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## Prime Minister asks industrialists Pay actual electricity bills, stop underhand dealings

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged private entrepreneurs to set up industries outside the capital to help build a strong rural economy and create new jobs, reports UNB.

The government will give incentives, including tax holiday for agro-based small and medium enterprises at thana and district levels," she told a delegation of outgoing executive committee of Bangladesh Chamber of Industry at her office.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed and BCI president Sharif M Afzal Hossain also spoke in the meeting.

Hasina said her government's economic policy attached priority to the private sector as well as focused on strengthening the rural economy to tackle growing unemployment.

She said the government had already offered various incentives for installing new industries, particularly cottage and small-scale ones, in the private sector.

The Prime Minister said industrial parks would be set up in the country's northern region. Besides, those who would

come forward to set up industries on the reclaimed lands would be encouraged.

Referring to power shortages, Hasina said the government was working hard to improve the situation by setting up new power plants and maintaining antiquated plants and transmission lines.

She indicated that two more power transmission lines might be installed in Dhaka to help ease the problem created by outages.

Since assuming power, the Prime Minister said, the government has been able to increase power production by 700 MW in less than three years. She said the power system loss had also been brought down.

She urged the industrialists to pay the actual electricity bills without resorting to underhand dealings with corrupt officials.

The Prime Minister said electricity bills to the tune of Tk 2000 crore remained outstanding as it was found that some big industrialists and companies did not pay properly, affecting the power sector as well.

"This bad trend of under-

hand dealings with corrupt officials and employees of the power sector and deduction of the actual bill amounts must be stopped," she told the BCI delegation.

Hasina said if the entrepreneurs paid the correct bills, the money could be spent on establishing new power plants and renovating the old transmission lines.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed said opposition political groups were trying to disturb economic activity by creating law-and-order situation in a planned way.

Earlier, BCI president Sharif Afzal praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership in revamping the economy by restoring discipline in the financial sector.

He also appreciated industrial policy as a well-timed step to encourage foreign and local investors.

Other members of the BCI delegation included Rashed Moudud Khan, Obaidur Rahman, A K Azad, Alhaj Moksud Ali, Dr Mohammad Jahangir Alam, M A Shahid, Abdul Baten beg and Wares Sardar.

## BNP's letters

From page 1  
The BNP leader briefly narrated the latest political developments since March 25 and said the situation in the country has further deteriorated.

Bhuiyan referred to the Prime Minister's refusal to break the political impasse, inaction against the ruling party MP even in his Chittagong house and arrest of BNP MP Alamgir Kabir without permission of the Speaker.

He said the Prime Minister "dared to warn even the head of State not to initiate any action on his own with a view to breaking the current political impasse and to reach a settlement."

"These clearly reveal the sinister motive of the ruling party to govern the country and hold elections unilaterally without participation of the opposition political parties," Bhuiyan said.

He also referred to electricity, water and gas sectors and said "one does not have to emphasise the colossal distress of the commonmen due to negligence, incompetence and total failure of the government."

"This has led to the spontaneous eruption of the people in different areas of protest against mis-governance of the ruling party," the BNP leader told the diplomats.

## Publish white paper on power crisis, default loans: Kamal

RAJSHAHI, Apr 26: Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain demanded a White paper on power deficit, default loans, secret killing, terrorism and illegal toll collection, reports UNB.

"Come up with the White Paper within 15 days, or we shall expose all the secrets," he warned.

Dr Kamal was addressing a public meeting at the Shaheb Bazar square in the city today, organised by 11 left leaning parties.

Dr Kamal, former Foreign Minister and a close associate of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, asked the government to inform the nation the reasons and amount of power deficit, default of bank loans and rising incidents of terrorism, secret killing and illegal toll collection.

He asked the government to admit its failure and apologise to the people.

The meeting was also addressed by Rashed Khan Menon, Manzurul Ahsan, Abdullah Sarkar and Abdus Samad.

## Gas export: Local economist opposes WB view

By Staff Correspondent

A World Bank economist said at a seminar in the city yesterday that export of gas would provide additional support to Bangladesh's balance of payment.

