

Only 723 corneas donated for transplant in 10 yrs

By Staff Correspondent

Nine-year-old Babul only recently had his first glimpse of the beautiful world.

Babul was born blind. After long years, he received a cornea transplant, courtesy of a donor and a local eye transplant society.

Few are so lucky. More than a million people in this country, out of a total population of almost 120 million, are visually impaired and another forty thousand are added every year.

However, half of those who are either born blind or become so later due to disease or accidents, may easily regain their sights through a simple operation involving corneal grafting.

Although Bangladesh has the technical means and expertise to carry out such operations, due to lack of cornea, only 50 to 70 transplants are performed every year.

Only 723 corneas were made available for transplant during the last ten years. Of those, thirty were donated and the rest were taken from unclaimed bodies at different medical college hospitals.

The facts were disclosed by Sandhani National Eye Donation Society at a press conference in the city on Thursday, held on the eve of its fourth national biennial conference. Little Babul and his mother were present on the press conference.

"Since Sandhani's inception in 1984, we have successfully performed 662 corneal grafts," said Dr A H Syedur Rahman, a senior consultant at BIRDEM.

"On an average, 250 patients requiring cornea transplant register with us annually. Unfortunately, we can acquire only 50 to 70 corneas per year, although 24,448 persons are enrolled with us as potential donors," he added.

When asked why so few corneas were actually available, Dr Rahman said: "The majority of those who have

pledged their eyes to us after death, are still young. Besides, because of prejudices, when a registered donor passes away, his relatives often fail to contact us or in some cases, refuse us permission to remove the eyes."

In spite of a 1975 eye-transplant law, under which persons failing to comply with the wishes of a potential donor are liable to imprisonment of up to six months, little can be done without the cooperation of relatives, the conference was told.

The law has never been implemented.

The eyeball, from which the cornea is taken, has to be removed within six hours of death. It can then be preserved for up to a week, but the transplant is more successful if carried out within 72 hours, according to a medical expert.

Sandhani Eye Donation Society's long term projects include establishment of a national eye bank. "We have asked the government and NGOs to help us set up a modern eye bank, and the response so far has been encouraging," Dr Rahman said.

Every year, about 40,000 people, mostly impoverished children, become blind due to malnutrition and curable diseases like measles or even diarrhoea. And still a large number of others, are blinded in preventable household accidents like rice husks entering the eye or lashing by a cow's tail.

"Such blindnesses can be easily prevented through education and simple medicines. But we lack the resources to spread the message."

The press conference was addressed by Ruhul A Mazumder and Dr Tariq R Ali, president and secretary general respectively of the Sandhani Dr Sharfuddin Ahmed, assistant professor, Dhaka, Medical College and Amanullah Khan, Chairman, UNB.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a meeting of the Army Selection Board at Sena Sadar yesterday. Chief of Army Staff Lt General Abu Saleh Mohammad Nasim sitting on her left. —PID photo

4-party alliance for Afghan peace

ISLAMABAD, Sept 23: Four parties in Afghanistan have formed a grand alliance in a bid to establish peace in the country and to resolve internal affairs through mutual consultation and consent, said an Afghan leader, reports Xinhua.

Local reports today quoted Abdul Hussain Maqsood, member of the central committee of Hezb-i-Wahdat, as saying Friday that the alliance was formed by Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar group), Hezb-i-Wahdat led by Muhammad Khalil, Jambashi-Milli of Rashid Dostum and Juba Nijat Milli.

On his arrival in Quetta of Pakistan, he said the alliance should be headed by former interim President Mujaddidi.

He said he had briefed UN special envoy Mahmud Mestiri on the stand of the alliance, which was formed in Quetta recently.

Mostaque hospitalised

Democratic League leader Khandoker Mostaque Ahmed has been admitted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) with serious ailment, reports UNB.

A party press release said yesterday he is under treatment at the intensive care unit of the hospital.

PM on political solution

From Page 1

A large number of foreign investors had already invested huge amounts which would help the economy become robust, creating employment opportunities and thereby ensuring uplift of the country. "Keep involvement with the sheaf of paddy (BNP's election symbol) and continue your support to the BNP and we will make the country self-reliant in every field within the next five years," she said.

Without naming any parties, the Prime Minister blasted two Opposition parties who were engaged in managing wealth keeping the economy weak and people uneducated and poor during their rule.

