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## New CEC: PM invites Khaleda for opinion

By Special Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday invited Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia for discussion on appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner following resignation of Mohammad Abu Hena.

A letter from Hasina inviting Khaleda for a meeting at her office at 7 pm today to 'have her conscientious opinion regarding appointment of the new CEC' was delivered by an aide to the PM, sources close to her said.

Ibrahim Hossain Khan, APS to the PM, delivered the letter to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiya at 9-15 pm at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition.

At 10-30 pm Khaleda Zia summoned available members of the BNP Standing Committee to discuss the issue. They included Saifur Rahman, Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain, Oli Ahmed and Khondaker Mahabuddin Ahmed.

The meeting ended at 11-20 pm. Khaleda, while leaving at 11-25 pm, declined to make any comment.

Saifur Rahman said, "Does it require a meeting with PM to appoint a CEC?"

Mannan Bhuiya said they would give reply this morning.

"I hope leader of the four party alliance Khaleda Zia will consult the three other component parties before taking a decision about meeting the PM," Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad told The Daily Star over telephone.

## Houses of three agents of hundi trader Kajol set afire

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, May 8: Houses of three agents of much-talked-about 'hundi' trader Kajol were set on fire while 14 shops, owned by other agents, were looted here today by a mob.

Some 500 police were deployed at Kotchandpur thana headquarters this afternoon as people cheated by Kajol became unruly, vandalized the shops and laid a siege to Kajol's village home at Solaimanpur.

Police said that houses of Shahjahan, Nuru and Enamul were damaged badly by the fire this noon.

Local people feared further

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May	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
9	5:19am	6:31pm
10	5:18 am	

### Prayer Timings

May 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:15	4:45
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:35	6:38
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

## CEC resigns on 'health ground'

By Nurul Kabir



CEC Md. Abu Hena

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena has resigned.

Abu Hena, who became the seventh CEC on April 9, 1996, sent his resignation letter to President Shahabuddin Ahmed at 12:30 pm yesterday. He also sent a copy of it to the Prime Minister's Office.

He cited 'health ground' as the reason for resignation. His term was scheduled to expire on April 8 next year.

In the resignation letter, Abu Hena said that for him it has 'completely uncertain' to resume his work 'in the near future'. "As the Chief Election Commissioner, my prolonged absence is by no means desirable or beneficial for this institution of national interest. I am all the more concerned because it is no longer possible for me to do justice to the grave responsibilities entrusted with me for such a prolonged absence."

"Under the circumstances, I tender my resignation, under Article 118(6) of the Constitution, from the post of Chief Election Commissioner in the afternoon of May 8, 2000," he said.

Hena, 63, was on leave due to illness since November 30 last year. He was operated upon at Bamrungrad Hospital in Bangkok in December last, got admitted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka on January 12 this year following post-operative complications and left for the US on February 15 for treatment at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He returned home on April 24 and is scheduled to undergo a check-up at the same hospital next month. He has been suffering from prostrate.

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## All parties were demanding it, says BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has said resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena is a victory of the people and the Opposition movement.

Bhuiyan said he was a 'controversial personality and no election, even the last national polls, was fair under him'. All political parties raised objection on every election as people could not exercise their voting right, he claimed.

Giving his reaction to newsmen yesterday, Bhuiyan said except the ruling Awami League, all political parties in

the country had been demanding his (CEC) resignation.

"Many lives could be saved and the democratic process could be smooth had Abu Hena quit when the political parties demanded his resignation," Bhuiyan said.

The BNP Secretary General hoped that the government would discuss with political parties and nominate for the post of CEC a person acceptable to all. "There is nothing to hurry."

He hoped a new CEC would take appropriate steps to reform the electoral code of conduct.

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## CU not reopened

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 8: Chittagong University was not reopened today despite the withdrawal of strike by Opposition-backed student bodies.

Campus sources said that the University faced a fresh stalemate as the ruling party's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) began a siege programme yesterday.

BCL is demanding withdrawal of expulsion order against four of its activists.

University bound train and buses did not ply today because of the siege programme.

Chittagong University Syndicate expelled four BCL activists and a Shibir worker in connection with clashes on the campus on May 15 and December 19 last year.

