

DOWN TO EARTH

Efforts to Improve Slum Life in City

By ASM Nurunnabi

According to a recent survey, there are about 3 million people living in a total of 2,156 slums and squatter settlements in metropolitan Dhaka. Majority of the slum dwellers live at below poverty level. According to another survey conducted by the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) of Dhaka University, 35 per cent of slum dwellers live in unauthorised slums raised on government or semi-government land or on land owned by autonomous institutions while the remaining 65 per cent live on privately-owned lands. The common features of these slum areas are poor housing, poor sewerage and drainage, inadequate water, electricity and gas supply, insufficient or absence of street lighting.

Contrary to the conventional view, research derived from UNICEF-funded surveys of slums in some of our major cities has shown the slums to contain quite stable populations and they have about the same percentage of women as in the entire nation-nearly half.

Admittedly the cause of growth and expansion of slums in the city is the massive rural-urban migration during the last two or three decades. Migration of people caused by rural push and urban pull factors continued to increase and was concentrated especially in Dhaka city. According to available statistics, the most general and common causes of rural-urban migration include, among others, poverty in general and landlessness in particular. This trend is conspicuously influenced by the social and demographic mismatch. The natural growth of rural population contributes to the increasing size of labour force; as a consequence, land-man ratio goes down to an alarming level, the rate of unemployment soars as the agricultural sector is already filled up disallowing absorption of the new labour.

On the other hand, employment opportunities, relative security and other social developments in the city act as urban pull factors. The one way rural-urban traffic can be reduced to a tolerable limited provided the urban-rural disparity in resource allocation is bridged, as opined by knowledgeable circles. Concentration of population and the growth of spatial expansion of slums in Dhaka is said to reflect the absence of rural-urban linkage.

After consultations with experts, policy makers and public representatives, govern-

ment formulated and approved a National Housing Policy in December, 1993 which urged avoidance of forcible relocation or displacement of slum dwellers. Moreover, it stresses expansion of water supply, provision of sanitation and basic services through community development and participation of voluntary agencies.

The Third Five Year Plan included some funding for rehabilitation of slum dwellers and squatters, but it was felt that the need for their housing should principally be met by the private sector. The private sector is unlikely to meet the housing needs of the poor, since they are least able to pay. There are, however, some UNICEF-assisted projects targeted towards the underserved urban slums and peri-urban areas. The 'old' Dhaka Project (supported by the World Bank) plans to upgrade some of the largest slums in the city by including housing, community organising and other basic services. The UNDP-supported Mirpur project is a sites and services project for resettlement of squatters of the city. In the last few years, UNICEF had assisted the government in basic services projects in the city along with some district towns. This community-based Slum Improvement Project includes income generation for women, physical improvements and primary health care.

Some basic problems reportedly faced by nearly all the above projects are lack of resource and lack of policies related to providing land security or tenure to the urban poor. Without the latter, it is difficult to upgrade the slum environment.

As already noted, surveys show that almost half of the slum population consists of women. Most of them are illiterate, malnourished, deprived and dependent on their male relatives. According to observers, most of the NGOs of the country being concerned exclusively with rural women, the growing number of disadvantaged women in city slums areas have been completely overlooked.

