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The Daily Star organised a discussion meeting on "State of Women's Movement in SAARC Countries" at a city hotel yesterday.

## Women's representation

From page 1  
Nepalese parliament said that all the clauses of CEDAW were ratified by Nepalese parliament but without implementation.

Rokshana Mashadi, a Pakistani freelance journalist said that although all political parties had women's wings, women were reluctant to join them because of the cynicism about political parties that those are corrupt institutions.

"Women in high positions in Pakistan come from elite families who consider women's issues as peripheral. Years of martial law has had a backlash on women," she added.

She also said that the penal code often victimised the woman victim, particularly in rape cases where the rape victim is jailed, if she failed to produce evidence.

Jezima Ismail, a Sri Lankan educationist, said that women's movement as such do not exist now and the CEDAW was ratified only recently.

Ramini Muhehumegama, a Sri Lankan lawyer, said that there existed several discriminatory laws including laws of citizenship in her country. "We have a national women committee, but it has no statutory rights," she added.

Both the Sri Lankans opposed the idea of quota reservation as it marginalises and "shunts women in one corner."

Rouf Hakim, a male parliament member of Sri Lanka

who was present in the discussions said, "Women movement in Sri Lanka do not want reservations and quotas. They want to rise on their own merits."

Sigma Huda said that citizenship law in Bangladesh is totally biased against women. "Women MPs on reserved seats have allegiance to parties, not the constituencies. I favoured that women MPs should be directly elected. We are working to establish a uniform family code in Bangladesh based on equality of men and women."

Salma Khan, an executive member of CEDAW committee, said that some Muslim countries like Iraq and Tunisia have enacted progressive laws on the basis of Islam. "Quota should not be seen as a favour. Rather, it should be seen as a lawful means to ensure parity," she added.

Naila Khan, an activist of Samilitto Nari Samaj, said that women's issues are marginalised in the Parliament and there is lack of political will when it comes to women's place.

Shirin Huq, a member of Naripokkho, said the voices of the vast multitude of women will not be heard unless adequate representation of women in local bodies is ensured.

Humaira Islam, executive director of the Shakti Foundation, suggested for evolving strategy for ensuring much more participation of

grassroots level women in decision making.

Shaeen Anam, a writer on women's issues, said though domestic violence is endemic in all strata of society, least is talked about it.

Rokeya Rahman, President of Women Employers Association, said banks, particularly in urban areas, are reluctant to give loans to women as they consider women entrepreneurs as high risk clients though the village women have proved them to be credit worthy.

Rasheda Chowdhury, Director of ADAB, stressed the need for coordination between the city-based élite women movement and the silent emergence of the women movement in the grassroots level.

Helen Rahman, an NGO leader, said that the high turnout of women voters in the recent elections prove that a quite revolution is taking place.

Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, said if a women vote bank can be established, the political parties will be compelled to take women's issues more seriously.

Emphasising a greater role for the print and electronic media, the Daily Star Editor said that the television, in particular, is causing serious damage to the women's concerns by portraying women in stereotypical images.

**Nari Samaj urges govt to help rescue Kalpanath Chakma**

By Staff Correspondent

The Samilitto Nari Samaj has expressed deep outrage at the kidnapping of Kalpanath Chakma, a student and central committee member of the Hill Women Federation.

Kalpanath Chakma was kidnapped in Rangamati in the early hours of June 12 by plain-clothes people suspected to be members of security forces.

Her kidnapping has been confirmed by various women organisations and reported in several newspapers, said a statement of Nari Samaj.

Nari Samaj has demanded immediate release of Kalpanath Chakma and punishment of the kidnappers. It has urged the caretaker government to take immediate action in the matter.

Later, Hasina went round different sections of the Press Club and had light refreshments with newsmen.

**Maoists kill 3 policemen in Bihar**

**NEW DELHI**, June 15: Maoist guerrillas fired rockets for the first time late Friday to destroy two police stations in eastern India, killing three policemen and losing seven of their men, police said today. reports AFP.

Some 1,000 activists of the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) simultaneously attacked the outlying stations in the state of Bihar with rockets, petrol bombs and automatic weapons, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

Three members of the Bihar Military Police (BMP) were killed instantly in the daring attack. The outnumbered police fired back at the Maoists, killing at least seven of them, officials were quoted as saying.

The raid destroyed both police stations at Malwari and Pandavpura in Palamu district of Bihar, India's most lawless state.

It was the first time Maoist guerrillas, known in India as Naxalites, used rockets against security forces. PTI said Bihar authorities had alerted all the police stations in the region against further attacks.

Hasina invited questions and suggestions from the journalists present.

Replies to a question she said, "I am for establishing rule of law in the country. The illegal arms recovery drive will continue. A sub-committee of Awami League is being formed to work out ways and means to root out terrorism."

She further said that there

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## The Daily Star

### Syria masses troops near border with Turkey

BEIRUT, June 15: Syria has massed troops near the border with Turkey following reports that Ankara was behind four blasts that rocked the country in recent weeks, Al-Hayat daily reported today, says AFP.

