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Int'l Women's Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women take centre stage once again as numerous women's rights groups and international organisations in Bangladesh and elsewhere around the world prepare to observe the International Women's Day today.

On this day in 1857, female workers of a sewing factory in New York fought police while protesting against a 12-hour workday, low pay and unhealthy condition at workplaces.

Later, the day was declared International Women's Day during the second International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1910 following a proposal by German Socialist Movement leader Clara Zetkin.

The theme 'No more dowry' has been chosen to observe the day in Bangladesh where millions have fallen victim to the social scourge

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Stop political intervention

JS body asks government

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the government to stop political intervention in the internal affairs of the police administration to make the force free from corruption.

Focusing on government's meddling in the promotion and transfer of policemen, the parliamentary

standing committee on the home ministry yesterday observed that every government used the force politically.

"It should not happen. Government intervention in the promotion and transfer of the police should be stopped immediately. Unless such steps are taken, the force will not be able to perform its duty," Abdul Mannan, chairman of

the committee, told newsmen after the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Opposition political parties and the civil society have blamed politicisation of the police as one of the key reasons for the crime wave sweeping Bangladesh and claiming up to 12 lives a day.

About widespread allegations of

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

2 Khulna outlaws lynched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A mob lynched two activists of Janajuddha faction of outlawed Purbia Banglar Communist Party on Saturday night (at Barhsinga village in Sadar upazila) in Bagerhat when they hurled bombs at a shrimp trader for refusing to pay toll.

The dead were identified as Alamgir, 24, and Ismail, 22.

The trader, Abu Saeed, was seriously injured.

Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police Station Matiar Rahman said a gang of five outlaws threw two hand bombs at the shrimp trader as he did not pay them toll.

A crowd of Barhsinga villagers then chased the attackers, caught two of them at the nearby ferry ghat and beat them dead. The other three managed to escape firing shots at the mob, police said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Fresh bid to tap tele-talk

Security agencies press for making police verification a must for new cellphone connection

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Security agencies have asked the telecoms regulator to introduce mandatory police verification for new cellphone connections in a bid to control telephone conversations in the name of national security.

In a letter to the chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the National Security Intelligence (NSI) asked the watchdog to take an undertaking from the would-be

subscribers that they would not object to the security agencies' tapping their telephonic conversations for the sake of national security.

Subscribers reacted to the plan that they said would be an additional hassle. "Police demand conveyance allowance to do verifications for passport and other needs," Mizanur Rahman, a businessman, said in distrust of police roles.

"In many countries you can have a prepaid cellphone without pro-

ducing any document."

The letter that came after the proposed amendment to Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001 was delayed also requested the regulator to ask telecoms service providers and internet service providers (ISPs) to maintain a subscribers' database which the intelligence agencies can access for pressing charges and trial purposes.

The agencies also asked the chairman to take steps so that

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Hasina threatens more hartals at month-end

