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## Draft voter list shows 22pc rise in number

### Over 65pc of total population listed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday published the draft voter list, enlisting a total number of 9,13,14,592 voters, but the lists were not posted at many selected places for public viewing.

The EC failed to mention the figures of male and female voters, and the publishing date of the final list as acute indiscipline in coordinating the total process was noticed.

The total increase of voters on

the new list is around 1.65 crore, about 22 per cent higher than the number on the list prepared in 2000, which seemed to many quarters very unusual.

In the existing roll, 57.53 per cent of the then 13 crore population—7.48 crore—was registered as voters, while the new draft list has over 65 per cent of around 14 crore present population as voters.

The ratio of voters to population in the fresh list will be much higher than those in all the rolls prepared since 1970.

Although posting voter lists at the offices of registration officers (RO) and assistant registration officers (ARO), public places like Upazila Parishad, municipality and city corporations, ward commissioners' offices and polling centres is mandatory, no lists were displayed at the EC Secretariat in Dhaka and election offices in Chittagong, Moulvibazar, Jessore and other districts.

Acting Secretary to the EC Secretariat Mohammad Zakoria and officials of Dhaka district

election office gave contradictory statements about the places of posting the draft lists.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Zakoria claimed that the draft lists were displayed at different public places for public viewing.

An official of district election office Dhaka, however, told reporters that they will rather send the lists to the EC.

"We will not disclose the total number of voters or display the lists here ourselves. We will send the

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## 14-party trashes draft voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition line-up has rejected the draft voter list published by the Election Commission yesterday, alleging that the fresh list was prepared for 'election engineering' by passing a High Court directive for updating the voterroll.

At an impromptu meeting at the Awami League (AL) central office at Bangabandhu Avenue last night, the 14-party also decided to stage demonstrations across the country on May 10 denouncing the draft voterlist.

The meeting chaired by AL presidium member Tofail Ahmed deferred the planned May 21 'Dhaka Siege' programme to June 5 in view of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations.

## Govt to go tough on fuel dealers if strike enforced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Against the backdrop of the Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners Association's strike programme from May 8, the energy ministry yesterday decided in principle to take tough action against those who will 'create problem by violating the Essential Products Act'.

The ministry may cancel licences of the petrol pump owners who will resort to strike as a weapon for meeting their demand, sources at a high level meeting attended by Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman, the communications secretary and the commerce secretary said.

The petrol pump owners and distributors earlier threatened to stop buying petroleum products from the government from May 8 if the latter fail to fulfil some of their demands by May 07.

Meanwhile, the energy ministry has called a meeting with the petrol pump owners today to discuss the problem.

Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners Association may withdraw their ultimatum for strike if the government resolve the problem through discussion, association President Nazmul Haque said.

About the energy ministry's move to take action against the

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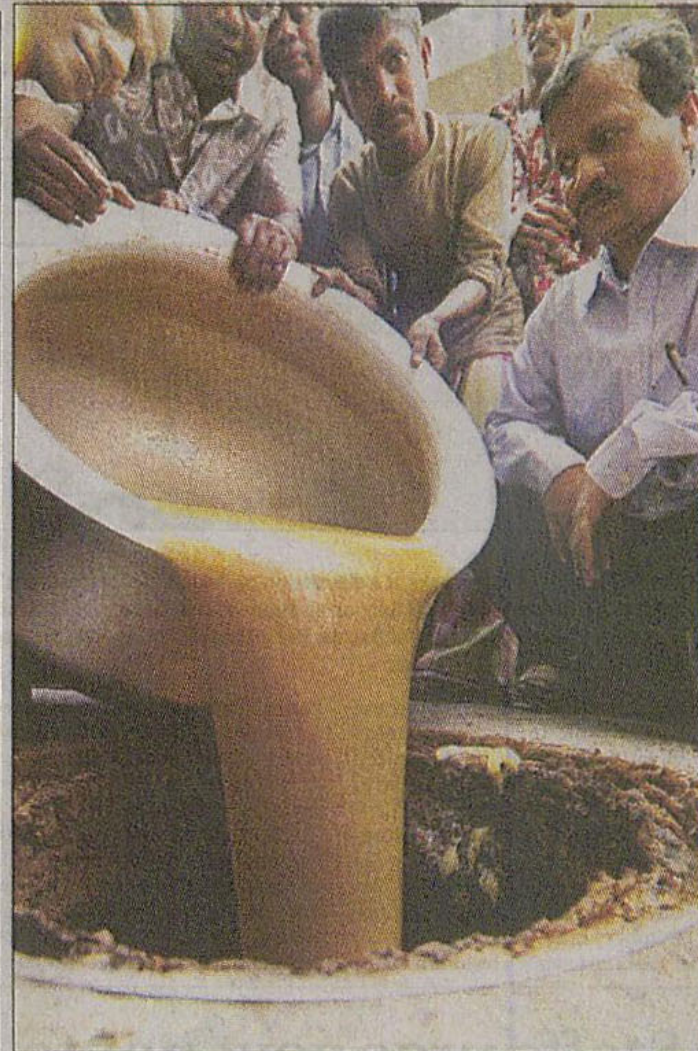


PHOTO: STAR

Adulterated ghee, seized by a mobile court at a South Jatrabari factory in the capital yesterday, being dumped into a manhole.

