

Ayubur Rahman resigns from Admin Reforms Commission

By Special Correspondent
Chairman of the Public Administration Reforms Commission Ayubur Rahman has resigned, highly placed sources said.
They said the former cabinet secretary, who had retired in September last year, and was appointed chairman of the Commission in December on contract for two years, handed over his resignation letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina early yesterday afternoon.
The reason behind the resignation could not be known immediately. Rahman could not be reached for his comments. It was also not immediately clear whether the government had accepted the resignation.
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AL, BNP leaders talk formation of JS bodies

Star Report
Three top level leaders of the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP met yesterday to resolve a deadlock on the formation of the Parliamentary standing committees on various ministries, but the meeting ended with no specific outcome, sources in the parties said.
Leaders of both the sides, however, were optimistic that they would be able to overcome the stalemate.
The leaders who met to discuss the issue included Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta, Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim and Chief Whip of the Opposition in Parliament Khandaker Delwar Hossain.
In the meeting, the BNP leader reiterated the demand that the membership on the committees should be distributed in proportion to the parliamentary strength of various parties and groups. The BNP leader also asserted that the ruling party had earlier accepted the proposition but it
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PG Hospital doctor shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent
A doctor of PG Hospital was gunned down by some miscreants at Zigatola in the city last night.
Dr Hafizur Rahman, 37, sustained fatal injuries when a gang of about 10 armed men fired on him in front of his house at about 10 pm. He died on the way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), said police and hospital sources.
The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

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Iranian quake: Thousands feared killed, official figure crosses 500

ARDABIL, Iran, Mar 1: The death toll from the violent earthquake that rocked a mountainous region of northwestern Iran rose to 500 today as freezing weather and heavy snow hampered rescue operations, officials said, report agencies.
Deputy Interior Minister Rasul Zargar said on state television that at least 500 people were killed and 2,000 injured in the temblor which shook the Ardabil region in Iranian Azerbaijan on Friday afternoon.
He said around 5,000 families or 35,000 people lost their homes in the temblor, which measured 5.5 on the Richter Scale. Some 83 villages around the main towns of Ardabil and Meshkinshar had been destroyed or severely damaged.
But villagers, officials and aid workers helping to dig out victims said the number of dead was in the thousands.
In the village Villadareh at the center of the damage, residents beat their chests in grief as volunteers pulled out the bodies of a toddler and three other children from the rubble.
The wailing of the villagers echoed through the snow-covered valley that divides the village from the main road. Most of the houses made of mud and wooden beams were in ruins.
The number of dead was expected to climb since many of the damaged villages are cut off by landslides and heavy snows in this mountainous region.

An Intelligence Ministry official who said he had toured some villages said the death toll was likely in the thousands.
"The situation in the other villages is even worse than here in Villadareh. It's a catastrophe," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.
A teacher in the town of Sarain said he counted 2,000 dead from the surrounding villages taken to the cemetery in Ardabil. In Villadareh, 15 bodies were laid out in the courtyard of the health center, and an aid worker said he had pulled 85 dead victims from under the rubble.
Most of the 720 people of the village were believed to have died, surviving residents said. They said each family, usually made up of at least six members, had only one or two survivors.
Trucks carrying tents, food and blankets were just starting to trickle in today. Cranes and bulldozers were being brought in to take out the dead.
Villagers said they spent the night in the open, keeping warm by burning tires or lighting bonfires. They said aftershocks continued until early today.
In Varania, a few kilometers from Sarain, dozens of cows, See Page 12 Col 2

