

## Bus fares go up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday increased bus fare by 16 per cent. The new fare for minibuses is Tk 0.75 a kilometer and Tk 0.72 for large buses against the previous Tk 0.65 and Tk 0.62.

The fare re-fixing committee okayed the increases at a meeting yesterday at the conference room of the communication ministry. Communication Minister Nazmul Huda chaired it.

The meeting also decided to make it mandatory for all three-wheelers plying the city roads to have fare meters from tomorrow. The autorickshaws namely Mishuk will get two more months to install meters.

Earlier, the Bangladesh Road Transport Association demanded a 40 per cent increase in fare against a 14 per cent fuel price hike. The

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## Dhaka mulls border trip for diplomats to see push-ins

### BDR foils more BSF attempts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry may take foreign diplomats to border areas to show them the 'ground reality', if the Indian attempts to push its nationals into Bangladesh persist.

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) tried to push in some 150 people late last night.

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) foiled the attempts on the Jessore Anjulia border at around 4:30am yesterday, BDR sources said.

The scheduled flag meeting between the BDR and the BSF was not held as the Indians did not turn up.

Bangladesh wants to put an end to India's repeated push-in bids through diplomatic channel, Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin

Chowdhury said at a weekly press briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday.

"Our mission in New Delhi has been asked to raise the issue with the Indian authorities," Chowdhury added.

About New Delhi's denial of any push-in, Chowdhury said the BSF has so far made about 30 push-in attempts.

"The ground reality is completely different from the New Delhi's claim. How can they deny when evidence is there?"

He said there is a laid-down procedure between Bangladesh and India based on mutual understanding to deal with any illegal staying in any of the countries. "We want India to maintain that procedure in dealing with illegal immi-

g r a n t s , if any."

About the reported deployment of army by India along the border, Chowdhury said he was not informed but read it in newspapers.

On the Indian Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani's remarks on Bangladesh, made in France, he said it is a violation of the third country rule and the matter was brought to the attention of the French authorities.

The BSF has been trying to push Bangla-speaking people into Bangladesh since January 22.

The BDR sent four protest letters to the BSF and asked for a flag meeting. But these attempts went into vain.

## Rajuk to sue officials for missing files

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajuk will soon be filing criminal cases with four police stations for the loss of hundreds of building construction plans from its archive, sources said.

A top Rajuk official said, currently they were not naming anyone as accused. However, on filing the cases, the police would investigate to identify the culprits.

Following the disappearance of about 200 files, the Rajuk Board members approved the decision to file criminal cases. An organised gang of engineers, architects, bureaucrats and petty officials are believed to be involved in the scam, top Rajuk officials alleged.

The files went missing from the Rajuk archive to suppress the evidence of irregularities regarding approval of high-rise and other buildings in the city.

Sources said in most cases whenever Rajuk's top officials were required to investigate a building violating various construction rules, most of the files could not be found in the archive.

When Rajuk confiscated plans retained by building owners, the

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## Donors for joint watch on NGOs

### Objection to proposals for service charge, registration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Donors want a role if the government keeps a watch on the non-government organisations (NGOs) for 'political links'.

They also objected to the government's intention to impose 1 per cent service charge on NGO fund.

The views were expressed at a meeting yesterday with a cabinet committee to discuss a proposed national policy for the NGOs.

The donors agreed that NGO activities should be monitored to get to know whether their funds are being used for political purposes, but said the watch should be from both sides.

"We want donors' participation in the monitoring," one of the donor representatives told the meeting.

The cabinet committee is now at the final stage of formulating a national NGO policy. In its 17-point proposal, the committee suggested imposition of service charge on foreign grants and monitoring of 'political activities' of NGOs.

Donors viewed that imposition of service charge would discourage them from channelling funds to Bangladesh. They said this amounts to imposition of tax on assistance.

The cabinet committee members however argued that the proposal was made in line with the existing NGO regulations.

One of the donor representatives then asked the government to explain how it defines the NGOs.

The government said the charge would not be applicable to international donors and is meant for the local NGOs.

The government also claimed that the proposal requiring NGOs to obtain certificates from the district administrations to get funds released from the NGO Affairs Bureau has been made to bring transparency in the NGO activities. However, donors opposed the proposal.

Later, the government said it would review the donors' objections.

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## Inflation to rise on fuel, water price hikes

### ADB report says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inflation is set to rise in the coming months on the back of fuel price and water tariff hikes, says the Asian Development Bank.

Prices of non-food items have continued to climb, up to 6.8 per cent in November from 6.4 per cent in September due to higher utility prices.

