designed to help the ultra poor in the present munga (a pre-harvest lean period when poor people suffer due to lack of work).

He told this correspondent yesterday that he received a letter from higher authorities recently to prepare for RRP food distribution from

October 7. The rescheduling will be effective in all the eight northern districts, he said.

Earlier, 450 ultra poor people were selected in each union by the Union Parishad and the lists were checked and verified by the army.

As per the changed programme, Union Parishads will submit lists of more 450 ultra poor people to Upazila Nirbahi Officers and army personnel will check and verify those from October 1 to October 4.

Under the RRP, each cardholder will get six kilograms of rice once a month at Tk 4 per kg. The quantity may be increased, sources said. Union Parishads will distribute the rice.

The RRP will be in addition to other programmes like Vulnerable

Group Feeding (VGF), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice during the munga period.

Sources in the district Food Department said allotments were sent to upazilas to start the programme from October 1.

Talking to this correspondent, Shahjahan Chowdhury, president of Nilphamari District Union Parishad Chairman Samity and Chairman of Kundu Pukur UP in Sadar upazila, said it would be difficult to prepare new lists of beneficiaries within such a short time.

As munga has already started, the government should have launched the RRP from October 1 as scheduled earlier and then bring more people under its cover.



Participants at a Math competition held at the Zilla School yesterday. About 1000 boys and girls from different schools took part in the competition, organised by Bogra Math Club.

BSF kidnaps another Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

The body of a Bangladeshi citizen who was gunned down by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday is yet to be returned while another Bangladeshi was taken away by the BSF on Thursday.

The BSF took away Md Zayed Mia, 20, son of Md Babul Mia of Kharatola village in Sadar upazila while he was working at a field near Hirapur border. He did not come back home till filing this report yesterday evening.

Earlier, Md Yunus Mia, 20, and Md Alal Mia, 14, were taken away by the BSF on Wednesday. The BSF gunned down Yunus on the day but Alal managed to return home with serious injuries. He was admitted to a local hospital.

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sent two protest notes to the BSF. In a reply on Thursday, the BSF said they fired gunshots at Yunus but did not kill him, rather he succumbed to his other injuries. The body was handed over to Indian police for autopsy, the BSF said.

Abducted brick field owner yet to be rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A brick field owner in Manikganj, abducted seven days ago from Uttara in the capital, is yet to be rescued.

The victim is Meer Delwar Hossain, 42, owner of Meer Bricks in Manikganj.

His brother Meer Selim Hossain filed a case with Uttara thana on Tuesday, accusing three persons - Iqbal Sazzad, Ferdous and Awlad Hossain.

According to case, Iqbal Sazzad, owner of Shrestha Housing Project in Dhaka, purchased bricks worth Tk 2,68,000 from Meer Bricks on credit three years back. Delwar had been demanding the money for long.

On September 22, at around 10:00 pm, an unidentified man called

Delwar to House no. 8, Road No. 24, Sector-7 in Uttara on cell phone to take back the money. Delwar left home at around 11am on September 23 for Dhaka. He reached the house at 1 pm and found there Iqbal Sazzad, Ferdous, Awlad Hossain, Anwar, 20, and Sanwar, 21.

Delwar phoned his brother Meer Selim Hossain at around 4:00pm from the house and said he was waiting there for the money. Delwar is untraced since then.

The victims' family at a press conference at Manikganj Press Club on Thursday demanded Delwar's rescue and arrest of the alleged abductors.

JUTE MARKET DULL IN MAGURA

Tk 3 cr of traders still unpaid by BJMC, mills

HOSSAIN SERAI, Magura

Jute purchase in the district is yet to pick up as traders have no capital because they have about Tk three crore lying outstanding with BJMC (Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation) mills.

"We do not have money to buy jute but the mill authorities are indifferent to repaying our arrear dues", said Uday Sankar Saha, a top jute trader at Natun Bazaar in Magura.

According to the jute traders, before closure of Adamjee Jute Mills Ltd (AJM) in 2002, its authorities bought 2500 tonnes of jute of worth about Tk 3 crores through local traders. BJMC paid Tk 2 crore in two installments and Tk one crore is still unpaid.

Moreover, Peoples Jute Mills Ltd, Platinum Jute Mills Ltd, Crescent Jute Mills Ltd, Star Jute Mills Ltd. and Gul

Ahmed Jute Mills Ltd. owe to local traders over Tk 2 crore, they said while talking to this correspondent.

Another big jute trader seeking anonymity said most of the mills have virtually closed their purchasing centres in Magura.

About 17,890 hectares of land were brought under jute cultivation in Madaripur this year, according to sources in the Agriculture Extension Department (AED).

Jute cultivation increased substantially in the district in the last three years following steps by AED but farmers are frustrated now because prices have fallen, they said.

"As the traders do not have money, the jute market is under the control of middleman who are offering lower prices", said Abul Kalam who came to sell jute at Natun Bazaar on Saturday.

Netrakona PTI Super's removal demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

At least 242 trainees of Netrakona Primary Training Institute (PTI) abstained from attending classes since Wednesday demanding removal of its superintendent.

They ransacked the office of Superintendent Mostafa Kamal thrice on Thursday. Two female instructors, Bimola Das and Jebunnahar Khanom, were injured when they were trying to prevent the agitators from ransacking it.

They brought out a procession in the town and submitted a memorandum to Netrakona Deputy Commissioner (DC) containing their demand.

While talking to the correspondent, the trainees expressed their firm determination to continue their programme till realisation of their demand.

When contacted, the superintendent said the agitation began when he punished four trainees due to their continuous absence from the training course for 15 days without leave. Police have been deployed on the campus.

Erratum

Our story 'Thousands protest open pit coal mining in Phulbari' published in The Daily Star on page 20 on September 26 quoting Asia Energy geologist Badruzzaman said 10 to 20 percent of the coal will be lost if underground mining is done. Actually he had said that 10 to 20 per cent of deposit could be extracted in underground mining. The inadvertent mistake is regretted.

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