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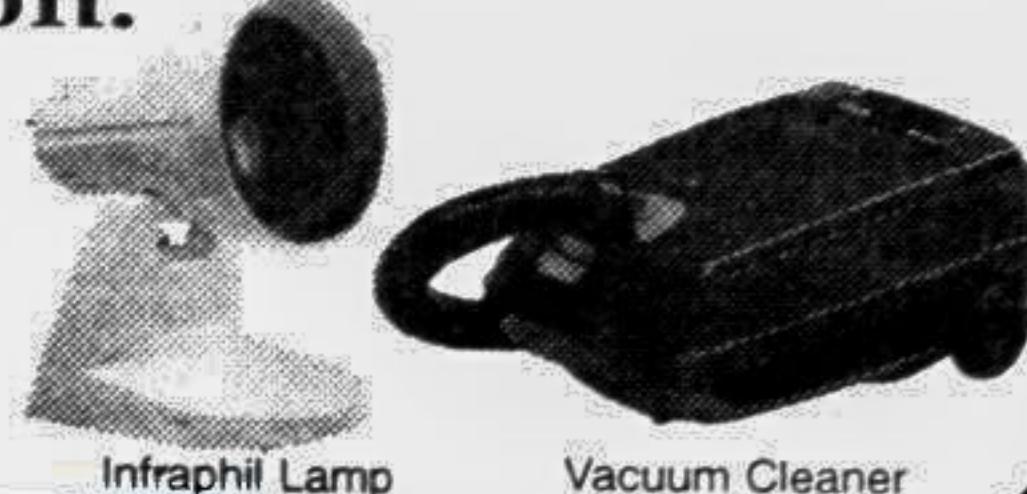
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**IEB election today**

By Staff Correspondent
The biennial election of the
Institution of Engineers,
Bangladesh (IEB) for the year
2000-2001 will be held today.

The election will be held simultaneously at IEB's 14 centres in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna, 21 sub-centres and in three overseas centres.

The election will be held in Dhaka to elect eight office-bearers including president, three vice-presidents, honorary general secretary, three honorary assistant general secretaries.

Noted newscaster and incumbent vice-president (Finance and Administration) Engr Serajul Majid Mamoon, Engr Md Abul Hayat, Dr Engr Muhammad Shahjahan and Engr Aminul Hoque are contesting for the post of president.

Engr Md Ibrahim Miah, Khan Monjur Morshed, Md Nuzzaman, A K M Khademul Haque, Md Inamul Haque and Abdur Razzaq are contesting for the post of honorary secretary general.

Some 7,800 voters will cast their votes to elect the IEB executives. The result of the election will be known tomorrow.

One jumps from sectt bldg, dies

By Staff Correspondent

An employee of a textile mills who came to meet his brother at Secretariat allegedly committed suicide after jumping from the 17th floor yesterday, police said.

The victim was identified as Md. Madi Hasan Bablu, 30, an employee of Madhabdi Textile Mills in Narsingdi. Bablu hails from Sribaddi in Sherpur.

Mehdi came to visit his brother constable Abdul Jalil. Jalil is working under Ministry of Education at the Secretariat.

The incident took place at about 3:45 pm when the victim allegedly jumped from the seventeenth floor of building No. 6, police said.

Police quoting the victim's diary said Bablu committed suicide as he was frustrated with his family.

Police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

9240 'chocolate bombs' seized at Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Dec 22: Police recovered 9,240 'chocolate bombs' from a Dhaka-bound passenger bus at Magura bus stand this evening.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the bus coming from Benapole and recovered the bombs. None was, however, arrested.

Announcement

The Star Weekend Magazine will be bringing out a 48-page year-end issue on Friday, December 31, 1999.

Due to the added pressures at bringing out such an issue, we regret to inform our valued readers that we will not be printing our regular issue on Friday, December 24.