Although rice prices remained at a relatively high but stable level, prices of vegetables came down due to the increased availability of winter crop, the ADB said in its latest Quarterly Economic Update (QEU) released yesterday.

Point-to-point inflation has decreased marginally from a yearly high of 4.7 per cent in September 2002 to 4.6 per cent in November as the food price index moderated to 3.4 per cent from 3.8 per cent during this period.

"Inflation remains at almost the same level but the trend is upwards. If you visit the market, you will find about 20 per cent increase in com-

modity prices in three months," said Toru Shibuchi, country director of the ADB, at a briefing at the bank's conference room.

According to the QEU, the economy appears to be recovering from last year's slump.

Due to a steady growth in agriculture and recovery in exports, GDP growth in FY03 is likely to increase to 5.2 per cent from 4.4 per cent in FY02, it mentioned.

The industry is likely to perform strongly if exports remain buoyant and the domestic constraints solved, the QEU added.

Although the aman crop may have been affected by adverse weather, manufacturing output has picked up strongly. And the aus crop production is likely to meet the target, it said.

"Higher current prices may also act as an incentive for the boro crop in the face of a likely increase in irrigation cost due to the recent hike

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## Police swoop on Jubo League procession, 40 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police swooped on a procession of Jubo League at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday evening, leaving about 40 leaders and activists injured.

The injured included newly elected Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak, General Secretary Mirza Azam MP, BCL President Liaqot Sikder and Shechhasebak League leader Pankaj Debnath.

The youth front of the Awami League (AL) brought out the procession demanding immediate resignation of the four-party alliance government and in protest against graft charges against AL chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in MIG-29 purchase case.

Witnesses said breaking police barricade in front of the AL central office, the procession started marching ahead in the evening. Police resorted to baton charge as Jubo League activists hurled bricks at them when the procession reached near Peer Yameni Market.

Chasing the fleeing AL and Jubo

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PHOTO: AFP

A policeman kicks an Awami League (AL) activist inside the party headquarters on the Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday. At least ten activists, including women, were injured after police kicked and beat stone-throwing AL activists who protested the corruption charge against their leader Sheikh Hasina.

## Mob beats four to death

### Fleeing muggers shoot 2 guards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged extortionist and three suspected robbers were beaten to death in separate incidents in Tikatuli in the capital and Munshiganj yesterday.

Nadim, 28, along with a few others, robbed the manager of the Madonna Hotel in Tikatuli of Tk 4,000 after they had lunch there at about 2:00pm.

The gang then went to the Motaleb Mansion a block away and demanded money from a trader of the market, threatening him with death.

The trader with back-up from others started chasing the gang. Meanwhile, Mujib, security guard of the market, blew his whistle and a large number of people joined the chase.

The mob caught Nadim before he could flee with other extortionists and beat him to death.

The extortionists opened fire, leaving one Shahidul Islam Liton and Abdur Rahman, another guard, injured. They were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The body of Nadim was sent to the Mitford Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Police recovered a cell phone and 24 bullets from the spot.

A mob killed three robbers in Baoshir village in Sirajdikhan Upazila, Munshiganj, in the early hours of yesterday, reports UNB.

Up to 15 robbers stormed into the house of one Mohammad Hawlader at 2.30am and looted Tk 10,600 and gold ornaments.

A young man sneaked out of the house and informed people at the nearby mosque about the robbery.

As the mosque loudspeaker blared out alarm, villagers rushed out of their homes and caught three of the robbers. The mob beat them to death.

However, other gang members fled the village with loots.

The identity of the bandits, aged between 30 and 38, could not be known immediately. Police recovered a rifle used by the robbers.

A case was filed with the Sirajdikhan Police Station.

## SHAZNEEN CASE

### Brother-in-law's statement recorded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Arshadul Haq, fifth prosecution witness in the Shazneen case and husband of the victim's sister, gave his deposition before court yesterday.

Kazi Rahamat Ullah, Judge of the Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, recorded the deposition for one and a half hours.

The witness was then cross-examined by the lawyer of principal accused in the case Shahidul Islam alias Shahid.

Arshad identified all the six accused --Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- in the dock.

The court then adjourned the hearing till February 2.

In his deposition, Arshad said that on April 6, 1998, he and his brother-in-law Waqar Hossain (husband of another sister of the victim) went to Marina Tea Garden at Kulaura in Sylhet. His wife, wife's elder sister Simeen Hossain, their children and Shazneen had already gone there on April 2.

At about 10 am on April 7, Shazneen told them that a serious incident had taken place on April 1 at their Gulshan residence in Dhaka.

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