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Political situation Business bodies meet Saturday to devise plan for a dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's business community plans to devise a way to persuade the political leaders to stay off the collision course and initiate a dialogue to settle their disputes.

In the wake of a 72-hour shutdown called by the BNP-led four-party opposition alliance, leaders of leading chambers and trade associations will hold a meeting Saturday to work out the plan.

According to sources, the business community would appeal to the political leaders to refrain from politics of confrontation and sit across the table to reach a consensus

Offices, banks to remain open on Saturday

BSS, Dhaka

The offices of the government, semi-government, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies will remain open on Saturday, April 7, an Establishment Ministry notification said in Dhaka yesterday.

According to a Bangladesh Bank press release, all scheduled banks of the country will remain open on the day.

Holiday Notice

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of holy Ashura. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Friday).

INSIDE TODAY

Article

Political horsetrading portends uncertain future
Column: Currents and Crosscurrents
M M Rezaul Karim

Focus

The great martyrdom; and Excerpts from the 'declassified' main report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 5		6:16 pm
Apr 6	5:46 am	

Prayer Timings

April 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-10	5-40
Zohr	1-00	1-30
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Criminal silence for 3 years!

Despite detection, two lakh people in C'nawabganj are still drinking arsenic water

NAIMUL HAQ

The government concealed, for three years, the fact that most people in the Chapainawabganj municipality were drinking arsenic-contaminated water.

In 1998 experts detected more than 0.2mg/L arsenic in water samples taken from deep tube-well in Chapainawabganj. Such a high level of concentration of arsenic can cause various deadly diseases, leading to cancer even.

Of 200,500 people in the municipality, more than 140,000 use contaminated water.

Detection of such a high level of arsenic in water of the municipality pipelines, the first time in the country, was kept confidential until early this year.

"We came to know about it only in February this year," Moinuddin Mondal, chairman of the municipality, said. "We are very frightened."

"Since the fact came to light, we have shut down two deep tube-wells," he added, "but we still drink from seven others. Water from those tube-wells

have also shown presence of arsenic at more than the acceptable level." Seven out of the total 16 deep tube-wells in the municipality, which supply water through the pipelines, are contaminated with arsenic above the permissible level of 0.05mg/L.

Of the rest, two deep tube-wells, which draws water from between 200 and 400 feet deep aquifers, have been recently sealed off. Arsenic level of more than one mg/L was detected after several tests carried out by the authorities concerned.

It is worth mentioning that the first hand pump tube-well to be identified having arsenic above the acceptable level was found in the Chapainawabganj municipal area in Rajarampur back in 1996.

Information about contamination of the municipal supply water was disclosed to this correspondent yesterday. Until now information about the toxicity was kept 'confidential'.

Mondal, who wrote to the Prime Minister in February last for her personal

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Telling trouble... tellers at a city bank work at a frenzied pace as they attend a swelling crowd of customers, forced into a transaction overdrive yesterday following 60 hours of non-stop hartal called by the opposition alliance.

Holy Ashura today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, the 10th day of the Arabic month of Muharram, will be observed in the country today with duereligious fervour.

On this day in the Hijri year 61, Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA), grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), made supreme sacrifice to uphold the cause of Islam and the teachings of the holy prophet.

Hazrat Imam Hossain along with other members of his family and close associates embraced martyrdom in an attack by Yajid and his troops in the desert of Karbala.

The day is a public holiday. President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages urged the Muslims to learn the spirit of sacrifice from Muharram.

Different religious organisations and political groups have drawn up programmes to observe the occasion by holding discussion meetings

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DSE servers hacked

Officials involved, brokers allege

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

Brokers at the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) became panicky yesterday following reports on Friday that mainframe servers of the bourse where valuable data are stored had been hacked.

Sources say that the market administration and control (MAC) and surveillance software, meant for surveillance and monitoring, was taken over by an unauthorised person who also has the password to log on to the servers.

The software enables access to information and prepares various precious statements when requisition entries are given. Such statements, sources say, can provide a person with enough information to earn a fortune in a very short time.