"If you stay beside us, we will try to solve all your problems," she said. "People want development for which an elected government is needed. If an elected government exists, welfare of the people and development of the nation take place."

Making a dig at the Awami League, without naming it, Begum Zia said a party was now talking of democracy, right to vote and food. But none of these rights were ensured during its rule, she added.

"And, as they are again talking about the rights of franchise and food and

PM tells army officers Maintain high standard of efficiency

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has asked senior army officers to maintain high standard of professional efficiency of the Bangladesh army to further enhance its image at home and abroad, reports UNB.

Continuous training, exercise and hardwork are needed for this purpose, she said addressing the Army Headquarters Selection Board-1995 which began its three-day meeting at the Sena Sadar yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the armed forces were entrusted with the onerous responsibility of preserving the country's independence and sovereignty. To perform this great responsibility, the members of the army and other defence services should be efficient, hardworking and honest.

"Our armed forces have earned admiration of all at home and abroad by their professional efficiency and integrity. Their performance in the UN peacekeeping operations in different areas of the world created a bright image of Bangladesh in the international arena," she said.

"Our army officers are well-trained and well-disciplined," Begum Zia said and called for building such well-trained officers in the Army in future to maintain its reputation.

Mobilise people for rally, Hasina asks partymen

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the leaders and workers of the party to mobilise people for the September 28 grand rally in the city.

"To make the programme a success, you all start preparing yourselves," said Hasina while addressing a meeting of the party leaders of Dhaka and adjoining districts.

She also urged the bus-truck owners to cooperate in this regard.

Hasina said the government is hatching a conspiracy to foil the grand rally. As part of it, ruling party's Mirza Abbas (Juba Dal chief), who was expelled from the transport owners' association, has called a transport strike to create chaos and anarchy," according to party press release.

Presidents and general secretaries of AL units of Dhaka city, and Gazipur, Narsingdi, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Tangail, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Comilla-north and Manikganj districts attended the meeting.

Mohila AL meet
UNB adds: Addressing an extended meeting of Mohila Awami League yesterday, Hasina said that her party waged the current movement to establish the voting rights of the people.

Power tariff
From Page 1

generating capacity and routine load shedding, the donors found that the collection-generation ratio has improved to 62 per cent, two per cent above the target for 1995, and up from 54.3 per cent recorded during fiscal year 1994.

The state-owned Power Development Board (PDB) is responsible for all generation of an average 2100 MW and bulk transmission in the country. The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) accounts for 50 per cent of PDB's total sales.

While rural electric cooperatives (Palli Bidyut Samities or PBSs) that operate under the aegis of Rural Electrification Board (REB) accounts for about 12 per cent and PDB's direct consumer outside Dhaka for about 38 per cent.

The Midnight File

PLO, Israel on verge of agreement

TABA, Egypt, Sept 23: Israel and the PLO, saying they were on the verge of an agreement on expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank, resumed marathon talks today witnesses said. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO chief Yasser Arafat went into a meeting in the Egyptian Taba resort which both sides said could lead to an accord within several hours, reports Reuters.

50pc surcharge

From Page 1
have also been told verbally by the representatives of the Shipping Agents Association at a recent meeting on congestion.

Earlier, the shipping lines and feeder vessel operators imposed congestion surcharge from July this year at the rate of 50 US dollars per 20 feet container and 100 US dollars per 40 feet container.

The acting chairman attributed the congestion to rapid increase in traffic volume through Chittagong Port with the rise of trading activities.

Beaten to death

From Page 1
An unnatural death (UD) case was lodged with the Mohammadpur police station. Police sent the bodies to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

In another incident, two young men received bullet injuries when two groups of musclemen clashed near Jurain Bazar at about 6 pm yesterday.

Humayun Kabir, 30 publicity secretary of the local Jubo League, was admitted to the DMCH while Mahboob, 22, a first year student of the Government Tolaram College, was released from the DMCH after first aid.

In a separate incident, one Abdul Mannan, 40, and his teenage daughter, Minara, were injured when some youths opened fire on them at Jurain yesterday afternoon.

They were admitted to the DMCH.

Nari Samaj

From Page 1
The processionists on their way to the Jatiya Press Club chanted slogans against "repression on women, police brutality and failure of the administration in Dinajpur."

