

Passengers, BDR men clash at Barisal steamer ghat: 50 hurt

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Feb 14: At least 50 people were injured in a clash between the passengers and BDR personnel in a BIWTC Dhaka-Khulna steamer at Barisal steamer ghat tonight. Witnesses said that the clash broke out when the Dhaka-bound steamer — P S Masud — berthed at the ghat and a large number of passengers rushed to board it. The trouble started as the BDR jawans numbering more than 90, who were on board reportedly declined to leave some space despite the rush of passengers. The passengers were injured as the BDR men beat them with belts and lathis, according to witnesses. The situation came under control when the DC and the SP intervened and took out the BDR personnel from the steamer. Later, the steamer left Barisal for Dhaka at about 11 pm. Meanwhile, arrangement has been made to send the BDR jawans to Dhaka by a special launch tomorrow, local administration sources said.

Delhi confce opens with call to end bias against women

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The President of India here today launched a global conference on gender equality in politics by calling for an end to bias against women, report agencies. "We must root out prejudice against women and the negative attitude towards their participation in politics," Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma said, inaugurating the five-day Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) summit. "Despite numerous guarantees and safeguards, gender discrimination and prejudice remain a distressing reality," he said. He added: "Clearly we have to do more to promote gender as a central issue in our political advancement... tangible and sustained progress is possible only by focusing on women and the girl-child who remain among the most vulnerable, weak and deprived sections of society."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on Namibian President Sam Nujoma at Rastrapati Bhawan in New Delhi yesterday. —PID photo

Programmes on Feb 15

By Staff Correspondent
Today is February 15, the first anniversary of parliamentary elections under the previous BNP government, which major opposition parties had boycotted. The then major opposition parties — Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — had termed the polls 'one-party farcical elections'. They had spearheaded a vigorous anti-government movement at that time demanding elections under a neutral caretaker government. Later, fresh elections were held on June 12 last year under the caretaker government of Justice Md Habibur Rahman. The Sixth Jatiya Sangsad which was elected through the February 15 polls in 1996 was a short-lived one having only three days' sittings in a single session. The ruling Awami League will observe the day as 'Democracy Killing Day' while the major opposition party BNP has declared the day a day of 'consolidating democracy'. Jatiya Party See Page 12 Col 4

PM addresses IPU confce today

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the plenary session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) here tomorrow, reports BSS. Hasina arrived here this morning to a warm welcome to attend the specialised conference on 'Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics' that began later in the day. She was received at the Palam Airport by Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma. The Lt Governor of New Delhi, Tejendra Khanna, External Affairs Secretary, Salman Haider, Bangladesh High Commissioner in New Delhi, C M Shaif Sami, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Deb Mukherjee and high officials of the External Affairs Ministry were present. The Prime Minister's entourage included Minister for Environment and Forest, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Deputy See Page 12 Col 5

Nujoma praises Ganges water sharing treaty

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Namibian President S A M Nujoma today congratulated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for signing the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India, reports UNB. "Good neighbourly relations can contribute very significantly to socio-economic development," Nujoma told Hasina when she called on him at Rastrapati Bhawan here. The two leaders flew to the Indian capital to attend the five-day Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference that began here today. The Namibian President said the African countries are also under lining the need for further developing their good neighbourly relations. Hasina said that Bangladesh was also benefitted through the Afro-Asian solidarity. As the Namibian President spoke of shortage of skilled manpower in his country, Hasina said Bangladesh could send skilled manpower to Namibia. See Page 12 Col 3

