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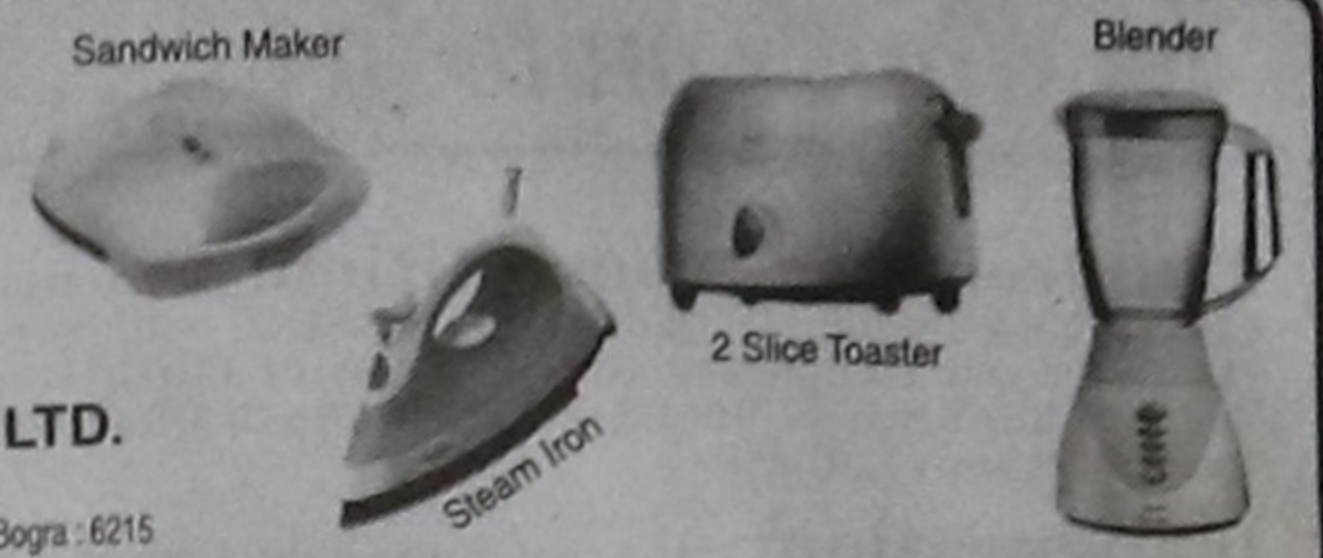


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### Release Sharif, set time-frame for polls

McKinnon urges Pak military govt

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Commonwealth Secretary General Donald C. McKinnon asked the Pakistani military government to release imprisoned Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif yesterday and set a specific time frame for national elections.

"I appeal to them for the release of Nawaz Sharif and to set a time-table to hold regional and national elections," said McKinnon. "Announcing a date for local polls is just not enough."

McKinnon, the new secretary general of the 54-member Commonwealth, made the remarks during a press conference at Zia International Airport last night before ending a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

He said the fate of Pakistan's membership in the Commonwealth would be decided at a ministerial meeting in London next month.

The general tenor of thinking among the members was that there should be some pressure on Pakistan.

"Keep the pressure on, but have dialogue, too," said McKinnon.

McKinnon said he had fruitful talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, and made a courtesy call on the president during his brief visit.

The secretary general also met with the Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia. McKinnon described their meeting as "very productive" and said he was happy to hear her views.

"Every opposition is a government in waiting," said McKinnon.

McKinnon, who served as New Zealand's foreign minister for nine years, said he wanted to visit Bangladesh, since it was

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### 132 students call off hunger strike

By Staff Correspondent

The 132 students of Motijheel Model High School and College, who began a fast unto death at Mukhtangan in the city at about 11am yesterday, called off their programme at 8:30 pm at the request of Opposition leader Khaleda Zia.

The students were demanding permission to sit for the HSC examinations beginning on April 27.

Parents of some of the students had also joined the programme.

Parents of the students will sit today to fix their next course of action. S M Shajahan, father of one of the students told this correspondent last night.

Khaleda Zia visited the hunger-striking students and their parents and told them that she would talk to the government on the issue. "As the Leader of the Opposition and as a conscious citizen, I urge all, including the Education Ministry, to solve the matter."

In her brief speech she said it

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**Testing time**  
The 132 students of Motijheel Model High School and College during their fast-unto-death programme at Mukhtangan yesterday. Star photo

### Major job cut in MOA project

Many lose their jobs as bid to work out a successor instrument fails

By Reaz Ahmad

About two-thirds of the staff of a Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) project have been fired after the government and the funding agency failed to work out a successor project.