## Passengers suffer as bus owners start indefinite strike in 13 dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bus and minibus owners associations of Barisal and Khulna divisions enforced an indefinite strike on 175 routes of 13 southwestern districts yesterday demanding cancellation of BRTC bus services on these routes.

The strike triggered untold sufferings of the commuters of 13 southwestern districts including Khulna, Barisal, Pirojpur, Patuakhali, Bagerhat, Jhalakathi and Barguna.

Our Barisal correspondent

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## Six testify on judges killing at Jhalakathi

UNB, Jhalakathi

Six witnesses yesterday made depositions before the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court in the November 14 judges killing case.

The witnesses are Biplob Mallik, Sagir Hossain, Zubair, M Ekhlas, M Tarique, police constable Ali Akbar and ambulance driver of Sadar Hospital Abdus Sattar.

The court has so far taken statements of 20 out of the 53 witnesses.

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## KIBRIA MURDER CASE Trial held up as complainant seeks further investigation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Trial of former finance minister SAMS Kibria killing case could not be resumed yesterday in the Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal following a petition filed by the complainant for further investigation into the case.

The trial judge Biplob Goswami, however, fixed today for order on the petition.

Complainant of the case Advocate Abdul Majid Khan and others filed the petition.

The trial that started on February 7 was stayed by the High

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## Militants' patrons yet to be identified

### PM also tells JS their international links are not confirmed

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said it cannot be said right now who were the patrons behind the militant activities in the country.

"It is yet to be confirmed whether any international group is involved in it, as the probe is still going on," said the prime minister while replying to a supplementary question of BNP lawmaker Moazzem Hossain Alal in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

She said if the involvement of any international group with ter-

rorist activities in the country is found, the government will make the whole world know about it.

Although the lawmakers of main opposition Awami League were present in the House, they did not take part in the prime minister's question-answer session.

The prime minister said the network of the militants has been broken. They will not be given any chance to achieve their goals even if they have any link with international group, she asserted.

Khaleda said all members of the Majlis-e-Shura of JMB have

already been arrested.

When Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed asked about the steps of the government in curbing terrorism, robbery and mugging on the roads, the prime minister claimed the country is now free of terrorism.

While replying to another query of Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker Mashur Rahman Ranga over the success of prime minister's India visit, Khaleda said her India visit was very successful as two agreements, including a revised trade

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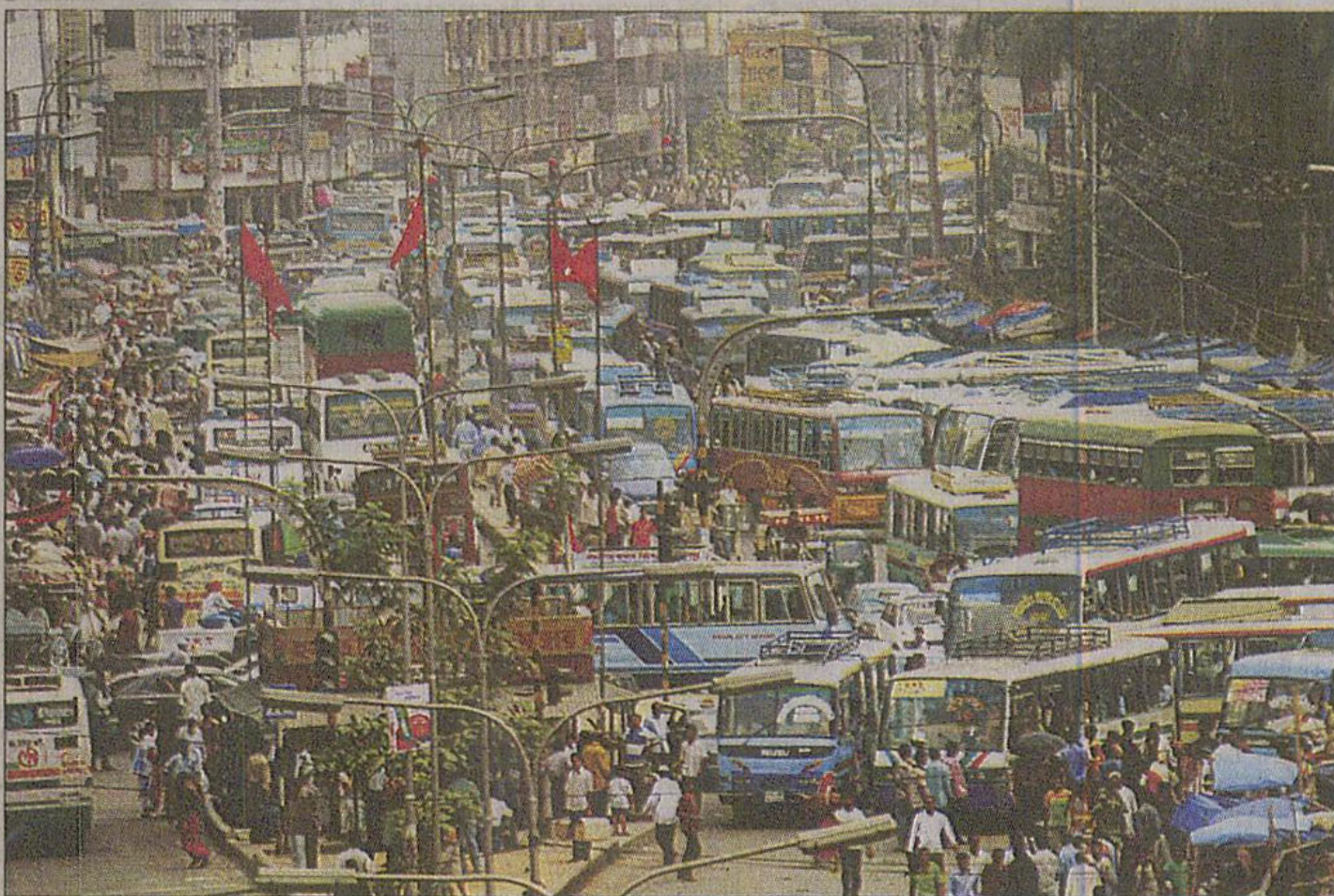


