

## Help maintain congenial academic atmosphere : PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday sought help from all concerned in maintaining a congenial academic atmosphere and stopping unscheduled closure of educational institutions, reports UNB.

"I urge all including students, teachers, guardians and politicians to take measures, in the interest of the country and future generation, so that studies of the students are not hindered," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing at the Osmany Memorial Hall a reception accorded to the meritorious students who secured places in the 1994 Higher Secondary Certificate and Alim Examinations under the country's four Education Boards and the Madrassah Education Board.

Begum Zia distributed certificates among the 325 students at the function, presided over by Education Minister Zamiruddin Sircar. Education Secretary Ershadul Huq also addressed the function, attended by ministers, MPs, teachers, guardians and senior civil and military officials.

She noted that nobody gains if the educational institutions

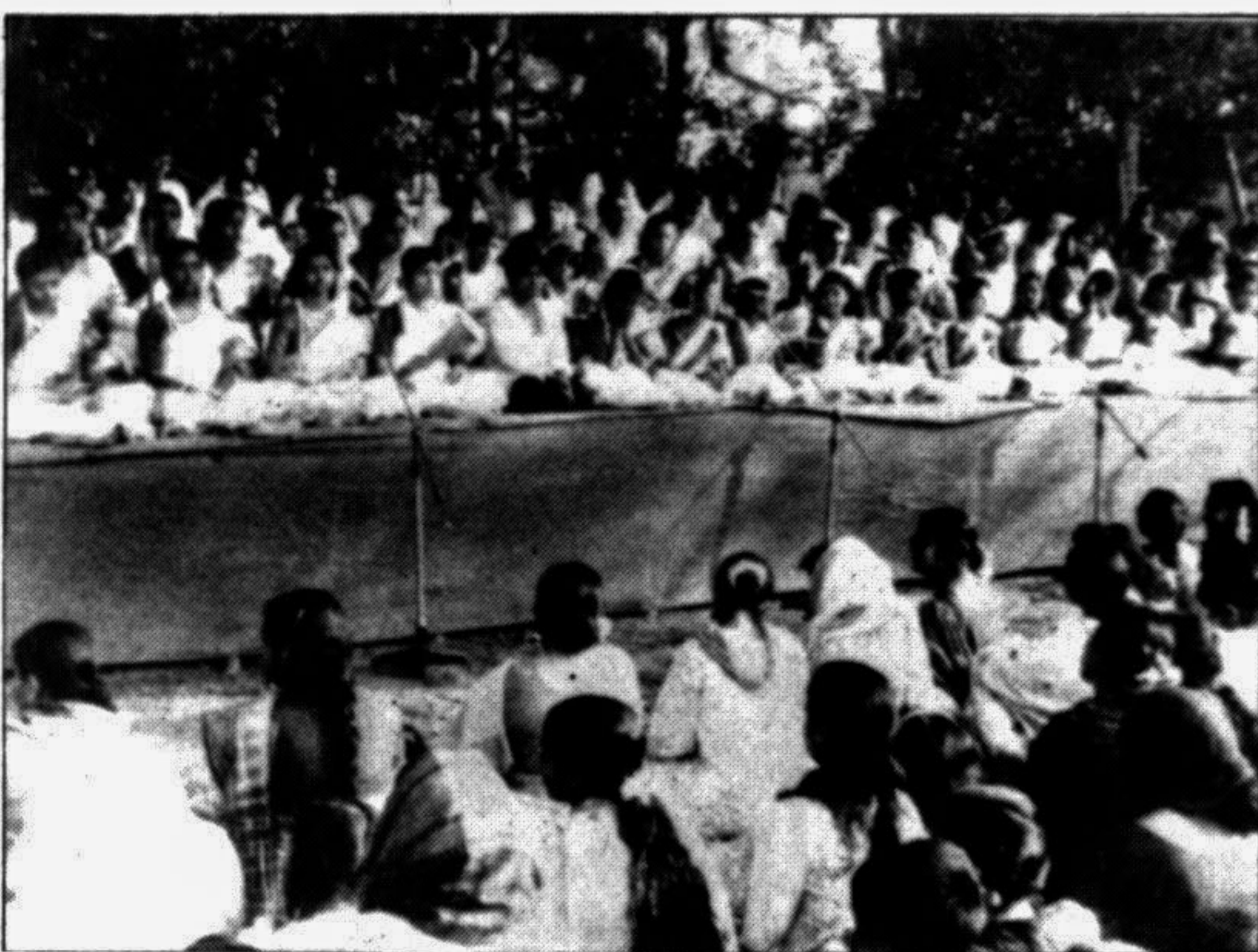
are closed, examinations are deferred, educational atmosphere is disrupted. "Rather it's a loss for our children, the whole nation."

