ating a situation which will make the government unable to function properly. The acute political unrest will benefit the opposition. A number of senior BNP leaders have earlier told this correspondent that they have planned to do what the present AL did in 1996 and at the end of 2006, and also early January 2007 against the then BNP-led government and the Iajuddin Ahmed-led caretaker government. On both occasions, the AL had waged violent street agitations by enforcing dozens of hartals, road blockade and siege, making the then governments unable to keep the situation under control.

Army Saves the Day?

In the third world countries where democracy is fragile, armed forces, particularly the army, play a crucial role in shaping political developments. The political forces also take into consideration the role of the army, the most organised and disciplined force in the country. When the country plunges into a political crisis, the army intervenes to save the day.

But sometimes, politicians also take the strategy to use the army for their political purpose. It is interesting to see how both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her archrival Khaleda Zia have been urging the army to play a 'role to save the country's democracy'.

Addressing the Generals Conference of Bangladesh Army at Dhaka Cantonment on February 3 this year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the senior army officials to resist any anti-democratic and anti-constitutional activity for the continuation of the country's development.

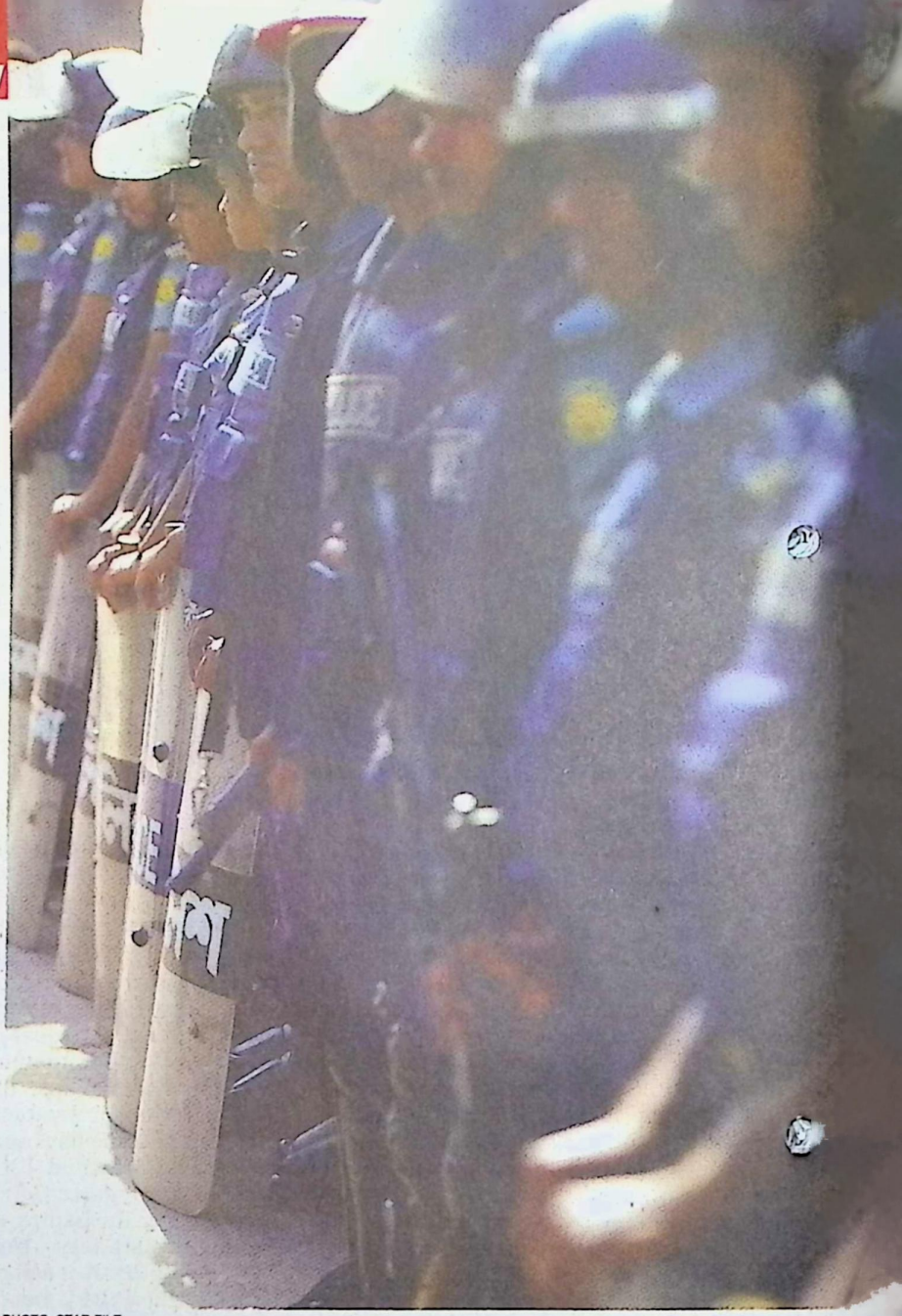


PHOTO: STAR FILE

Readying themselves for battle.

"Stay alert so that no vested quarter can disrupt the country's forward march riding over the army's back. I hope you'll resist any anti-democratic and anti-constitutional activity with your all-out strength," said, Hasina, who also holds the defence portfolio.

Hasina's remark was unprecedented. It was also surprising to many, how an elected Prime Minister could speak this way. By making such remarks didn't she invite the army to play a role in the country's politics? Her remarks might not have been warmly welcomed by the army which has now become more professional than before. But