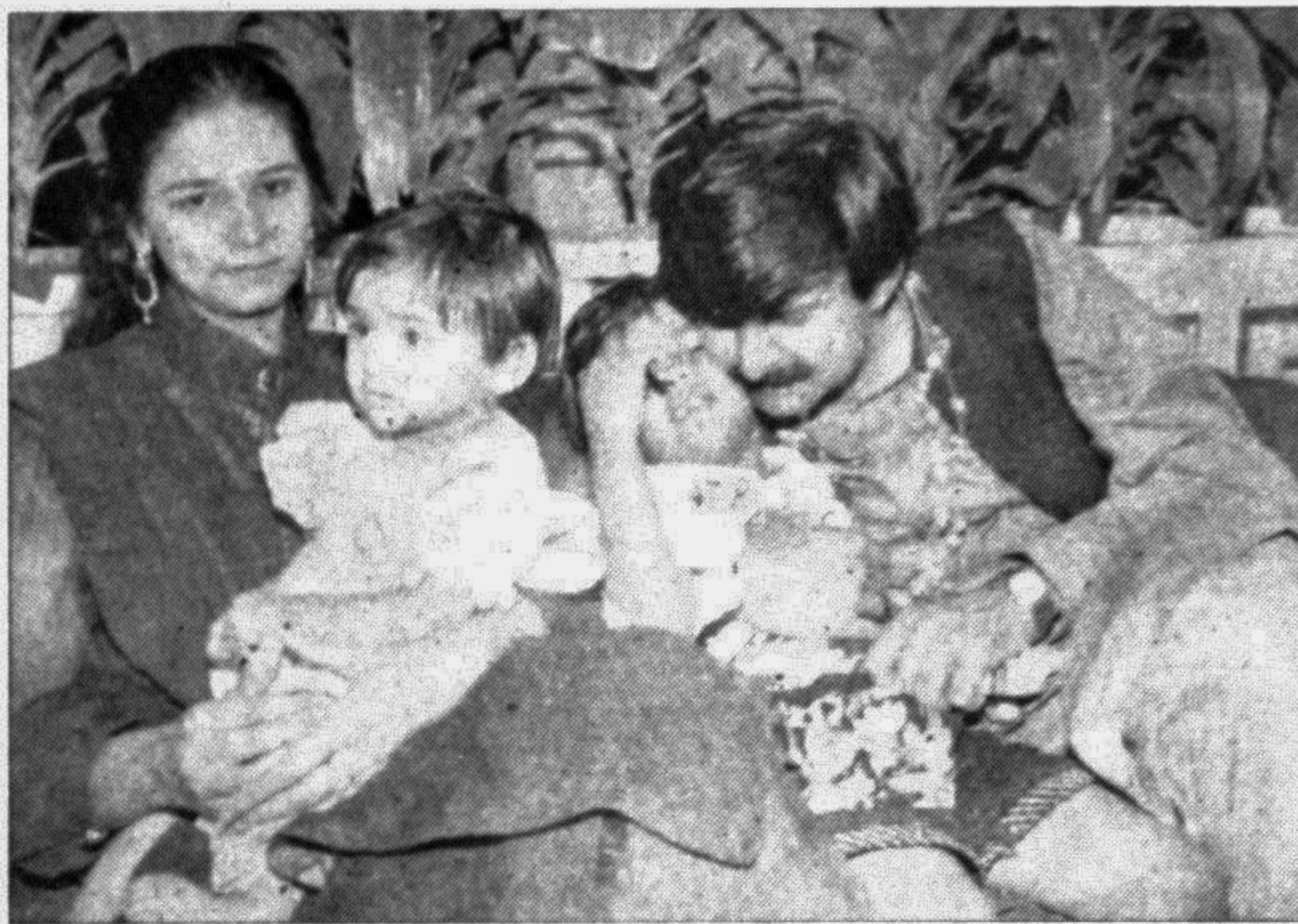
Lately notable work for women in slums is reportedly being done by one NGO named Shakti Foundation. It initiated its Urban Credit Programme (UCP) in 1992 for women in slums and squatters of Dhaka city. Through this programme, opportunity has been made available to these women

to use their potentials to be financially self-reliant and to gain access to a male dominated labour market. According to a news report, the credit programme, based on the Grameen Bank model and initially supported by Ford Foundation, has the objective of empowering slum women economically and socially. The credit programme offers a complete package providing credit for income generating activities, encouraging savings, providing training in skilled development and basic literacy and women's management, organisational and leadership skills so that they can control their own investment. With an existing project of 23 slums in Dhaka city, this NGO under the UCP programme has reportedly given the slum women the chance to make a better tomorrow.

This year Dhaka City Corporation has programmes to play a greater role in improving housing and self-employment opportunities for slum dwellers in certain specific areas. For this purpose it has made provision of Tk 50 lakh in its current year's budget as against provision of only Tk 10 lakh in the last year's budget. The UNICEF and other non-government organisations are also extending their help and co-operation in the implementation of the Corporation's present programme for slum improvement includes quite a good number of projects covering such locations as sweepers' colonies at War, Ganakuti, Hazaribagh. The slums near Mohammadpur Town Hall, Bank Colony near IG Gate, Khalgaon, Bagichabari, Baunia at Mirpur are also included in its improvement programme.

The implementing agencies, however, face certain problems which complicate their projects. For example, few slum dwellers own their houses or the land on which they stand. Thus any project which aims to improve infrastructure in the slums requires the co-operation of the landowners.

We have seen that development efforts aimed at the rural poor in the key sectors of health, education, population and community development have stressed not just the development of facilities and services, but also the creation of conditions under which they will be used. The condition of the slums today suggests that this type of approach is also needed in the city.



