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## Ashfaqur to be next foreign secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ashfaqur Rahman is set to replace Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury as the foreign secretary of Bangladesh, after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia signed the summary for change at the top diplomat spot.

Rahman, currently Bangladesh's ambassador to China, will be flown in to Dhaka to take up his post after the 13th Saarc summit, while Chowdhury will take up his new assignment as ambassador to the United States by March.

## Tk 28 lakh robbed in 4 incidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers yesterday looted cash and gold ornaments worth about Tk 27.8 lakh in four separate incidents at Kalyanpur, Dhanmondi and Mohammadpur.

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## Samad Azad returns home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdus Samad Azad, presidium member of Awami League (AL), returned home yesterday after undergoing medical treatment in India for the last four months.

He underwent abdominal surgery at a Madras hospital. Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and AL leaders Sohel Taz, MP and Abdul Mannan received the elderly politician at Zia International Airport.

## Prayer Timing

January 10

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Magrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) leaders bring out a procession in the capital yesterday to protest the appointment of an administrator at the association.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Palestinians vote in key election

Abbas expected to notch easy win; Israel poised to resume talks

AP, Ramallah, West Bank

Palestinians held their first presidential election in nine years yesterday, choosing a successor to long-time leader Yasser Arafat in a vote that many hoped would revitalise the Mideast peace process.

Mahmoud Abbas, the candidate of Arafat's ruling Fatah movement, was expected to win easily. But he was struggling to capture a clear mandate to push forward with his

agenda of resuming peace talks with Israel and reforming the trouble-ridden Palestinian Authority.

Israel said it was ready to meet with Abbas shortly after the election. Senior Israeli officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said Israel was prepared to release Palestinian prisoners if Abbas can halt Palestinian rocket attacks launched from the Gaza Strip.

Voters trickled into stations soon after they opened in the morning

and activity picked up in many areas by midmorning. The process was smooth in most areas, although international observers complained of confusion in Jerusalem.

"I came because I want change. Any change," said Fathi Kamal, a 53-year-old taxi driver, who cast his vote in Ramallah before heading to work. He declined to say for whom he was voting.

The 69-year-old front-runner, accompanied by his family, cast his ballot at the Muqata, the Palestinian headquarters building in the West Bank city of Ramallah where Arafat, who died on November 11 in France, was a virtual prisoner for most of the final three years of his life.

Israel eased travel restrictions

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

MONJUR MAHMUD

The government has decided from now on to hold the chiefs of the Bangladeshi foreign missions, instead of their economic and commercial counsellors, accountable for achieving their respective export targets.

The decision followed a review meeting of the export promotion performance of the 46 Bangladeshi missions abroad - which together cover some 124 countries - between July to October of the current fiscal year. Of them, 25 missions performed well, achieving or even

surpassing their respective export targets, while 21 failed to carry through their tasks.

"We are not happy with the performance of most of the counsellors. They have not faced any evaluation in the last 30 years," a high official at the commerce ministry said yesterday.

At yesterday's meeting with Commerce Secretary Aminur Rahman in the chair it was decided that the counsellors would be asked to report from now on through the ambassador or high commissioners, so that the missions' performance in this regard can also be questioned, the official added.

The missions that failed to achieve their export targets for the July-October period are those in Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, Brussels, Dubai, Islamabad, Bangkok, Cairo, Singapore, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur, Kuwait, Hanoi, Pretoria, Tripoli, Kathmandu, Amman, Nairobi, Brunei, Yangon, Rabat, Colombo, Stockholm and Tokyo.

In that period, these 21 missions together facilitated an export income of \$1,455.3 million, 7.58 percent less than their combined target of \$1,574.7 million.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## HC dismisses theft case against ex-air chief Jamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday quashed the proceedings of a wristwatch theft case filed against former Air Force chief Jamal Uddin Ahmed.

A HC division bench comprising Justice Syed Mohammad Dastgir Hossain and Justice Mamun Rahman gave the order yesterday, declaring absolute an HC rule on the government asking why the case would not be declared invalid.

Air Force Sergeant Motiur Rahman filed a case with Gulshan Police Station against Jamal Uddin on November 27, 2002 accusing him of obstructing performance of government duty and stealing a wristwatch.

