

## JS session resumes today

By Staff Correspondent  
 After a six-day recess from March 16 the Jatiya Sangsad resumes its session this morning.  
 The Finance Minister is expected to introduce a bill seeking setting up of an Employment Bank today. The cabinet approved the bill a couple of weeks ago.  
 Besides, three parliamentary standing committees on different ministries are likely to submit separate reports on three proposed legislations.  
 The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) will submit a report on the proposed

## Rape in old city One arrested for alleged involvement

By Staff Correspondent  
 Police yesterday arrested a young man for his alleged involvement in raping a seven-year-old school girl on PC Banarjee Lane in the old part of the city early morning Friday.  
 Sutrapur police identified the suspect as Mizanur Rahman, 28, who resides in a rented house on Fyarisad Road. Police arrested him from the area at about 2 pm yesterday.  
 Mizan is likely to be produced before the CMM's Court today.

The condition of the girl, who is now under treatment at the intensive care unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), is improving, hospital sources said. She was operated upon on Friday night, said the sources, adding that

## Rape at court bldg Accused to be produced in court today

By Staff Correspondent  
 Obayedul Matar, accused of raping a six-year-old girl inside a police control room on March 10, will be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court today after the end of three days' remand.  
 A senior CID official informed last night that Obayedul's confessional statement likely to be recorded before a magistrate under Section 164 of the Penal Code.  
 The rape victim, now at the Razabagh police hospital under CID custody, is also likely to be taken to the court today for recording her statement.  
 CID sources said a medical board formed at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) would conduct her medical test within a day or two.  
 Investigators yesterday took the girl and a friend of her to the place of the incident at police control room at the CMM's court building.

## Dhaka quits race for IJO chief in favour of Delhi

Star Report  
 Bangladesh has formally withdrawn its candidature for the post of executive director of International Jute Organisation (IJO) in favour of India.  
 The Jute Ministry has informed the IJO members that it has decided to withdraw its candidate I U Malik, a former secretary, in favour of the Indian candidate.  
 Election of the executive director will be held today with the incumbent, K M Rabhani, scheduled to retire in April.  
 With Bangladesh leaving the race, India, UK and France are the other contending member countries.  
 The formal withdrawal of Bangladesh's candidature in favour of India has created a ripple in the diplomatic circle.

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Rice imported from India by boats being unloaded at Bhuapur ghat in Tangail. —Star photo by Sheikh Enamul Haq

## Expectations for an independent judiciary fading: President Consequences will be terrible if people lose faith in court

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday stressed the need for an intimate relations between judges and lawyers based on amity and cooperation to perform properly all judicial activities, report agencies.  
 "Be it rule of law or human rights — everything depends on the proper performance of judicial activities as well as quick disposal of cases," he said, adding, "Our entity as a civilised nation won't exist long if the people lose their confidence in the judicial system."  
 The President was addressing a function marking the silver jubilee of Bangladesh Supreme Court at its premises. Chief Justice ATM Afzal was the guest of honour on the occa-

sion.  
 The President quoted the last year's report of Transparency International, which dubbed the judicial system of Bangladesh as a den of corruption.  
 "Perhaps the report is an exaggeration. But even if one-third of it is true, it is very unfortunate," he said.  
 President Shahabuddin who held the office of the Chief Justice said, "Justice should not only be done but it should be shown to have done."  
 A verdict of a court may be correct, but if people do not trust it or they lose faith in the court, the consequences will be terrible, he warned.  
 The President expressed his

disappointment, saying, "Expectation of an independent and strong Judiciary is waning day by day."  
 Justice Shahabuddin, who spent his long chequered career as a judge for nearly 24 years until he retired as the Chief Justice three years ago, said, "Establishment of a fair and independent judiciary was my life-long endeavour and a dream."  
 "In my service life I could not fulfil the dream completely, but at the time of my departure I had left my cherished desire that my dream will come to true one day. But that expectation is waning day by day."  
 Referring to the piling up of more than seven lakh cases in different courts, the President

