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## 100 more killed in Gujarat strife

AP, Ahmedabad

Communal violence spread to more towns of the western Gujarat state yesterday as the death toll in India's worst religious strife in a decade reached 408, officials said.

They said the violence continued for a fourth day despite army troops being deployed with orders to shoot-to-kill rioters and curfew being imposed in 37 towns in the state.

Police said fresh rioting and arson was reported in the cities of Surat, Bhavnagar, Vadodra and Ahmedabad, the commercial capital of Gujarat and the worst hit by the mob violence.

In Ahmedabad, mobs set fire to shops in at least three neighborhoods yesterday and prevented fire

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## Gujarat violence a blot on nation's face: Vajpayee

### Joint appeal for calm and restraint

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee yesterday described the "carriage" in the western state of Gujarat, hit by communal violence, as a "blot" on the nation and expressed confidence that communal harmony would be restored there.

In a brief televised address to the nation, Vajpayee said the gruesome killings of people in Godhra, Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat have "left a blot on the nation's face which has damaged India's reputation before the international community."

He said the country had in the past overcome crises and it would be able to do so this time also to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

"Leaders of various parties have made a joint appeal to the people to remain calm and exercise restraint," the Prime Minister said and appealed for peace and calm in Gujarat.

Vajpayee's address to the nation came a day after a joint appeal by the government and the opposition urged the people "to isolate the perpetrators of violence and defeat their sinister designs."

"It is our collective responsibility to promote brotherhood and national

unity at all costs. The Prime Minister assures the people that the Central government would deal firmly and effectively with the situation in Gujarat and elsewhere in the country.

All of us expect the state government to do the same," the appeal said.

The joint appeal was issued from a meeting Vajpayee had with leaders of major political parties including Congress President Sonia Gandhi here Friday evening. A suggestion by Sonia Gandhi that an all-party delegation visit Ahmedabad, one of the worst-hit by violence in Gujarat, as soon as possible was promptly accepted by all.

Among other political leaders present at the meeting included former Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, CPI(M) General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI leader A B Bardhan, Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, and Bahujan Samajwadi Party leader Mayawati, BJP President Jana Krishnamurthy and Telugu Desam leader Yerran Naidu.

After the meeting, Vajpayee called on President K R Narayanan and briefed him about the situation in Gujarat and the measures put in place to tackle the situation.

The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Ahmed Bukhari also met Vajpayee

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## Unprecedented wish

President goes out of the way to ask for bringing his hometown under the city's telephone network

ABU SAEED KHAN

Going out of the way, the president has desired that the telephone network of Munshiganj be urgently incorporated into Dhaka city's.

President AQM Badruddoza's secretary recently conveyed his wish to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MoPT). And if his wish is entertained through an executive order, it may expose the telecom sector to financial, technical, political and regulatory risks.

The presidential wish goes beyond constitutional jurisdiction.

However, the letter conveying the president's desire blamed the existing analogue exchange in Munshiganj for the BTTB's sub-standard service. On February 2, the elite of Munshiganj demanded better service when Badruddoza visited his hometown prior to leaving for pilgrimage in Makkah.

The letter asked the MoPT to bring Munshiganj under the capital's telephone network. As a case in point, the letter referred to the linking of networks of Narayanganj, Gazipur and Savar with that of Dhaka.

The MoPT secretary has immediately conveyed the president's request to the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) that stirred up widespread controversy. Sources said the BTTB would incur huge financial losses if it wanted to entertain the presidential desire. For one, the Dhaka-Munshiganj call charge, now Tk 3 per minute, would come down to Tk 1.70 for unlimited period if Munshiganj came under the network of Dhaka city.

Moreover, the BTTB will have to redesign its Dhaka network. The country-wide exchanges and gateways of the BTTB will have to be reprogrammed, as

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## Graft charges against advisor to Hasina, ten others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) yesterday pressed graft charges against an advisor to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and 10 bureaucrats and businessmen.

A BAC official also went to the Chittagong Kotwali police station to file another case against the chairman of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and another person last night. However, till the filing of this report at 9:00 last night there was no confirmation about the filing of the case.

The BAC filed a case accusing former Awami League lawmaker and the ex-premier's advisor Khandker Asaduzzaman and 10 others for financial irregularities involving Tk 1.1 crore.

The other case to be filed accuses CDA Chairman Colonel MKZ Jalalabadi and another person of embezzling Tk 61 lakh.

The first case filed with the Motijheel Police Station by BAC

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## Jail Killing Case HC asks trial court to submit papers by Mar 11

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday ordered the trial court to submit papers of the Jail Killing Case by March 11.

The HC made the order after hearing a petition seeking bail for Taher Uddin Thakur, one of the accused in the case, to verify his involvement in the incident.

March 11 has been fixed as the next date of hearing on the petition.

Earlier, 4 accused in the case KM Obaidur Rahman, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Nurul Islam Monjur and Maj (Rtd) Khairuzzaman were granted bail by the High Court.

## Detention of BCL leaders: HC asks govt to explain

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday asked the government to show cause why the detention of leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League should not be declared illegal.

Two benches of the High Court passed the orders upon separate petitions challenging the detention.

The student leaders were arrested on February 25 and detain for 30 days under the SPA.



PHOTO:AFP

Aboriginal dancers perform during the opening ceremony for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Cooloom, Queensland yesterday. Representatives from 51 countries, including 35 heads of state, have joined the four-day biennial summit.

## INSIDE TODAY

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V for VHP or Vajpayee?