Over 100 killed in Baluchistan

QUETTA, MAR 1: Doctors appealed for blood and medicines as injured victims of a powerful earthquake that killed more than 100 people, reached the western Baluchistan provincial capital today, reports AP.
Stretchers lined the corridors of Quetta's hospitals. Relatives scoured the markets to buy medicines that the hospital had run short of, said Abdul Shah, who lost 17 members of his family in the earthquake.
"We are buying medicines from the market because the hospital doesn't have enough,"

he said. "Some can only get a glucose drip."
Many people from the hard-hit outlying region of Sibi were still struggling to bid victims from rubble, authorities said.
Others, like Shah, were airlifted in army helicopters to Quetta.
Emergency workers still in the region said more than 100 people died in the magnitude-7.3 earthquake that shook the province of Baluchistan Friday morning.
They said the death toll was likely to climb even higher. See Page 12 Col 5

Chakma repatriation Tribal leaders seek UNHCR, IRC involvement

By Staff Correspondent
The leaders of the Bangladeshi tribes people, now living in the refugee camps in the Indian state of Tripura, have renewed their demand for involving the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Red Cross in the repatriation and resettlement of the tribal refugees in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).
According to a BBC report monitored here last night, the refugee leaders told the visiting Bangladesh National Committee on CHT delegation that they want the Bangladesh army and the settlers to leave the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Earlier, the tribal leaders had a three-hour See Page 12 Col 4

PM's directive to Energy Ministry

Allow pvt sector to generate power without delay

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the Energy Ministry to give private sector permission for generating power without delay in order to solve the nagging electricity problem, reports UNB.
She issued the instruction after taking stock of the power situation across the country in over a three-hour-long meeting at the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry.
Having been briefed about the overall situation, the Prime Minister directed the officials concerned to take immediate decision and action to overcome the problem.
She also asked them to adopt a standard power generation and distribution policy to meet up the increasing power crisis in a balanced way.
Taking note of the vexed problem of loadshedding, Sheikh Hasina directed the concerned officials to avoid long-term loadshedding in specific areas.
She told them to inform people of the particular area before shedding load of power, as an immediate measure to provide the residents with some relief.
To plug electricity pilferage, as another step to come to grips with the situation, the Prime Minister suggested the energy officials to conduct a motivational campaign for reducing system loss of power.
"Such motivation to cut the system loss will be a great job done for the nation as it will save power for the convenience of the people," she told the Energy Ministry meeting that she presided.
She was apprised in detail about the current situation of power and causes of power crisis. Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Lt General (Rtd) Noor Uddin Khan briefed the PM.
About the prevailing power crisis, the energy officials said the power generation plants had become old causing production shortfall.
Eight power plants were also under repair, which aggravated

