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## PM leaves for US tomorrow

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves here tomorrow morning for Washington on a week-long visit to the United States, reports BSS.

She will be accompanied by the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad and press secretary to the Prime Minister Jawadul Karim.

During her stay in the USA, the prime minister will deliver a major policy address on "Leading a Country in Transition: Challenges and Opportunities" at the John F Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University on April 5.

On April 8, Sheikh Hasina will receive Pearl S Buck Award.

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## Nasim suspects

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim suspected yesterday that BNP chief Khaleda Zia and her Rajakar associates kept US President Bill Clinton from visiting the National Mausoleum at Savar.

Replying to a question from Abdul Latif Mirza of Awami League in the Jatiya Sangsad, Nasim also accused BNP, Jamaat and other anti-Liberation forces of making an abortive bid to foil Clinton's visit to Bangladesh.

We are trying to find out who sent fax to and had communication with the United States.

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## Massive campaign ahead of grand rally in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Apr 2: All Party Action Committee of opposition parties launched a massive campaign in the port city ahead of the grand rally here on April 4.

Chiefs of four mainstream opposition parties — Khaleda Zia of BNP, H M Ershad of Jatiya Party, Golam Azam of Jamaat-e-Islami and Maulana Azizur Rahman of Islami Oikya Jote — are scheduled to address the rally on a single platform at the outer stadium.

Several hundred opposition activists riding motorcycles went down through the city roads today to garner support for the rally.

JP sources said party chief Ershad is expected to arrive by road tomorrow.

The three other chiefs are likely to fly in on April 4.

## Our new numbers

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April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
3	5:37am	6:16pm

## Prayer Timings

April 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:00	5:30
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:20	6:25
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Block 7 goes to Unocal, BAPEX partner

The government yesterday awarded Block 7 to US oil giant Unocal for mining gas with national exploration company BAPEX, reports UNB.

Unocal Bangladesh Limited became the first among 22 companies that took part in the second-round bidding for gas block distribution in 1997 to enter the long-awaited production-sharing contract (PSC).

Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla), its subsidiary Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company Limited (BAPEX) and Unocal Bangladesh Limited signed an agreement at the Petrobangla headquarters yesterday.

This is for the first time that BAPEX became partner in gas exploration with an international oil company.

Block 7 is located in the southwestern region, west of the existing Shahbazpur Gasfield.

Negotiations are in progress for signing more PSCs with other companies that took part in the first-ever formal international bidding. Earlier, there was no formal bidding and international oil companies were awarded eight gas blocks on selection basis.

As per the agreement signed on the basis of a model PSC, BAPEX will get 10 per cent carried interest without any capital investment, a unique condition that is absent from the PSCs signed in the first round in early '90s.

It provides Unocal Bangladesh Limited, a subsidiary of US-based Unocal Corporation, with terms and conditions for conducting exploratory drilling within five years from the signing of the PSC, a shift from the bidding document that allows three years for the works.

Petrobangla secretary Imdadul Huq, BAPEX secretary Saffur Rahman and Unocal managing director Terry Budden signed the deal.

Deputy secretary of the energy division of the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources Khaled Anwar signed the deal on behalf of the government.

Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on energy ministry Abul Hasnat Abdullah, state minister for energy Rafiqul Islam, energy secretary Dr Toufiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury and officials of Petrobangla and BAPEX witnessed the signing ceremony.

After prolonged negotiations, Petrobangla secretary Imdadul Huq, BAPEX secretary Saffur Rahman and Unocal managing director Terry Budden signed the deal.

Deputy secretary of the energy division of the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources Khaled Anwar signed the deal on behalf of the government.

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## Bill seeking changes in PSA placed

By Staff Correspondent

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim moved a bill yesterday seeking some major changes in the controversial Public Safety (Special Provision) Act.

The amendments to the PSA came two months after the law was passed by parliament on January 30, in absence of the Opposition.