Dhaka may seek Delhi's help to develop telecom network

From Pallab Bhattacharya

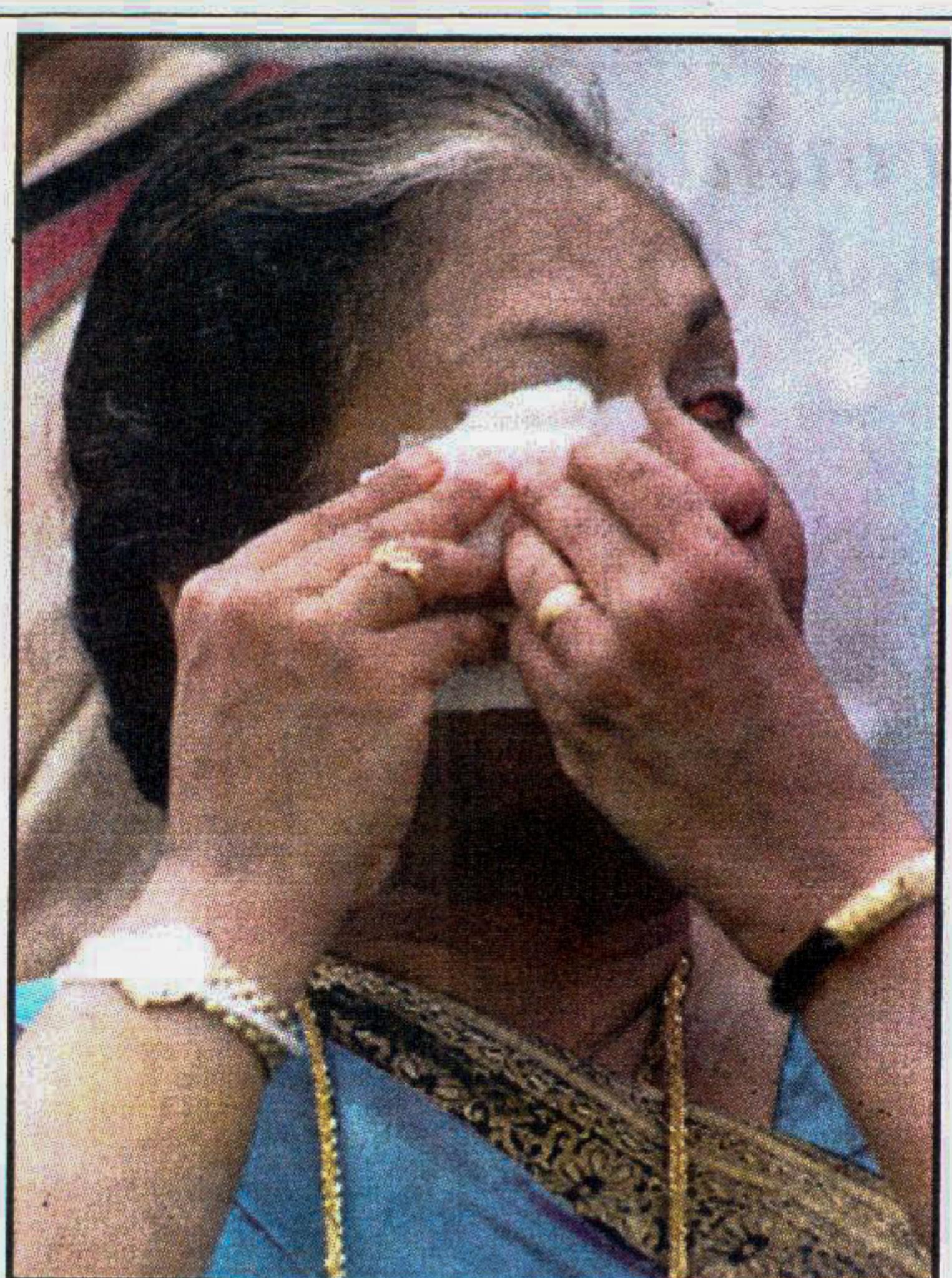
NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Bangladesh will seek Indian investment to help develop telecommunication network, especially in villages, and will respond positively to New Delhi's keen interest in setting up an optical fibre telecom link between the Indian capital and Dhaka when delegation-level talks between the two countries are held here tomorrow.

Bangladesh Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim will lead his

country's delegation at the talks with the Indian side to be headed by Indian Telecommunications Minister Ram Vilas Paswan.

Nasim, now here on a week-long visit, will also hold extensive talks with Indian Home Minister L K Advani tomorrow morning.

The Nasim-Advani meeting was earlier scheduled for today but was re-scheduled for tomorrow due to urgent preoccupations of the Indian Home Min-



Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga nurses her wounded eye, caused by a blast on Saturday, as she poses outside her residence for a group photo with her cabinet after she was sworn into office for a second term yesterday.

