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ANNOUNCEMENT
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SPEAK OUT

The Daily Star is organising a conference of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs (age limit 25-35 years) at 3.30 pm on Sunday, 28 December '97 at British Council. The objective of the conference is to hear what our Young Experts have to say about the 21st Century Bangladesh and about the future growth of their respective professions.

Join this unique gathering of the Young and let the policy-makers hear YOUR VIEWS. The Daily Star will publish a special supplement on the outcome of the Conference.

Call Rafiq Hossain or Monjurul Kabir Kallol between 5 to 7 p.m. everyday at tel. 863036 and 500092-4 at The Daily Star for registration (free) and further information.

JOIN THE CONFERENCE AND HELP OUR COUNTRY GROW

Rumour of resignation denied

By Staff Correspondent

Three senior generals of the Bangladesh Army, who were reported to have resigned, denied the authenticity of a news item in this regard circulated by the French news agency AFP from Dhaka yesterday.

A BBC broadcast in Bengali last night, quoting the report said that Major General Abdul Matin, Divisional Commander of Chittagong, Major General Imamuzzaman, Bir Pratik, Commander 9th Division, Dhaka and Major General Ruhul Amin, Quarter Master General of the Army, had resigned.

When the three generals were contacted by The Daily Star, they denied that they resigned.

BBC also said that the three generals, when contacted, denied the report.

Weary waiting at Aricha ghat

From Shehab Ahmed

ARICHA GHAT, Dec 22: "Where should I mail my letter, I do not know the name of the post office," the strains of the folk song were coming out of a luxury air conditioned coach amid a gridlock of vehicles, hundreds of those waiting to cross the Padma-Jamuna here today.

The singer with a dotara (two stringed guitar), Tamizuddin Bayati in his sixties, tried to entertain those in the long-distance coach here in the afternoon, waiting in a nearly four-km long logjam of transports.

But the folk singer's efforts

failed to soothe the frayed nerves of the drivers or the passengers, who opted to try their patience on a seemingly hopeless situation.

Some of the vehicles, like a truck carrying vital engine spares to Bogra from Chittagong Port, had been waiting for five days, since heavy fog on Saturday cut the frequency of ferry service, already strained by the shrinking ferry channel.

Selim, 36, had been playing poker with his colleagues after crawling his way near the terminal number one for a chance to board the ferry and deliver the spares for farmers' pumps

in Bogra since he arrived here five days earlier.

He was hopeful that by tonight, he could get a berth. But his fellow truckers were not as hopeful as he was. They were yet to cross a long way to the terminal.

Some had parked their trucks, bumper to bumper and side by side on both the lanes of the vital highway to the northern and southern districts. Between those crawled in long distance coaches, cars and even rickshaws which sneaked but failed to come out of the gridlock.

See Page 12 Col 6



Tamizuddin Bayati trying to entertain passengers of a bus stuck up in traffic jam at Aricha ferry ghat yesterday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

