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PM visits tornado-hit areas

UNB, Gaibandha

Prime Minister Khaleida Zia yesterday visited the tornado-hit areas in Gaibandha and assured her government's all-out support for rehabilitation of the affected people.

She said the army already deployed in the affected areas will be distributing relief goods among the affected people so there will be no irregularity and misappropriation of relief.

"You're not alone, you are not friendless. Our government and the BNP are now with you and will be with you at the time of your distress," she told the victims of natural disaster in Naldanga and Sadullapur upazilas.

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REGISTRATION WITH EC

Main political parties ignore rules

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Political parties' registration with the Election Commission (EC) as part of the electoral reforms has turned into a pointless exercise as the major political parties have been ignoring the system since its introduction in 2001.

The EC has apparently been forced to stop the registration process due to lack of interest of the

leading parties including BNP and Awami League. Only a few small political parties have shown interest in getting registered.

Sources said rules do not allow the EC to force these major parties to be registered with it, as registration is not mandatory for the parties.

If only the small political parties get registration, the EC will face complexities in holding the next parliamentary polls when the regis-

tered parties will claim certain facilities in line with the rules.

In 2001, the EC had introduced the registration system in a bid to keep off the small political parties from contesting the national elections for better management of the polls and make the political parties accountable to the EC.

In the last four years the EC

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Kibria sisters observe token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six sisters of slain Awami League (AL) lawmaker and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday observed a token hunger strike in the capital demanding an independent international probe into the killing.

The two and a half hours hunger strike in front of the SOS Children's Village at Shyamoli drew much attention of the locals and passers-by many of whom joined the protest expressing solidarity with the demand.

Asma Kibria, widow of the slain

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The six sisters and the widow of slain Awami League MP Shah AMS Kibria stage a 150-minute token hunger strike at the city's Shyamoli demanding an independent international probe into the January 27 carnage.

Chinese PM views Dhaka visit as vital for co-op

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao yesterday said his talks with Prime Minister Khaleida Zia during his coming visit to Bangladesh will further deepen friendship and cooperation between Dhaka and Beijing.

Jiabao will arrive here on a two-day official visit on April 7 from Pakistan on the second leg of his four-nation South Asia tour.

"I am looking forward to the official visit to your country at the

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Noab worried over newsprint price hike, tax

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) has expressed grave concern at the rising price of newsprint and high level of taxes on imported newsprint.

This is contributing to the

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Notice

Tomorrow we publish a 12-page special supplement on the occasion of Independence Day to go with our regular issue.

The night the genocide began

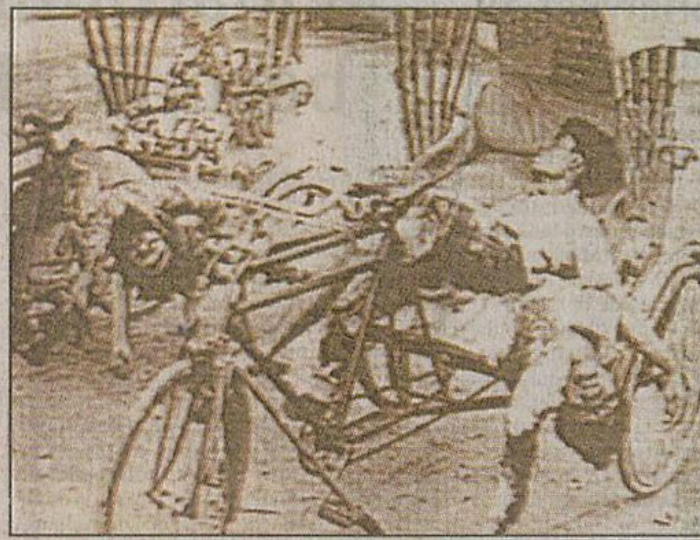
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

March 25 arrives once again evoking painful memories of a night of murder and mayhem, the beginning of the genocide of millions of Bangladeshis by the Pakistani occupation forces.

On this night in 1971, the Pakistani military rulers launched "Operation Searchlight" against the unarmed Bangladeshis. Dhaka University was attacked and students exterminated in the hundreds. Death squads roamed Dhaka streets, killing some 7,000 people in a single night.

It was to be only the beginning. On March 26, the nation waged an

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FILE PHOTO

These three innocent rickshaw-pullers were among some 7,000 people killed wantonly by Pakistani troops in Dhaka on that fateful night of March 25 in '71.

US telco evades payment to BTTB

No action taken against firm for not paying for \$4 lakh int'l calls

ABU SAEED KHAN

A US telecoms firm, aided and abetted by its powerful local allies, has evaded paying state telecoms operator Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) some \$400,000 last year, but the BTTB has not moved to get the money back.

The BTTB has not reported the matter to the telecoms ministry either, nor has it taken any action to

realise the dues with the US telecoms carrier.

According to a BTTB report, its board signed an international telecommunications service operating agreement with Intra Global Communications, Inc. (IGC) of New York, USA on April 12, 2004. The agreement stipulates that the IGC send monthly minimum 600,000 minutes of calls from USA and settle

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BNP leaders in election mode

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ministers, MPs and senior leaders of the ruling BNP have started making hectic visits to their constituencies and are making public contacts keeping the next general election in sight.

Party insiders said Prime Minister Khaleida Zia has not taken victory in the next national polls for granted and has asked party leaders including ministers and MPs to go to their constituencies and make sure the party is on a strong footing.

Khaleida, also BNP chief, herself

has been holding more than a dozen public meetings in each month across the country for the last few months.

They said though the next general election is far off, the BNP high-ups are convinced that the party may well brace for a polls debacle if the ministers, MPs and party leaders confine their activities to the capital.

BNP sources said ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers have frequented their respective districts and constituencies in the last one month in the wake of complaints at

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