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## President for internal arrangement for trying criminal cases

President Shahabuddin Ahmed advised the Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners to maintain strict neutrality without any fear or favour while performing their duties, reports UNB.

The President was addressing the Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners at Bangabhaban yesterday.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed reminded them of their three-fold duties as collector, district magistrate and also as Deputy Commissioner and cautioned them not to neglect their primary duties as magistrate and collector of the district.

As to separation of the judiciary from the executive as per the Constitution, the President advised them that as long as it is not achieved, they should make internal arrangement by earmarking some of the magistrates only for judicial work for trying criminal cases strictly following the judicial procedures.

He asked them to work hard, be devoted to their duties and feel the pulse of the people so that they have full confidence in their neutrality.

Among others, Cabinet Secretary Ataul Huq, Establishment Secretary Dr Shah Mohammad Farid, Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan and Home Secretary Shaifur Rahman were present on the occasion.

## BNP examining legal aspects of CHT bills

By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP has started 'homework' to effectively oppose the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) bills, aimed at giving legal cover to the government-PCJSS agreement signed in December last year.

Four bills on the agreement, approved by the Cabinet last week, are expected to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad when the current session resumes after the Eid-ul-Azha.

A meeting of the party's Standing Committee, the highest decision-making body, last night discussed the bills, copies of which were distributed among the party lawmakers earlier on the day, meeting sources said.

BNP terms the agreement unconstitutional.

The meeting felt that the bills should be examined

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## 2 army officers retired

Maj Gen Ruhul Alam Chowdhury and Col Md Abdus Salam, Bir Protik, have been retired from the service of the Bangladesh Army, an ISPR press release said in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

It said quoting two separate notifications issued by the Ministry of Defence that the orders took immediate effect.

## Biman official sent on forced retirement

By Staff Correspondent

A director of Bangladesh Biman was sent on 'forced retirement' by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism on Thursday.

Syed Abu Naser Md Ocha was Director of Biman's Store and Purchase Department.

Biman sources said the ministry order was effective from Thursday.

However, the reason behind the ministry decision could not be known immediately.

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# Power supply system 'fragile' due to overloading for 6 yrs

By Sharier Khan

The power supply system in the country has become 'fragile' as the power generation units and distribution network were constantly overloaded during the last six years.

As a result of constant system overload, longevity of the power plants and distribution network has also reduced alarmingly. Power units are 'tripping' more frequently than ever before and will continue to do so until total power generation exceeds the demand for it, sources concerned said.

The average loadshedding is around 400 mw to 450 mw nowadays. However, following Thursday's grid failure and subsequent system restoration work, the loadshedding situation improved last night. At 7 pm yesterday, the PDB plants were generating 1868 mw of power against the demand for 2162 mw.

As per a standard practice worldwide, it is mandatory for the PDB to generate power at least 10 per cent less than the installed capacity of the power plants. But due to shortage of power generation capacity against a rapidly rising demand, PDB has been generating power at the maximum level since 1992-93, leaving no 'safety reserve margin', the sources pointed out.

Now, as PDB's total generation capacity has not increased virtually in the last six years, although some new plants were commissioned, the power system is running without safety limit. In other words, there has been an increasing level of loadshedding of up to 550 mw during this period.

In 1971, the PDB's installed power generation capacity was 550 mw against a peak demand of 183 mw. The installed capacity rose to 822 mw in 1980 against a demand of 462 mw. In 1985, the demand rose to 887 mw while PDB generated 1141 mw. In 1990, the capacity rose to 2352 mw (with some units obsolete) against a demand of 1506 and in 1997 it rose to 2418 mw (with units having 650 mw capacity needing repair) against a demand of 2100 mw (loadshedding level reached 300 mw to 350 mw).

Safety reserve marginwise, PDB maintained a 46 per cent reserve in 1975. This level went down to 18 per cent in 1991 and 15 per cent in 1992. In 1993, the margin went down 5 per cent minus.

It is now suspected that Thursday's power grid breakdown was simply caused by system overload.

"Before the national grid failed at 10 am Thursday, the Ghorashal 4th 210 mw power unit tripped for a technical reason. Subsequently the 230 KV Ashuganj-Comilla Double Circuit power distribution line tripped," said an official.

"At that time, the total stand-by power generation capacity was 1709 mw while there was a load of 1700 mw. If it was possible to keep the 10 per cent power generation reserve, PDB would have had generated between 1500 mw to 1550 mw and avert the national grid failure by sustaining the sudden vacuum of power supply created by breakdown of the Ghorashal 210 mw unit," he added.

