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## Proposal to raise gas price to be placed before Cabinet soon

**Star Report**

The proposal to increase gas prices by 31 per cent from this month is likely to be placed in the Cabinet meeting next week, sources said.

The government plans to gradually increase the current gas tariff by 60 per cent by the end of this year. The last time the government increased this tariff was in 1994.

Gas price hike would lead to inflation as all industrial and agricultural products would become costlier, economists say.

One of the main reasons to increase the gas price by such a high margin is to minimise the government's loss due to gas purchase from multinational Cairn at a higher rate than the local gas sale price from this month.

Cairn will start supplying 100 million cubic feet of gas per day from the Sangu field. As per the Gas Purchase Sales Agreement (GPSA), the government will buy Cairn's off-shore gas at 92.75 per cent of the price of the High Sulphur Fuel Oil (HSFO) in the international market (which is the formula to calculate international price of gas). According to that calculation, government will buy Cairn's gas at 2.6 dollars per thousand cubic feet or per unit. The current domestic price of gas is only 1.2 dollars per unit.

## DCC yet to take over Osmany Udyan

**By Staff Correspondent**

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) was yet to take over the Osmany Udyan where more than two acres of land was occupied by a group of people claiming its ownership last week.

The actual owner, Public Works Department (PWD), was supposed to hand over the city park to DCC after the sudden occupation. DCC sources said the process of handover would take a 'day or two' because the city corporation wanted to take it over as per the original land index.

Following the occupation by the group who had put up a signboard saying that they were acting on the basis of a court order, police moved in to evict them.

DCC officials said once they take over the ownership they would fight the case in court.

## Govt spreading propaganda thru' Radio, TV: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has accused the present government of spreading propaganda through electronic media, reports UNB.

But during our rule, we did not hanker after publicity. Unlike them, we believe in deeds and welfare of the people," she said.

Pointing to activities of the government leaders, Begum Zia said they are trying to take credit by cutting ribbons of the unfinished work initiated by the BNP regime.

Speaking at a civic reception accorded to her by Jamalpur pourasava on Saturday, the opposition leader alleged that the ruling party, instead of doing any work, is engaged in spreading propaganda through radio and television.

The former prime minister

## City BNP rally in support of Apr 2 programme

Dhaka city unit of BNP yesterday demonstrated at different wards to drum up support in favour of its April 2 sit-in programme in front of Dhaka WASA, reports UNB.

The processions, led by BNP-backed ward commissioners and ward unit leaders, paraded the city streets protesting the price hike of gas, water, electricity and essentials, and repression on women and children and "propaganda" on TV.

**Inside Today**

**Article**

**Stern measures alone are not sufficient for combating sex crimes**

Column: Currents and Crosscurrents by CAF Dowlah

Page 4

**Supplement**

A two-page supplement on 'Electronic Goods and Home Appliances'

Pages 8 & 9

# Drive to check pilferage, cut system loss

## Army deployed in power plants

**By M Anwarul Haq**

Army has been deployed in at least 20 of the 25 power stations of the country for monitoring and checking electricity pilferage, according to official sources.

The deployment of army began after the setting up of a power monitoring cell under the Armed Forces Division in the Prime Minister's Office. The deployment operations, which began on March 29, have been completed yesterday in all the power stations in the country which are presently operational and now numbers around 20. In Dhaka and its suburbs, army has been posted at the Siddhirganj, Ghorasal and Haripur power stations.

In most cases, an Army officer with a contingent of troops have been posted at the operational power plants for the purposes of monitoring and supervision.

It was learnt that the Power Cell in conjunction with the Armed Forces Division are chalking out emergency plans for disconnecting illegal connections and reducing pilferage to cut-down the systems loss.

The plans under consideration include using magisterial powers for making spot decisions for punishing all types of offenders. Besides, a new power load management policy will be implemented immediately after Eid for restoring uninterrupted domestic power supply by closing all shopping centres by dusk and cutting off power supply for unproductive purposes, the sources said.