Meanwhile, the university authorities have started informal talks with the leaders of

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## Plan to shift domestic air services to Tejgaon ignoring public safety

By Morshed Ali Khan

Despite serious technical shortcomings, the government is planning to shift domestic airline services from Zia International Airport (ZIA) to Tejgaon old airport at a cost of crores of taka, according to sources.

Experts say the plan is "one step backward" as far as urban planning is concerned. An airport in the centre of one of the most densely populated cities in the world will pose great risk to life and property in case of an accident. It will also worsen

noise pollution and the vibration created by aircraft will pose a threat to buildings, they say.

Architect Ehsan Khan, involved in airport building designs, said if revived, Tejgaon airport will instantly choke the entire vicinity with vehicular traffic.

Tejgaon area already looks like the old part of the city and activities involving a commercial airport will worsen the problem in an area where the Prime Minister's office is situated," Ehsan said.

He suggested that the huge area of Tejgaon old airport be converted into an open public place for the city dwellers.

Officials of private airlines said the scheme is practically "impossible" and "not viable" as there is no shuttle service between ZIA and the old airport to ferry passengers for connecting flights.

Moreover, the old airport does not have any night landing instrument and Bangladesh Biman will 'not be able to shift

its engineering and maintenance wing there. A Biman engineer also said that under the present circumstances, Biman can not extend its facilities to another airport.

Acting Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), Group Captain M. Murad Hossain, said the concerns are 'genuine and valid'. He however said the airlines concerned will be responsible for ferrying the passengers between the two airports.

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## PCJSS calls hartal in CHT today

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, May 8: The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samity (PCJSS) called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Chittagong Hill Tracts tomorrow to protest kidnapping of its member Jiban Prodip Dewan.

Prodip Dewan was abducted from Khulorampara High School ground under Moulchhari at about 8:00 am today, said a PCJSS press release.

PCJSS blamed anti-peace accord party the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) for the kidnapping.

Rupayan Khisha, Shunanta Chakma along with 20 armed miscreants brandishing weapons allegedly kidnapped Prodip Dewan from the school ground, said a general diary registered with the Mohalchhari thana, police said.

But none claimed responsibility for the kidnap.

## Law & order reviewed

A high profile meeting chaired by the Home Secretary yesterday acknowledged deterioration of law and order in the capital in recent days.

Sources close to the meeting told UNB last night that they stressed proper coordination between the police and the magistracy to reduce incidents of crime that shook the city with a number of horrendous killings.

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## Be imbued with 'philosophy of Tagore: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged people irrespective of party affiliation to work unitedly for peace, development, democracy and human rights being imbued with the philosophy of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, reports UNB.

"We want to win our struggle for world peace and humanity by traversing the path of welfare, development and peace in the country," she said, while inaugurating two-day Rabindra Jannoyanti celebrations at the National Museum in the afternoon.

Hasina, however, said the path to peace and democracy in the country is not bedecked with roses as many hurdles are there in this hazardous journey. "But we will have to go ahead taking all the risks. We're aware of the dangers before us. We know what are the obstacles, but we will have to overcome all that."

Dwelling on Tagore's works and philosophy the Prime Minister said the great poet had not only enriched Bengali literature but also voiced protest against war and imperialism for peace and welfare of universal humanity.

She said the erstwhile Pakistani regime banned Tagore's time-honoured songs and essays, expressing their mean-spiritedness. But Bengali intellectual and conscious citizens broke out of the restrictions through

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Young artists perform a dance number marking the 139th birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore at the Shishu Academy Auditorium in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

## SUST to reopen on May 16

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, May 8: The Shahjalal University of Science and Technology will reopen on May 16.

The residential halls will open on May 15, said registrar of the university Jamil Ahmed Chowdhury.

The university was closed since die on February 22 this year after disturbances over the naming of its different buildings and dormitories.

The 3000 students, the teachers as well as the people in Sylhet heaved a sigh of relief after the announcement.

The announcement came after meetings involving the district administration, university officials, district Awami League and All Party Action Committee (Opposition), which was agitating against the naming.

Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet Ali Imam Majumder presided over both the meetings which were addressed by the treasurer Prof. Abdul Aziz, registrar Jamil Ahmed Chowdhury, provost of Shahporan

Hall Dr. Gouranga Dev Roy, police super M.A. Hanif, Sylhet Municipality chairman Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and Sylhet Press Club president Muqtabis-Un-Noor.