Ata Muhammad, a senior Pakistani administration official kisses his child upon his return to Islamabad airport, yesterday. Ata was kidnapped by Afghan warlord Mullah Abdul Salam last April from the Baluchistan province. Ata's wife is on the left with their daughter. — AFP photo

2000 bodies of Rwandans recovered from camps

MUNIGI, Zaire, July 22: Tens of thousands of Rwandans left the Zairean refugees' camps near Goma today to escape from a raging cholera epidemic now killing thousands of people, reports AFP.

The road from Goma airport to the nearby refugee camps in Kibumba and Munigi is littered

Ctg tense

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Supporters of the APSU on the other hand have announced a four day programme beginning today to make their July 26 meeting a success. Their programme includes a students' rally at the Dost Building premises tomorrow, wayside meetings and demonstrations at different places in the city on July 24 and a protest rally at the central Shaheed Minar here on July 25, APSU sources said.

Besides, APSU activists are planning to go for agitation in the port city to voice their protest against the arrival of Golam Azam here, sources said.

When contacted, police officials here said the situation is under observation. "We are watching things closely and taking proper measures," they said.

Taslina

From Page 1 Col 8

Asked if going against a Muslim regime will be detrimental to Oslo's diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, he said it will have no effect on the peace diplomacy. "We want a dialogue between the West and Muslim countries, even, fundamentalist ones, and we know we have to try harder to understand the views in other countries."

Bangladesh Ambassador Giasuddin Chowdhury stated that Taslima was not charged under any extreme Muslim law, as was being propagated in some sections of the western media. Action was taken against her, he added, according to a secular law enacted by the British colonial powers in 1891.

"The law must be applied and Taslima should come out of hiding to prove her innocence," he asserted.

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 5

League members to prepare a list of educational institutions where national anthem is not played.

Those who joined the Awami League include the union's Vice-President Moslehuddin Ahmad, Joint Secretary Abul Bashar, Assistant General Secretary Ansar Ali, Organising Secretary Hafizul Hasan, Publicity Secretary Khandker Shahidul Islam and Office Secretary Akhtar Hossain.

Yanong

From Page 1 Col 4

ing to set up talks with the Myanmar foreign minister for Monday although that may fall through because of scheduling problems. It would be the European grouping's first ministerial-level talks with Myanmar since its junta bloodily suppressed a pro-democracy movement in 1988.

"We are getting some signals that they are indeed interested in talking to the European side," von Pffetten said.

"I think we should press for more results from the Myanmar side. Probably this can best be achieved by pressing them on how much we want things to move, particularly with Aung San Suu Kyi," he said.

Of the Myanmar-UN talks, US ambassador to Thailand David Lambertson said: "I hope it... represents progress. One can only wait and see." He said he did not know of any US plans to talk with the junta.

4 get M A Khan gold medals

Four eminent personalities yesterday received M A Khan gold medal award 1992/93 for their outstanding contributions in the field of medical science and for service to humanity, reports UNB.

The recipients are: Dr FG Hudson Silva of Sri Lanka, founder of an eye bank, Dr Muhammad Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, Prof Sultan Ahmed Chowdhury, founder of Shishu Hospital, and a team of Doctors headed by Dr Hanif for identifying Di-Ethylene Glycol in Paracetamol syrup that causes acute renal failure in children.

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman distributed the award among them at a function at Hotel Sheraton yesterday evening.

Speaking on the occasion as chief guest, the Foreign Minister urged the affluent section of the society to come forward in serving the distressed humanity.

"There are many millionaires in the country, but a very few of them do really work for the people," said Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, who attended the function as special guest.

Referring to the contribution of Grameen Bank in the field of poverty alleviation, the health minister said the Bank's performance is better than all government machinery put together.

Four recipients of the award and Naval Chief Rear Admiral Mohammad Mohaiminul Islam also spoke in the function presided over by Gazi Shamsur Rahman.

Millat reporter killed in road mishap

By Staff Correspondent

Haris Mahmood, a staff reporter of a vernacular daily, died in an accident on the Laksam-Chandpur Road at Ratanpur in Comilla yesterday.

Haris was 30. A passenger bus hit an auto tempo by which Haris was going to his village home at Barura in the afternoon.

Fatally wounded, Haris was rushed to a local hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Haris was a crime reporter of the Daily Millat for the last five years.

The President and the General Secretary of the Crime Reporters' Association, Bangladesh (CRAB) has expressed their shock at the death of Haris. The CRAB will hold a condolence meeting at Hotel Metropolitan tomorrow.

