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## PM leaves for Australia

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia left Dhaka yesterday for Australia to attend the 13<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

Khaleda, who flew in a commercial flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, will make a stopover in Singapore before departing for the summit venue in the Australian city of Coolum.

Ministers, Chiefs of Army and Navy, Acting Chief of Air Force, Dean of the diplomatic corps, diplomats, senior civil and military officials saw the PM off at the Zia International Airport.

## Court allows screening of a videotape seized from Shahriar

BSS, Dhaka

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) yesterday accepted a petition for screening of a videotape police seized from journalist Shahriar Kabir in presence of a Metropolitan Magistrate.

ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman of CID, the Investigation Officer of a sedition case against Shahriar Kabir, yesterday submitted a petition to the CMM for screening of a videotape for the interest of investigation.

Police arrested Shahriar at Zia International Airport on his arrival

## Mondal murder 'Kana' Selim placed on 3-day remand

BSS, Dhaka

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court here yesterday placed Kana Selim on a three-day remand in connection with the murder of Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal.

CID police produced Kana Selim before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate (MM) Sirajul Haider with a prayer for 10 days remand.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate granted a three-day remand.

Kana Selim, a listed terrorist of the city was earlier arrested by police in another murder case and recently 'shown arrested' in Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondal murder case.

Advocate Mondal, General Secretary of Sutrapur Thana BNP and a leader of Jatiyatabadi Ayeenibi Forum, was shot dead by miscreants near his Banogram residence on August 20, 2000.

## INSIDE TODAY

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The shadow of Ayodhya Temple issue gets longer

Column: Just Another View

SH Imam

Focus 5

The EU presidency: Its current agenda; and CHOGM venue wears a 'danger zone' look

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 28		6-01 pm
Mar 1	6-21 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-05	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# Holding fire

## Govt suspends move to axe 1996 'rebel' civil servants on backlash

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The government has suspended its move to fire the civil servants on charge of joining the Awami League-sponsored anti-government 'Janatar Mancha' in 1996 due to lack of specific charges and evidences, sources said.

After coming to office in October last, the BNP-led coalition government has so far filed departmental cases against 185 officials as part of the process to sack them.

But the move felt the first jolt after one of the officials against whom disciplinary action was taken challenged the government action at the High Court. This made the government decision-makers to realise that there has been a basic flaw in the process of spotting the officials who had actually joined the 'Janatar Mancha'.

Besides, the government was challenged in the court

over its application of two different service rules against the so-called Janatar Mancha participants. Under one rule, the officials had the scope of going to the court while under the other there was no such scopes, which is a violation of basic human rights.

Moreover, the government move drew flak as being discriminatory as only mid- and low-ranking officials were served with show-cause notices and the secretaries, some of whom also had supported the 'Janatar Mancha', were spared. Even, some of these secretaries had their services extended on contract.

This ultimately created a deep schism in the administration.

In the first week of this month, an official challenged the government move and consequently, the High Court asked the government to explain why the Government

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## Polythene out, 'polythick' in



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Polybags thicker than 20 microns are now being sold in the city, giving rise to questions about the policymakers' farsightedness in framing the ban.

## Govt now plans to amend laws

REZAUL KARIM

Amendments to environmental laws have been suggested to effectively ban production, marketing and use of all categories of polythene shopping bags in the country.

Ten years' imprisonment and Tk 10 lakh fine for production and marketing of polybags and fine of up to Tk 500 and on-the-spot trial by mobile courts for their use have been proposed in the amendments to the Bangladesh Environmental Conservation Act 1995 and Environmental Court Act 2000, sources said.

The Ministry of Environment will place the draft amendments before the cabinet soon.

After cabinet approval and vetting by the law ministry, the proposed amendments will be placed in the current session of parliament for passage, they said.

The amendments have been suggested as the environmentally harmful shopping bags have

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## Surveillance around Sudha Sadan worries AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League yesterday expressed deep concern over the 'infringed security' of its President Sheikh Hasina amid escalated intelligence surveillance around Sudha Sadan, the residence of the opposition leader.

Following the last two days of enhanced surveillance around Hasina's Dhanmondi residence, her Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury conveyed the concern of the party to Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

On Tuesday, plainclothes and uniformed police were posted at different points around her residence, and ten leaders of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were arrested on Monday night

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## Police plan to nab 150 BCL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have prepared a list of about 150 leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) for their arrest.

Most of them are leaders of BCL's central committee or its units at Dhaka University, police sources said.

They would be arrested under the Special Power Act (SPA) or as per previous allegations against them, filed with different police stations in the city.

The list has been prepared at the directive of the government and as per information gathered by intelligence agencies.

Newspaper reports involving BCL leaders in various criminal activities in the last five years have also been taken into consideration in preparation of the list.

Campus sources said law enforcers are asking students, shop owners and staff and officials of DU dormitories about 'previous activities' (during the last five years) and 'whereabouts' of the listed BCL men.

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# Alleged BNP-backed men besiege Christians

## Houses in 3 Pabna villages looted, damaged: 30 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Alleged BNP-backed terrorists yesterday swooped on Christians, leaving at least 30 of them injured and nearly 200 families confined in their houses in three villages under two unions of Chatmahar thana in the district.

Also looted and damaged were a large number of houses under Failzana and Kadamtali unions.