— AFP photo

Chandrika takes oath

From page 1

in 1994, when she won Sri Lankans over with a vow to end the war against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatist rebels, cruising to victory with a record 62 per cent of the vote.

Chandrika Kumaratunga took her oaths before the Chief Justice Sarah Silva at a simple ceremony at her official residence, Temple Trees, after being declared winner by the commissioner of elections. She later swore in her cabinet without any changes.

"This victory is without doubt a very special and potent gift of the gods. For I believe that there now stands before you... the single most qualified to lead us to the peace we long for," Chandrika said in a speech.

The president, who broke down twice during her speech, said she commiserated with Wickremesinghe and asked him to join the government in an effort to find peace.

Chandrika said the significant support that Wickremesinghe commands means that the people wanted him to play a major role.

There was no immediate comment from Wickremesinghe on her offer, but he told Reuters earlier that the polls were a "threat to democracy" because of malpractices.

Sylhet incident

From page 1

When the processionists reached Court Point, some of them started hurling brickbats and crackers at the police standing nearby, police resorted to lathicharge that led to the violent clash.

Police official said, several hundred people under the banner of All-Party Action Committee swooped on the police while they prevented them from marching towards the DC's office. Police had to resort to lathicharge and firing shots to disperse the agitators, he added.

Meanwhile, the All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) has shifted its tomorrow's rally at Sylhet town to December 25.

Nasim calls on Vajpayee

From page 1

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim called on Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at his South Block office here this evening.

During the meeting, Nasim, who is on a visit here, discussed with the Indian Prime Minister the entire gamut of bilateral relations.

The discussion was held in an atmosphere of utmost cordiality and friendship, a meeting source said.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

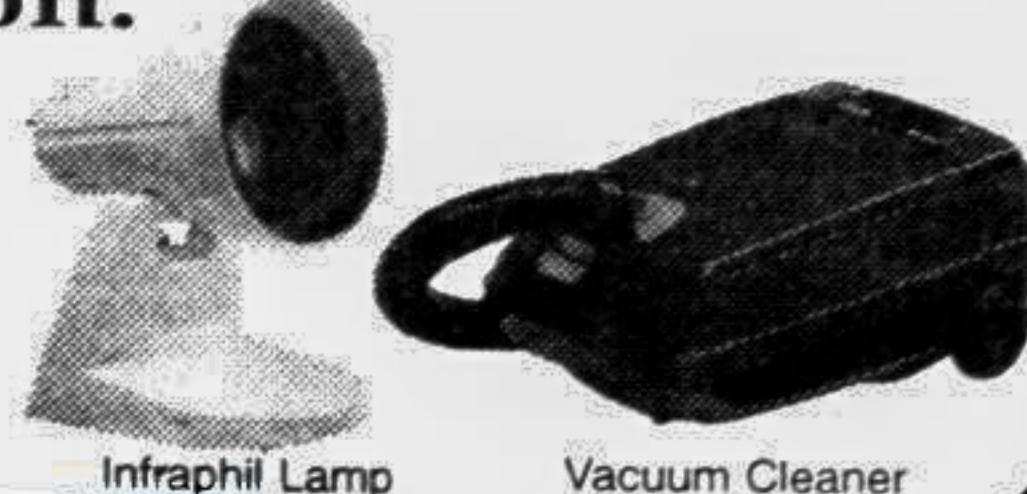
Published by the Editor from City Publishing House Ltd., 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000, Editorial News & Commercial Offices, House No: 11, Road No: 3, Fax No: 88-02-8613035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA, Internet edition address: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> and Email address: dstar@bangla.net

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**Dr Kamal to chair Kader Siddique's convention**

By Staff Correspondent
Kader Siddique floats a new political party as he finds the existing ones failing to live up to the people's expectations, said Fazlur Rahman, convenor of the Convention Preparatory Committee during a press conference yesterday.

Dr Kamal Hossain will be the chief guest at the convention due on December 24 at the Engineers' Institution in the city. Rahman said and added that the name of the party will be announced during the first session of the convention. "It (the name of the party) will be chosen as per suggestions of the delegates and participants at the convention".

The party (that will be) floated only few days ahead of the new century will follow the ideals of secularism, progressive culture and democratic polity," Rahman said.

The convention beginning at 10 am will end at 4pm, he said. The ad-hoc committee that will be announced before the end of the daylong programme will be given six months to announce the full committee.