said mere appointment of additional judges, amendment of laws or enacting new laws will not help speedy disposal of the cases.  
 If the aggrieved persons fail to get justice for a long period, their trust on the court will not only be lost, their disrespect and hatred to judges, lawyers and all concerned will increase.  
 The President said everyday he receives complaints from unnamed people from across the country. He used to send those complaints, with individual case numbers, to the Law Ministry or the Registrar of the Supreme Court for taking action.  
 "One allegation is undeniable. See Page 12 Col 4

## ALCWC concerned at incidents of rape PM for more stringent laws

By Staff Correspondent  
 Addressing the meeting, Sheikh Hasina stressed proper application of the existing laws and introducing more stringent laws for an end to repressions on children and women.  
 Some members of the 67-strong ALCWC pointed out incidents of rape, particularly of five or six-year old girls, and called for tougher action from the government. They were critical of the role of the ministry concerned as regards checking this.  
 Recent incidents of rape of Tania and Moushumi came up as reference as the ALCWC resolved that people should also come forward to build social resistance and help the government take proper action against the criminals.

The ruling Awami League has expressed deep concern at the frequent incidents of rape and repression on women in the country.  
 The AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) also noted that people wanted peace, relief from price hike of essentials and an end to frequent power disruption.  
 These issues figured prominently at a lengthy meeting of the ALCWC in the city yesterday with Prime Minister and party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.  
 The meeting began at the Eskaton residence of party president member, Amir Hussain Amu and was later shifted to the Ganabhaban after the lunch break.

One minister at the meeting was critical of the role played by a section of the press which, he pointed out, creates sensation over the incidents of rape.  
 Focusing on price hike of some essential items including rice, the meeting resolved that a section of hoarders and conspirators were behind 'artificial rise' of prices to create crises in peoples' life.  
 The meeting called for building social resistance against smugglers, hoarders and conspirators.  
 The Prime Minister instructed her cabinet colleagues present at the meeting, to visit market themselves whenever they could make time and observe the price situation.  
 See Page 12 Col 8

## Muggers snatch over Tk 3 lakh at Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent  
 CHITTAGONG, Mar 21: Muggers snatched Tk 3,30,000 from the staff of a company at Mehdiabagh at around noon today.  
 The money was being taken to a bank on board a pick up van, police said.  
 Three muggers riding an autorickshaw suddenly arrived there and took away the money at gunpoint after intercepting the pick-up van, police said.  
 A case was filed with Kotwali thana in this connection but none was arrested so far.

## 70 rescued while being trafficked to India

JESSORE, Mar 21: At least 70 persons including 15 women and 35 children, allegedly being trafficked to India, were rescued by police from a Keshabpur-bound coach at Rajarhat crossing today, reports BSS.  
 Police also arrested four alleged traffickers from the bus.  
 Acting on a tip-off a police team raided the night coach at Rajarhat crossing at about 3:45 am and rescued the passengers, most of whom were in an unconscious state.  
 SP Mohammad Ali Imam Chowdhury told BSS that four alleged traffickers, all from

## Bid to end stalemate at BUET fails

By Staff Correspondent  
 Education Minister ASHK Sadek yesterday held a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor of BUET Prof Iqbal Mahmud and representatives of Architecture students but failed to resolve the crisis arising out of introduction of new admission system for the Architecture Department.  
 The students of the Architecture Department have been boycotting classes protesting the new admission system.  
 At yesterday's meeting held at the VC's office, the minister advised the students to accept the new admission system only for this year. But the students demanded 360 marks for drawing and dropping of physics from question papers for admission, sources said.  
 Meanwhile, the BUET Teachers' Association (BUETTA) at a meeting yesterday held the university's 15 resigning teachers responsible for what they said "propagating falsehood to tarnish the image of the university as well as of the education minister, the Vice-Chancellor of BUET and the democratic government."  
 The (resigning) teachers along with some outsider Architects have been trying to use the students of university to gratify their desire, the meeting observed.  
 When contacted later, the VC said, "We are preparing for the admission test which is due on March 28".  
 The Bangladesh Shapathi Samaj organised a 'citizens rally' at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday demanding cancellation of the new admission system.

