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BNP chief Khaleda Zia, flanked by JP chief HM Ershad and convenor of Chittagong APAC Mir Nasir wave at crowd before the Opposition's joint grand rally held at the Outer Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

## Stopover in Delhi Hasina discusses issues with Indian FM

From Pallab Bhattacharya  
NEW DELHI, Apr 4: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today discussed bilateral issues with Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh during an hour-long stopover here. She was on her way to Boston.

Singh received Hasina at the airport.

During the talks, Hasina, diplomatic sources said, raised

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## Our new numbers

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## Inside Today

### Article

**Syndication of  
Smuggling  
and Nexus  
with Politicos**  
by Mansoor Mamoon  
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April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
5	-	6:16pm
6	5:45 am	-

## Prayer Timings

April 5	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

## Hasten fall of terrorist govt: Khaleda

Opposition calls countrywide hartal on April 12  
at grand rally in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, April 4: BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia today announced a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal programme on April 12 and called for intensifying the oust-government movement.

She made the announcement at a mammoth joint public meeting of the four-party Opposition Alliance at the Outer Stadium in the city this afternoon.

Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote chief Moulana Azizul Huq also addressed the public meeting, the first such joint meeting outside Dhaka.

The BNP chief also announced a countrywide 'protest day' programme on April 9 to press release of all opposition political leaders and activists.

She called for making all agitation programmes successful to hasten the fall of "the terrorist government".

"We want to establish a people's government by removing this government which totally failed to run the country," Begum Zia told the grand meeting, attended by supporters of the parties and people from far flung areas. She addressed the meeting for 30 minutes from 5:40 pm.

"People don't feel secure if Awami League remains in power," she added.

"If we return to power, we will ensure peace and development to the nation," the BNP chief said.

All opposition parties are now united to force resignation of this government, she said.

She announced that the election of Chittagong City Corporation held on January 3

would be scrapped if the government falls.

"We will not accept any agreement on gas done by the present government," Begum Zia said.

"If our unity exists, 80 per cent people of the country will be in our support in future," she said.

The BNP chief alleged that 300 leaders and workers of her party were killed in the past four-year rule of Awami League.

"New government has introduced the Public Safety Act (PSA) for repression on our activists so that it can retain power by keeping our people behind bars during election," she said.

Awami League has started posting its men at all level of the administration for rigging

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## Akhteruzzaman's 'open letter' to Army Chief

By Staff Correspondent

Major (Retd) Akhteruzzaman MP has urged the Army Chief to withdraw what he called all "illegal and beyond-authority restrictions" on movement of civilians and private vehicles on streets inside Dhaka Cantonment.

In an open letter to Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Mostafizur Rahman yesterday he said civilians residing in and around Dhaka Cantonment areas are being harassed at MP check posts due to various "illegal and unlawful restrictions by the Army authorities".

"Such checking is increasing day by day. The Army authorities also restrict movement of opposition political leaders in the cantonment area," he added.

"Cantonment is not a military establishment... It is only a residential area for military men. Besides, carrying of arms, except by on-duty personnel, is a punishable offence."

As per law, police would control any type of crime inside the cantonment and Army authorities would co-operate with po-

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## Speaker's belated action

BNP MP loses seat for absence from JS for 90 days

By Nurul Kabir

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury has declared the parliamentary seat of BNP legislator Shamsuddin Ahmed Eshaq vacant for his absence from the House for more than ninety consecutive sitting days without leave of Parliament.

The announcement, delayed by some eight months, is likely to create a lot of legal complications as regards holding of by-election to the seat.

Making the announcement in parliament yesterday, the Speaker said, "Shamsuddin Ahmed Eshaq, elected from Narshingdi - 1 constituency of Jatiya Sangsad, was absent from the House for 101 consecutive sitting days from 9th to 15th session without leave of the Parliament". The 15th session was prorogued on November 9 last year.