Among the political leaders, the meetings were addressed by District Awami League president Syed Abu Nosor, vice-presidents Manirul Islam Chowdhury and Shah Modabber Ali, general secretary A.N.M. Shaiful Haque and joint secretary Iftekhar Hossain Shamim, district BNP president M.A. Haque, general secretary Ariful Haque Chowdhury and the town BNP president Aheza Reza Chowdhury, district Jatiya Party president Giasuddin Ahmed and general secretary Syed Abul Quasem Mantu, City ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Dr. Shaifur Rahman and district Jamaat president Moulana Habibur Rahman and central nayebe ameer of Khelafat Majlis Moulana Habibur Rahman.

The meetings expressed deep

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## Felling of trees in reserved natural forests banned till 2005

The government has banned felling of trees in the reserved natural forests up to year 2005 with a view to maintaining "bio-diversity" in the country, reports UNB.

An official announcement said the decision on the moratorium was taken in a regular Cabinet meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The cabinet also approved in principle the draft Bangladesh Handicapped (Welfare) Special Bill 2000.

The Cabinet also endorsed proposed amendment to the Insurance Act 1938 for streamlining the outmoded insurance industry.

It also approved a draft bill on Appointment and Terms and Conditions of Services Act 2000 for the first and second-class gazetted officers (Tax, Excise and VAT) outside the cadre services.

## Javed elected CCCI president

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 8: Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Javed has been elected president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The board of directors of the CCCI at a meeting here today elected Javed, acting president of CCCI, as the president.

The meeting also elected S M Nurul Haq and M A Latif as senior vice-president and vice-president of CCCI respectively. The meeting was attended by 18 out of 24 directors. It entrusted the newly elected office-bearers with the responsibilities of holding the CCCI election by July 30 as per directive of the High Court.

Earlier, Javed resigned as acting president on April 27. He was made acting president at a meeting of the CCCI board of directors. The directors' meeting also removed the incumbent president Kamal Uddin Ahmed on a no-confidence move on March 14.

## Feni Jubo Dal leader shot dead

From Our Correspondent

FENI, May 8: A Jubo Dal leader, abducted by gunmen from Jamia Mosque Road, was murdered at about 9:30 last night.

Abdul Mannan, 26, joint secretary Kalidhah union Jubo Dal, was abducted by terrorists at about 7:15 pm.

Police found him in a critical condition in a paddy field and rushed to Sadar Hospital where attending doctors de-

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## Ministry's intervention fails to resolve PDB-AES row

By Sharier Khan

The Energy Ministry's intervention has failed to resolve the row between the Power Development Board and AES over handing over of the site of Meghnaghat power plant.

The PDB insists that AES, a US company, take over the Meghnaghat land with retrospective effect from January 3. But it itself did not accept the first phase of Meghnaghat project's land from its Chinese developer, CWHEC.

The project consultant unconventionally issued a hand-over certificate on behalf of PDB last month, sparking off the row, sources said.

After the consultant's "blunder," PDB officially told the press that it will review the consultant's recommendations regarding the hand-over and decide on its certification in a week. However, the matter has not been taken up at PDB board meetings till date.

Meanwhile, the Energy Ministry in a letter on Sunday asked the PDB whether it acted against the consultant for issuing the certificate to CWHEC without the Board's approval.

The Energy Ministry heard contentions of both PDB and AES separately last week. The ministry was supposed to give the disputing parties a schedule yesterday for a joint meeting. But no such schedule was given yesterday.

There has been no communication between PDB and AES on the Meghnaghat project since April 26.

PDB served AES the final notice on April 17, asking it to take over Meghnaghat's land developed under the first phase in a week. It said in case AES failed to take over the land, the Land Lease Agreement (LLA) between them will be terminated. It also accused AES of delib-

erately delaying to take over the site and failing to prove the defects at the site.

"You will also be liable to compensate all damages incurred by BPDB as a result of your negligence, willful misconduct and Project Company Event of Default," warned PDB, which is refusing to take over the land saying that it was poorly developed, replied that as per the contract, PDB has no right to terminate the LLA since the land was not handed over to AES or that the LLA itself was not registered with the government as yet.

It blamed PDB for the delay in implementation of the project and the achievement of Financial Closing, and all other damages for which the Project Company may suffer. "The amounts of such damages are yet to be determined," AES Meghnaghat managing director

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Firefighters try to douse the blaze at Urban Textile garment factory at West Rampura in the city yesterday.

—Star photo