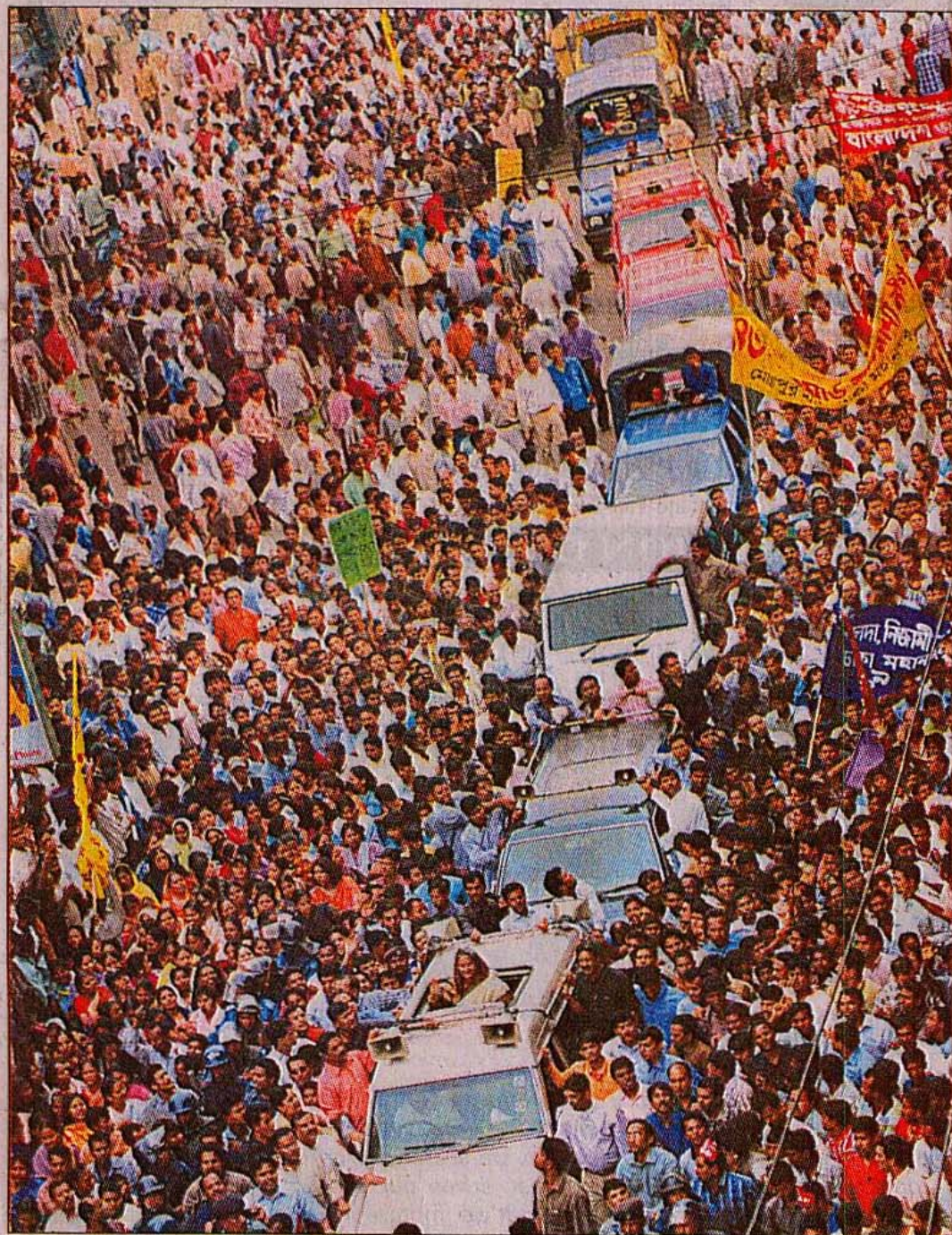


PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina leads a procession from Bangabandhu Avenue to Russell Square in Dhaka yesterday with thousands of demonstrators shouting anti-government slogans, carrying banners and placards.

Asks coalition to step down, unveils March 9-22 protest programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday rejected Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's call to give up hartal before a huge procession and said her party along with allies would enforce more hartals at the month-end against 'the misrule of the government'.

"After the end of the SSC examinations on March 24, we'll consider calling more hartals demanding resignation of the Khaleda regime," Hasina, also the leader of the opposition, told thousands of demonstrators from a truck in front of her Bangabandhu Avenue party headquarters before the beginning of the procession.

She asked the Khaleda Zia administration to step down immediately, showing respect to people's desire. She alleged that people had no confidence in the present BNP-Jamaat coalition government as it totally failed to run Bangladesh.

The demonstrators of the AL and its front organisations paraded through different city roads for hours shouting anti-government slogans and carrying banners reading 'People Don't Want the Anti-people Government Any More', 'Step Down Immediately', and 'Khaleda's quit is Our One-point Demand', while many beat drums.