Quoting Article 67(1)(b) of the Constitution, the Speaker

said, "A member of Parliament shall vacate his seat if he is absent from Parliament, without the leave of Parliament, for ninety consecutive sitting days". Therefore, Narshingdi-1 constituency of Jatiya Sangsad, the seat of Shamsuddin Ahmed Eshaq, has fallen vacant."

When contacted at Narshingdi over telephone yesterday evening, Shamsuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that he 'already heard about the Speaker's announcement'. "I am yet to receive any letter from the Sangsad. However, I am least bothered about it."

He could not remember the date he attended parliament proceedings last.

Asked why he had been absent for such a long period, while his party MPs have been absent from the House for 41 days, Shamsuddin said, "I

know Awami League better than many of my party leaders. So I started boycotting parliament sessions much before my party colleagues did."

Replying to another query, he said that he would not participate in the by-election to the seat. "No election under the government of Sheikh Hasina."

While making the announcement in the House, the Speaker did neither give any specific date when the 90th day of the BNP lawmaker's absence was completed, nor did he mention the date from when the seat would be considered vacant.

The Speaker also did not give any reason behind his delayed action.

But an analysis of the Speaker's statement shows that 90 days of Shamsuddin's absence from the House was completed on August 30, 1999 -- the

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## Japanese cabinet resigns Mori may be named new PM today

TOKYO, Apr 4: Japan's Cabinet rushed to resolve the country's leadership crisis today, resigning en masse and setting in motion the selection of a ruling party stalwart to replace ailing Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, reports AP.

Yoshiro Mori, secretary-general of the Liberal Democrats, was expected to be named premier tomorrow, and a new Cabinet -- with Obuchi as the only change -- could be installed by the end of the day.

Government ministers vowed today to move quickly and avoid a political vacuum in the aftermath of Obuchi's collapse. The 62-year-old premier suffered a stroke on Sunday and lapsed into a coma.

"It is regrettable that the leader of the government fell ill... In such difficult times both at home and abroad," the ministers said in a statement after an emergency meeting. "We are determined to do our best."

With Obuchi's LDP firmly in control of Parliament, the changes were not expected to bring any major shift in direc-



Yoshiro Mori

tion in political or economic policies.

Mori, 62, the second-highest official in the LDP, has a reputation as a conservative, and analysts said he would come under considerable pressure to continue Obuchi's initiatives.

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## Speaker's action conspiratorial, says BNP

By Staff Correspondent

Main opposition BNP has protested declaration of Narshingdi-1 seat of the JS vacant by the Speaker and termed it "conspiratorial, unprecedented, illegal and contrary to the morality".

Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury yesterday declared the seat vacant because of absence of BNP MP Shamsuddin Ahmed Eshaq from the House for 101 consecutive sitting days, as per Rule 1 (Kha) of Article 67 of the Constitution.

In a statement yesterday, opposition Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hossain said the step taken by the Speaker is unprecedented and conspiratorial. "This act of the Speaker is certainly conspiratorial, illegal, unacceptable and contrary to democracy and parliamentary norms and morality," he added.

Delwar said as per Article 180 of the Rules of Procedure, the Parliament Secretary should place a book nearer to the MPs for counting their presence.

But the officials concerned of Parliament Secretariat kept this book outside the sight of

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## Opposition unity in Khulna at stake

Move to form All-party Action Committee without BNP

From Quazi Amanullah

KHULNA, Apr 4: The opposition in the district is poised for a split.

Fed up with the intense intra-party rivalry in BNP and its alleged "big brotherly attitude", Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote are likely to form an All-party Action Committee here without BNP.

The APAC may be formed at a meeting of the local Liaison Committee members from the three parties at the city Jamaat

office tomorrow, its Ameer Mian Golam Farwar told this correspondent.

"We shall consider with sympathy if any one from BNP desires to join the APAC, to be formed on April 5", he said while taking to this correspondent yesterday.