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# Bus owners 'realising extra fare' before Eid at Gabtoli terminal

By Naimul Haq

Bus operators at Gabtoli bus terminal in the city have raised fare in long distance routes by at least Tk 40 per ticket prior to the Eid-ul-Azha.

Even double the normal fare is charged depending on the route and the service.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Gabtoli Terminal Transport Owners Association, salesmen at the ticket counter said.

During a visit to Gabtoli bus terminal yesterday evening, this correspondent was told by salesmen at most of the counters that they had sold tickets in advance.

At the Syedabad bus terminal, transport owners said they have not taken any decision to raise the fare in view of the Eid. Passengers as well as salesmen at different counters said tickets were sold at normal rates.

A passenger going to Chuadanga from Gabtoli yesterday said, "I bought this ticket on March 1 for Tk 200 whereas it should cost Tk 140. They are forcibly realising the extra money."

Another passenger intending to travel to Khulna on April 6 said he was told from the ticket counter of Druti Paribahan yesterday that no ticket was available for March 6 and 7.

"I was then approached by a 'broker' who offered me three tickets for March 6 each costing Tk 300, almost double the normal rate. I had no option but to buy the tickets for Tk 800."

Shahida Begum, travelling to Rangpur, said she paid Tk 50 extra for a ticket.

At the counter of Shaikhin Paribahan tickets for Jessore were sold at Tk 210 against the normal rate of Tk 110.

Similar situation was observed at the counter of Chandra, Subarna, Mitsui, Eagle, Dhaka Deluxe, Intercity, Madhumati and Zaker transports. Salesmen at the counters said that they had instructions from their owners to raise the fare by at least Tk 40 per ticket.

Asked why police was not taking any action, Assistant Police Commissioner of Mirpur Zone Mahubul Alam said, "We cannot take any action unless someone complains. None has yet made any complaint about enhanced fare."

"The matter is beyond our control. Communications Ministry officials are responsible for this. If they instruct us, we can then take action."

When contacted, Zubair

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# HR activist from Kuala Lumpur says 7 lakh Bangladeshis at risk of losing jobs in Malaysia

By Reaz Ahmed

Some seven lakh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia are now facing either unemployment or under-employment, a Malaysian human rights activist has said.

Talking to The Daily Star here recently, Irene Fernandez, Director of Tenaganita, a Kuala Lumpur-based non-government organization, drew a grim picture of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia.

Irene, who was on a week-long visit to Bangladesh to attend an international workshop on migrant workers in Dhaka, said quite a big number of Bangladeshi workers had no job or were working only twice-a-week in the wake of the economic slowdown that put the fast growing South-East Asian economies to a back seat for quite a few months now.

She feared that work permits of foreign workers in service sectors would not be renewed after expiry of the contract period in August next.

She said, condition of "undocumented workers," who constitute half of Malaysia's total foreign labour force, was worse.

"For overstay or entry without legal documents, one has to count 30 ringgit per day as 'compound', up to 3,000 ringgit. Otherwise, one would not be provided with 'exit-pass' and there would be risk of being put behind the bar," Irene explained.

She further said, "We from Tenaganita, asked the government for waiver of this 'compound' but, to no effect so far. Bangladesh, along with Indonesia, whose contribution to

pioneered the cause of foreign workers, particularly those from Bangladesh in Malaysia, said that despite a recent increase of yearly 'levy' on foreign workers, the Malaysian government did not bother to create any welfare fund for the benefit of workers. "Malaysia now earns four billion ringgit from levy on foreign workers," said Irene.

In August 1995, I came up with a memorandum depicting the picture of abuses and tortures on Bangladeshi in immigration detention centres in Malaysia," recalled Irene.

She was arrested by Malaysian police in March 1996 on charge of publishing "false" news. Trial of the case is continuing. Hearing continued for 125 days, the longest trial in Malaysian legal history, claimed Irene.

Thirty five witnesses appeared before the Kuala Lumpur Magistrate Court so far but, "The Prosecution has not yet come up with proofs," she said.

She said her submission for constituting an 'independent judicial body' or at least, transferring her case to High Court was turned down. "My case is not a question of mere falsehood or truth. It is about 'Freedom of Expression'."