## Govt considering gas export to India

Inam Ahmed and Sharier Khan  
 The government is seriously considering 'pipeline export of gas' to recover the losses from its purchase of gas from foreign companies at a higher price than the local gas sale price.  
 Sources in the Energy Ministry and Petrobangla said there is little alternative to exporting gas now because of the deal with foreign gas explorers.  
 Energy Minister Nour Uddin Khan had earlier hinted that there was no alternative to export of gas in the near future. Sources in the ministry said primary discussions with the Indian authorities have already been held in this regard.  
 Unlike the decision makers, energy experts vehemently oppose the pipeline gas export concept saying that before thinking about such export, the government should prioritise building gas-based power plants, fertiliser and other gas-based industries. Gas export, they say, is the last thing any energy hungry country like

Bangladesh should think of.  
 As per the model Gas Purchase Sales Agreement (GPSA), the government will buy gas from foreign companies with foreign exchange at international price while it will sell the same to the local market at a cheaper rate. Therefore, purchase of huge quantity of gas from foreign companies would cause enormous losses.  
 Besides, the government's foreign exchange reserve, around 1.6 billion US dollars now, is too meagre to pay the companies for their gas in foreign currency. The first foreign company, Cairn, which begins selling gas to the Petrobangla next month, alone would take 6.24 million dollars every month.  
 As part of its gas export strategy, the government intends to sign an agreement with US oil company Unocal to set up an inter-district pipeline from Bhola to Kushtia for gas export to India. This pipeline

project, part of an integrated energy scheme, is being opposed by Petrobangla because of its 'negative impact' on the national economy.  
 However, as the higher authorities have emphasised Unocal's pipeline scheme, it is likely to be approved soon. Under the first phase of the scheme, a 45 km pipeline would be built at a cost of 130 million dollars. Bangladesh will have to pay one dollar royalty for every unit for gas supply through it. Besides, as per the proposal, the government will have no share in the profit from this pipeline.  
 Unocal projects a profit of one billion US dollars by allowing the government to use it for the next 35 years.  
 The pipeline project has again given rise to new controversy. Petrobangla officials say it would have cost the government agency only 70 million dollars to build the 45 km

## Majid-ul Haq's house, car damaged Factional clashes mar Magura BNP confce

MAGURA, Mar 21: The biennial conference of BNP District unit here today was marred by factional clashes during which the house and car of former minister Majid-ul Haq were also damaged, reports UNB.  
 Witnesses said the trouble erupted when the supporters of Majid-ul Haq exploded bombs behind the dais at Academy Maidan in the town and snapped the electric cable of the loud speaker just after the Party Secretary General and other central leaders stepped into the dais at 11 am to inaugurate the conference.  
 Then supporters of the rival faction gheraoed the house of former minister Majid-ul Haq and damaged door and windows and his private car.  
 However, none was reportedly hurt.

Leaders of the newly-formed District Committee accused Majid-ul Haq and his supporters of creating the trouble. Majid-ul Haq has been dropped from the newly formed committee.  
 However, the conference resumed at about 12:30 pm after police rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control.  
 Addressing the conference, the BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan accused the government of its failure to maintain law and order, check price hike of essential commodities and to curb smuggling.  
 A 51-member District Committee was formed in the conference with Kazi Salimul Haq and Nazimuddin Ahmed as President and General Secretary respectively.