Many brokers allege that the some DSE officials are involved in the hacking and that it has been on for some

time. The DSE had initially formed an inquiry committee to nail down the 'culprits' but later dissolved it following pressure from some councillors. Finally, in an emergency council meeting yesterday it decided to refer the matter to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), capital market regulators, for an independent probe.

The SEC yesterday formed a three-member committee to run an investigation.

SEC Chairman Maniruddin Ahmad told The Daily Star yesterday that efforts would be there to track down the hackers and bring them to book.

"This is a criminal offence and the persons involved should be prosecuted. Mere firing will not be enough," said the SEC chairman.

On Friday, when the stock market was closed the DSE

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CEC seeks PM's 'intervention' in filling EC posts

NAZRUL ISLAM

Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed has sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "personal intervention" in resolution of a long-drawn deadlock over recruitment to more than 1,400 posts lying vacant at the Election Commission.

"It is unfortunate that no progress was made till date to approve the recruitment rule for the Election Commission although the proposal was submitted afresh on November 11, 2000," the CEC wrote, in a letter sent to the PM on March 19, according to an EC official.

"Due to such a huge vacuum at the grassroots level, the election preparatory works are being hampered seriously... The Election is imminent. Need workforce," pleaded the CEC in the letter, the official revealed, adding that there has not been any response, as yet.

In line with decentralisation of its offices down to the upazilas, the EC drafted a proposal for an independent recruitment rule for direct appointment of officials and employees and submitted it to the Ministry of Establishment on July 26, 1998 for approval. The PM holds the establishment portfolio.

As there had been no progress since submission of the draft in more than two years, the EC resubmitted the proposal on November 11 last year, inco

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Mohammad Sharif

Bangladesh win warm-up match

SPORTS REPORTER, Harare

Bangladesh began their Zimbabwe mission on an inspiring note when the tourists beat CFX Academy by seven wickets in their limited-overs tour opener at the Alexandra Sports Club in Harare on Wednesday.

Young pace bowler Mohammad Sharif took five wickets for 30 runs to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Rajuk to revoke plans of 151 bldgs approved by its 'corrupt' officials

MORSHED ALI KHAN

In its bid to redress past misdeeds, Rajuk now faces the daunting task of revoking plans of 151 commercial buildings at Elephant Road, Mirpur Road and in part of Dhanmondi.

These buildings, mainly shopping arcades, have been erected in gross violation of construction rules.

Owners of these buildings have already been served with notices and administrative procedures are now at the final stage towards cancellation of the plans, said SM Asaduzzaman, a Rajuk authorised officer.

According to Rajuk sources, a section of corrupt officials originally approved all these plans, ignoring basic requirements for a commercial building.

Owners of some of these buildings don't even have any plan whatsoever while some others clearly deviated from the original plans. None of these busy shopping centres has any parking facility and are classified as public nuisance.

"The whole idea is to compel the building owners to vacate the ground floor and make room for parking facilities," said Asaduzzaman.

With cancellation of the plans, trade licences within the premises of these buildings become null and void, he informed. Also, electricity and gas connections to these establishments no longer remain legitimate.

Each case is then sent to Rajuk's appellate authority for hearing. The appellate authority usually tags

conditions for revival for the nullified plans, the Rajuk authorised officers said.

Town planners and Rajuk sources said that the move might bring in some changes. They said some of the commercial buildings such as hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and shopping arcades are permanently creating traffic congestion on important thoroughfares.

"A 400-bed hospital on Panthapath, a 1,000-bed hospital in Dhanmondi are among several hundred commercial structures in the city who do not have any parking facility whatsoever," said a top Rajuk official commenting on the move.

"Somebody has to do something about these irregularities or we will face an impossible situation soon."

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Ghorasal plant: PDB likely to review deal with Russian co

SHARIEH KHAN

The Power Development Board (PDB) is facing embarrassment as a Russian power company has brought in some 10 experts and heavy equipment for rehabilitation of the 30-year old Ghorasal power units 1 and 2 although the contract with it is yet to be made effective.