"We are expecting over 3000 delegates in the convention," Rahman said, adding other than national leaders, professionals of different disciplines and elite from the capital; many are expected to attend the convention from remote areas of the country.

All the MPs and political leaders excepting those identified as anti-Liberation have been invited to attend the convention," Rahman said.

BCL-JCD clash in Feni, 10 hurt

From Our Correspondent

FENI, Dec 22: At least ten people were injured and local Russel Smriti Sangsads was torched during a fresh clash between BCL and JCD activists at Chhaglalnaiya in Feni district last night, police said.

The clash was a sequel to Saturday's clash at village Moluha in Chhaglalnaiya, Feni, police and witnesses said.

The feuding groups exploded crackers, fired shots and used sharp weapons during the clash. The injured were admitted to Chhaglalnaiya health complex.

The BCL activists locked some 35 BNP activists in shops at Jamnadar Bazar when miscreants torched the Russel Smriti Sangsads and damaged portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

UNB adds: Opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia has condemned terrorist acts being unleashed by 'ruling party goons' in Feni.

In a statement yesterday she said Feni now turned into safe haven for terrorists.

Begum Zia said several people were killed recently in Feni in violence triggered by ruling party-patronized terrorist godfathers. The situation worsened as police failed to arrest the culprits.

"Instead of taking murder cases, local police are filing false cases against the district leaders of BNP and harassing them," she said.

Testing time

Parents wait anxiously as their children go through school admission tests at Viqarunnisa Noon School yesterday.

— Star photo

Full moon

From page 1

which also appears in a copy of the article on the almanac's Web site, "caught on like the Melissa virus," said Geoff Chester, a spokesman for the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C.

Susan Peery, managing editor of the Dublin, N.H.-based almanac, said Monday that some readers may have taken the full-moon article the wrong way.

"The article points out that it's the first time in 133 years that all these factors are in place, but it's not necessarily saying it's the brightest moon in 133 years," Peery said. Yet she added, "even a matter of a few percentage points closer could make a big difference."

Maybe. At most, experts said, the moon may be 10 to 30 per cent brighter this week than when its light is weakest. But the human visual system has trouble telling even when one light source is several times brighter than another, Chester said.

And, saner elements warned, don't count on driving your car by the moon's light.

Yet, as just about anyone with heartstrings to play will tell you, the moon does curious things to the soul of human beings.

For Bengalis, the moon brings up all sorts of romantic notions. As legendary Manna Dey sang: "Chand dekhte gley ami tomaj dekhey lefchchi... (I saw your face trying to see the moon, and I am in a fix to ascertain which one is brighter.)

Clear skies encouraged thousands in Dhaka to gather at the BUET playground for a look through one of the Bangladesh Astronomical Association's telescopes, but at least one person didn't sound too impressed.

"Why do you need a telescope to see it? It's all clear and bright."

After re-scheduling the bid closing time twice, the Power Development Board (PDB) Tuesday closed bidding for the Japanese funded Haripur 109 MW power project, participated by only three Japanese companies.

Sources said the bidding was supposed to be closed on November 17. But till that time, only one Japanese company, JBIC loans are untied and all companies are eligible for bidding, only three Japanese companies submitted bids," he noted.

He claimed that the tendering was an eye wash. The bid winner was determined long before floating of the tender. "It was pre-determined for Mitsubishi and other companies were later persuaded to submit bids to make it look competitive," he said. "Such manipulated bidding means higher project costs".

However, another PDB official denied allegations of foul play. He said there was a down-

See page 11 col 2

— Star photo

Haripur power project**Bidding closed: Only**

3 Japanese cos

participate

Star Report

object, nine bidders from several countries submitted bids," one source said.

But in case of the Haripur project, no bidder other than Mitsubishi participated in the bidding, probably suspecting foul play, the source claimed. Normally, projects financed by Japan goes to Japanese companies. "In this case, though the JBIC loans are untied and all companies are eligible for bidding, only three Japanese companies submitted bids," he noted.

Sources said the bidding was supposed to be closed on November 17. But till that time, only one Japanese company, Mitsubishi had participated in the bidding.

To make it competitive, the Japanese donor — JBIC — asked the PDB to extend the bid closing time till December 14. As the new deadline also failed to attract more bidders, the JBIC again asked PDB to extend the time till December 21. Two more bidders — Mitsui and Marubeni of Japan — dropped their proposals then.