They shouted: "Why do Yasmins die, Khaleda Zia must answer. We want removal of the Home Minister, Stop police repression on women."

Police closely guarded the procession. Near the Jatiya Press Club, where the march came to an end, Rokeya Kabir of the Nari Pragati Sangha, addressed the rally. She said that the struggle would continue until total victory was achieved against any kind of repression.

The organisers of the procession declared several action programmes over the next few weeks. Two representatives from every organisation would assemble near the Jatiya Press Club at 9:30 am today and would march to different points in the city with black flags and hoist one at the police headquarters.

On October 8, rallies, organised by the Nari Samaj, would be held in every district.

9358 vehicles

From Page 1
According to law, the vehicles bought for implementation of development projects have to be returned to the Directorate of Government Transport within three weeks after the project is completed.

The report said the officials concerned showed reluctance in returning the vehicles despite repeated reminders by the Establishment Ministry and Planning Commission, and Directorate of Government Transport.

They are using the cars in the name of the projects which had already been declared completed long ago, sources alleged.

The implementation, monitoring and evaluation division of the Planning Ministry prepared the report as per a decision of the National Economic Council (NEC).

A total of 481 development projects under different ministries were to be completed during the period, but 307 projects were completed.

In all 9426 vehicles were allocated for the projects. Of those 68 vehicles have been out of use by now.

The vehicles which were not returned are: 276 wheeler (jeep), 32 private cars, 12 mini buses, 45 micro-buses, 15 trucks, 74 pick ups, 10 tractors, 3,432 motor cycles, 5420 bicycles, 4 water carriers, 18 speed boats, 3 engine boats, 5 trawlers, 4 ambulances and 1 station wagon.

Transport strike in 18 inter-district routes called off

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Sept 23: The transport strike in 18 inter-district routes of the south and south-western zones was called off today.

The strike enforced from yesterday following the killing of a transport worker here, was withdrawn after a meeting of the rival of transport workers with the Deputy Commissioner today.

Minister for Posts, Telephone and Telegraph Tariqul Islam was present at the meeting.

The Representatives of the Bangladesh Paribahan Sangstha and the Jessore Motor Workers Association attended the meeting.

Munir, 35, a member of Bangladesh Paribahan Sangstha, was stabbed to death allegedly by supporters of the Motor Workers Association at the Majura Bus Stand yesterday morning.

Eye damage

From Page 1
same name who was supposed to undergo the dacryocystitis operation.

In hospital documents, available to this correspondent, it was written, "patient is mislabeled as the name of the two patients are the same."

AKC-MSC

From Page 1
equal number of defeats while the remaining 15 matches ended in a draw.

But today's clash offers a different meaning to both Mohammedans and Abahani. A win for Mohammedans will enable them to complete an unprecedented treble in the domestic soccer history. The black and whites had won both the DMFA and Federation Cup early this year.

While defending champions Abahani, who are at par atop the point-table with Mohammedans, both have collected 39 points from 16 outings, left with the only option to win the match in defence of their lone title.

Sick detainees

From Page 1

on charges of forging Malaysian visa. Besides, cases were filed against 12 travel agencies and 30 people from March to August this year.

The meeting was further informed that on a government request, the Malaysian government has assured to install one pay-phone in each detention camp so that the detainees could contact their employers, the High Commission and relatives.

The meeting was told that the Malaysian government had also assured Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman during his recent visit to Kuala Lumpur that it would sympathetically consider his request for release of and legitimising the detained Bangladeshis.

The Malaysian government also assured to consider allowing a Bangladesh bank to open its branch in Malaysia.

Bosnian troops find mass grave with 540 bodies

ZAGREB, Sept 23: Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said today Bosnian forces had found a three-year-old mass grave containing 540 bodies in territory recaptured a week ago from the Bosnian Serbs.

"Serb terrorists killed the Bosnians of the town of Kljuc and buried them in a mass grave — that is genocide," he said in an interview with Reuters.

RU forms body to probe irregularities in mark sheets

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Sept 23: The Rajshahi University authorities have formed a three-member committee, headed by Prof Azharul Islam to investigate the alleged irregularities in the mark sheets of the degree (Pass) examinations of the session 1992-93.

Sources said some mark sheets were found with overwriting and exaggerated marks were put after rubbing the original marks.

The examinations were held in December last year.