"A contract needs to be made effective first before a contractor, upon giving its performance guarantee, opens its Letter of Credit (LC) and imports necessary equipment and bring in experts," said a source

concerned, adding the root of the problem lay with the signing of contract.

PDB has refused to take any machinery from the Russian company Technopromexport and asked the 10 experts now staying at Ghorasal to leave the plant premises. It has also decided to review the contract.

A strong lobby is however trying to make the contract effective immediately by passing several important legal procedures.

PDB signed a 17.7 million US dollar contract in May last year,

bypassing the Economic Relations Division (ERD), for Ghorasal power units 1 and 2 rehabilitation project under suppliers' credit scheme. Following this, an irritated ERD issued a letter raising questions about PDB's actions.

On the basis of ERD's objections as well as allegations raised by others against the then PDB chairman Qamrul Islam Siddique, who pushed the deal, the government formed a nine-member inter-ministerial probe committee in August last year.

The committee was assigned to

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Babul Murder Case Warrant for arrest of Manzur

BSS, Dhaka

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court here has issued warrant of arrest against Jatiya Party (Ma'in-Manzur) leader Nazim Rahman Manzur and ordered to confiscate all of his moveable and immovable property.

The court on Tuesday passed the orders against Manzur following the submission of a charge sheet in industrialist Obaidul Haque Babul Murder Case.

Inspector Shahjahan and Senior Assistant Commissioner of the

Detective Branch Mohammad Akhteruzzaman submitted the supplementary charge sheet to the court after re-investigation of the case.

Mohammad Abdul Hannan, deputy commissioner of DB, told BSS that they submitted the charge sheet against him for masterminding the killing of Babul.

But the DB police did not bring any charge against his brother Mofizur Rahman Mostafa as they did not find his involvement in the case.

The High Court yesterday

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Reasons behind BTTB's failure to prepare bills

