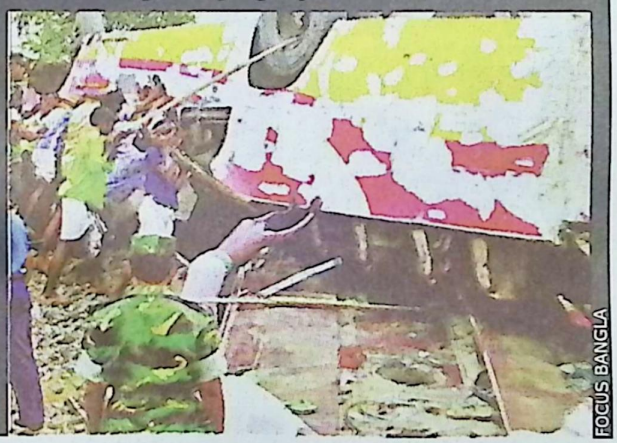

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Committee controversy

The recommendations by an ulema committee formed to review the proposed national women development policy are widely condemned as unconstitutional. The ulema review committee is formed amid hard line opposition to the women's policy by some Islamist parties and headed by the acting khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. In its report handed to the government, the committee recommends deletion of six sections of the policy and amendment of 15 others for going against provisions of the Quran and Sunnah. Critics point out that the committee is unable to pinpoint any actual Quranic provision that the policy contravenes.

Bus tragedies

In Tangail, two fatal bus accidents leave over 35 people dead and dozens injured in the space of just three days and within 5km of each other. On April 16, an inter-city train rams a bus at Rajbari level crossing in Kalahati, killing 17 and injuring 25. On April 19, another bus skids off the road and falls onto the rail line at Jamuna Bridge, killing 18 and injuring 55 passengers who say the bus driver was "drowsy" while driving at very high speed.


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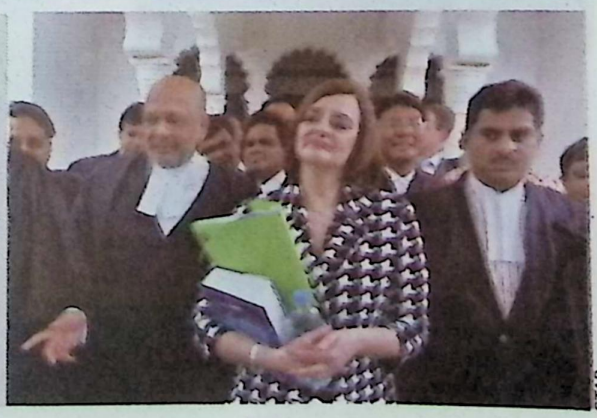

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BNP brouhaha

After sitting "informally" with both BNP factions the Election Commission gives BNP an ultimatum to unite for talks on electoral reform, saying it may otherwise wrap up its dialogue process without the divided party's input. Nevertheless, following the High Court verdict on the original EC-BNP invitation, the commission finally sits with the Saifur-led faction for dialogue. April marks a year since the EC began the process of electoral reform dialogue, starting with civil society representatives and completing two rounds of talks with 17 political parties, not including BNP.

Cherie comes to town

Cherie Blair, wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, arrives in Bangladesh on a three-day visit. As a barrister, she acts as a consultant to Sheikh Hasina's legal team, visiting the Supreme Court to observe proceedings in a graft case against the detained former prime minister. Blair expresses her concern over Hasina's detention and says she hopes for the application of human rights principles enshrined in Bangladesh's constitution in all judicial proceedings.


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