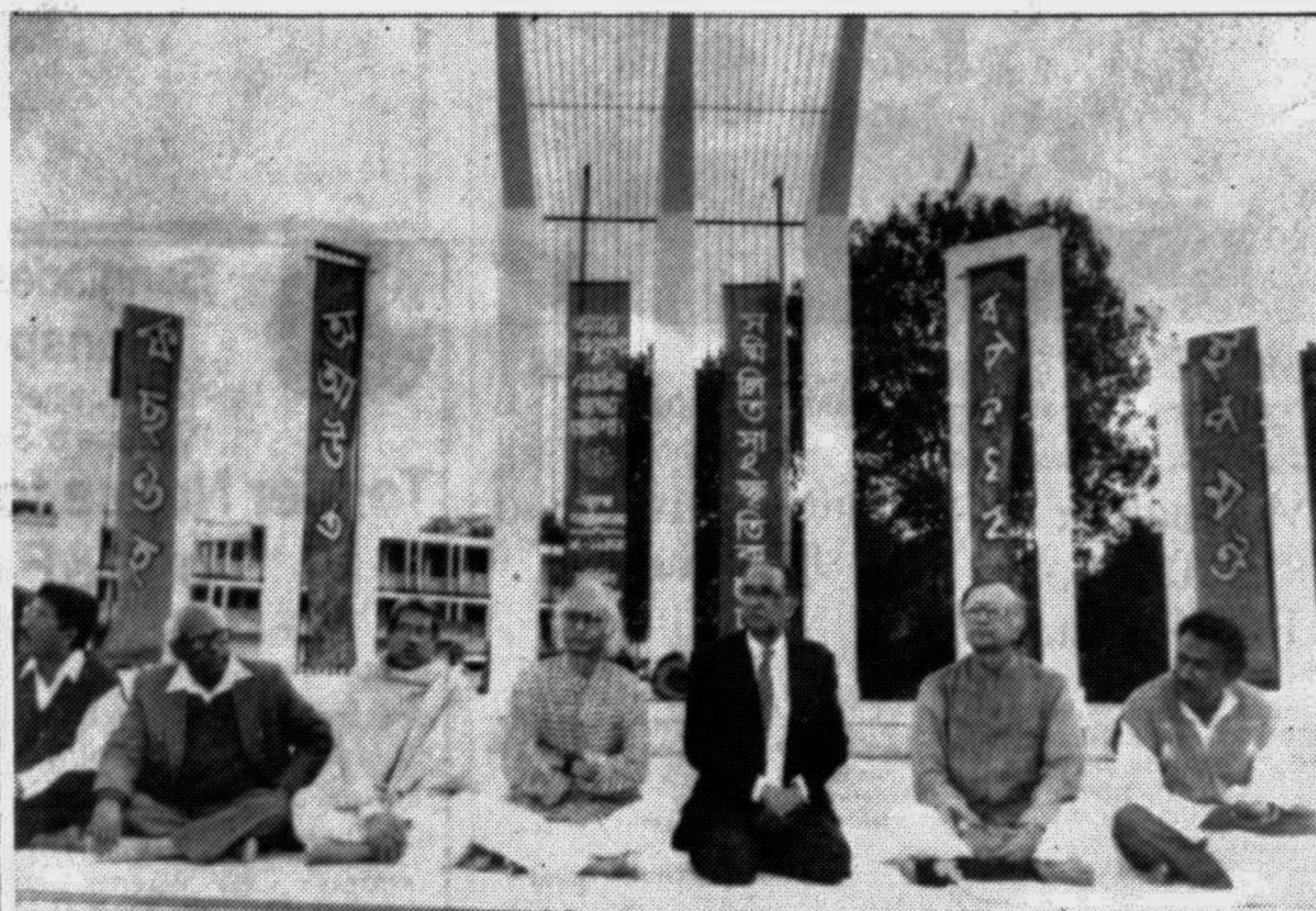
Flag meet on Tinbigha corridor today

LALMONIRHAT, Feb 14: A flag meeting between Bangladesh and India begins tomorrow to find out a permanent solution to various problems on both sides of the 'Tinbigha' corridor, reports UNB. The meeting, to be held at the 'Tinbigha' corridor at 10 am, was proposed by Bangladesh side early this month. The proposal was accepted by India on Thursday. BDR Rangpur Sector Commander Col MASK Azad will lead the Bangladesh side that will also include Commanding Officer 27 Rifles battalion Lt Col Zahiruddin Mohammad Babar. The Indian BSF team will be led by Deputy Inspector General of Signals. The meeting's agenda includes setting up of Bangladesh security camps and hoisting of Bangladesh flag on both sides of the 'Tinbigha' corridor, and ensuring supply of electricity, gas and water for the people of Dahagram and Angorpara enclaves. Earlier, another flag meeting was held in December last after the Indian side objected to the setting up of security camps by Bangladesh on two sides of the corridor. The meeting ended without resolving the issue.