The former Air Force chief, arrested from his house the same night, was released on bail after three days.

Following police charge sheet against him on December 31, 2002, Jamal Uddin filed a petition with the HC.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Tk 8 lakh looted from bank staff

Robbers kill one for trying to stop them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Robbers yesterday gunned down a taxi driver and stabbed two Bank staff as they looted Tk 8 lakh from Rupali bank at Majidi in Noakhali.

The police later arrested one of the robbers with Tk 1 lakh from Dagonbhuian.

Labour organisations and local traders blocked Majidi-Begumganj road for two hours in protest at the robbery and killing in broad daylight.

Witnesses said Noor Uddin, an officer of Rajganj branch of Rupali Bank, and Abdul Kalam, a guard of the bank, drew Tk 16 lakh from Sonali Bank treasury branch at around 10:00am and paid a party Tk 8 lakh at the same place.

They took a rickshaw to go to their bank with the rest amount in a

trunk.

As they reached Padmar Maar Pool, a gang of about eight robbers swooped on them. They stabbed the two bank staff indiscriminately and took away the money. The robbers boarded a microbus waiting for them and sped away.

When a taxi driver, Noor Nabi, 25, tried to stop the robbers' speeding microbus at Majidi Bazar a few minutes later, they shot him dead on the spot.

The robbers also opened fire on a traffic sergeant when he attempted to stop the microbus at Begumganj intersection. As the sergeant, unharmed, kept on chasing them in his motorbike, the robbers got down from the vehicle at Boro Pool and fled.

The police rushed to the spot and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Principal secy gets 4th time extension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday extended the service contract of the principal secretary to the prime minister for the fourth time in nearly four years.

An official notification said the contract of Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui has been extended for one more year effective from yesterday.

Siddiqui was appointed on contract when the BNP-led alliance came to power in 2001. He also served as the secretary to the PM during the BNP's previous rule.

Official sources said resentment was being mounted in the administration over repeated extensions of Siddiqui's contract, as it has blocked others from being promoted.

Siddiqui has also been trying to get posted in the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank, but the PM declined to release him from her office, sources from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

A senior minister yesterday told The Daily Star that while the

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ইঞ্জিনিয়ার্স ইনসিটিউশন, বাংলাদেশ

সদর দফতর, রমনা, ঢাকা-১০০০

ফোন: ৯৮৫৯৪৮৮৫, ৯৮৬৬৩০৩৬, ৯৮৫৮১১২, ফ্যাক্স: ৯৮৮-০২-৯৮২৪৮৪৭

ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং স্টাফ কলেজের ভিত্তিপ্রস্তর স্থাপন

প্রধান অতিথি : বেগম খালেদী জিয়া, মানবীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
বিশেষ অতিথি : ডঃ খন্দকার মোশাররফ হোসেন, এমপি, মানবীয় মন্ত্রী, যাত্রা ও পরিবহন কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়

জনাব মির্জা আব্দুর রাম, এমপি, মানবীয় মন্ত্রী, গৃহযাশ ও গণপূর্ণ মন্ত্রণালয়

জনাব আব্দুল হাই, মানবীয় সংসদ সদস্য, মুসলিমজ-৮

তারিখ ও সময় : ১৬ জানুয়ারী ২০০৫, রবিবার, বিকাল ৩-০০ ঘটিকা

স্থান : ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং স্টাফ কলেজ প্রাঙ্গণ, চৰ বাউসিয়া, গজারিয়া, মুসীগঞ্জ-১

(মেঘনা-গোমতী প্রীজ সংলগ্ন ঢাকা-চট্টগ্রাম মহাসড়কে)

দেশের সকল প্রকৌশলীদের উচ্চ অনুষ্ঠানে আয়োজন করা যাচ্ছে। অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজনগত নিজ নিজ কেন্দ্র/উপকেন্দ্র

হতে সহায় করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে। জনাবী অবস্থায় আইটি কার্ড প্রদর্শনগুরুক আইইবি সদর দফতর হতেও আয়োজন করা যাচ্ছে।

আয়োজন ব্যাখ্যানে অনুষ্ঠানে অবস্থায় আইইবি সদর দফতরে উপস্থিত হওয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে।

প্রকৌশলী আ.ন.হ. আখতার হোসেন, পিইজ