See Page 12 Col 3

## BNP stages walkout alleging violation of rule by Speaker

**By Staff Correspondent**

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday plunged into an uproar over a remark by the Speaker followed by a debate between top leaders of the Treasury and Opposition benches soon after the Prime Minister's Question Time.

BNP lawmakers who charged Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury with violating a rule on raising supplementary queries, also staged an angry walkout shortly after they joined the proceedings.

The Speaker, however, repeatedly denied the BNP allegation and charged the party lawmakers with misquoting the relevant rule and his statement as well.

The BNP legislators remained absent from the proceedings of the House during the first 30 minutes of the one-hour PM's question-answer session on the ground that they were not allowed to put starred questions and supplementaries to the Prime Minister on Tuesdays.

At the end of PM's Question Time on Tuesday last, the BNP had also walked out of the House, alleging that they were not given the chance to ask questions to the PM.

As the sitting resumed at 10.35 am yesterday, there was only one BNP MP in the House. He also left the House shortly afterwards.

The PM's Question Time over, the BNP legislators joined the proceedings and some of them sought the floor to make supplementaries to Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed who was replying for the Education Minister. Of them, Ruhul Kudus Talukdar Dulu was given the floor. Then more BNP members also tried to draw the Speaker's attention in their bid to get the floor.

The uproar started when the Speaker told the BNP MPs that he would first entertain questions from those in his list who drew his attention (during BNP's absence) and then allow the BNP members.

All the BNP lawmakers then sprang on their feet and started shouting at the top of their voice. At that time, Dr. Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain was the lone BNP member in the first row of the Opposition bench.

After noisy protests in the House for some time, the BNP members staged an angry walkout at about 11:40 am.

Briefing newsmen at the lobby later BNP lawmaker Dr. Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain viewed that the Speaker could not make a list of persons for making supplementary questions in advance before any starred question was answered.

He also alleged that the Speaker had showed the same "partiality" on Tuesday last by not giving chance to BNP lawmakers to ask supplementaries.