Irene is now in her early

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Irene Fernandez

# Parents gather at BJMAS office for missing wards

By Special Correspondent

At least 50 people visited the Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Samity's shelter for women and children at Dhanmondi in the city till yesterday to see if their missing children were among those rescued from traffickers in India and brought back home on Wednesday night.

Seventeen children and five women rescued while being trafficked to Dubai, are now in the BJMAS shelter.

Worried parents and guardians who had lost their children gathered at the shelter yesterday and on Wednesday.

The children were being taken to be used as camel jockeys and the women were lured with offers of jobs in the Gulf states. They were rescued by Indian police in Bangalore.

"They were brought back by the BJMAS in cooperation with a New Delhi-based NGO, Bangladesh High Commission in India and Indian authorities. Eleven men, who were accompanying the children and women, were handed over to the immigration authorities by the Indian police at Benapole on Wednesday. They are likely to be brought back to Dhaka.

Some of them were traveling with their wives and children in search of better future in the Gulf, offered by the traf-

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Seventy Bangladeshi nationals, including 38 children, who were rescued in India while being trafficked to Gulf countries, having breakfast at Howrah station in Calcutta yesterday. They arrived in Calcutta on their way home. — AP/UNB photo

# Mysterious death of a maid

By Staff Correspondent

A 13-year-old maid died in the city mysteriously while she was being rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Police identified the girl as Zarina who had been working as a maid at a businessman's house in the city's Kalyanpur area.

Mirpur thana said Zarina had been suffering from fever. As her condition deteriorated in the noon, she was rushed to DMCH where the doctors declared her dead.

According to hospital sources, the girl was bleeding heavily when three unidentified persons brought her to the DMCH at about 4:15 pm. But the three fled the scene soon after the doctors declared the girl dead. However, the cause of her death could not be known immediately.

Police was investigating the incident. However, none was arrested and no case was lodged till filing of this report last night.

# Teenage girl rescued from kidnappers

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday rescued a teenage girl who was abducted on Thursday night and arrested seven young men in this connection from the city's Pallabi area.

Police said a gang of about 10 persons abducted the 14-year-old girl from near her house at Section 12 of Pallabi at about 9 pm.

Meanwhile, the DC (West) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, quoting the girl, said last night that she had a love affair with one of the arrested.

Recently the young man proposed her to marry him. But her refusal made him angry. As a result, he along with his friends abducted the girl.

Following a case filed by the girl's father, Pallabi police raided different parts of the area and rescued the girl from inside a house at Section 11 at about 4 am. The seven were also arrested from the house.

Police are likely to produce the arrested before the CMM's Court today.

# Islami Bank VP arrested for embezzlement

By Staff Correspondent

A Vice-President of Islami Bank Ltd was arrested last night on charge of embezzlement of about Tk 1.39 crore.

Police said they arrested Sirajul Islam from the bank's Motijheel local office at about 10:05 pm.

Nurul Amin, a Senior Vice-President of the bank lodged a case accusing Sirajul of embezzlement of Tk 1,39,31,000 through fake vouchers on Wednesday.

Police filed the case under sections 409, 420, 467, 468 and 109 of the Penal Code.

# 2000 acres of new forest torched for settlement Powerful quarters employ gunmen to grab vast charland in Noakhali

By Special Correspondent

At least 2,000 acres of forest, efforts of 14 years of afforestation in the newly formed land in Char Bata, have been torched to clear it for settlement by some powerful quarters and their musclemen in Noakhali.

They used poor landless people as human shields to claim the forest lands. Gunmen kept vigil and even exchanged fire with forest guards several times since February.

To make their 'victory' clear to all, the gunmen also raised red flags to declare the areas under their occupation as 'no go' zones.

A beat office, the symbol of the Forest Department's presence at the island, have been ransacked and torched and finally abandoned. Daily Star Chief Photographer A. K. M. Mohsin reported after a visit to the chars in the Meghna estuary recently.

He saw streaks of smoke still rising from the forests on March 22. But the presence of gunmen deterred him from taking photographs.

Mohammad Abul Kalam, Deputy Commissioner of Noakhali, denied that such incidents took place.

"There had been some poor people who tried to settle there. But we drove them away with the help of police. Some of them, however, still remain. They will be evicted soon," he told The Daily Star last Wednesday evening.

Forest Department official Siddikur Rahman told The Daily Star that they have lodged a number of cases and police had arrested one person. But the powerful remain out of purview of the law, he complained.

The World Bank-aided afforestation project took off in 1984 to help accretion of the rising sand bars and shoals that dot the coasts at the Meghna estuary.

