

JS RESERVED SEATS

Women groups slate move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samajik Protirodh Committee, a forum of 34 women organisations, yesterday at a press conference firmly rejected the approval of the government's draft bill regarding women seats in parliament and called on the opposition leader to join the parliament to speak for their demand.

Recently the cabinet approved the proposal for proportionate distribution of 45 reserved seats, up from 30, for women among the parliamentary parties, instead of direct polls.

Women rights groups in the country have long been demanding direct elections for those seats in parliament.

Addressing the press conference, held at the National Press Club, the leaders of the forum said by taking such decision the government has dishonoured the age-old

demand of the women as well as the democratic norms and values. The leaders, however, vowed to run the movement as long as their demand is met.

Aysha Khanum, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, in a written statement said leaders of different political parties, including the ruling BNP agreed to support their demand of direct polls for women seats in parliament.

"The ruling BNP in its election manifesto pledged to meet our demand. But it has violated its pledge," said Aysha at the conference.

Salma Ali, executive director, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) said, "It is our demand to the leader of the opposition to join parliament."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

New lease of life for burnt Shilpi

Philanthropists aid her treatment after The Daily Star story

DMCH CORRESPONDENT

Doctors yesterday successfully operated on severely burnt and cash-strapped Shilpi Begum, who had been writing in pain for her grave burns at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for over one and a half months.

The 22-year-old mother of a 4-year-old boy, whom she lost to a child lifter at the DMCH on February 25, suffered severe burns on January 9 while fixing lunch in the earthen cooker at her mother's home at Kotnagar Fakirpara in Dhamrai.

The life-saving operation was made possible thanks to philanthropists who came to her aid after reading her sordid story from a report run by The Daily Star on March 8.

Kazi Farms Limited, a poultry farm, first sought out Shilpi's mother Hazera Khatun at the DMCH on Monday afternoon and assured the family of financial help for the operation. The Social Welfare Department of the DMCH provided medicine worth Tk 1,500 and three bags of blood while a woman who declined to be identified gave Tk 3,000 to Shilpi's mother.

Nazma Khasru, a woman from Ramna, visited the hospital and assured Hazera of bearing the treatment cost. However, when an official of Kazi Farms told her that they were taking care of all expenses, she gave Hazera Tk 1,500 to hire a loudspeaker to announce the missing of the son, Emon, Shilpi's only child with her husband who had abandoned her for another woman.

Pakistan tests N-capable missile

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan successfully test fired yesterday an intermediate-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile that it says can reach all the cities of neighbouring India.

The Pakistani military said in a statement the surface-to-surface Shaheen II missile was tested successfully.

"The two-stage Shaheen II Missile System, which has been indigenously developed by Pakistani scientists and engineers, can carry all types of warheads up to 2,000km," it said.

There was no immediate confirmation of the capabilities of the missile, and India, which has a vigorous missile development program of its own, offered no immediate response to the news.

Pakistan says its weapons program is a response to that of nuclear-armed rival India, with which it has fought three wars since

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Workers sieve stones that rolled down the hills into the riverbed of Plain in Sylhet in monsoon. The extraction of stones is declining by the year for heavy layers of silts. PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

HC issues contempt rule against IGP

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued a rule upon the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and three other senior police officers to explain why contempt proceedings should not be drawn against them for ignoring the court order.

The rule came on a petition filed by Sheikh Wahiduzzaman, a suspended sub-inspector of police of Chittagong Kotwali Police Station.

The petitioner submitted that he was acquitted of corruption charge after departmental investigation. Despite that he was summoned to appear before the security cell in police headquarters in connection with the corruption charge.

Sheikh had challenged the order in the High Court and secured a stay order. But he was again summoned ignoring the stay order.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Azad Mancha asks govt to meet demands

DU CORRESPONDENT

Humayun Azad Mancha, a platform to protest attack on Dr Humayun Azad, yesterday asked the government to meet its 13-point set of demands immediately.

The demands include immediate arrest of the 'real attackers' on Azad, sending him abroad for treatment and resignation of the home minister.

Azad Mancha at a press conference at Madhu's Canteen at Dhaka University also demanded investigation of police atrocities on demonstrating students, release of all arrested students and leaders, and bearing medical expenses of wounded students.

The Mancha members alleged the government miserably failed to bring the assailants on the eminent writer to justice, adding it was rather trying to save the culprits by allowing law enforcers and its student wing Jatayatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to assault on the protesters.

"We urged the students to continue demonstration until our demands for protecting freethinking and resisting undemocratic forces are not met," the Mancha said in a written statement.

Azad Mancha will stage demonstration on the varsity campus today at 10:00am in front of Aparajeyo Bangla, a sculpture, and later submit a memorandum to DU Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Prayer Timings		
March 10		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-12	6-16
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation



They are child labourers, but their labour will not be counted on their own, as traders did not hire them. They work at a brick-field in Narsingdi to help their parents out. PHOTO: STAR

Tamil rebels reject amnesty offer

Uncertainty grips Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

A breakaway faction of the Tamil Tiger rebels Tuesday rejected a fresh amnesty offer to end their rift that has plunged Sri Lanka into new uncertainty over efforts to end a three-decade civil war.