Girl 'raped' in Ctg: one held

CHITTAGONG, Feb 14: A girl of about 12 years was allegedly raped by two young men at Sarad Bahadur Nagar Lane, under Doublemooring thana last night, police said today. A case was lodged with Doublemooring thana in this regard and the victim Nazma Begum, a maid servant, was kept under thana custody for sending her to Chittagong Medical College Hospital tomorrow for medical check-up, police said. Nazma was going to a nearby shop at about 8:30 pm when the young men forcibly took her to an abandoned building and allegedly raped. When the alleged rapists, Sufian and Kallol, left the victim raised a hue and cry that draw people from surrounding See Page 12 Col 3

'Language Movement still unfinished'



Former caretaker govt Chief Adviser Habibur Rahman inaugurating Ekushey programmes organised by the Sammilita Sangskritik Jote at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. — Star photo

Nat'l policy for English medium put schools being prepared

By Morshed Ali Khan
The government is planning to formulate a national policy for the unregistered English and mixed medium private schools in accordance with the existing law of the country, sources in the Ministry of Education said. A seven-member committee headed by the additional secretary of the ministry has been formed to look into different aspects of its (ministry) role in the country's rapidly growing Nursery, Preparatory, Kindergarten (English and mixed medium) and other English medium schools in the private sector. Despite legal provisions, most of these schools have so far been running without any government control whatsoever, an official in the ministry admitted. When asked why the law was not implemented earlier, he also admitted that it (law) was not in their knowledge. It is nonetheless widely believed that these schools have significantly contributed to the education sector. Education ministry sources said that the government was yet to introduce Nursery, Preparatory or Kindergarten classes in primary schools. As a result, even at thana level Bengali and mixed medium kindergarten schools have mushroomed in the private sector. Under the Bangladesh Registration of Private Schools Ordinance 1962 (as amended by Registration of Private Schools Act 1989), every private school must be registered with the relevant authorities. The law also compels the private schools to set a curriculum, ensuring that it does not derail from the education policy of the country. Failure to register could be punishable with a fine of Tk 1,000 or one-year imprisonment or both. The seven-member committee, at a recent meeting, decided that each of the members would soon start surveying five schools in the city and collect data as regards registration, curriculum, management and administration, educational qualification of the teachers, tuition fees and other related matters. The committee also decided that the ministry would soon appeal to these schools to get registered with the relevant authorities. At this stage, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), a wing of the Education Ministry, does not even have statistics on how many such schools exist in the country. The number is somewhere from 10 thousand to more than 20 thousand. There has been widespread allegations that most of the English medium schools — usually catering to students pursuing O and A level studies — have been charging exorbitant fees, running without trained teachers, teaching foreign books regardless of the national context and are almost invariably housed See Page 12 Col 8

President tells CJ Delay in disposal of cases clear denial of justice

President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday said undue delay in disposal of cases is a clear denial of justice, reports UNB. The President made the observation when Chief Justice ATM Afzal called on him at Bangabhaban in the morning. During the meeting, the Chief Justice cited some difficulties standing in the way of quick disposal of pending cases. He also apprised the President of working conditions of the Supreme Court, including the accommodation problem. Justice Afzal requested President Shahabuddin, who was also the Chief Justice, to visit the Supreme Court and discuss the matters with judges of both the High Court and the Appellate Division. The President gave the Chief Justice a patient hearing and assured him of all assistance and cooperation for disposal of the long standing cases.