"Syria moved around 40,000 soldiers to border areas with Turkey," said the London-based Saudi daily, which is published in Beirut and PKK which is waging a violent campaign against Ankara for an independent Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey.

Travellers arriving in Damascus from the Turkish-Syrian border spoke of tension there as well as gunfire from the Turkish side which "seems to be on a permanent state of alert," Al-Hayat said.

The travellers also reported Syrian troop reinforcements "for the first time" in areas near the border, it added.

The US State Department said earlier this month that several non-accidental blasts took place in Syria in May. Damascus dismissed the reports, which it said had been traced to Turkish journalists amid cool ties between the two countries over an Israeli-Turkish military accord.

Al-Hayat said one of four blasts — none of which caused casualties — was a booby-

trapped car which exploded in the Bassatin region just outside Damascus near the home of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

"It occurred on May 6. It was a powerful blast which was heard across Damascus," the newspaper said, quoting a source close to the outlawed PKK which is waging a violent campaign against Ankara for an independent Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey.

Syrian security forces who rushed to the scene found another booby-trapped car that had failed to explode," the source said.

A second, smaller bomb exploded a few days later in the central Damascus square of Marjeh in an empty construction plot.

Last week the British daily quoted senior Arab political sources, said Assad, who has a summer home in Latakia, was the target of a bomb attack in Damascus.

Diplomatic sources told Al-Hayat that Syrian security forces arrested 80 members of the small ethnic Turkman community, mainly in Latakia, following the blasts.

### Storm kills 87 in India

HYDERABAD, India, June 15: India's south-eastern coast braced for the full force of a powerful tropical cyclone today after torrential rains whipped up by the storm killed at least 87 people, reports Reuter.

The cyclone, swelling in the Bay of Bengal, was heading towards the state of Andhra Pradesh where at least 30 people have died in heavy rains with winds of up to 100 km (60 miles) an hour.

Meteorological experts said the storm was expected to strike the south-eastern coast between Machilipatnam and Visakhapatnam towns by this evening.

Strong waves at least a metre higher than normal were likely to inundate the low-lying areas of the southern part of Andhra Pradesh which home to nearly 25 million people, mostly poor farmers and fishermen.

The area, across the sub-

Farakka issue can be resolved with new govt, says

**Indian Express**

NEW DELHI, June 15: The Indian Express, a leading English daily, today expressed the hope that Farakka issue can be resolved with new government in both New Delhi and Dhaka, reports BSS.

The hope was raised in the editorial comments which the paper made on the outcome of general election in Bangladesh.

The daily described HM Ershad's Jatiya Party as a major beneficiary while debacle for the "Mullah dominated Jamaat-e-Islami, denoted a setback to Islamic fundamentalists."

Referring to the election results, it said, "the most satisfying of the outcome in Bangladesh is the clear indication that the democratic spirit had established itself in the country, hopefully putting an end to its dismal record of coups and rigged elections.

Menon, who contested the June 12 parliamentary election from Barisal-2 constituency, however, accepted the overall results of the election and greeted Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina for her party's victory.

"We think the single-majority party has the right to form government," he said.

He alleged that the Jatiya Party activists captured different centres in Babuganj thana and drove out the polling agents of other parties.

Menon said the presiding office of Dargabari centre in Barakota union, which was captured by JP activists, postponed voting at 3:15pm after he had filed complaint.

But the JP workers gheraoed the centre confining him and the on-duty election officials and forced them to count votes and announce result of the centre, he alleged.

Meanwhile, supporters of

BNP put up barricades at

about 1 pm after two party

workers were kidnapped al-

legedly by Chhatri League ac-

tivists at Burir Char in Hathazari thana.

They, however, removed the barricade at about 3 pm

after BNP workers Lokman and Bhutto were released by the kidnappers. The two BNP men

alleged that they were beaten up by BCL activists.

Supporters of the BNP brought out a procession at

Burir Char protesting the kid-

napping. Tension was prevailing in the area. Police were posted to

avert any possible clash.

Meanwhile, supporters of

BNP and the Awami League chased each other at Fatehabad in Hathazari thana at about

12:30 pm. The chase and counter-chase followed ran-

sack of a confectionery owned

by a local Awami League leader allegedly by BNP supporters.

Nizami, who lost his Pabna-

seat, said: "We expected an-

other impartial election like

1991, but never comprehen-

ded how serious and naked

it can be the bureaucratic con-

spiracy.

The aim of deploying a army

proved a failure as their role

was subject to request for as-

sistance by the civil adminis-

tration, he said, alleging that

the administration played the

role of a silent spectator when

polling centres were captured

by musclemen.

The Jamaat leader con-

ceded that the presence of

voters this time was higher

than that of 1991. "But it does

not mean that the real voter-

presence was equal to the

turnout shown officially ... 90

per cent turnout shown in some places totally absurd," he said.

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