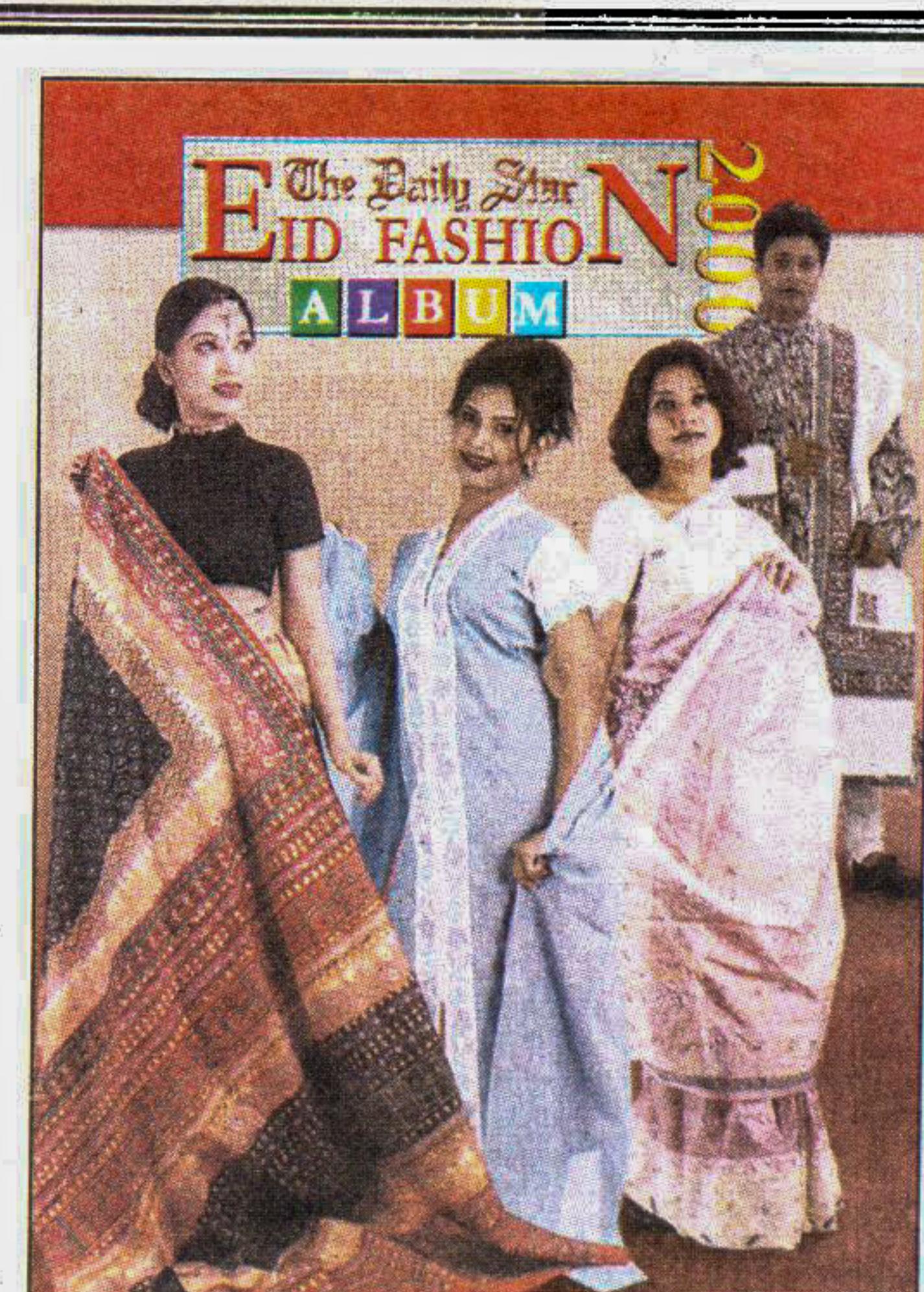
Contrary to this, response from power companies was much better in case of other PDB projects in the recent past, the sources said. "Last year, when PDB floated a tender for Shazibazar 60 MW power pro-



Officers and employees chant slogans in the corridor of Board of Investment offices demanding removal of executive chairman M. Mokammel Haq.

— Star photo

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