Exhorting the meritorious students, the Prime Minister hoped that they would be able to continue their success in attaining knowledge of the amazing progresses in science and technology taking place at this fag end of the twentieth century.

Noting that tough competition lies ahead for this world in the twenty-first century, Begum Zia said, "We have to prepare for the challenge. We have to accelerate the pursuit of knowledge."

"The knowledge the developed world has acquired in a hundred years has to be grasped by us in a much shorter period, and for that the meritorious students are the centre of our hope," she added.

She reiterated that the present government had given top priority to education and listed different programmes, including the Food for Education, Compulsory Primary Education, Adult Education and free education for girls upto Class Ten in the rural areas.



The Chhayanaut members rendering songs at the Ramna Park in the city Friday morning in celebration of Pahela Baishakh.

## Pahela Baishakh

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crooners welcoming the first sunrise of BS 1402 with Tagore's famous song "Esho Hey Baishakh—Esho, Esho."

Under the huge banyan tree, the singers also presented folksongs and patriotic songs while a large number of people enjoyed the first few hours of the New Year.

Outside the parks, makeshift stalls sold fried fish and *pana bhat* with chilli and onion to those who wanted a different kind of start for the day.

Pavement stalls also sold traditional items, handicraft and cottage industry products besides assortment of foodstuff and beverage.

Students of the Fine Arts Institute brought out a colourful procession that paraded different areas.

Masked processionists, carrying huge paper-and-bomb-boon bunting of fish, elephants and other creatures, sang in chorus and danced with the drumbeats.

The Institute also arranged an art competition for children of different age groups.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) brought out a separate procession from the Bahadur Shah Park in the old city.

Led by DCC Mayor Mohammad Hanif, the procession ended near the Engineers Institute.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation organised a week-long *Baishakh Mela* (fair) at the Dhanmudi Club ground with traditional handicraft and household items on display.

In observance of the day, the Shishu Academy organised an eight-day "Shishu Ananda Mela" in its premises since Friday morning.

Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury inaugurated the *mela*. State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs Sarwari Rahman and Director of the Academy Golam Kabir spoke on the occasion.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum opened a week-long folk festival organised by Bangla Academy in its premises.

Eminent folk artists are taking part in the festival.

A separate *Baishakh Mela* has also been arranged in the Academy premises.

Dhaka City unit of the Khehlaghar, a juveniles' organisation, sponsored a cultural competition at the Amtala on the Dhaka University campus in the morning.

More than one thousand children from fifteen localities of Dhaka took part in the competition that included items like songs, dance, recitation, dress-as-you-like and hand-writing competition.

Besides, cultural groups like Swanan, Annay, Rishwik Shilpi Gosthi and Kathhak Abritti Kendro organised musical soirees at the Suhrawardy Udyan.

Political organisations were also involved in the Pahela Baishakh celebrations. The Awami League held a cultural soiree in front of the Engineers Institution. AL president Sheikh Hasina was the chief guest.

The Jatiyatobadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha, cultural wing of the ruling BNP, held a function at the Ramna Batumal in the afternoon to celebrate the Pahela Baishakh.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder was the chief guest.

The Jatiya Press Club organised a traditional Jatra in the club premises.

In Chittagong, a function organised by the Pahela Baishakh Celebration Committee at the DC Hill premises was the central attraction of the day.

Chakma, Marma, Tripura and Rakhaine tribal communities also observed the day with traditional enthusiasm.