On the contrary, a leading economist of the country Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud said the foreign investors would share the export earnings from gas which would be repatriated abroad. "It will not provide any extra support to the balance of payment position," he observed.

He said FDI flow into the country is still very low and this came with assured profit in an assured market where the government will buy the output like power and gas.

"The real test whether Bangladesh is attractive to foreign investors will be whether such investments come on the basis of market incentives, whether for export purpose or for production for the domestic market. That is yet to happen," said Dr Mahmud.

Deliberating on the key-note paper at the seminar by World Bank economist Zaidi Sattar, Dr Mahmud said the author's presentation did not show any portfolio investment. "But Bangladesh still remains open, in terms of policy, to portfolio investment and therefore, the risk is still there. If and when portfolio investment comes in, the country will have to rethink about its policy stance."

He said the Bank projections show increase in private sector borrowing from abroad, although most of it is envisaged to take place under multilateral arrangements such as lending from IFC and other multilateral donors to the private sector.

"Even if it is not direct borrowing of the private sector from the international capital market, which was identified to be the crucial factor underlying the East Asian crisis, the risk is still there in commercial borrowing through the multilateral donor organisations."

Here, the important question is how to have the institutional arrangement for the financial inter-mediation within the country and who will underwrite the loans and will bear the risks."

Senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya was critical on the point of "portfolio investment" in the context of Sattar's paper.

Dr Bhattacharya termed the portfolio investment a missing component in Sattar's presentation and said, "Portfolio in-

vestment might be an important tool as equity of foreign investment is lower in Asia."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said recently that Bangladesh would not export gas, but it planned to set up gas-fired power plants and such industries as urea fertiliser plants which use gas as raw material.

Zaidi Sattar said "Bangladesh stands to gain from these inflows provided it is able to allocate and manage these resources (oil and gas) efficiently keeping in view the foreign exchange liabilities arising from profit repatriation, interest and debt payments."

"Bangladesh had about 13 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas reserve. The gas sector has already drawn in excess of \$400 million FDI for exploration and development."

There is heightened interest from international oil companies in contracts for further exploration indicating similar inflows over the next five years. Thus in the fiscal year 1997-1998 (July-June), more than half of the \$386 million of FDI came in the gas sector alone.

"This trend (investment in gas sector) is likely to be sustained for the next five years, with average inflows anywhere from \$200 to \$300 million," he said.

Sattar said: "From a trickle in the 1980s, inflows of private foreign direct investment in Bangladesh have risen to nearly \$400 million in fiscal 1997-98 and are expected to average about \$780 million a year for the next five years."

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Trade and exchange liberalisation, current account convertibility and liberalisation of the investment regime, have all helped to bring this about."

A recent World Bank projection shows FDI inflows will average \$ 620 million annually during 1992-2000 and about \$ 4900 million annually till 2010.

The principal recipient of the inflows in the early years is the energy sector, but if current trends continue, foreign investment in telecom, manufacturing and services could overtake energy by 2006.

Private corporate debt is a rising component of Foreign Direct Investment with an average maturity of 6.6 years and average interest rate of LIBOR +3.6 per cent.

"Short-term debt of under one year's maturity is still a small fraction of this debt," Sattar said.

Experts said issues like law and order, physical safety, lost workdays, institutional problems, difficulties in management, market reforms, power crisis and improving social contacts should be brought into serious consideration to create an atmosphere conducive to increased FDI flow into Bangladesh.

## HC told during hearing on suo moto rule Hartal can be avoided if govt is tolerant

By SC Correspondent

Peaceful means to persuade people to observe hartal or peaceful action to dissuade people from hartal is a democratic right, said Barrister Moudud Ahmed before the High Court during the hearing on the suo moto rule regarding pro-hartal activities and anti-hartal activities.

However, on behalf of BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan he said, "Anyone who commits an offence in pursuance of either for the hartal or against the hartal comes under the purview of the existing laws of the land and they should be punished in accordance with law."

The hearing on the suo moto rule yesterday continued for the third day before the Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Gholam Rabbani and Justice Md Latifur Rahman.