JS most suitable forum to discuss CHT accord: PM

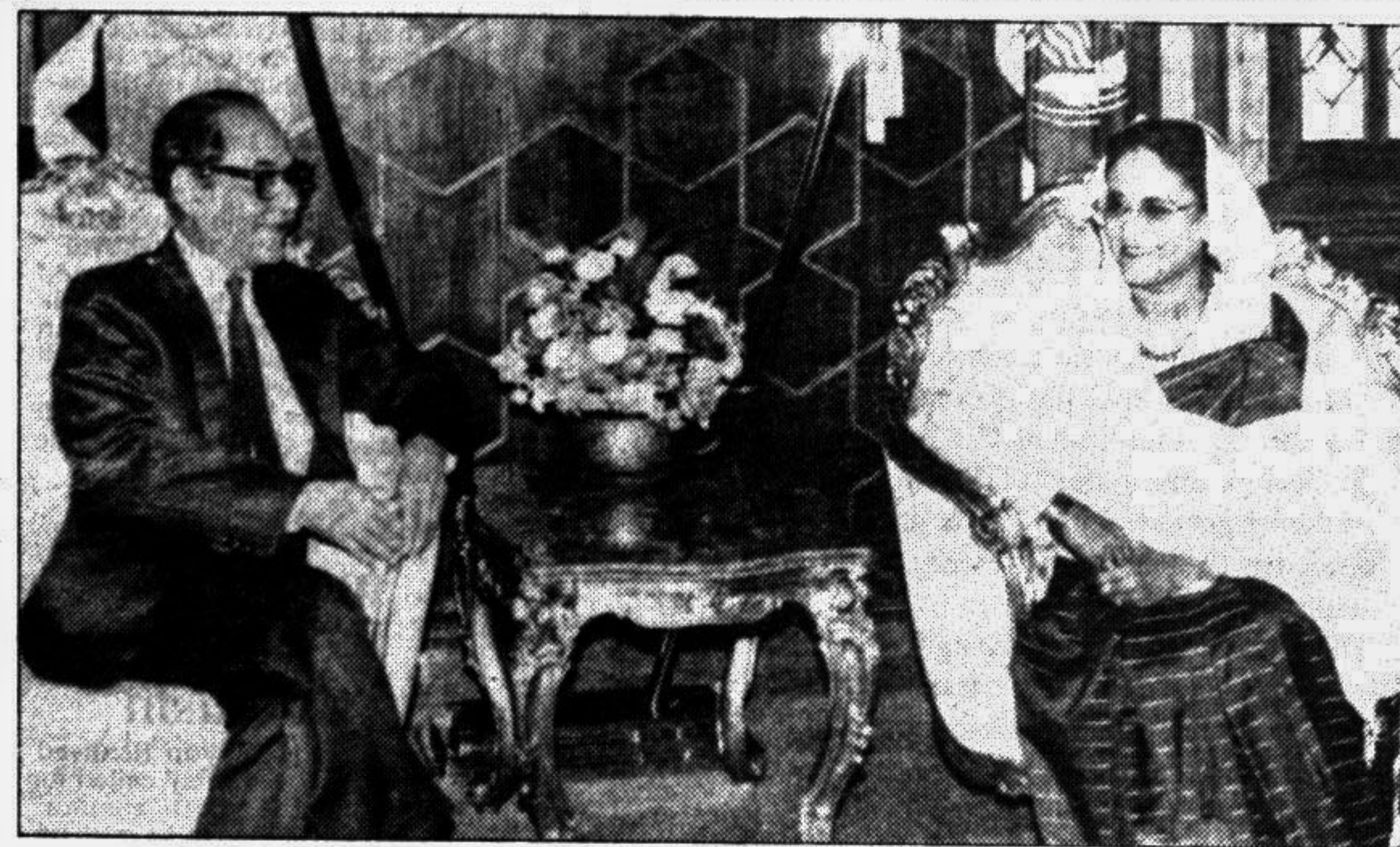
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban, reports UNB.

The main topic of the discussion between the President and the Prime Minister was the memorandum submitted by Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia. The discussion lasted for over an hour.

A communique from the Bangabhaban said the Prime Minister was of the opinion that "parliament is the most suitable forum for detailed discussion of the draft peace agreement" on the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The communique said the President referred to the suggestion for a roundtable conference between the government and the opposition leaders, but he (President) prefers to remain above all controversy.

It said, "He (President) will See Page 12 Col 1"



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

Cabinet okays CHT accord

By Nurul Kabir

The cabinet yesterday 'officially' approved the Chittagong Hill Tracts accord which was signed between the National Committee on CHT and the Parbatya Chattagram Jano Sanghati Samity in the first week of December.

The accord was earlier approved in principle at the first cabinet meeting after the signing of the treaty on December 2.

Official approval of the cabinet was necessary for full implementation of the accord as it has proposed amendment to certain laws relating to the CHT. None of the cabinet members objected to any of the clauses of the accord, cabinet sources said.

The cabinet meeting, held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, also decided to constitute a five-member cabinet committee to examine a health ministry proposal for enacting a law to 'ensure quality treatment' at private clinics in the country.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salauddin Yusuf will be heading the committee. See Page 12 Col 1

Biman's F-28 makes belly landing: 15 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

A F-28 aircraft of Bangladesh Biman with 84 passengers made an emergency belly landing at the Sylhet Osmany airport last night at 10.46 pm.

Biman officials said that at least 15 passengers with injuries were rushed to different hospitals in Sylhet town. There was no report of any casualty till the writing of the report at 1.30 am.

The officials, however, said they were still awaiting further details.

Sources said the Biman flight BG 609 left Dhaka for Sylhet at 10.10 pm and due to heavy fog had to make a near crash landing at the Osmany airport. Although more details were not available, Biman officials said that the plane slipped off the runway while making a belly landing.

The extent of damage to the aircraft or the manner the passengers were evacuated could not be known immediately.

Osmany airport is located some 15 kilometres from the town. Fire Brigade and ambulances reached the spot and were carrying out emergency operation work.

Of the 84 passengers, one was a child.

The seven-party alliance yesterday announced fresh programmes demanding annulment of the CHT accord, reports UNB.

The alliance, which includes BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, will hold rallies and stage demonstrations at all thana headquarters tomorrow and at district headquarters on Saturday (Dec-27).

The decision was taken at a meeting of the alliance held at the Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament with BNP leader Barrister Abdus Salam Talukdar in the chair.