Some 130 out of 200 staff members of the Agrobased Industries and Technology Development Project (ATDP) have already lost their job. The rest will be in the job until the US-AID-supported project formally winds up on the 30th of this month.

Ronald P. Black, Chief of Party, ATDP, told the Daily Star that the ATDP's staff strength has been reduced to one-third but the project may continue with less staff until July to bridge the gap between the current and the future project.

Officials in MOA and USAID hinted that it may take several months to negotiate a new phase of agribusiness supportive project. They attributed bureaucratic tangles to such delay in the negotiation process.

The officials, preferring anonymity, said any break in the vital programme will slow down the current pace of development in agribusiness sector.

ATDP that involves over 40 million US dollars began in 1995 with 10 million dollars in assistance from the USAID while the rest coming from state coffers.

However, an ATDP report claimed that although the project started with only 10 million dollars in assistance from the USAID, it generated investment worth 227.7 million dollars in the country. Of this, 30.7 million dollars came from the government, 117 million dollars from financial institutions and 80 million dollars from the private sector.

It contributed immensely to the promotion of commercial potato export, introduction of Urea Super Granule (USG), de-

velopment of linkages between exporters and growers of fruits and vegetables and raising of nine orchards in the country over the last five years.

The ATDP also played a crucial role in the formation of Agribusiness Development Organization of Bangladesh (ADOB), a forum of 20 major associations in the agriculture sector.

There were criticism as well. An USAID report had observed last year that ATDP focused on too many areas with inadequate resources, maintained a centralised management at its head office and did not recognise the potential of feed and diary processing.

But officials argued that government and supporting agencies could always find ways to improve upon previous errors once they agreed on a new project modality.

### Young man shot dead at Narsingdi

From Our Correspondent

NARSINGDI, Apr 20: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a young man in the town's Kawriapara area at about 8:15 pm tonight.

The dead was identified as Babul Miah, 25, an engine boat owner, police said.

Being informed by local people, police rushed to the spot and sent the victim to sadar hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was registered with Narsingdi sadar thana in this connection. None, however, was arrested till filing of this report at 10:00 pm.

### Secret union activities at CEPZ concern investors

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Apr 20: Investors and officials at the Chittagong Export Processing Zone have expressed concern about union activities after some leaders from outside the zone started a secret campaign to encourage workers to join unions.

Source said trade union leaders from the port and other industrial areas became active to take advantage US pressure to allow trade unions in EPZ.

A senior EPZ zone official said they received a letter recently from 13 companies voicing their concerns about the secret activities of union leaders. The government was notified about the matter.

We are keeping watch out for union activity since they could pose a threat to uninterrupted production and investment," said all official, who requested anonymity.

Sources said some foreign investors visited several neighbouring countries recently to look for alternative invest-

ments if trade unions are allowed in the CEPZ.

"We are closely watching the situation since we are concerned about the pressure to allow trade unions," said a senior

### Javed sues former CCCI president

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 20: The acting president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI) Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed today filed a criminal case against CCCI president Kamaluddin Ahmed with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court, Chittagong.

Saifuzzaman accused Kamaluddin Ahmed of tarnishing his image by making false allegations at a press conference held at Dhaka recently.

official of a leading foreign company, who requested anonymity.

"We can accept trade unions, if they are handled lawfully. But we are afraid they would lead to frequent strikes and unrest that plague other industrial areas in this country."

Nasir Uddin, managing director of a Bangladeshi textile unit in the zone said "the introduction of trade unions will lead to a deterioration in the production efficiency. Unions would force many investors to relocate to other lucrative places."

"Some investors have suspended plans to develop programmes in their units. They have assumed a 'wait and see' policy," said Nasir. The CEPZ was developed on 132 hectares of land overlooking the sea. It became operational in 1983. It houses 100 industrial units including 62 owned by foreign investor, 18 joint ventures and 20 owned by Bangladeshis.

### Upazila in place of thana

The government yesterday issued a directive to use the word "Upazila" in place of "thana" with the designations of government officials in all the thana of the country, reports BSS.

An official handout said the word "Upazila" instead of "thana" has to be used for everything formed conducted and controlled under government orders, directives or executive orders with regard to the thanas.

The change was made in view of the passage of Upazila Parishad Act 1998, and its subsequent effect from February 1, 1999.

### Remarks on judges BNP may take AL leaders to court

Main opposition BNP is likely to sue the ruling party ministers and leaders for their recent remarks and demonstrations against justices of the High Court that they consider as an "assault on the judiciary", reports UNB.