## New system to check ghost phone bills soon

The Telegraph and Telephone Board is introducing a new system to check ghost billing in analogue telephone sets, official sources said, reports UNB.

"Call-barring equipment are being set up on experimental basis for analogue sets like digital ones, which will help subscribers protect their phones from misuse," said a T&T official yesterday.

It will be done by using code numbers in analogue sets like digital sets. With this device an analogue subscriber will be able to lock and open his set as he wishes, the official added.

To check ghost bills and modify the overall telephone system in the city, he said, T&T will also turn all F-1 analogue sets into digital system step by step.

The F-1 analogue-number sets in the port city of Chittagong have already been turned into digital numbers.

T&T sources said it would also introduce an auto-billing system to inform the subscribers of their outstanding bills before disconnecting their lines.

After a limited number of NWD and ISD calls. In this system, a subscriber will be informed and cautioned about his outstanding bill.

If he does not respond within the stipulated time, his set will automatically be turned into a one-way (incoming) line, and after another stipulated period, his connection will be cut off.

The T&T official hoped that after introducing the system, the subscribers would be conscious about their bills and pay regularly.

Meanwhile, T&T has started search for fake telephone lines. After the investigation, it will go for action against those who had taken telephone connections illegally.

"We have a good number of demands for new telephone connections. If we could identify the fake and unauthorised connections, we will be able to give these numbers to the new subscribers," the official said.

## Ershad's trial adjourned

The trial of former president HM Ershad and four others on charges of corruption in connection with the purchase of radars for the Air Force was adjourned yesterday until May 20.

Presiding judge Md. Shaifuddin, the sixth Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, allowed a prayer by the prosecution for adjournment.

Ershad is the principal accused while two former air chiefs — retired Air Vice Marshals Sultan Mahmud and Montazuddin Ahmed — and two businessmen, Shahzad Ali and H M Musa alias Tipu, both directors of United Traders, are the co-accused.

They are all charged with causing a loss of over Taka 64 crore to the state exchequer through their dubious dealings in the matter of a radar purchase from the USA in 1985.

Defence counsel Mahabubur Rahman, a former Ershad minister, yesterday challenged the maintainability of the case and the jurisdiction of the court in the light of the Seventh Amendment to the Constitution which gives blanket cover to all actions by Ershad as the Chief Martial Law Administrator.

The judge said he will decide on the question of maintainability when the court resumes.

## Taslima's trial adjourned

The trial of the controversial trial, Taslima Nasreen, was adjourned yesterday for the sixth time until May 17, reports UNB.

## Donors ask for autonomous status of JMBA

Financiers have asked for autonomous status of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) for expeditious implementation of the bridge project, reports UNB.

A joint mission of the three financiers — World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the OECF of Japan — that visited Bangladesh last month recommended the JMBA to be declared as a separate division under the Ministry of Communication.

Official sources said a meeting of the project steering committee might decide on strengthening the JMBA at a meeting today.

Delegation of greater financial and administrative authority to senior level JMBA executive are likely to be okayed at the meeting, sources added.

## DU student hurt by falling plaster

A student of the Dhaka University was injured when cement plaster from the ceiling of the Administrative Building fell on his head yesterday afternoon.

Injured Mazharul Huq Tito is an MCom final year student. He received serious head injuries and was under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, sources said.

## AIDS body meets

The 27th meeting of the National AIDS Committee (NAC) was held in the committee room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan with Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, chairman of the committee and Deputy Leader of the House in the chair, reports BSS.

## CEC

Another minister, who attended yesterday's meeting, said that the progress of issuance of ID cards for voters was also discussed.

The meeting was informed that it would take another five to six months to complete the process. The EC has already printed forms for the voters, the minister added.

When asked who will be the next CEC, the ruling party leader said that a decision was yet to be taken in this regard.

## Ctg murders

Between two factions of the Shibir in Fatikchhari. An activist of the pro-Jamaat Shibir, reportedly belonging to group opposed to Babul and Ilias, was killed in the month of Ramadan (February).

Police sent the bodies to the General Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Kotwali police, but none was yet arrested.