Traffic jam

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shaw by Rob Gallagher, an English researcher who worked at the BUET, said that Dhaka's future in transport sector depended on the rickshaws — a contradiction to the popular notion that an estimated three lakh rickshaws are the main culprits behind Dhaka's traffic jams.

Gallagher said that rickshaws, which contributed 34 per cent of the total value added from the transport sector to the GDP, and public buses could cater to the enormous demand from the citizens.

Considering that Bangladesh is among the world's poorest nations, Dhaka's traffic growth over the years was topsy-turvy, he pointed out.

This meant that there were more cars on the roads than motorcycles and more motorcycles than bicycles, he commented quoting his study.

"This is absurd," the study said, because the number of the pedicab, affordable to most of the people, should have been more than any other form of transport.

The study recommended optimum land utilisation in the urban Dhaka, improved traffic management, vehicle restraint and priority to public transport and construction of more basement parking facilities.

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Christopher ends Mideast trip

DAMASCUS, July 22: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher met Friday with Syrian President Hafez Assad in an effort to revive the long-stalled Syrian-Israeli peace talks, reports AP.

Christopher then left for home soon to return to the Middle East to continue his shuttle diplomacy.

The Midnight File

German parliament okays military missions for Bosnia

BONN, July 22: A special session of Parliament Friday approved strengthened sea and air patrols in the Balkans, applying for the first time a court ruling that allows German troops to join allies fighting overseas. A 424-48 vote, carried by the government and the main opposition party, gave German ships in the Adriatic the right to challenge, fire across the bow or board ships to enforce an embargo against Serb-led Yugoslavia, reports AP.

Pakistan violating code for diplomats: India

NEW DELHI, July 22: India accused Pakistan on Friday of violating the code for treating its diplomats and called for talks between the two countries to halt deteriorating relations. In the last one week, both nations have each expelled officials after accusing them of spying. They have also alleged that diplomats have been beaten and seriously injured. The incidents have further worsened ties between the arch enemies, which have fought three wars, reports AP.

Earth-bound space rocks

From Page 1 Col 4

The cost of doing such a sky survey has been estimated unofficially at 50 million US dollar. The amendment orders the NASA administrator to submit a plan, including costs, by next February 1.

Although the Jupiter experience was an incentive, the House science committee had talked about this ever-present danger before. With good reason.

On March 23, 1989, a 320-meter diameter asteroid missed the Earth by only six hours. Astronomers did not see it until it passed.

"Astronomers tell us that each day, an asteroid the size of a house passes within the distance between the Earth and the moon," Hail said. "Each month, one the size of a football field passes within that distance."

The amendment would enlist the help of the Defence Department and some of its super-secret satellites, and other nations in the cataloguing task.

Last year, NASA aircraft sampling in higher altitudes determined that a large celestial object had plunged into the Pacific earlier. It turned out that Defence had known for months that a strike had occurred in the atmosphere but failed to tell the space agency long after tell-tale clouds had dissipated.

Now the US Space Command has volunteered to work with the scientific community.

So far, scientists have found only 100 objects in an orbit Bomb explodes near Kazi Shahed's house

By Staff Correspondent

A home-made bomb exploded near the house of Kazi Shahed Ahmed, owner-editor of the Daily Ajker Kagoj, at Road No 2A, Dhanmondi, in the city last night.

Some unidentified men hurled the device at about 8:45 pm and fled. There was no casualty.

Dhanmondi police rushed to the spot and recovered splinters of the cracker. None was arrested.

A press release issued by the newspaper said cracker was hurled at the editor. Some unidentified men hurled crackers at the Ajker Kagoj office last year, the press release added.

Fragment W, the last piece of comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, collided with Jupiter a little after 0800 GMT Friday, according to Hien Nguyen and Joe Spang, who observed the impact through the University of Chicago's infrared telescope at the South Pole.

The impact of fragment W was slightly less bright than that of the largest fragments, the two astronomers said in computer messages responding to questions.

A day earlier, the comet hit the giant planet with a cluster bomb — four fragments that smashed in at nearly the same point over a 20-hour period.

Fragments Q1, Q2, R and S all exploded within about 100 kms of each other, said Mordacal-Mark Mac Low, a University of Chicago astronomer.

Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 was discovered in March 1993. Shoemaker said the original comet was about 10 kms across and probably weighed about 500 billion tons. The pieces all smashed into Jupiter at about 210,000 kph.

Nepali leftists call 3-day strike next week

KATHMANDU, July 22: Nepal's Communist-led opposition groups called for a three-day nationwide strike next week to try to dislodge the caretaker government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, their leaders said today, reports Reuters.