While assenting to the bill on February 15, President Shahabuddin Ahmed reportedly requested the government to change certain 'objectionable' provisions in the law.

However, the bill sought changes in the controversial provision that denied the appellate court the authority to grant bail to an accused until his or her appeal was disposed of by the court. According to the proposed amendment, the appellate court can consider a bail petition after examining the gravity of the offence, related documents and evidences.

The bill also sought dropping of Section 13(5) of the PSA that authorised the tribunal to recommend criminal prosecution against 'wilful lapses' on the part of police in conducting investigation.

The bill also proposed addition of a proviso to Section 13(4) of the PSA. According to the proviso, a tribunal would enjoy the authority to convert an accused in a case to an witness of the same case, provided that the accused make a confessional statement under Section 164 of the CrPc.

The bill proposed another proviso to be added to Section 14(3). The proviso, if adopted by the House, would allow the tribunals to award any punishment.

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## PM tells Temple Prescribed reform measures need serious review

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the reforms measures prescribed by the development partners of the country needed a serious review as many of those seem to have become old-fashioned, reports BSS.

The old-fashioned reform measures did not seem to work and therefore a serious review of those reform measures is now necessary, the Prime Minister said this while talking to World Bank Country Director Frederic T. Temple who met her at her office at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. They discussed important issues relating to financial reforms and other programme.

Sheikh Hasina said while doing the review the World Bank should consult its development partners in the Third World, the Principal Secretary

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## Draft laws for making 2 new city corps okayed

The cabinet yesterday approved draft laws for upgrading Barisal and Sylhet municipalities of city corporations, reports UNB.

With these two, the country will have six city corporations. The existing four are in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna.

The approval was given at a regular cabinet meeting held at the PM's office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The cabinet also approved the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh Ordinance 1976 amendment proposal.

It further endorsed Bangladesh's assent to the amendment to the International Monetary Fund Articles of Agreement.

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## Body to curb anti-social activities in 3 posh areas

The government has formed a committee headed by the Director General of the Narcotics Control Department to curb anti-social activities at the guest houses in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas of the capital.

The committee has already started operation to stop such

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The PWD's demolition squad levels an illegal extension to a building housing a school on Road No 6/A in Dhanmondi yesterday (left), and the students don't seem to mind the break.

— Star photo



## Rajshahi-5 byelection Aggrieved AL leaders back 'rebel' Raihan

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Apr 2: Most local leaders of ruling Awami League have extended their all-out support to 'rebel' party leader Raihanul Haque Raihan who is contesting the Rajshahi-5 parliamentary by-polls as an independent candidate.

Awami League nominated Nurul Islam Thandu, whom most of the local leaders and workers have declared persona non grata, party sources said.

Aggrieved at the AL nomination, three other local leaders of the party are also contesting the by-polls as independent candidates. They include Azizul Azam, Chairman of Gargari union under Bagha thana and Brig (Retd) Anisur Rahman, who was AL candidate in 1996 election.

By-polls in the constituency comprising Charchat and Bagha thanas is scheduled for April 22. Raihan is general secretary of Charchat thana A L. Major opposition parties are boycotting the by-polls.

Prominent local party leaders who have already started campaigning for Raihan include President of Charchat thana AL and chairman of Charchat municipality Anwar

Hossain, Bagha thana AL president Abdus Samad Sarker and general secretary Muzammel Hume, the sources said.

So far, Thandu has been openly supported by Akkas Ali, former general secretary of Bagha AL and chairmen of Pakuria union. Ali was expelled from the party a year ago for his alleged involvement in stripping the wife and the sister of a local BNP worker.

Thandu, hailing from Sirajganj, is almost unknown to local people as he was not involved in any party activity since 1975. He had problem in arranging a proposer and a supporter in his nomination paper, the sources said.

On the other hand Raihan, who grew up at Charchat thana headquarters, spent his student life and was involved in political activities there since 1980, is well known in the constituency. Several hundred leaders and activists accompanied him when he went to file nomination paper.