Earlier the two amici curiae Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan and Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and Advocate Mahubey

## Nepal's first Communist PM Adhikari dead

KATHMANDU, Apr 26: Manmohan Adhikari, Nepal's first Communist prime minister, died in hospital Monday, reports AP.

The 78-year-old chairman of the United Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Nepal, collapsed during an election rally last week and slipped into coma. He was declared brain dead on Thursday and a team of 19 doctors attending his case offered no hope of revival.

"Adhikari's blood pressure dropped and heart stopped beating at 2:32 am (2047 gmt)," said Dr Govind Sharma, Executive Director of the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital where Adhikari was being treated.

## Lok Sabha

From page 1  
Information and Broadcasting Minister Pramod Mahajan told reporters after the cabinet meeting that the Election Commission was left with the option of conducting the hustings either in May-June or in September-October.

Sources in the BJP indicated the party would prefer an early election seeking to cash in on perceived sympathy following the one-vote defeat of Vajpayee government last week and the opposition's failure to put together an alternative due to internal contradictions.

The Congress, on the other hand, would like to delay the polls to ensure the "sympathy" factor was dissipated and the utter disunity in opposition parties, thrown up futile efforts to firm up an alternative government, could be pushed to background with passage of time, the sources said.

The Chief Election Commissioner Manohar Singh Gill has returned to India cutting short his visit to the United States. The three-member Election Commission held a meeting this morning to take stock of the situation arising out of the cabinet recommendation for fresh general elections.

The week-long political drama relating to formation of an alternative government, triggered by the defeat of Vajpayee government in confidence vote on April 17, came to an end with the Congress President Sonia Gandhi throwing in the towel saying she did not have the numbers for a majority in Lok Sabha.

## Virus attack

From page 1  
users can actually determine some "peculiar behaviour".

"Some CIH versions slowly kill the computer system files, some destroy them on a particular date like April 26. These can be detected earlier and cured," he said.

One can check the computer whether it is affected by CIH virus by simply using search command and putting a search parameter, "CIH.V1.2".

Many users reported that they had detected and removed this virus from their PCs successfully before yesterday's disaster took place.

Bangladesh Computer Samity had warned computer users of this virus long ago and urged them to take remedial measures. This virus became widespread because of careless exchange of software and use of pirated software, it said.

The Computer Samity and Dolphin Computers have offered advisory cells to help affected computer users recover data.

The Computer Samity in a press release yesterday suggested that if any computer's BIOS was affected, its user could install fresh BIOS by disks and restore the system. "Users are requested to consult PC vendors in this regard."

The Samity further said that if a PC's Hard Drive partition is affected, users should not immediately go for reformatting of the drive without consulting computer experts, as it may be possible to recover Hard Disk data with the help of experts, it said.

## Ashura

From page 1  
The Religious Affairs Ministry has urged the authorities of mosques and religious organisations across the country to hold discussions, milad and doa mahfil on the occasion.

Islamic Foundation and Azimpur Chhoto Daira Sharif will organise discussion meetings and milad mahfil to mark the day.

## Corruption at SEC

From page 1  
from Cyprus, which was not even verified from our University Grants Commission".

"Bypassing many brilliant candidates, appointment of such less qualified and inexperienced person is an example of the depths of corruption and irregular practices at SEC," an official alleged.

The official claimed that he knew of at least one candidate, having a First Class from Dhaka University, who failed to make the shortlist.

Those who protest are "targeted" and have to pay. "Loyalty is a must. Efficiency is a very undervalued virtue. If you try to protest, you had it," said a disgruntled senior official.

Already, two senior officials have paid the price.

In October last year, one executive director was shown the door, the sources recalled. In February this year, another was refused extension of his job on grounds of "unsatisfactory performance".

But an independent assessment of all members of SEC staff made earlier found them "efficient and professionally sound".

A team of experts from Asian Development Bank, which is funding Bangladesh's capital market development efforts and helping SEC modernise the assessment as part of its work on the market. ADB officials confirmed it.