The main opposition Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) group said the walkout planned from Sunday sought Koirala's ouster even before the parliamentary elections called by King Birendra for later this year.

At least eight Nepali leftists were injured on Wednesday when riot police teargassed 20,000 demonstrators opposed to the Koirala government near the royal palace in the capital.

"Wednesday's strike has proved that the public opinion is in favour of replacement of Koirala government by an all-party ministry" a UML statement said.

It said the protest would also target the King, who asked Koirala to stay on as caretaker Prime Minister until the early elections, scheduled for November 13.

The opposition parties resent the King's keeping Koirala

Ashari Purnima celebrated

The Buddhist community celebrated the Ashari Purnima throughout the country today commemorating the three memorable incidents in the life of Gautam Buddha, reports BSS.

The Buddhist monks started their three-month long seclusion inside the monasteries from today.

The community celebrated the Purnima holding day-long programmes including hoisting of the national and religious flags, probhat ferry, Buddha puja, pindan, shilarahan, religious congregation, pradwip puja and special prayers for world peace.

Housewife killed in Savar

From Our Correspondent

SAVAR, July 22: A young housewife was allegedly killed by her husband, at a village here last night.

Police say Rai Kumari Das, 22, was killed when her husband tortured her, poured kerosene, all over her body and set her on fire at Rishipara village under Savar thana reportedly for her failure to pay the promised dowry.

Rai Kumari's father promised to give taka one lakh as dowry out of which taka 10,000 was given at the time of the marriage, they said.

The husband had been pressuring Rai Kumari and occasionally beating her for the dowry, police said.

Police arrested the husband, Rai Kumari's brother-in-law and the father-in-law.

Muktijoddha Sangsad election schedule

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad has announced its election schedule.

Elections to the Central Command Council of the organisation will be held on December 3, in unions, wards and thanas on September 5 and in the districts on October 15.

"For the first time, the organisation is going to form its committees through secret ballots," said Major (ret'd) Syed Munibur Rahman at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Among others, the press conference was attended by Abu Sayed Khan, Kabir Hossain Bhuiyan, M A Aziz (Bir Protik), Rezaul Ahmed, Major (ret'd) Ahsanullah and Kabir Ahmed Khan.

The chief patron of the organisation, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has appointed Habibur Rahman, Secretary, Establishment Ministry, as the chief election commissioner, Munibur Rahman said.

The election commission would include five other members who are yet to be named, he added.

Bid to kidnap JU students

From Our Correspondent

SAVAR, July 22: Jahangirnagar University students tonight foiled an attempt to kidnap fellow students on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

Sources said, three JU students — two females and a male — while returning to the campus by a minibus got down from the vehicle after its engine broke down near Boliarpur.

When all other passengers had left the area, a group of people arrived by a boat and tried to snatch one of the girls.

A JU shuttle bus while passing by the area stopped and the passengers rescued the besieged students after a brief scuffle.

Housewife mugged

By Staff Correspondent

Muggers snatched a gold chain and bangles from Jahana Islam Khan, wife of a retired government official, at Road No. 8-A, Dhanmondi in broad day light yesterday.

Two muggers riding a motorbike waylaid Jahana and her husband, Nurul Islam Khan around noon when they were returning home by a rickshaw and snatched the ornaments valued at Tk 15,000 at gunpoint.

"One of the muggers held a sharp weapon at my abdomen while the other pointed a pistol forcing me to give them my ornaments," Jahana told The Daily Star.

The muggers aged between 20 and 25 fled immediately, she said.

ATTENTION BGMEA MEMBERS

BANGLADESH GARMENT MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION

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Ref: **July 01, 1994**
To : All Members of the BGMEA.

NOTICE

An Extra Ordinary General Meeting of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association will be held on 23-07-94 (Saturday) at 4:00 PM at Sonargaon Hotel, Ball Room, Dhaka.

You are requested to kindly make it convenient to attend the meeting on the above date and time.

Agenda :

1. Recitation from the Holy Quran.
2. Consideration of the proposal for suitable amendment of the Articles of Association of BGMEA to provide punitive measures in case of employment of any Child Labour by any member unit of BGMEA after 31-10-94 and other amendments necessary in the light of the changed circumstances.
3. Making provision in the Articles of Association of BGMEA for inclusion of Buying Houses as Associate Members of the BGMEA.
4. To incorporate changes in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the BGMEA as required by new Trade Organisation Ordinance.
5. Miscellaneous.

By order of the Executive Committee

Faruque Ahmed
Secretary

Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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