The main opposition brought out the procession for the immediate resignation of the government and snap polls and unveiled protest day programmes from March 9 to March 22 across Bangladesh against what it said were repression, price hike and attack on prominent writer Humayun Azad along with the resignation.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

ALTERNATIVE STREAM B Chy to name leaders Mar 11

UNB, Dhaka

Names of the leaders of the proposed 'alternative stream' in politics led by former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury will be formally announced on March 11.

"Hopefully we will announce the names of the leaders of the proposed alternative political stream on March 11 at Muktangan, if the venue is allocated to us," said Prof. MA Mannan, a member of the national committee of the proposed platform.

Speaking at a press conference at the KC memorial clinic in Baridhara, he said, "If our desired venue is not allocated, if necessary we will

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RESERVED JS SEATS FOR WOMEN Cabinet sits today to okay quota system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to reintroduce the quota system retaining the previous provision of indirect elections to the seats reserved for women in parliament ignoring the long-held demand for a direct ballot in such seats.

A new proposal of the draft bill however has made some changes as the government planned enhancement of the number of the reserved seats to 45 or 50 from the previous 30 and proportionate distribution of

seats among the parties in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The draft bill will be placed in today's regular weekly cabinet meeting for approval.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia sat with some of her senior cabinet colleagues on Saturday for the draft of the bill.

She unveiled the plan to raise the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) seats to 450, 50 of them reserved for women, to keep pace with the rising population, at a meeting with the top four-party

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

AZAD ATTACK 10 days gone, investigators still clueless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators are still clueless about the motive for February 27 deadly machete attack on writer Humayun Azad near Bangla Academy even 10 days into the incident that critically injured his head, jaw and shoulders.

Immediately after the attack, Azad's family pointed an accusing finger at some fundamentalist quarters who had threatened the versatile author of over 50 books. But the investigators, firstly Ramna police and later the Criminal

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

2 PCJSS activists killed, 8 abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Operatives allegedly of an anti-CHT peace accord group gunned down two members of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), abducted eight others and burnt a house in a five-hour raid on a remote village in Rangamati Saturday night.

The PCJSS, a pro-CHT peace accord platform of hill people, in a press release yesterday blamed its rival United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) for the violence.

A 25-man strong UPDF gang led by Shantidev Chakma and Tapon Jyoti Chakma stormed Kurolyamura village in Naniarchar upazila at around 8:00pm.

The attackers reportedly in search of PCJSS activists found Chitra Kumar Chakma, 27, and Judhamoni Chakma, 25, shot them

point blank and left them dead instantly.

Chitra Kumar, son of Kamala Kanto Chakma and former member of Shantibahini, PCJSS's armed wing, returned to normal life after surrendering arms with the peace deal signed on December 2, 1997.

While leaving the village at 1:00am Sunday, the assault team set fire to a house and abducted eight villagers at gunpoint.

Seven of the captives are Promud Kumar Karbary, 50, Biraj Moni Chakma, 35, Kanta Chakma, 25, Probhat Kumar Chakma, 52, Shadon Moni Chakma, 45, Sumoti Ronjon Chakma, 33, and Kangsa Chakma, 65. The identity of the eighth abducted villager could not be known immediately.

The PCJSS and UPDF claimed to have lost 300 members in rival

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MPs not elected to set vehicles afire

PM criticises AL for not joining JS

UNB, Lalmonirhat

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday questioned whether an MP should set afire and vandalise vehicles on the streets instead of joining parliament sessions for which people elect him.

Criticising the Awami League (AL) MPs for not joining parliament and staging procession inside the parliament building, she urged people to tell them there is no use voting them in future as they did not go to parliament this time.

Addressing a public meeting at the Collectorate ground here Khaleda said, "Peace and discipline are of utmost necessity now but the opposition party (Awami League) is impairing these. They (AL) don't want to let us work for the country."

The BNP chairperson firmly said people voted the BNP-led alliance to power considering its election commitments, which the government is implementing in phases.