PHOTO: STAR

Gullstan area witnesses huge traffic congestion as police closed the roads around the Secretariat during the Jubo Sangram Parishad's home ministry siege programme yesterday.

## Dhaka concerned over Delhi's duty on hilsa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka yesterday raised serious concern over India's latest decision to impose duty on importing hilsa from Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi customs officials raised the issue at a joint meeting with the Indian customs in Dhaka and demanded immediate withdrawal of the tariff.

The Indian customs officials in reply said the issue needs further examination in New Delhi to withdraw the duty.

The third meeting of the Bangladesh-India Joint Group of Customs also discussed a number of crucial issues including smuggling of petroleum products and the non-tariff barriers imposed by

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## Armenian plane crash kills 113

AP, Moscow

An Armenian passenger plane crashed in stormy weather yesterday off Russia's Black Sea coast as it was heading for a landing, killing all 113 people on board most Armenians.

The Airbus A-320, which belonged to the Armenian airline Armavia, disappeared from radar screens about four miles from shore and crashed after making a turn toward the Adler airport near the southern Russian city of Sochi, emergency official Viktor Belsov said.

Officials said all 113 people aboard the plane, including six children, were killed.

Armenian airline officials said they believed the crash was due to the weather. Investigators did not believe terrorism was a factor.

The crash occurred early Wednesday during a flight from the Armenian capital of Yerevan to Sochi, a resort city on the Black Sea about 350 miles away.

The victims' relatives gathered later Wednesday at the Yerevan airport for a charter flight to Sochi after the crash. Gurgun Seroboyan, whose 23-year-old fiancée Lucenie Gevorkian was a flight attendant on the plane, wept as he waited.

"We were planning to get married and then this tragedy happened," he said, choking up.

In Sochi's airport, about 100 tearful relatives nearly all Armenians kept up an anguished vigil in a waiting hall. One man became hysterical and had to be taken away by ambulance.

Meanwhile, divers searched storm-churned waters for the plane's wreckage.

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## HEROIN SMUGGLING TO UK BB asks of banks all info about 12 suspect firms

### Joint team of CID, BB, NBR to get clear picture of trafficking process

REJIAUL KARIM BYRON

As part of the ongoing investigations into the heroin smuggling to the UK, the central bank yesterday asked all commercial banks to report within a week all banking information of 12 business houses that include BD Foods Limited and its nine sister concerns.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) took the step on a request of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police for the banking information it deems vital for its investigation that points at involvement of these 12 firms in

the international drug running, BB and CID sources said.

Besides, prompted by media reports on the drug trafficking in the guise of export, the BB asked its Anti-Money Laundering Department to look into the bank transactions of the suspect companies to check if any money-laundering has been taken place, a BB high official told The Daily Star.

In yesterday's letter, the BB directed every commercial bank to submit by May 9 all information about any account opened with it by any of the 12 suspect organisations including account opening

forms, other banking documents, all transactions etc.

Nine of the 12 companies are sister concerns and have the same address - 9 DIT Avenue, Motijheel, Dhaka. They are BD Food Limited, Universal Trade International, Al Ajmir Trade International, King & Company, Camellia International, Oriental Export, Greenway Traders, Famous Business Internationals, and BD Sea Food.

The address of BD Food Corporation, yet another sister concern of BD Food Limited, is Sagarika Road in Chittagong.

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