In another incident, Abdur Rashid, 24, was beaten to death at a fair at Pahartali village in Raozan thana on Friday evening following a feud between the residents of Kasarpura and Sheikhpura.

Rashid succumbed to his injuries on way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. A case was filed with Raozan police.

## The Midnight File

### 'Akash' to be test fired by April 24

BALASORE, Apr 15: India's indigenously developed surface-to-air medium range missile 'Akash' will be test fired from the Interim Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur-on-sea 15 km from here any day between April 17 and 24, according to official sources. There is every likelihood that two 'Akash' missiles will be test fired within the period, the sources said, reports PTI.

### Chirac ahead of rivals

PARIS, Apr 15: One week before French voters go to the polls to elect a new president, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac stayed solidly ahead of his main rivals from both the political left and right. Premier and fellow conservative Edouard Balladur was locked in a tight battle with Socialist Lionel Jospin to make it into the second round May 7. Only the top two finishers from the first round April 23 go on to the runoff, unless one candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the vote, reports AP.

## Train-bus collision leaves 42 dead in Egypt

QUWEISNA (Egypt), Apr 15: At least 42 people were killed and 39 injured today when a mainline Egyptian train smashed into a bus packed with textile workers on their way to a Nile delta factory, reports Reuter.

The wreckage of the bus, mixed up with shoes and clothing, was spread over 200 metres of track near a level crossing on the outskirts of the delta town of Quweisna, 55 km north of the capital Cairo.

"It was horrible. The bus started moving and for the next few seconds all I saw was my friends scattered all over the line," said Ghada Mohamed, 25, one of the survivors.

Mohamed and other witnesses said two trains had been approaching the level crossing at about the same time, 6:50 am (0450 GMT). When the first had gone, the bus driver decided to drive on and the second train hit the bus smack in the side.

The bus belonged to the Misr Menoufia Spinning and Weaving Company and had collected workers from the nearby town of Shubin Al-Koum to take them to the factory in Quweisna.

Doctors and investigators in Quweisna gave the death toll of 42 killed and 39 injured, slightly higher than an interior ministry figure of 37 dead and 39 injured.

Some of the injured were in serious condition and might not survive, the doctors said.

## Jamuna Bridge

taken to rehabilitate some 80,000 individuals and an environmental management action plan is being implemented to mitigate the environmental issues.

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## Gas explosion

Meanwhile, the condition of the six other injured remained critical until yesterday. They were under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, medical sources said.

The accident occurred when a member of the house tried to light the stove with a matchstick at around five am.

## Kuwait eager to help

had fruitful talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia and other ministers on matters of mutual interest.

He thanked the government and the people of Bangladesh for extending warm hospitality to him and members of his entourage during the visit. "I and members of my entourage are very satisfied and happy," he said.

The Kuwaiti Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to the government and the people of Bangladesh for extending support to his country in combating the Iraqi aggression in 1991.

"Bangladesh stood by Kuwait in time of its crisis and played a due role in the liberation of Kuwait," said the Crown Prince.

Referring to his formal talks with Begum Zia, he said that the Bangladesh leader had also assured her country's support to Kuwait and work in all international fora to make Iraq comply with all terms of the UN resolutions before lifting of the embargo.

Responding to a question, the Crown Prince said Kuwait is ready to take all possible

## measures to help its 'test friend' achieve allround development.

The strong ties of friendship and cooperation between Dhaka and Kuwait City will continue to grow in the days ahead, he said.

He regretted his inability to attend the press conference scheduled for Friday. All his official engagements on the day were cancelled due to the sad demise of a senior member of the ruling Sabah family.

Earlier, Begum Zia met with Al-Sabah at Sonargaon Hotel where he was staying during the visit and hoped that the visit would further strengthen the existing relations between the two countries.

She expressed deep sorrow at the death of the Sabah family member and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

The royal guest was also given a ceremonial farewell at the state guest house Karotoa. He was given a guard of honour by a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the three services. He took salute and inspected the guard.

BSS adds: Sheikh Saad in a message greeted Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh.