A top leader of Jatiya Party here said, "We are seriously thinking to go ahead without BNP, if need be, and form both district and city units of APAC to carry forward the on-going

anti-government movement".

Liaison Committee members from the three parties held a secret meeting in the city on Saturday, where they strongly condemned the attitude of BNP leaders, sources in the parties said.

In fact, the 'tug-of-war' between the two stalwarts of BNP here has damaged the spirit of a united movement, they said. The gap between BNP and the three parties widened after Khaleda Zia's tour of Khulna on March 31 as leaders of the three parties could not meet her, they said.

Jatiya Party, Jamaat and IOJ leaders wanted to meet the BNP chief at the circuit house. But they failed due to non co-operation of city BNP leaders

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## 90 Bangladeshis arrested near Kashmir border?

JAMMU, Apr 4: Security forces have arrested allegedly 90 Bangladeshis near the international border in Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir since yesterday, official sources said here today, reports PTI.

The Bangladeshis were apprehended by a border security force patrolling party in Jammu division when they were trying to cross over to Pakistan at different places near the international border, they said.

Preliminary questioning revealed that they were brought from Calcutta by agents promising them jobs, the sources said, adding that those arrested were later handed over to the district police for further investigation.

## 'WB estimates not based on facts'

By Staff Correspondent  
The World Bank's estimates on the relationship between corruption and GDP growth are not based on any quantitative evidence, says Dr. A.K.M. Mashur Rahman.

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## Dhanmondi lake: Demolition team fails to recover half of land

By Staff Correspondent

The joint demolition team has removed 33 structures around Dhanmondi Lake but it has failed to recover half of the public land occupied illegally by influential residents.

Demarcation pillars installed by the surveyor have been relocated at the squatter's convenience. Men were seen digging along visibly occupied areas where barely eight feet of space was left for the project's walkway component.

'Representatives' of several squatters said Manoj Roy, sub-divisional engineer in the Public Works Department, approved the new demarcation line. Several residents alleged that department officials accepted bribes from squatters in exchange for concessions.

"Some of these officials have made several lakh in the last five days," alleged a resident. He said he knew of at least three such "deals".

An architect from Vitti Sthapati Brindo, the consultant on the Dhanmondi Lake project, a Dhaka City Corporation engineer and an engineer from Monami Construction, the project's contractor, visited some of the 'recovered' areas yesterday. The team concluded the drive had recovered less than half of the land occupied by squatters.

For example, a lake-side, six-storey house on Road 2a didn't leave any space along the edge but it wasn't on the list of squatters. The engineers said they didn't know how they

would build a walkway on the spot.

House-38 on Road-3 still had a garage located on lake land. The demolition team spared the squatter's illegal structure and overlooked his extended boundary wall.

House-37 on Road-4 belongs to the department's former chief engineer. The demolition team did not touch his structure. House 36 on the same road was not measured by the surveyor, while House 36/1 next door built its sewer pit on lake land.

The land for a walkway became even narrower at Road-5. House-47 nearly blocked the way, while about 20 per cent of House 47a was situated on lake

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## Dhaka experiences massive power shortage

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka and surrounding area experienced a massive 225-megawatt power shortage and low voltage yesterday, making it difficult for residents to cope with the summer heat.

Power Development Board and Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority blamed each other for the city's continued power problems.

The board control room said they don't give the authority the power it needs, since it doesn't have the capacity to handle the load. The authority's capacity banks are out of order in certain areas, board sources alleged.

However, the authority denied the allegations. The authorities' control room said they can handle the load, but the board wasn't giving them

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## AMERICAN EXPRESS BANK

The news item in yesterday's Bangladesh Observer stating that American Express Bank Ltd. is selling its business in Bangladesh to Citibank N.A. is false and misleading. Several other statements in the news item are untrue as well.

American Express Bank Ltd. would like to reassure its customers of its continuing commitment to its business relationships and service in Bangladesh.

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