Flag meet on Tinbigha corridor today

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Nari Samaj protests Shima's death in 'safe custody'

High-powered judicial probe body demanded

By Staff Correspondent
Leaders of Sammilita Nari Samaj have urged the government to form a high-powered judicial committee to probe the death of Shima Chowdhury while in 'safe custody' in Chittagong jail. Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday they demanded that the Home Minister take initiative to inquire into this 'inhuman' incident for punishing those responsible for it. They alleged that Shima Chowdhury was killed in a planned way and the time was fixed keeping in mind the Eid vacation when newspapers would remain closed and there would be none to protest this heinous act. The press conference was attended by, among others, Maleka Begum, Farida Akhter, Rawshan Ara, Khaleda Khatun, Seema Das, Shimu, Hamida Sultana, Rokeya Begum, Elina Khan, Dr. Nayla Khan, Hamida Hossain, Habibunnesa, Shaheen Anam and Barrister Sigma Huda. Farida Akhter read out a statement at the press conference on behalf of the organisation in which she said 'Shima murder' had questioned police administration's respect for law and justice. She said that though Shima had embraced Islam in the jail, her body was cremated immediately to destroy all the evidence of their crimes. Terming the incident similar to the 'Yasmin murder', Farida Akhter further alleged that Shima was raped by police and shown as a floating prostitute in the charge-sheet of the case. She wondered that 'one always becomes a prostitute after being violated by police.' Expressing 'no-confidence' in the police administration, Farida accused police of committing a heinous crime by declaring Shima a prostitute. "None of the police personnel who were accused of violating girls earlier faced any exemplary punishment except divisional closure," she added. Responding to a question whether they demand resignation of the Home Minister in this connection, Maleka Begum said "We are fighting against the system, not against any person, because if one minister resigns another would replace him but there would not be any change." The Nari Samaj leaders said they would file a case against the Chittagong jail authorities if the government failed to take See Page 12 Col 4

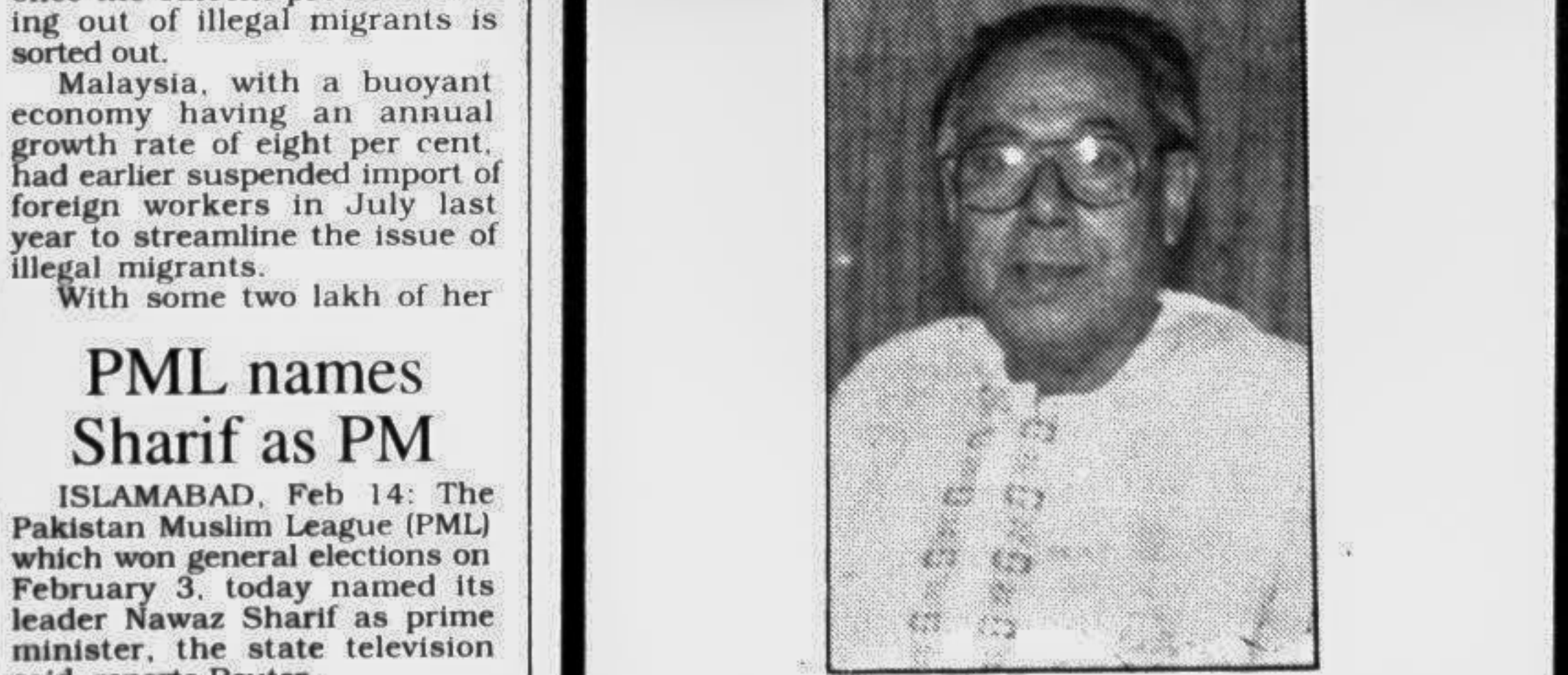
Khaleda's countrywide tour may start Feb 26