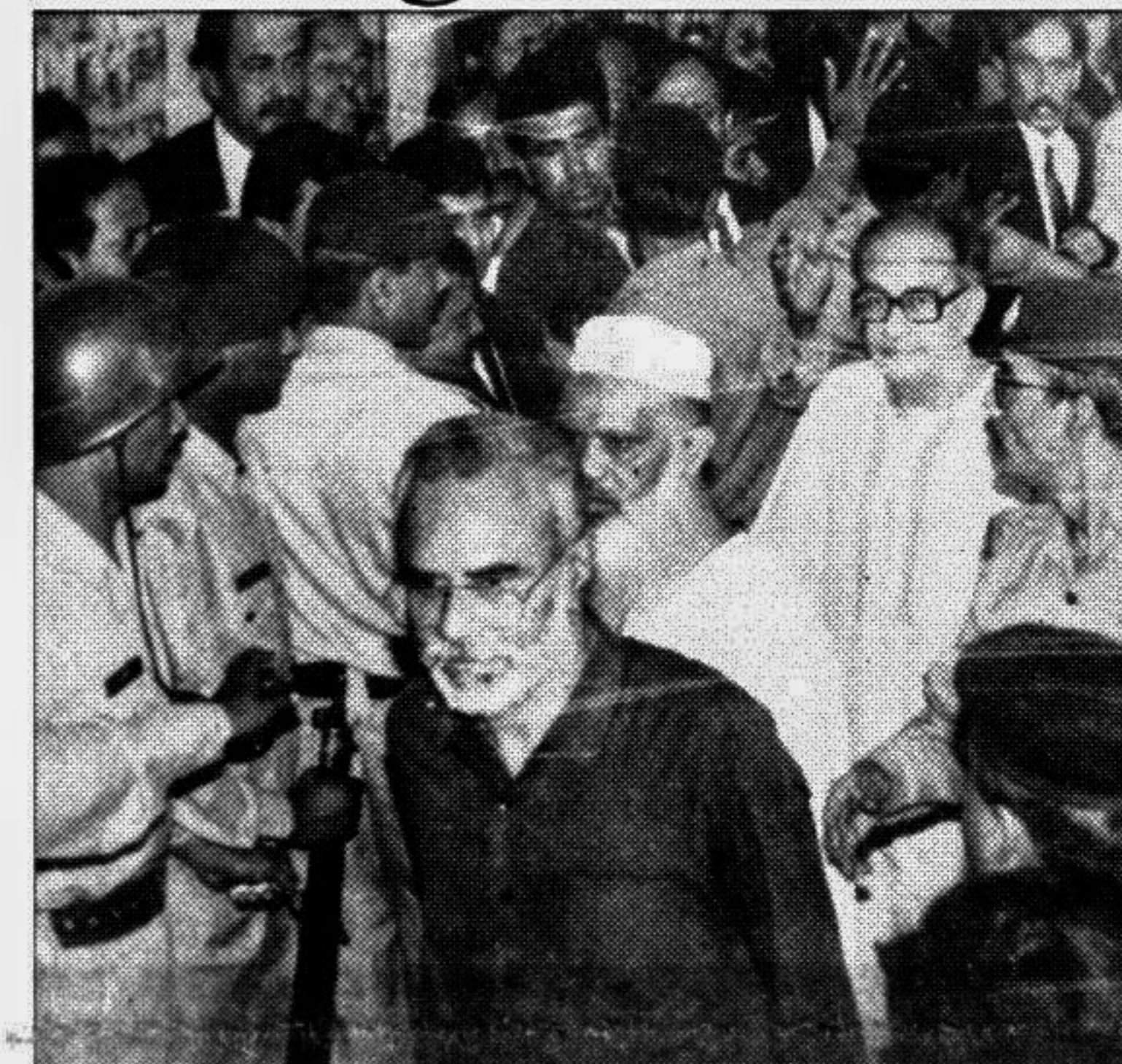
the problem.
They also informed the Prime Minister that on completion of the 57 km Ashuganj pipeline, different power plants in Chittagong would get adequate gas and be able to go into full-scale operation for generating power. By April, the pipeline will be completed, they said.
Meeting sources said the power-sharing contracts with some private firms had already been signed. After setting up of power-generation plants in private sector, the country will have surplus power meeting its present demand, estimated at more than 2200 megawatt.
In this context, the Prime Minister was told that not a single megawatt power had been generated in the last five years, resulting in the crisis.
Referring to the Baropukuria coal mine, the Prime Minister suggested the concerned officials to acquire the technical know-how for installing coal-fired power plant, particularly See Page 12 Col 3

Bangabandhu murder

Case sent to District and Sessions Judge's Court

Star Report

The six accused charged in the Bangabandhu murder case were committed to the District and Sessions Judges Court, Dhaka, for trial after a brief hearing by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) yesterday amidst tight security and demonstrations outside by a section of lawyers demanding their execution.
As the accused were brought to the CMM's Court under riot police escort from the Dhaka Central Jail, for their third appearance since they were charged on January 15, jeering crowd demanded their immediate execution.
Tension gripped the court room briefly when an unidentified lawyer taunted the accused. "Killers", he shouted repeatedly as a defence counsel was pleading for his client, Zobaidda Rashid. However, his colleagues calmed him. The magistrate twice ordered all to maintain order.
The six accused are: Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman; Lt Col (relieved) Sul- See Page 12 Col 4