## Khaleda business leaders

with the cooperation of the business community, her government would be able to create a more congenial investment and employment atmosphere for the betterment of the teeming millions.

The CCCI delegation, led by President of its Board of Directors Sarwar Jamal Nizam, apprised the Prime Minister of the latest situation of trade and business in the port city.

The CCCI president informed the Prime Minister that foreign investment in his city increased manifold due to the policy adopted by the government.

He mentioned that more than 35,000 people were now working in the Chittagong EPZ and foreign investors coming

## Sylhet murders : Post mortem held on three bodies

SYLHET, Apr 15: The post-mortem of the bodies of three villagers recovered from a gunny bag after 39 days of the gruesome murders, was held at the Sunanganj Sadar Hospital today.

Police yesterday arrested one more person from Muradpur village for his alleged complicity in the murders. With this the number of those arrested rose to fourteen.

On March 5 one person was killed and eighty others were injured in a clash between residents of five villages in Dharampasha thana of Sunanganj. Three others were also kidnapped on the day from the Jaldhara haor. The bodies of those three villagers were later recovered from a ditch at village Lanka Patharia Thursday.

## Lightning kills 4 in Barisal

BARISAL, Apr 15: Four members of a family were killed in a lightning when a hailstorm swept Hizla thana here last night.

The storm that started at about 8:30 pm damaged some 300 houses, crops of about 100 acres of land and uprooted many trees.

## Quarry labourers gherao Companyganj thana parishad

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Apr 15: More than four thousand quarry workers laid a siege to the Companyganj thana parishad today to press for immediate resumption of stone collection from the Bholaganj quarry. A rally was also held after the siege.

The labourers alleged that stone collection had been suspended for the last one week due to obstacles created by some local quarters demanding illegal tolls.

The quarry workers also called upon the district administration to take necessary steps to end the problem within 24 hours or face a big-gam agitation.

## to invest in the country's business capital.

Nizam said in the name of hartals, common people were being confined to their houses violating human rights.

"We are witnessing a bad trend that hartals and strikes are being called especially when foreign investors come to explore prospects of investment," the CCCI president observed.

"We have to face a serious competition for survival because every chapter of the Uruguay Round will be implemented by the year 2005. So, it is time to groom our business by shunning the anti-development activities," cautioned the chamber leader.

The CCCI executives lauded the current economic policy of the government and expressed their gratitude to the Prime Minister for declaring Chittagong as the business capital.

They further said the standard of living of the people of the port city and already improved and observed that the infrastructure of the city was better than that of capital Dhaka.

Thanking the Prime Minister, the directors said the government had in the meantime set up stock exchange and the infrastructure of the proposed World Trade Centre to be established in Chittagong.

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## 13 killed in country

Patiya police recovered the body of a woman aged about 45 years from a ditch at Shantirhat Saturday night. Police could not identify the woman.

In the capital, a pedestrian aged about 55 was killed when a train knocked him down at Kasal Bari under Uttara police station yesterday afternoon.

The victim, not immediately identified, died on way to the DMCH.

In another road accident, a minor boy was crushed under the wheels of a speeding autorickshaw in front of the BDR cinema hall at Azampur Friday morning.

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## NID second phase today for eradicating polio

The second phase of the National Immunisation Day (NID) will be observed throughout the country today to immunise about two crore children below five years against the dreaded disease poliomyelitis.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the second phase at the International Conference Centre in the city at 12:30 pm.

The government introduced the NID this year with the objective of eradicating poliomyelitis from the country.

The first phase of the NID was observed on March 16 when about 1.60 crore children under five years were given the first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV). The second dose would be administered today.

The NID would also be observed twice with a gap of one month in 1996 and 1997 in line with the WHO target of building a polio-free world by the year 2000.

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Meanwhile, the condition of the six other injured remained critical until yesterday. They were under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, medical sources said.

The accident occurred when a member of the house tried to light the stove with a matchstick at around five am.

Sources alleged that someone had left the stove knob open the night before and as soon as the matchstick was struck the kitchen, which was filled with gas, just lit up like a bonfire with a loud bang.

The flame immediately spread, engulfing the entire ground-floor of the building where three families resided.