The prime minister alleged the AL is making false propaganda against the government to garner public support for its resignation.

"We want to work for people's welfare but they (AL) enforce hartal to obstruct the process," Khaleda said.

The prime minister once again warned of legal actions against anybody regardless of his political identity for damaging public wealth and creating chaos.

She said the AL men have become frustrated sensing they have no chance of coming to power

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8th March

International Women's Day

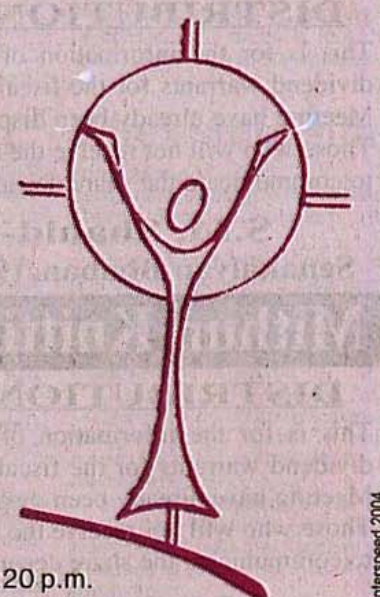
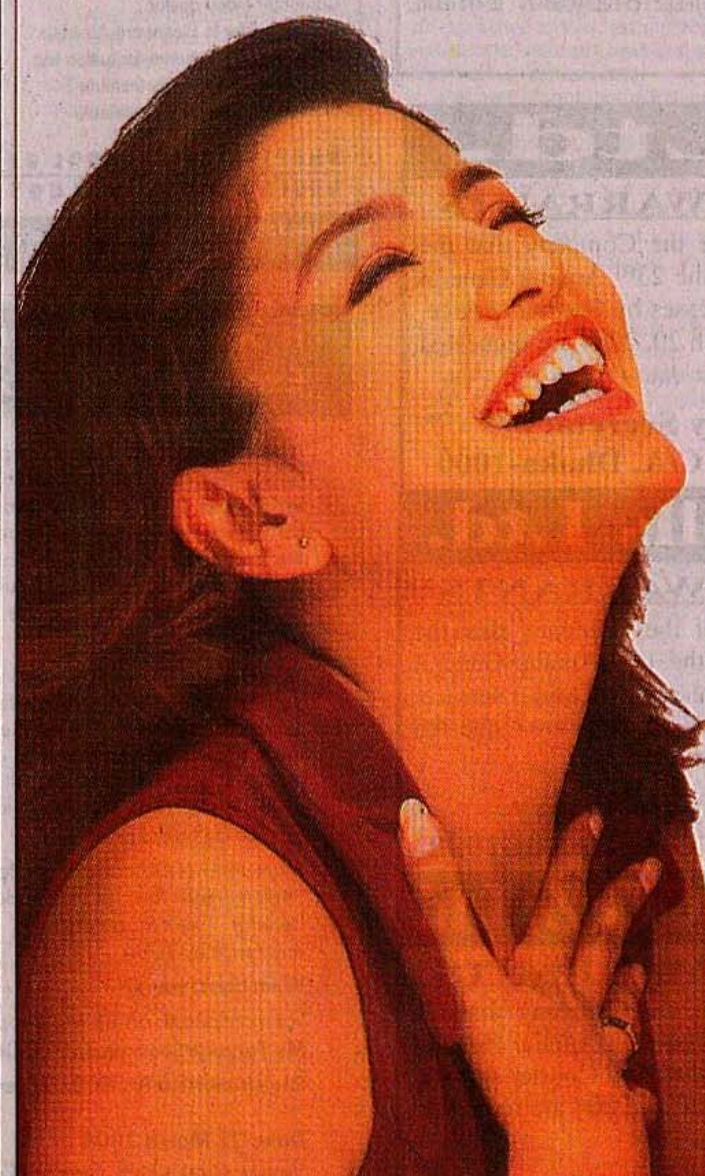
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