His supporters also went on the rampage at the thana headquarters and stopped plying of vehicles on March 28 on hearing the news.

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## Loadshedding in DESA areas static at 200mw

By Staff Correspondent

Dwellers of Dhaka city and its adjacent areas are having great difficulty in the early summer days due to frequent power failure in almost every parts of the city.

The amount of loadshedding in Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (DESA) command areas remained 200 megawatt for the last five days, sources said.

Residents of different parts of the city alleged that power outage happens twice and even thrice a day. "Sometimes we have to face power disruption throughout the day or night," said a resident of Demra yesterday.

Most parts of the city experienced blackout from 7 pm for about an hour last night. Besides, Lalbagh, Postogola, Kaila and some parts of the Old City experienced yesterday the worst power shortage in recent times. The maximum temperature in the capital yesterday was 35.1 degree Celsius, highest of this season so far.

Meanwhile, 13 out of 63 power generation units of the country remained shut down yesterday. Power generation has been suspended at seven of these units for about a month. The number was 19 on Wednesday last.

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## BNP also to prepare for polls

By Rezaul Karim

BNP has apparently changed its strategy and decided to prepare for the next general elections through strengthening the organisation side by side with intensifying the current out-governments movement.

The change was made in view of the party's failure to build a militant anti-government movement to dislodge Awami League from power.

Sources said BNP leadership is now convinced that the party was 'misguided' and it had to change its strategies repeatedly as 'hard liners' in the party gave various 'ambitious and unrealistic' advices over the past one year.

They party Chairperson now wants to strengthen the party and inspire the 'frustrated' leaders and activists by asking them to start preparations for the elections.

They said frustration gripped those leaders and activists as the party boycotted the municipal polls and declared not to participate in other local bodies polls. The main task now is to remove this frustration.

A top BNP leader said instructions have been given to party units at all levels to go for election preparations in their respective areas because the national elections are not too far.

Though the tenure of the present government will expire in June next year, the parliamentary polls may be held towards the end of this year or by March next year at the latest. Polls are not possible after March because of the weather in the country, he said.

The leader further said party MPs and probable candidates have been instructed to strengthen the party down to union and ward levels and check the voters' list.

Local leaders and activists have also been asked to see that irregularities in voters identity card and list are removed and eligible voters not in the list are enlisted.

Another senior BNP leader observed that boycott of the

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## 'Govt should back RMG sector after MFA era'

By Rafiq Hasan

The government should classify the ready-made garment industry as an essential sector and support it when incentives are withdrawn in 2005, says a government report.

The report, which was prepared by the Project Management Institute, a private consulting firm, made 13 recommendations to help the sector in the post Multi-Fibre Agreement era. They include the creation of backward linkage industries, demand pull for backward linkage, an enabling investment climate and an appropriate tariff structure.

The report also said the government should improve the sector's infrastructure, create a fashion technology institute and testing facility, strengthen the textile cell of the Export Promotion Bureau and inter-ministerial and inter-organisational relationships and create awareness about the impact of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

The in-depth study, which was submitted to the Ministry of Commerce and the Export Promotion Bureau recently, also assessed the growth of the sector after 2005 and estimated

its demand for fabric and yarn. The study said implementation of the GATT would open up new markets for Bangladesh's textile and clothing exports, but competition with China and India would also increase. This places Bangladesh at a disadvantage, since there is a huge gap between the supply and demand for fabric and yarn in the sector.

The reported said the government should provide incentives to encourage ready made garment factories to use local materials. It also recommended lowering the interest rate on long-term loans to 6 per cent from 11 per cent.

The tariff structure should be export based. Backward linkage industries should be allowed to import the materials they need without having to pay the VAT.

World level efficiency and cost effectiveness are other crucial factors for the survival of the sector in a quota free market. The government should improve the transportation system, ports and ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas

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## Bangabandhu Murder Case HC to hear death reference May 2

The High Court will begin hearing on May 2 the death reference of Bangabandhu murder case to confirm the death sentences handed to 15 former army personnel, reports UNB.