The accused in the Bangabandhu murder case being taken to the CMM's Court in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Tension, panic grip Sadhapur village

13 Ansars taken to thana, police guard trouble spot

By Masud Arif

Dozens of gunshots that rocked Sadhapur village in Savar leaving four people dead on Friday left the green hamlet and its people in a state of panic and tension.
Hundreds of people of Sadhapur and its adjoining villages, about 45 km from city, started crowding the thatched huts around the Ansar camp yesterday to see, what they said, the 'devastation' caused by the Ansars and 'some hired armed mastaans'.
Meanwhile, police said that four persons including a teenage girl were killed in the incident but the villagers claimed the figure was seven. Savar police added that none came to claim anyone as missing till last night.
According to police sources, 84 rounds were fired during the trouble. Thirteen Ansars who were on duty at the camp were taken to Savar thana till last night while extra police forces were guarding the troubled spot at Sadhapur.
Four persons, including a teenage girl, were killed and at least 25 others injured when Ansars opened fire during a See Page 12 Col 1



Police deployed in the area where four villagers were killed in firing by Ansars at Sadhapur village in Savar. — Star photo

Investing 'black money' in industrial sector

WB for review of decision not to question source of funds

By Inam Ahmed

The World Bank (WB) has questioned the wisdom of the government decision not to question the source of 'black money' if invested in the industrial sector and suggested its reconsideration.
A reconsideration of the proposed policy to exempt previously unreported income totally from any income tax if invested in manufacturing seems warranted since it could undermine the credibility of the tax system, apart from being misused, the Bank observed in its progress report on reform targets prepared on February 22.
The government in a cabinet meeting on January 13 had approved this new proposal aimed at increasing investment in the country.
The WB report further observed, it is also questionable whether the same investment should also be allowed to benefit from tax holidays, in addition to this concession, which seems 'overly generous and possibly unethical'.
The Bank felt that to strengthen fiscal balances in the medium and long term, serious efforts are required to expand the low coverage of income tax and VAT. The income tax system has been very inequitable because of its poor coverage and substantial exemptions and loopholes so that the tax burden effectively falls on a small minority.
A comprehensive action plan, backed by strong political commitment, will need to be implemented to mount a countrywide drive to make this a truly broad-based tax system.
The Survey Zones of the Taxes Department (SZTD), which is responsible for internal and external surveys to identify new tax payers, continues to be under-equipped and efforts so far have been very inadequate, the WB report noted.
Unlike in the past, the SZTD should be given the mandate to function independently of interference and conduct surveys on a continuous basis, it said. Accordingly, SZTD would need to be upgraded and given strong leadership, possibly with a Secretary-level official in its charge.
The WB also noted that the NBR had recently launched external surveys through door-to-door house visits, but there has been no attempt in FY 97 so far to compile available information from various official and business sources, and to consider how the information provided by the VAT and importers registration list could be exploited for this purpose.
Attention should be given to gearing up internal surveys so See Page 12 Col 3

All banks but Sonali to be disinvested, says Kibria

CHITTAGONG, Mar 1: Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria said today that all nationalised banks excepting Sonali Bank would be disinvested in phases, reports BSS.
The minister said this while addressing the members of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) at chamber house here.
Kibria said private sector was the driving force for the economic development of the See Page 12 Col 7