Keoras were primarily chosen to develop the forest.

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Forest guards, armed with vintage guns, being trained to face armed land grabbers in Char Bata, Noakhali. — Star photo by AKM Mohsin

# 24 held: Half-day hartal Sunday BNP, police clash at Ctg again: 20 hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: At least 20 persons were injured during a clash between the police and BNP activists in the city for the second day today, witnesses said.

Police arrested 24 BNP activists during the trouble from Station Road and other parts of the city.

BNP leaders claimed that a large number of their party activists were arrested when a procession was parading the city thoroughfares protesting Thursday's police action.

They also said that about 40 BNP activists were injured during the clash at Station Road this evening.

Police said the clash erupted at Station Road when some crackers exploded there at the time of procession.

Police rounded up the BNP activists for blasting the crackers that triggered a pitched battle with the processionists.

Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to disperse the angry processionists.

Police also alleged that the processionists pelted bricks and opened fire at them but none was hurt.

The clash at Station Road continued for half an hour from 6 pm.

Immediately after the clash, tension gripped the entire city. Angry demonstrators also damaged some passing vehicles at different points of the city.

BNP brought out the procession after a rally in front of the party office at Nasim Building at Nur Ahmed Road.

The rally announced a 6-hour hartal in the port city on Sunday in protest against Thursday's police action on BNP procession.

Meanwhile, BNP leader Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP, alleged that police attacked the procession led by him though it was moving peacefully.

He said that the injured party activists were admitted to different private clinics for treatment.

# 69 road accidents kill 182 in first 3 months of '98

By Raziur Rahman

At least 182 people were killed in 69 road accidents in the country in the first three months of this year.

The number of deaths in these accidents was higher in Comilla, Dhaka, Jhenidah, Feni and Mymensingh districts, according to newspaper reports.

Senior police officials told this correspondent there are three main reasons for road accident. These are reckless driving, inefficiency of the drivers and lack of public awareness. An official of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) pointed out that overloading of transports is another reason for frequent accidents.

The most tragic accident this year was the collision between a passenger bus and a truck on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Comilla on January 23. Ten people were killed and 40 injured in the accident.

About 20 per cent of the accidents in the three months were due to reckless driving as a result of which motor vehicles fell into roadside ditches, the reports showed.

Another accident on Dhaka-Chittagong highway took place on March 28 due to reckless driving of two inter-district passenger buses. Both the buses fell into a roadside ditch in Siddharganj, leaving nine people killed and at least 25 injured.

Drivers of motor vehicles do not follow speed limits as the authorities concerned do not properly monitor the speed of vehicles on the roads properly. A high official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, however, said steps had been taken to install speed detectors.

Speed detectors will be set up

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# Price of rice still high, soybean oil dearer

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of rice remained high, those of vegetables were almost stable and price of edible oil increased in the city markets this week.

Rice traders said its price would not fall significantly until IRR-Boro crops are harvested next month. Import of rice would not change the price level since the cost was high, said a wholesaler at Mohamadpur Krishi Market.

Nazirshail rice was selling at Tk 19 to 20 per kg. Pajjam at Tk 17.50 to 18 and coarse rice at Tk 15.50 to 16 in different city markets.

Soyabean oil was selling at Taka 52-54 last week.

Potato was selling at Tk 6 to Tk 7 per kg, tomato at Tk 8 to 12, green beans at Tk 8 to 12 and onion Tk 12 to Tk 14 per kg. Prices of onion declined from its previous price of Tk 15 to Tk 18. Ginger was selling at Tk 28 to 32 per kg.

However, prices of garlic were still high — Tk 32 to 70 per kg depending on its quality. Daruchini (Cinnamon) was selling at Tk 220 to 240 per kg, labanga (clove) Tk 70 to 80, golmarich (black pepper) Tk 370 to 400, zira (cumin) Tk 150 to 160, elachi (cardamom) Tk 260 to 280 and dried chilli at Tk 280 and 300 per kg.

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# Contempt of court charges against Sharif dropped

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: Pakistani Supreme Court today dropped the contempt of court charges against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, court officials said, reports AFP.

The charges filed against the prime minister and his several cabinet colleagues triggered the country's worst judicial crisis last year and brought his government to the brink of collapse.

A seven-member bench headed by Chief Justice Ajmal Mian dropped the case and withdrew the contempt of court notice on a private petition filed by a local advocate, the sources said.

The court also dropped similar

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