"Has professional understanding of the work. Remains unutilised due to absence of specific work programme. Has taken initiative on system for monitoring trading," so reads an assessment report prepared by ADB about one trained in England and USA.

The ADB team also spoke highly of another candidate who was thrown out, a former CSP who had stood first in his batch.

A third such official is in the line of fire.

The official until recently dealing with the share scam

## Water sells

From page 1  
Islampur, Babubazar, Bangabazar, Peer Yamani Market, New Market and Ramna areas and the demand is rising," Amrul Islam Mintu, an agent of the company for Ramna area told this correspondent yesterday.

A former garments trader at Bangabazar, the young man reported "good business" in his new venture. He said he had studied up to HSC level at his hometown Khulna before setting up a garments shop which was gutted in a big fire in 1994.

He said the water is collected from the deep tube-well at Ikuria and treated. "It's plain and simple but safe. We do not brand it as mineral water. The water has also been tested free of arsenic," he added.

The company has provided him with a refrigerated van for which he pays Tk 1,000 daily. "After paying for all costs including wages of eight employees, not much is left for me," said the young man who supplies around 2500 litres to shopkeepers in Ramna and Fulbaria areas.

## Pakistan

From page 1  
trolling in bullet proof vehicles and in jeeps with machine guns mounted on the rear.

Shi'ite Muslim mosques in Karachi, the country's largest city of 14 million people, were surrounded by police and vehicles were being searched.

"In the present situation we feel confident that we can control the situation," said Karachi police chief Farooq Amin Qureshi.

In tribal regions of north-western Pakistan where violent clashes between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims have killed hundreds of people, police were patrolling by the thousands.

The estimated 1.5 million Afghan refugees living in northwestern Pakistan were being ordered to stay in the refugee camps.

Police fear that those Afghan refugees who follow Afghanistan's Taliban religious army may attack Shi'ite Muslim mourners.

## Beximco directors abused power, HC told

From page 1  
"Whereas, the commercial sectors are indeed in a bad shape and there is an unthinkable default culture," Tania said.

She said that the commercial sector is in poor condition because there is a conflict of interest as directors of private banks are also directors of business entities that borrow from the banks.

"They (Beximco directors) by abusing the fiduciary duty and possession of power as directors of the commercial banks had managed to obtain loans in companies where they themselves were directors."

"Normal businessmen and small enterprises can hardly approach such banks to obtain loans on such relaxed conditions violating the circulars of BB," Tania said.

She also said that they managed to get their loans rescheduled time and again by abusing their power but eventually failed to repay the money.

"Like a comatose patient they cannot inherently survive as they are not viable entities," she said. "Each time their payments were restructured and new rescheduling schemes were granted. But like comatose patient they were not in a position to repay the loans."

"It is only because of breach of fiduciary duty and abuse of offices these petitioners as directors of the bank had been able to inject new lease of life by extending repayment schemes."

There are many small business group unable to meet repayment deadlines due to genuine reasons such as power shortage and they are not given such privileges and indulgence as were given to these petition-

ers.

Justice Ebadul Huq of the Divisional Bench at this stage pointed out that some times the banks also refuse genuine loan seekers.

She also said that the notice, under section 17 of the Bank Companies Act 1991, was sent through Bangladesh Bank where BB's role was that of a post office which applies its mind to judge whether there is any substance in the claim.

She said that the Bangladesh Bank was discharging its mandatory and statutory requirement which it was bound to do.

"They were given rescheduling three times before the notice was issued and again after obtaining a stay order they applied before the BB to allow new re-scheduling," Tania said.

"Since the representation was not made before the BB, the writ petition was premature and not maintainable," Tania said.

She pointed out that the petitioner alternatively argued that they made representation before the BB. If that was the representation before the BB then it was done so after the stay order and as such they violated the stay order.

In addition, she argued, the letter was sent to BB seeking new re-scheduling for their loan liabilities implying that they had admitted before the BB that they had failed to repay as per rescheduling terms. Since they had admitted their liabilities there is no pointing for the BB to reply to.

She also pointed at Article 19 and 20 (2) of the constitution where it says that "state shall endeavour equal opportunity for all."