BNP working on plans

From Page 1

When his attention was drawn to press reports that BNP was working out a formula for an interim government providing for a 10 member mini-cabinet, headed by a senior treasury bench member of Parliament, Salam Talukdar said he was ignorant of any such plan.

Talukdar said that there were provisions in many countries to have 'interim government' for conducting elections. "But I do not know whether there is any provision for caretaker government," he said.

About the Prime Minister's offer to resign 30 days ahead of the next elections, Talukdar said the Constitution does not bar anybody if he or she is reluctant to continue as Prime Minister.

He reiterated that they were ready to accommodate any proposal within the frame of the Constitution. "We are still open to dialogue with the Opposition," he said.

Zillur Rahman, General Secretary of Awami League, told The Daily Star yesterday that they were still "waiting to hear a concrete proposal" from the ruling party. He, however, said they would mobilise "hundreds of thou-

sands of people," in the city on September 28 to create pressure on the government.

Anwar Hossain Manju, Secretary General of Jatiya Party, when contacted, said they would not accept anything other than a caretaker government headed by the Chief Justice for holding the election.

Matiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami, said, "We will see what we can do after receiving a concrete proposal." He, however, said it would have been easier if the ruling party had accepted the concept of caretaker government in principle.

Medical admission

From Page 1
pre-admission coaching to prospective medical students, are also in great trouble. A group of students recently ransacked several coaching centres in the city after the management of the centres refused to refund the fees paid earlier.

Meanwhile, authorities of the Dhaka University have already decided to continue the admission test system.

Flash floods in Assam

GUWAHATI, Assam, Sept 23: Flash floods have been reported in different parts of Assam following incessant rains during the last two days, raising the water level of the river Brahmaputra all along its 800-km course, from Sadiya to Dhubri, reports PTI.