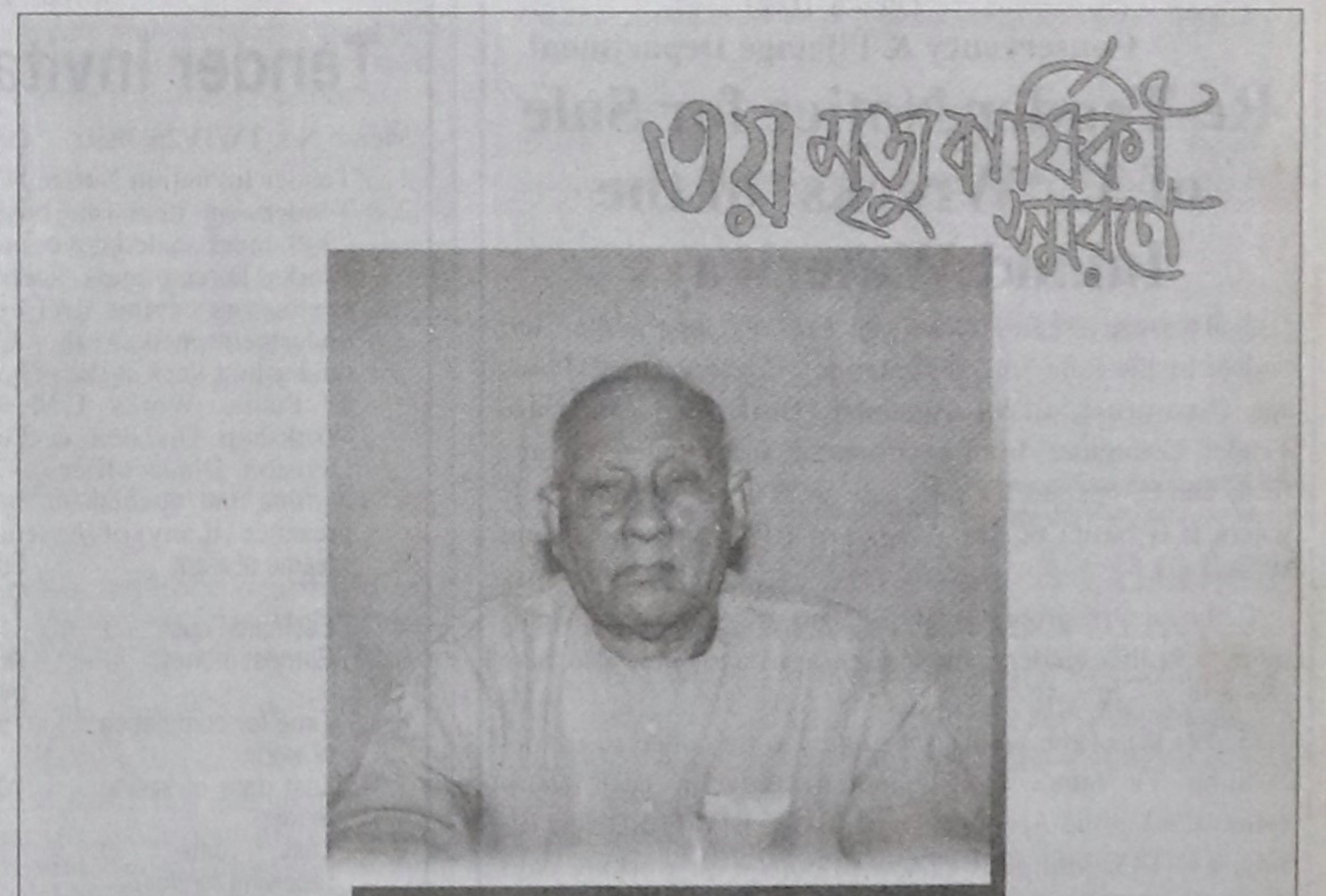
STAR REPORT

Delay in floating tender, court stay order and indecision of policymakers regarding preparation of the subscribers' monthly telephone bills have put the authorities of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) in a fix.

The BTTB did not float tender until December 20, last year. The tender was scheduled to open on January 4, just a few days ahead of the expiry of the contract with the Lith Enterprise Limited, a private bill-preparing firm, on January 31 this year, said sources.

In a mysterious move, the BTTB allegedly did not supply magnetic tapes to prepare the bills of January, despite repeated requests by the firm. When contacted, the BTTB officials could not specify the reason behind it.

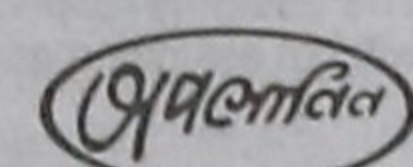
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বাংলাদেশের ঔষধশিল্প বিকাশে প্রথম বাঙালী শিল্পপতি অপসোনিন গ্রুপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ-এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা চেয়ারম্যান, আমাদের প্রাণপ্রিয় অভিভাবক মরহুম আবদুল খালেক খান-এর তৃতীয় মৃত্যুবার্ষিকী ৬ই এপ্রিল, ২০০১।

তার কঠোর পরিশ্রম, নিষ্ঠা, কর্মোদ্যম ও অধ্যবসায়-এর জন্য আজ অপসোনিন একটি শীর্ষস্থানীয় দেশীয় ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানে পরিণত হয়েছে। মরহমের সুদীর্ঘ সংগ্রামী কর্মময় জীবন আমাদের উত্তরণের পথনির্দেশ।

আমরা তার বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করি এবং পরম করুণাময় আল্লাহ তাকে যেন জান্নাতুল ফেরদৌস দান করেন- এই প্রার্থনা করি।



অপসোনিন গ্রুপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ -এর কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীবৃন্দ

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THURSDAY 5 APRIL 7pm—10pm SEMINAR & EXHIBITION
Scholarships & Financial Aid Information ONLY at 7pm SHARPIII

FRIDAY 6 APRIL 8am—11am INTERVIEWS & EXHIBITION

DHAKA SHERATON HOTEL, Ball Room