Khaleda Zia called an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee, the party's highest policymaking body, and senior lawyers belonging to the party at 29 Minto Road yesterday evening.

The meeting discussed various legal provisions to stand against the government party's

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### Oust AL govt to save judiciary: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has called upon the people to force the Awami League government out of office, save judiciary, and establish the rule of law.

Expressing concern over the comments and activities of the ruling party on judiciary, party leaders at a protest rally in the city yesterday vowed to topple the Awami League government immediately and form a democratic government under the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

The rally was organised to demand proper supply of gas, water and electricity throughout the country and to protest the remarks some AL ministers about the Supreme Court judges who were embarrassed to hear the death reference in the Bangabandhu murder case.

"The government is now planning to destroy the judiciary after destroying the administration," said BNP Secretary-general Abdul Mannan

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### Correction

In a news item published in The Daily Star on April 14 under the headline "Rejoinders and Our Reply," the name of Al-Haj AKM Belaluddin was inadvertently printed as Al-Haj AKM Melaluddin. We regret the error.

April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
21		6:23pm
22	5:31am	

### Prayer Timings

April 21		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:45	5:15
Juma	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:45	5:00
Maghrib	6:25	6:30
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

### Govt plans ban on smoking in public places

By Special Correspondent

The government is contemplating a ban on smoking in public places to protect people from the effects of passive smoking. Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru has said.

"A clean environment is a pre-requisite for a good life. Environment is a global issue on which there should not be any dispute. It should be kept out of the purview of politics and all have to come forward to protect it," the minister told a workshop on 'Environment Court: Challenges ahead' at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

Organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), the Work-

shop was held to discuss various aspects of the Environment Courts to be set up in divisional headquarters to try 'eco-offenders' under a legislation passed by Parliament last month.

The discussants included Syed Marghub Murshed, Environment and Forests Secretary; Shireen Kamal Saeed, UNDP assistant resident representative; Mahfuzullah, Chairman of IUCN National Committee; Dr Mahfuzul Haq, Coordinator of UNDP aided Sustainable Environmental Management Programme; UNDP expert Dr Aminul Islam, Dr Abdus Sattar, Dr Mizan Khan and Shehabuddin Ahmed of FEJB. Chairman

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**নির্ধারিত সময়সীমার মধ্যে ঢাকা ওয়াসার বিল পরিশোধ করে সারচার্জ মৌকুমের বিশেষ সুযোগ নি**

**অবিলাম্বে বকেয়াসহ হালনাগাদ পানি ও পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধ করুন!**

- ঢাকা ওয়াসার সম্মতিত গ্রাহকবৃন্দ ও সরকারী-আবাসনিক প্রতিনিধি প্রধানদের অকাত্তির জন্য জানান যাচ্ছে যে, ঢাকা মহানগরিতে পানি ও পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধে বার্থ গ্রাহকের সহযোগিতা তৎক্ষণিকভাবে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের বিশেষ অভিযান শুরু হয়েছে।
- বিল পরিশোধে বকেয়াসহ হালনাগাদ পানি ও পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধে বার্থ সম্মতিত গ্রাহক সাধারণের সমুদয় বকেয়া বিল সারচার্জ ব্যতির পরিশোধের সময়সীমা আগামী ১৫ই মে ২০০০ ইং পর্যন্ত নির্ধারিত করা হয়েছে।
- বকেয়া আদায়ের কারণে সহযোগিতা বিদ্যুৎ ও পিডিআর প্রকল্পের অধীনে মাল্টিস্টেট কোর্টে মামলা এড়াবার লক্ষ্যে অবিলাম্বে বকেয়াসহ হাল নাগাদ পানি ও পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধ করার জন্য গ্রাহকবৃন্দকে বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ জানান যাচ্ছে।
- আপনি কি না পেয়ে থাকলে অবিলাম্বে ঢাকা ওয়াসার রাজস্ব অফিসগুলোর রাজস্ব কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য পরামর্শ দেয়া হচ্ছে।
- বিল সংক্রান্ত কোন অভিযোগ থাকলে ঢাকা ওয়াসার সংশ্লিষ্ট আঞ্চলিক রাজস্ব অফিস অথবা প্রধান রাজস্ব কর্মকর্তা (☎ ৯১৩১৫৬৯) অথবা বাণিজ্যিক ব্যবস্থাপক (☎ ৯১২০৫৫৭) অথবা উপ-ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক (অর্থ ও প্রশাসন) (☎ ৮১১৬৭৯৯) এর সাথে যোগাযোগের জন্য অনুরোধ জানান যাচ্ছে।

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