The renegade regional commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) discarded the offer as "ridiculous," ending a bid by a Catholic bishop to help resolve the unprecedented split among the rebels.

ignored Tamils in eastern Sri Lanka. Diplomats here said the failure to peacefully resolve the standoff could seriously undermine Norwegian-led diplomacy to broker peace.

Norwegian special envoy Erik Solheim arrived here late Monday on a scheduled visit to review the Oslo-brokered truce between troops and the Tigers, but would have to focus on the new developments as well, diplomats said.

It was not immediately clear if Solheim would meet with Karuna, a move that would amount to recognition of his faction, but the renegade leader said he was pre-

pared to hold talks on a fresh peace accord.

The truce has been in place since February 2002, halting the Tigers' insurgency for a separate Tamil homeland that has claimed more than 60,000 lives since 1972.

Military officials in the east said that Karuna made it clear that he would hold his fire, but was not willing to recognise the ceasefire agreement between the government and his former boss, LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Speaking through his aide known only as Varadan, Karuna said he was commanding fighters in two eastern districts and would not step down

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Two Rajshahi cops held for mugging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two policemen were arrested yesterday on charge of mugging about Tk 5 lakh from a union parishad member at Puthia in Rajshahi.

Puthia police held probationary Sub-inspector Atikur Rahman and Constable Murad Hossain for allegedly taking away the cash from Abdur Rahman, a union parishad member of Monigram under Bagha upazila, on Monday.

Raiding their houses, police also recovered the looted money, they added.

They were produced before a magistrate court in the afternoon and the court sent them to jail, sources said.

The victim lodged a case with Puthia Police Station accusing that the law enforcers dragged him down from a bus at Jhalmalia and forcibly took away the money after a body search.

BANSHKHALI CARNAGE

Prime accused arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested the prime accused of the sensational Banshkhalia carnage in which 11 members of a Hindu family were burnt to death on the night of November 18 last year.

Mahbub Rashid, 30, was arrested from Bahaddarhat while he was on way to his village home at East Palwanpara in East Dnogra union of Banshkhalia upazila.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Panchlaish police nabbed Mahbub and handed him over to district police.

Mahbub's arrest raised to four the number of accused held for the gruesome killings. The others are

Abdul Karim, Mokhtar Ahmad and Nasruddin Toto alias Totaiya.

They named Mahbub as the 'main culprit,' police said.

The main accused yesterday gave some conflicting accounts of the Banshkhalia incident to journalists amid interruption by police officials.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of District Special Branch (DSB) Abdul Khaleque intervened at least thrice as Mahbub was referring to a BNP leader as one of the masterminds behind the carnage. Some other police officials also intervened as journalists asked

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Azad's health remains stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health of injured writer Humayun Azad remained stable and he was still in the intensive care unit (ICU) at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) till last night.

A medical board comprising senior specialists of Armed Forces reviewed the condition of Prof Azad, said a bulletin released by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

He wanted to take tea and when given some with a spoon, it rolled down his mouth because of bandages on his face, sources said.

Azad's family members visited him yesterday morning. "He is still unable to walk by himself and we helped him walk a bit," Azad's daughter Smita said.

Meanwhile, Md Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the Awami League (AL), said his party is ready to send Dr Azad abroad at its expense

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Krishak League leader in Ctg shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Gunmen killed a leader of Krishak League (KL), a front organisation of the main opposition Awami League, at around dawn yesterday at Raozan upazila in the district.

The victim, Ferdous Alam, 62, was president of Purba Gujara union unit of Krishak League and a businessman.

Police and witnesses said, some six gunmen came along the Ferdous' house at Andher Manik village at about 3:00am. Posing themselves as policemen, they asked Ferdous to open the door so that they could carry out a search. It aroused his suspicion and as he denied them access, the gunmen broke open a window and shot at Ferdous killing him on the spot.

His wife Noorjahan Begum filed a case.

Ferdous Alam and his wife Noorjahan participated in the last Union Parishad election at Purba Gujara.

The body was brought to the General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Hotel manager shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang yesterday shot and injured a hotel manager at Moghbazar in Ramna.

The gang went to Hotel Intercom in Moghbazar at about 11:00am and searched for hotel owner Mohammad Jahangir. They shot hotel manager Mohammad Zahid, 33, when he was coming down the stairs on the ground floor, sources said.

He was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with bullet wounds in the abdomen and right thigh, sources added.

"The criminals opened fire on me indiscriminately when I was coming downstairs from first floor of the five storied hotel," the manager said.

However, the duty officer at Ramna Police Station last night said the miscreants shot Zahid on the street in front of the hotel.

No case was filed till the writing of this report at 7:00 last evening.

Hartals for four straight days if govt doesn't quit

AL threatens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday threatened to call hartals for up to four straight days if the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia does not quit office by the end of this month.

The threat of general strikes came after police once again barred the AL from using loud-speakers during a demonstration in front of its Bangabandhu Avenue

headquarters, now ringed with barbed-wire fences.

Police hemmed in the demonstrators confining the rally to a pocket and barring them from taking out an anti-government procession.

Law enforcers allowed three other opposition parties, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Workers Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu), staging

similar anti-government demonstrations, to bring out post-rally processions.

Addressing the rally, AL leaders issued a three-day ultimatum to the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police to withdraw what they called "illegal siege" to the party's main office.

"If you don't comply with the ultimatum, we will call a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7