The court directed the solicitor to appoint lawyers of the Supreme Court for the 11 absconding convicts and supply them with paper books of the case within three weeks.

Earlier, April 6 was fixed as the date for hearing the application, filed by one of the convicts' counsel, for the preparation of additional paper books.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman, counsel for condemned convict retired major Bazul Huda, asked for time to file the application.

The court ordered the filing of the application at 2 pm and decided to pass order at that time. Yesterday was fixed to pass the order after hearing the petition last Thursday.

When the court started passing orders in the afternoon to appoint lawyers for the 11 fugitives, the counsel for retired major Bazul Huda submitted

the application asking for the preparation of the additional paper book.

Appearing for the state, Deputy Attorney General M. Faruque told the court: "Since the application is filed in the midst of passing of the court orders, it requires time to go through the application to reply to it."

The court fixed April 6 to hear the application.

The death reference along with four appeals filed by the counsel for retired lieutenant colonel Faruqur Rahman, retired major Bazul Huda, retired lieutenant colonel Sultan Shariyar Rashid Khan and retired major Mohiuddin Ahmed will be heard on May 2.

The criminal division bench of the High Court, comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Abdul Aziz is hearing the death reference of the Bangabandhu murder case.

Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golam Rasul sentenced the 15 former military personnel to death on November 11, 1975.

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## OPEN LETTER TO HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Hon'ble Prime Minister,

Accept our thanks for your personal commitment and ceaseless efforts of your government to ensure quality education for all.

An EFA review meeting of the world forum is going to be held in Dakar, Senegal in April, 2000. We will have the opportunity to present our problems, hurdles, successes and perspectives in the meeting. We sincerely wish that the active and meaningful participation of Bangladesh delegation will offer some positive points.

Education is a universal human right. As per the articles 17-a-b and c of Bangladesh Constitution it is the responsibility of the State to ensure the fundamental right to education for every citizen of the country. We know your government is committed to this task. We feel more optimistic as we see that the rate of children's education has increased, the equity of boys and girls has been achieved. We are proud of this achievement. But, Hon'ble Prime Minister, probably you know that even now, a considerable number of children remain outside the school. And those, in the school, do not have access to quality education. Opportunities for work and life-oriented education are still limited. The access of people of different religious faiths and ethnic groups to education still remains a matter of neglect. Programmes to eradicate illiteracy and the methods of teaching for the adolescents, young people and adults are not adequate. Steps are yet to be taken to integrate the disabled into the mainstream of education which can only ensure their human rights. Integrated efforts to include the working children and adolescents are still quite limited. In this context, in order to achieve the objectives of EFA our demands are:

- ensure integrated and indiscriminate quality education for all as enshrined in the Constitution
- increase total allocation in the education sector in the national budget and arrange equitable sector-wise allocation
- replace the planning, implementation and management of education of the disableds from the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Education
- ensure the participation of parents, teachers and members of the civil society at all levels of education policy and in its implementation
- prepare national education policy for the disadvantaged, working adolescents and ensure its implementation
- ensure all necessary arrangements for reading materials, class-rooms, quality teachers and other equipments for quality education
- integrate all kinds of non-government efforts including those of NGOs to ensure free compulsory and quality education for all children, adolescents and adult illiterates
- ensure quality early childhood care and opportunities of education.

Hon'ble Head of the Government,

We promise our all-out co-operation to the government in the implementation of our above-mentioned demands. We hope, your personal commitment and the positive and bold steps of the government will initiate new dynamism in achieving the objectives of education for all and ensure quality education for all,—children, adolescents, young people, adults, boys and girls and men and women.

on behalf of

Shammilita Shakkharata Oviyan &amp; Education Coalition in Bangladesh

Courtesy: Campaign for Popular Education, NFOED, ActionAid-Bangladesh, Oxfam-GB, Global Campaign for Education