## Pressure from top to renew PSC with Occidental Star Report

The higher authorities are putting pressure on Petrobangla for the immediate extension of the expired Production Sharing Contract (PSC) of US company Occidental without much of amendment.  
 Sources in Petrobangla said that there has been a 'clear' instruction from the higher authorities to Petrobangla to settle the PSC extension issue as it might be convenient for Occidental to begin immediate operation in Blocks 13 and 14.  
 Such pressure would now affect formulation of amendment clauses for the PSC. Following a decision of the Energy Ministry last month to extend Occidental's PSC, Petrobangla experts have been drafting the amendments to safeguard Bangladesh's interest in consultation. See Page 12 Col 4



A group of architects and students of the Architecture Department of BUET held a rally at the central Shaheed Minar premises yesterday protesting the new admission system. —Star photo

## PCP faction enforces road barricade in Khagrachhari

From Staff Correspondent  
 CHITTAGONG, Mar 21: A splinter faction of Pahari Chhatra Parishad, opposing the CHT peace accord, enforced a road barricade programme in the Khagrachhari hill district today demanding the release its leaders arrested recently.  
 Police and local sources said the barricade programme forced the suspension of transport movement in Khagrachhari.  
 Pickets torched a bus at Alutilla at around 11:30 am today as it was carrying passengers from Chittagong defying their barricade programme, police said, adding that the passengers were forced to get down before setting

## Transport strike in Sylhet from today

From Staff Correspondent  
 SYLHET, Mar 21: Indefinite transport strike has been called from tomorrow morning in all the four districts of Sylhet division.  
 The transport workers associations called the strike demanding punitive measures against those responsible for attack on the transport workers and damaging of 21 vehicles at the Mendibagh microbus stand on March 3.  
 They are also demanding compensation for the damaged vehicles.

## Distribution of DU admission forms begins today

By DU Correspondent  
 Distribution of admission forms for the first year honours courses of the Dhaka University of the 1997-98 session will begin today.  
 Forms will be distributed and received till April 23 and the admission tests under four units comprising five faculties of the university will begin on May 2.  
 Admission forms of the Ka unit (Science Group) will be available at the Agrani Bank branch located in the Curzon Hall area of the university, forms of the Kha (Humanities Group) and the Kha (Combined Group) units will be available at the TSC branch of the Janata Bank, and the admission forms of the Ga unit (Commerce Group) will be distributed from the Registrar building branch of the Sonali Bank.

## 268 'risky' bldgs in city

By Morshed Ali Khan  
 abagan area more than a year ago.  
 Rajuk sources said the report on findings in Nakhalpara has been sent to the Ministry of Works and they are waiting for a 'green signal' to demolish those buildings.  
 Among the eighteen 'risky' structures in Nakhalpara, several are five storeyed buildings. One owner could not produce any approved plan for his building, said a Rajuk source. The owner claimed that his building's plan was approved by the Cantonment Board, the sources said.  
 The report on the 250 faulty structures was submitted to the then Chairman of Rajuk Hu-

## Khaleda to open hawkers' confce in city today

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the central biennial conference of Chhinomul Hawkers Samity at the institute of Diploma Engineers at Kakrail at 3 pm today, reports UNB.  
 The conference will be addressed, among others, by BNP standing committee members Bannister Abdus Salam Talukder, Shahjahan Siraj, Mir Shawkat Ali, Mirja Abbas, Shaded Hossain Khoka MP, Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Salahuddin Ahmed and Ekhlhas Mollah, said a press release yesterday.  
 Convenor of the Samity Kamal Siddiqui will preside over the conference.

## \$7 lakh export orders for local cos at trade fair

By Staff Correspondent  
 Local companies received about seven lakh US dollars worth of spot export orders during the month-long Dhaka International Trade Fair DITF which concluded last night.  
 According to a preliminary estimate by the Export Promotion Bureau, different local companies signed final agreement with seven foreign buyers and discussions were going on with another 11 companies for exporting consumer goods.  
 EPB officials said the figure might increase because many companies were yet to send reports on their business performance at the fair.

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