The Section 17 of Bank

Companies Act was introduced in order to create an even playing field for all but the petitioners had abused their power and violated the law to receive loans on soft terms.

She said investigation by a special BB inspection team found that these were fictitious loans arranged by the directors and that the companies did not have separate signboards but were actually under the premises of Beximco Investment Company Ltd (BICL).

She said that the BB inspection had revealed gross irregularities. The report said that these companies were owned by Beximco which provided guarantee for these companies. There is no difference between principle debtor and the guarantor.

In every event the court was presented with documents. She said that before serving of the notices the loans were rescheduled three times and the debtors failed to meet each deadline.

And they failed because these companies were not viable entities to repay the loans, Tania said.

She also said that Article 20 (2) says "the state shall endeavour to create condition in which as a general principle one shall not be able to enjoy unearned income."

She said that BB special inspection team report revealed that these entities were fictitious that borrowed 97 per cent against three per cent equity and the debt to equity ratio was a gross irregularity. As such they will never be able to repay and this amounts to unearned income for guarantors who later admitted that these benami (fictitious) loans were their own. They were granted

## Sher-e-Bangla

From page 1  
Awami League presidium member Amir Hossain Amu will be the chief guest on the occasion.

Sher-e-Bangla Jatuya Smriti Parishad will arrange recitation from the holy Quran at 7 am at the mazar premises of the late leader.

The Parishad will place wreaths at the mazar at 8 am and hold a discussion at the mazar premise at 10 am.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will be the chief guest on the occasion.

Dakhin Bangla Jubo Kalyan Samity and Bangladesh Jubo Unnayan Parishad will place wreaths and hold doa mahfil at the mazar at 8 am.

They will also hold a discussion meeting on the life and activities of Sher-e-Bangla at the mazar premise at 4.30 pm.

## Chuadanga

From page 1  
area," Ali said.

Deputy Commissioner of Chuadanga M R Choudhury at a press conference at his office at about 11 am said, "This abrupt massacre is unfortunate at a time when law and order in the district has been brought under control to a great extent as a result of four days' police-BDR combing operation."

The bodies were later brought to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case has been filed with Damurhuda thana, police said.

Yesterday's killings took place despite an ongoing 'combing operation' by BDR and police in the south-western districts to nab outlaws and terrorists.

Three persons were shot dead allegedly by outlaws at a village in Kumarkhali thana in neighbouring Kushtia district on Sunday.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: Activists of outlawed Purbanchal Communist Party, Biplobi Communist Party and Sarbaraha Party have unleashed a reign of terror in Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Magura, Jessore, Narail, Sathkhira and Khulna districts.

At least 185 people were killed in the last three months. Of them, 70 were killed in January, 40 in February, 40 in March and 35 so far this month.

দুর্নীতি এক কাল-ব্যর্থির মতো আমাদের দেশ ও সমাজের রক্তে ছড়িয়ে গেছে। এই সর্বদলীয় সমন্বয় থেকে পরিদ্রাবের উপায় কী আমাদের? দৈনিক প্রথম আলোর উদ্যোগে মুক্ত সংলাপ

### দুর্নীতি প্রতিরোধ কি সম্ভব?

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১৭ তোপখানা রোড (হাইকোর্টের বিপরীতে)

প্যা নে ল আ লো চ ক

এম. হাফিজউদ্দিন খান কম্পিউটার ও অডিটর জেনারেল  
ড. মোজাফফর আহমেদ অধ্যাপক আইবিএ, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়  
ড. কামাল হোসেন বিশিষ্ট আইনজীবী ও সহসভাপতি, ট্রাসপারিসি ইন্টারন্যাশনাল  
সৈয়দ মঞ্জুর এলাহী চেয়ারম্যান এগেপস শিল্প গ্রুপ  
ইয়াহিয়া খালেদ ডেপুটি গভর্নর, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক  
এবং এ.এম.এ মুহিত সাবেক সচিব

আপনার অংশগ্রহণ কাম্য

## প্রথম আলো

একুশ শতকের দৈনিক

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