By Nazmul Ashraf
BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia is likely to start a cross-country trip with a dual objective — further strengthening the party network and mobilising public opinion against 'repression' by the government, sources close to her said last night. "February 26 has been chosen to begin the intended tour and it may start from Feni, Begum Zia's home district," said one source preferring anonymity. Nevertheless, the planned tough anti-government street agitation by the major opposition party is unlikely to be launched in the near future unless the political situation is aggravated by any action of the government, according to an influential member of the BNP standing committee. Earlier, the BNP chief had given an Eid-day deadline for the government to accept her party's demands or face a tough agitation 15 days after the Eid. The demands include ending 'repression' on opposition activists and allowing the JS to function smoothly and effectively. Meanwhile, Prime Minister and chief of the ruling Awami League Sheikh Hasina told a news conference in the city on Wednesday that no plan for an anti-government movement would succeed at the moment and the opposition party 'won't be able to destabilise the political situation in the name of agitation.' When his attention was drawn to the PM's remark, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star that his party was unwilling to go for an anti-government street agitation right now unless it was pushed in that direction. "We're quite capable of launching a street agitation since the people stand by us," he asserted. See Page 12 Col 4

Malaysia charges nominal fee Repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis by Feb 28

Star Report
Bangladeshi workers, either having no valid permits or whose job tenure expired in Malaysia, would be allowed to return home paying a nominal fee of 1000 ringgit each, official sources said in Dhaka yesterday. As the one month extension of amnesty offered by the Malaysian authorities to illegal migrants expired on January 31, foreign workers including Bangladeshis would now be allowed to return home by February 28, paying that fee. Labour and Manpower Secretary Mahe Alam, who led a four-member official delegation to Malaysia last week, told The Daily Star yesterday that the Malaysian government was considering waiving the ban on import of foreign labourers once the current problem arising out of illegal migrants is sorted out. Malaysia, with a buoyant economy having an annual growth rate of eight per cent, had earlier suspended import of foreign workers in July last year to streamline the issue of illegal migrants. With some two lakh of her nationals working in that country, Bangladesh stands second after Indonesia in the growing labour market of Malaysia. Mahe Alam said that Bangladesh succeeded in its efforts to apprise the Malaysian authorities of her eagerness to start fresh export of manpower to that country. "They assured us of giving utmost priority in importing Bangladeshi workers once the ban on manpower import is waived", he added. State Minister for Labour and Manpower MA Mannan told The Daily Star yesterday See Page 12 Col 3

QUL KHWANI



Qul Khwani of Reazuddin Ahmed (Bhola Mia), who expired on 14th February of prolonged illness, will be held on 16th February, Sunday after Asr prayers at House No 83, Road No 23, Gulshan-1. All his friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the Qul Khwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Sajeda Reaz Roxana Quader Sajjad S Ahmed Sajjad Sarwar Ahmed

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