Three delegations of the alliance will visit the three hill districts today to express their solidarity with the people living there.

See Page 12 Col 1

CHT accord 7-party alliance announces fresh agitation programme

BNP team leaves for CHT today

By Staff Correspondent

An 18-member BNP team leaves Dhaka for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) today to "express solidarity" with the agitation of CHT people against the "black accord," said a Press release last night.

The delegation, which includes 14 MPs, will also exchange views with the people there and meet relatives of those killed in Matiranga recently, the press release added.

CFTC gives time to ease congestion at Ctg port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 22: The Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC), a Singapore-based organisation of feeder vessel operators, has postponed its today's meeting, scheduled to be held in Singapore, to discuss congestion at Chittagong port, sources said.

The meeting has been postponed as the CFTC decided to observe the situation at the port till December 24.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister for Port and Shipping Direndra Nath Sambhu held a meeting with port officials today to review the situation.

Port sources said the special committee formed one month ago to probe the port activities will hold a meeting on December 24, possibly to fix up the productivity in cargo handling by dock workers who started a

'go-slow' following a dispute with stevedores.

The committee will also submit a report to the Chittagong Port Authority prior to holding the meeting.

The special committee was formed when the port plunged into a crisis due to the 'go-slow' by the dock workers demanding 'speed money' in the name of tips.

The port faced a serious congestion of ships both at the outer anchorage and at the jetties when cargo handling activities slumped centring the dispute between the dock workers and the stevedores.

Against the backdrop of a fresh congestion, the CFTC threatened to impose surcharge on cargo bound for Chittagong port.

But the Chittagong Port Authority yesterday requested the CFTC not to impose any congestion surcharge, claiming improvement of the situation, port sources said.

UNB quoting a source said, the CFTC, through a letter, informed that they would review the port situation till Friday and then decide about the imposition of surcharge on cargo handling.

Cold claims 34 in 24 hrs

PABNA, Dec 22: The severe cold wave that was sweeping the country for the last few days claimed 34 more lives in 10 northern districts in last 24 hours till Monday evening, reports UNB.

The highest 11 deaths were reported from Dinajpur, while six died in Panchagar, three each in Pabna, Thakurgaon and Kurigram, two each in Jaipurhat, Sirajganj and Lalmonirhat and one each in Naogaon and Nilphamari.

Most of the victims were elderly and poor.

The three victims of Pabna were identified as Khaleda Bawa, 78, of village Dhalarchar in Bera thana, Hakimnasa, 70, of village Deepchar and a one-year-old child of village Bhabanipur in Sadar thana, family sources said.

On Sunday a large number of poor people gathered in front of the DC office here, demanding winter clothes. But the administration could not help them as there was no clothes in their stock.

The mercury continued to dip in the region, particularly in Panchagar and Thakurgaon.



PARC chief resigns

By Staff Correspondent

Kazi Fazlur Rahman, Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission, has resigned citing health reasons.

He sent his resignation letter to the Prime Minister on Sunday expressing his inability to carry out his responsibilities because of his 'failing health'.

He was appointed chairman of the PARC in June this year. The first chairman of the commission, Ayubur Rahman, also resigned early this year.

Ayubur Rahman quit in frustration when his effort to organise the PARC to dent and paint the rusted bureaucracy as

See Page 12 Col 1

Formation of AL city, thana units Dragging disappoints party rank & file

By Reaz Ahmad

Delay in the formation of executive committees of Dhaka city unit and 15 thana units of Awami League has become a matter of grave frustration in the party rank and file, insiders said.

It has been over seven months now that the belated triennial council of the city AL was held. Except the two top posts of president and general secretary, composition of the executive committee of city AL is yet to be announced.

Failing to hold councils of the 15 thana units under the city AL in time, the council of city unit was organised in April last preceding the national council of the party. Six months after that, holding of the thana unit councils was completed on December 15. But new executive committee of any of these units has not been formed as yet.

"After completion of all these mere ceremonies we don't know how long we have to wait for the new committees to be formed," said a city senior AL leader.

Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, he said, party activities at thana level in the metropolitan area have lost

enthusiasm in the absence of dynamic leadership.

Grassroots level party workers feel that tendency of pursuing a policy of status quo as regards executive position in the party is detrimental to the growth of new leadership.

Young blood needs to be in- See Page 12 Col 2

24 killed in UP polls violence so far

By Staff Correspondent

At least 24 people have been killed in the polls violence across the country and polling in 324 centres cancelled until Sunday, the 14th day of the ongoing Union Parishad elections.

This was revealed at a meeting between the Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena and top-ranking officials of law enforcing agencies yesterday.

Re-elections in those centres where polling was postponed will be completed by January 15. See Page 12 Col 6

TURN TO GOLD

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