Rush of visitors on final day of US trade show

By Staff Correspondent

The rush of visitors at the 3-day US Trade Show on its final day yesterday was greater than ever before. Long queues of men, women and children were seen at the Sheraton Hotel premises, in front of the ticket counter where each one paid Tk 10 to get an admission.
Inside, the tennis court and the adjacent Winter Garden were turned into a hall with canvas roof and walls to set up the trade show. Visitors sweated and jam-packed every stall which offered American goods as diverse as Anagram balloons to shaving razors.
Other stalls included sophisticated computers, solar energy equipment, power generators, cash dispensing machines for banks, modern communication devices, air-cooled and even a locally devised bamboo-made manual tube-well presented by an American NGO.
"We are actually not having any serious buyers in the show, but it has been a great success in terms of growing awareness among the mass about our products," said Mirza Alim Ahmed who was demonstrating sophisticated 'total system' computers for offices, business houses and other places. Ahmed said that his company, Technoaven, after computerising the Bangladesh Railway ticket and reservation systems was about to sign contracts with 'big offices' including the Infantry Division of the Bangladesh Army.
Young people crowded at the Persona razor stall to purchase American shaving razors. The stall had run out of their advertising brochures, said the sweating young salesman under powerful spotlights and inadequate ventilation of the hall.
Round the corner, Bangladeshi representatives of the Black and Veatch, a renowned company setting up

power plants, were briefing curious visitors about establishing power plants in the country.
Both the American technology and its after-sales services are of quality, not like many other countries now trying to sign up contracts with the government," said an official of the company present at the stall. "We have paid more than Tk 80,000 for renting the stall space which we can afford but there may be many more companies which could not participate due to this high rental charges," he added.
The American symbol, Coca Cola, set up its stall at one corner of the tennis court section. It was the only stall selling refreshments therefore people struggled to get somewhere near the counter. In addition to the soft-drinks, the stall was selling footballs and Yo-Yo bearing the brand name of the company. "Why should we buy something See Page 12 Col 7

BNP protests DCC's failure to resolve problems

City BNP staged a demonstration yesterday protesting the city corporation's failure to resolve the problems of city dwellers, reports UNB.
It held a rally in front of the party's central office in the morning, which was addressed by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan. Khurshid Jahan Huq, and former city mayors Barrister Abul Hasnat and Mirza Abbas.
Addressing the rally, Bhuiyan said city life has become unbearable due to various problems like mosquito menace, traffic jam, loadshedding and gas and water crisis.
He accused the government of not fulfilling its pledges — turning the capital into a "beautiful city".
The BNP leader said during the past years, the Dhaka city mayor alleged that the then BNP government did not cooperate with him, but he could not solve the problems after his party Awami League had assumed power.
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Bangladesh got water less than agreed quantum

PABNA, Mar 1: Bangladesh received Ganges water 112,274 cucecs less than the quantum mentioned in the water sharing treaty with India during the last eight day cycle of February, reports UNB.
The country got 200,574 cucecs of water in total from February 21 to 28 as against 312,848 cucecs specified in the accord, official sources here said today.
A greater volume of 395,402 cucecs of water was available during the corresponding period in 1996.
Water experts from home and India started a joint monitoring at Harding Bridge point on January 15 after the 30-year Indo-Bangla water sharing treaty signed in New Delhi on December 12 last year came into effect on January 1.
According to the joint monitoring, the flow of water exactly on February 28 was 24,559 cucecs as compared to 48,050 cucecs on the same day in 1996.
On the day, officials recorded the water level at 10 cm lower compared to that of the previous year.

Shima's death JS probe body visits Ctg today

The parliamentary committee to investigate the death of garments worker Shima Chowdhury will visit Chittagong today, reports BSS.
Headed by Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, the 11-member committee will visit Raazan thana, Chittagong jail and medical college hospital and exchange views with the people.
This was decided at the meeting of the committee held at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.
The meeting reviewed the preliminary report from police and jail authorities and directed the authorities concerned to collect more information about the death.
JCD rivals trade fire
Police raid 3 DU halls: 10 arrested
By DU Correspondent
Gunshots rocked the Dhaka University campus late Friday night for the second time in two days.
Sources said the activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra (JCD) in the Zia Hall started firing at about 1 am. The Barisal group of JCD reportedly led by Babu returned the fire. Some 20 rounds of gunshots were heard.
Police raided the Zia, Bangabandhu and Jasimuddin halls shortly after the incident. Ten persons were arrested during the raids that began at about 2 am.