Column: Between the Lines

Kuldip Nayar

Supplement 8

One page supplement on Islamic

Finance and Investment Limited

(IFIL)

## Announcement



Today's issue of The Daily Star includes a four-colour tabloid special supplement on Contemporary Asian Art Workshop. However today's issue is Priced at Taka 7.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 3		6-02 pm
Mar 4	6-18 am	

## Prayer Timings

Mar 3	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	6-06	6-12
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

## C'wealth to expel member state for aiding terrorists

### No sign of taking action against Mugabe

REUTERS, Cooloom, Australia

The four-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) yesterday began in Australia with the leaders urging some of the world's poorest nations to join the "fight against terrorism", racism and religious intolerance.

They agreed to expel any member state that aided, funded or harboured terrorists.

In the first major announcement of their four-day meeting, the Commonwealth leaders said they had agreed on a "terrorist action plan" under which members would also act to stop abuse of financial systems and freeze and confiscate the assets of terrorists.

The leaders also called on the world's rich nations to adopt more humane globalisation policies to reduce the gap between rich and poor, which provides fertile ground for political instability.

And there was the call for promotion of democracy, but the summit showed no sign of taking action against strife-torn African nation Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe over allegations that he is intimidating voters and rigging the result ahead of a March 9-10 presidential election.

The biennial summit of the group composed mainly of ex-British colonies is divided over whether to impose sanctions against Zimbabwe.

But even though any measures taken by the Commonwealth would be largely symbolic, African states who make up about one third of the group are opposed to action until after next week's poll.

"The Commonwealth is not a police force," one southern African leader said, adding it would be premature even to consider what action to take until the elections were over.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has been leading a campaign to suspend Zimbabwe from the 54-nation grouping, said the Commonwealth's credibility was on the line.

Blair has been pushing for tough

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## 2 new judges for Appellate Division

STAR REPORT

Two judges have been appointed to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

With the latest appointments, which complete the restructuring of the Appellate Division, the number of division judges went up to seven from five.

Two judges are Justice JR Modassir Hossain and Justice Abu Sayeed Ahmed, who were appointed by the president yesterday.

Earlier, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia finalised the appointments before her departure for Australia, sources said.

This would now open up a scope for the beginning of leave petition hearing of the Bangabandhu Murder Case, which has remained suspended since August due to

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## Hasina visits Mahima's parents in Puthia 'Punish culprits or face people's wrath'

NAZRUL ISLAM, From Puthia

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday met the parents of Mahima at Kathalbaria and consoled them saying, the people are with them to see the culprits punished.

"People of the country are with you so that none can cancel the heinous crime or harass you any more and all the culprits are punished," she told Mahima's parents.

The family members broke into tears when Hasina went to the remote of village in Puthia upazila in Rajshahi to meet them.

Schoolgirl Mahima committed suicide on February 19 after being

abducted and gang-raped by four youths reportedly belonging to Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of ruling BNP on February 15.

The AL chief reached the tinshed house of Mahima's family at about 3:30pm and talked to her perplexed father, mother, brother and sisters for about half-an-hour. Hundreds of villagers, mostly women and children, gathered around the house at that time.

Hasina said those who tortured the girl and pushed her to self-annihilation are worse than animal. Such incidents are happening across the country now. Some victims protest while others choose to end their life to escape disgrace,

Hasina said.

"All are with you and there is nothing to be worried", she told them.

Later, addressing a gathering in front of the house, Hasina called upon the villagers to come forward to resist the culprits with an iron hand. "If you don't resist them right now such incidents will continue to happen."

She said Mahima was compelled to commit suicide. "We are here to console you because we cannot help you regain what you have lost in the death of your daughter."

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## JS body will probe death of Mahima

### An isolated act of crime: Altaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad will form an all-party parliamentary committee to probe the death of schoolgirl Mahima, who committed suicide after being gangraped allegedly by four student activists of the BNP.

Announcing the decision, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui told the House yesterday that the proposed committee would be formed today if he receives a proposal from any of the lawmakers.

The ruling from the chair came following demands by several lawmakers. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed seconded the call.

Earlier, Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury made a lengthy statement on the Mahima rape and suicide case as a number of treasury

and opposition lawmakers spoke on the incident that took place recently at Kathalbaria village of Puthia Upazila in Rajshahi district.

Mahima committed suicide on February 19, four days after she was gangraped, as the rapists circulated photographs of the rape incident.

"The entire nation was ashamed of the atrocious and heart-rending incident. It is an isolated act of crime that seems to be a sequel to old enmity. It has no political or communal edge," the home minister said, blasting opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and her party for trying to "politicise" the issue.

Referring to another incident of rape at the same area one and a half years ago, he commented that had the culprits of that incident been

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## Paris Club now analyses govt policies: Saifur

STAR REPORT

The donors will critically scan the country's economic situation and reform programmes at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meet slated for March 13-15 in Paris, but will not hold any discussion on or pledge future financial assistance.

Law and order, governance, public expenditure, financial sector reforms and many other critical issues will figure at the talks. The spotlight will also be on the interim poverty reduction strategy that could become the main basis for any future assistance.

"The Paris meeting is no more a

forum to discuss future financial assistance. Rather, it analyses the government's policies," Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday told a group of newsmen at his office.

The minister however said the assessment of the government's policies and different programmes would frame the basis for any future assistance.

The Paris meeting is seen crucial as the country's search for external assistance took on a desperate edge after the recent economic downturn. Because of a fragile balance of payment situation, the government initiated a dialogue with the IMF for

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