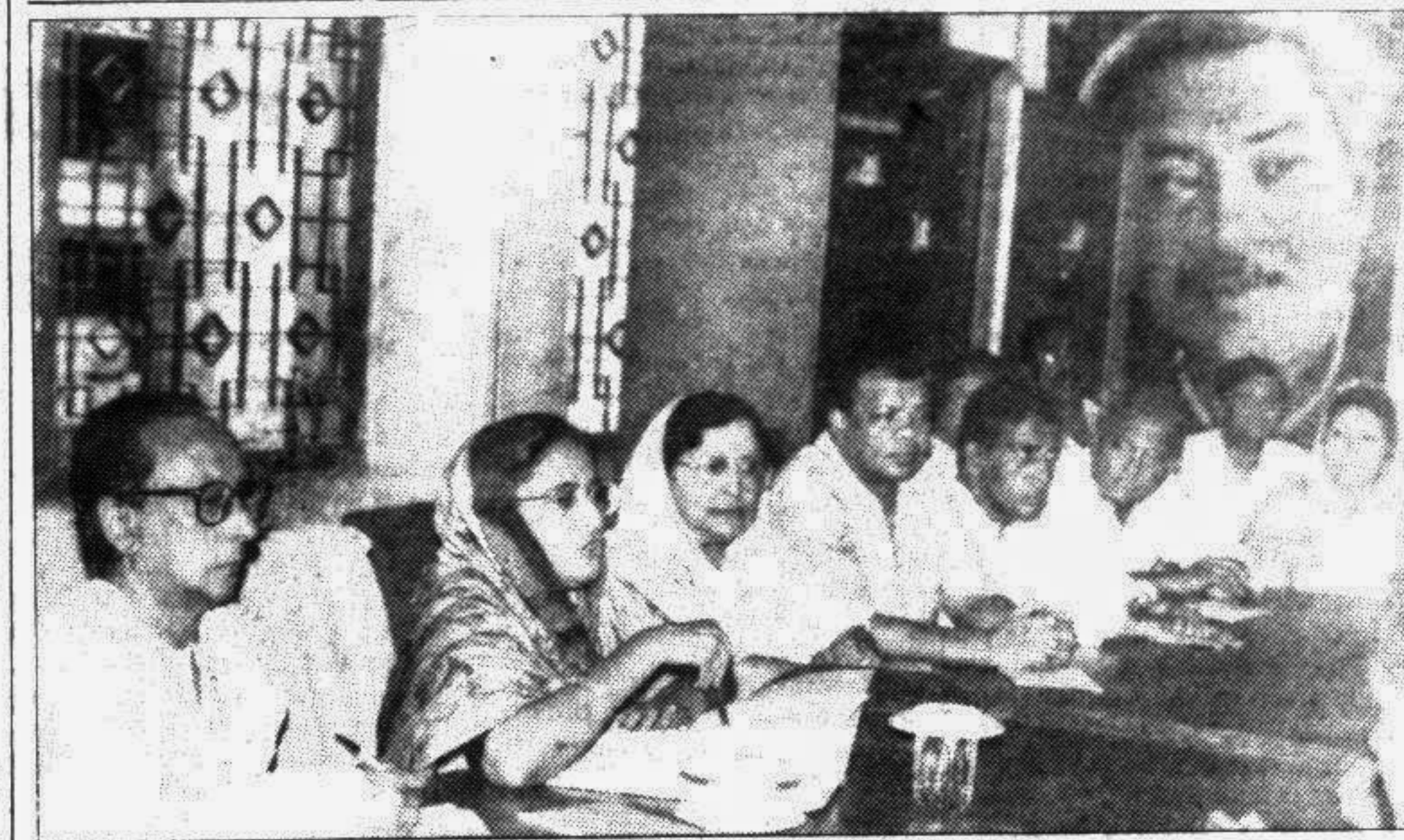
Meet with EC

From Page 1
did nothing about our suggestions which we gave earlier," Zillur Rahman, general secretary of the Awami League told The Daily Star last night.

He further said it is meaningless to attend the meeting if the EC does not accept the proposal.

Jatiya Party secretary general Anwar Hossain Manju said the question of attending the Election Commission meeting does not arise. "It has no credibility and we will not take part in any election."

Matiur Rahman Nizami, secretary general, Jamaat-e-Islami, said although the matter is yet to be discussed at the party level, the possibility of attending the meeting is bleak.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addressing party leaders of Dhaka City and adjoining districts at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue office yesterday while reviewing preparations for the 'grand rally' in the city on September 28. —Star photo

Hasina urges foreign states

From Page 1

In reply to a question, she said: "It would not be wise to enter into any agreement, negotiation or transaction with this illegal government ... I don't think next democratic government will bear the liabilities of this illegal regime."

Asked whether the Awami League, if returned to power, would honour accords signed by the present government, she said state-to-state agreements had to be honoured. Certain agreements may be considered in light of their merits and the existing situation. As a matter of fact this government has no legal rights to sign any agreement, she said.

Hasina, who recently proposed a caretaker government headed by the Chief Justice, said the Prime Minister should immediately resign so that the general elections could be held within 90 days under a neutral caretaker government.

"This is the only practical way to resolve the crisis and restore political stability," she said. "The political crisis in Bangladesh has entered a new and dangerous phase" with the BNP government leading the country towards confrontation ignoring people's demand for a caretaker government.

Making an offer for resolving the political crisis through negotiation, Hasina said once the principle of holding the general elections under a neutral, non-partisan caretaker government is accepted, a negotiated settlement of all other outstanding issues would be possible.

In reply to a question, the Awami League chief said her party stood for peaceful, negotiated settlement of all political problems.

"If the government continues to ignore the demand, the people will be left with no choice but to further intensify their peaceful agitation," she said.

Hasina replied in the negative when asked if she feared any intervention by the 'third force' due to pre-

sent political unrest. "If people and the press remain conscious, I don't see any such possibility."

Asked whether the Opposition would resist elections if the government goes for it sidetracking the demand for a caretaker government, Hasina said: "I cannot ask the voters to go to the polling booths when I cannot ensure their safety."

She alleged killing, raping and violence during the past elections under the BNP government, particularly the Magura by-election and Lalbagh massacre after the mayoral elections.

Replying to a question about the difference between the agitations of 1990 and 1995, Hasina said she did not find any difference as both the regimes were using same language and following same action and behaviour.

Asked about the impact of hartal on the economy, she said the Opposition had not staged any hartal in last one year, but there was no improvement in investment, production or employment.

Hasina also responded to questions on her party policy on economy and rights of women.

She was flanked by Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman and her political adviser SAMS Kibria. Party leaders Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Mozaffar Hossain Paltu were present.

Earlier, OCBAB President Golam Tahoor delivered address of welcome while acting Secretary General Enamul Haq Chowdhury gave vote of thanks.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motiheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1206. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.