The Christian families were kept besieged till filing of this report at about 5.00pm yesterday.

At around 10.00am yesterday, a group of local BNP leaders and activists assaulted Subal Mondol, a leader of the Christian community, and some other Christians of Kadamtali union.

Later, another gang allegedly led by Failzana UP chairman and BNP union unit president Mohammad Shajahan, again attacked the house of Subal Mondol at about 10:30am, and other houses also came under attacks at the same time, witnesses said.

To make things worse, no police personnel arrived at the villages till yesterday afternoon.

When contacted, Superintendent of Police of Pabna Amzad Hossain, however, said he sent police forces to the villages to keep the situation under control.

Again contacted by telephone from Dhaka last night, Amzad Hossain told The Daily Star that as per preliminary information a local chairman along with his associates attacked houses of a Hindu family and a number of Christian families.

"Following my instruction, the officer-in-Charge of the police station concerned has rushed to the spot with police backup. But he is yet to report to me, for which I am confused about the gravity of the incident," he said. There would be proper action against the culprits, he assured.

Of the injured admitted to Pabna and Chatmahar hospitals, four women have been identified as Pari

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# CU reopens Mar 2 after 8 months of deadlock

## BCL calls off siege programme

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) finally reopens on March 2 after eight months as the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) called off its siege programme yesterday.

The BCL, student front of main opposition Awami League, called off the siege programme during a meeting with the university authorities Tuesday night after they had assured the student wing of meeting their demands in phases.

It enforced the siege programme on the campus on November 4 last year in protest at the attack on its procession on November 3 that left 10 BCL men, including the president and the general secretary, injured.

However, BCL President Zillur Rahman and General Secretary Nasir Haidar in a statement yesterday threatened the authorities of re-enforcing the siege programme on the campus if their demands were

not met.

The leaders of the BCL's CU chapter recently met with Awami League President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan in the capital. Hasina reportedly asked them to call of the siege programme after meeting with the CU authorities.

After the 'Chittagong University Day' on June 28 no classes were held and as many as 348 academic days were lost from January 1 last year to March 1.

On August 13, a fierce clash between the activists of the BCL and the ICS took place and the authorities closed the university on August 14.

The residential halls opened on October 7 but the ICS took over all the halls and beat up and drove out general and BCL activists from the

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## AL-BNP clash in Natore: 25 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least 25 people were injured, 11 of them seriously, in clashes between BNP and Awami League supporters in Lalpur and Bagatipara upazilas in Natore yesterday and the day before.

In Lalpur, the clash erupted on Tuesday afternoon when some activists of BNP attacked the AL supporters at Borobaria village following a row over a volleyball match.

The injured are Amin Uddin, Abul Hossain, Shahbaz Uddin, Tafir Uddin, Majdar, Abu Toha, Nazrul Islam, Shafiqul Islam, Nantu and Fuljan Begum. Of them, condition of Tafir Uddin and Nazrul Islam was stated to be critical. They were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while others to different hospitals and clinics.

Some AL activists set afire the house of BNP worker Atiq during the clash.

On Tuesday evening, BNP cadres led by Jubo Dal leader Rashedul attacked the Upazila and the

Union

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# Train carrying Hindus from Ayodhya torched: 56 killed

REUTERS, Godhra

At least 56 people died when a train carrying Hindu activists from the controversial site of a razed mosque was set on fire in western Indian state of Gujarat yesterday, railway officials said.

The activists were returning from northern Ayodhya, where headline Hindus are gathering to build Ram temple on the ruins of Babri mosque whose destruction a decade ago triggered riots in which more than 3,000 people were killed nationwide.

The Sabarmati Express was stopped just outside Godhra station in the western state of Gujarat and unidentified men then set fire to one

of the coaches, an official said.

A senior official from the railway protection force told Reuters at least 50 bodies had been pulled off the train after the incident.

Police and firemen could still be

ted to hospital with burn and other injuries.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee condemned the attack and, amid fears that it could trigger communal violence, stressed that

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday cancelled his planned trip to the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia following the train massacre of Hindu activists, says AFP.

seen at the railway station pulling bodies, charred beyond recognition, out of the carriage which was set on fire. The rest of the train was allowed to continue on its journey.

More than 40 people were admit-

national security would be maintained at all costs.

Jayanti Ravi, chief administrator of Panchamal district where the attack took place, told AFP: "We entered the train and there were

charred bodies everywhere. The first priority is to get the situation under control."

An indefinite curfew had been imposed in the area with police given shoot-on-sight orders.

Gujarat Home Minister Gordhanbhai Zadafia told AFP that the train had been stopped shortly after leaving Panchamal's Godhra station.

"First there was some stone throwing and then the coaches were set on fire," Zadafia said.

"It is difficult to tell the exact number of those killed as the remains have got charred and mixed with the ashes of the burnt coaches."

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## Will the culprits be punished ?

ABDUL WADOOD, Rajshahi

Mahima's suicide has drawn top political leaders, parliament members, police officials, intellectuals, artists and NGO activists to remote Kantalbaria village in the district.

But the villagers still ask, "Will the rapists be punished?"

Her perplexed farmer father Abdul Hannan, who worked for Awami League in the last election, has appealed to all not to do politics over the incident.

"Please do not do politics with our misfortune and dignity. Do not damage our future. If you are really sincere and sympathetic to us, try to

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Mahima

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