See Page 12 Col 3

## Bill on women, child repression soon

### Offenders often take advantage of loopholes in '95 Act: PM

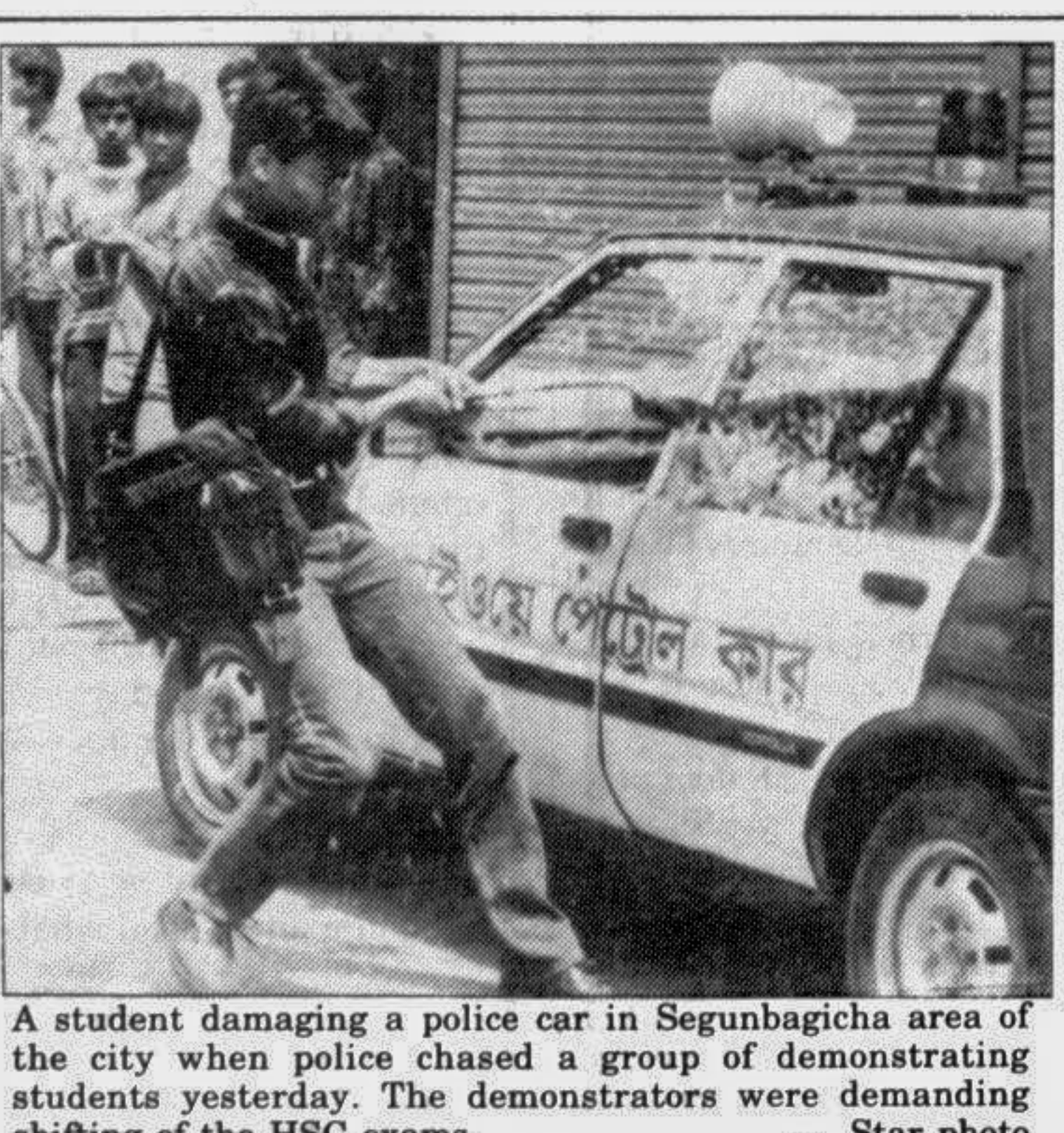
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that a provision has been kept in the proposed bill on woman and child repression for punishment to those who will file false cases, report agencies.

Replying to a supplementary during the PM's question-hour session she said the provision of punishment has been kept to save the innocent people from harassment.

The Prime Minister said the government has decided to plug the loopholes in the existing Woman and Child Repression Act of 1995 and make the law flawless and more effective. A bill in this regard will be placed in parliament soon.

In reply to Panna Kaiser (AL), she said the government is aware of the crimes against women and children.

The Prime Minister said that a number of laws are there



A student damaging a police car in Segunbagicha area of the city when police chased a group of demonstrating students yesterday. The demonstrators were demanding shifting of the HSC exams. — Star photo

## Children, women rescued in Bangalore return today

**By Special Correspondent**

Seventeen children and five women, who were rescued by Indian police in Bangalore on their way to the Gulf states allegedly for use as camel jockeys and 'sex slaves' are coming back home tonight.

The children's age ranges from two to eight.

Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Samity (BJMAS) has arranged their repatriation from a prison in Bangalore, with the help of Bangladesh High Commission in India. Samity sources said last night.

Eleven men, said to be Bangladeshis, some are suspected to be the traffickers are also being deported by the Indian authorities. They were part of the group of children and women.

The women claimed themselves to be mothers of the children.

The men are being brought to be Benapole border outpost to be handed over to the Bangladesh police on Thursday. They claimed they were also lured by traffickers on the promise of jobs in the Gulf states.

They are likely to be interrogated in a bid to screen out suspected traffickers among them, BJMAS sources said.

Ms Rama Debarata, a teacher of Delhi and convener of Stop Trafficking Oppression and Prostitution of Children, is accompanying the children and the women.

Earlier, she played a key role in rescuing a group of eleven

See Page 12 Col 6

## Payment of old age allowance from May next

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that payment of old age allowance to deserving persons in the country is expected to start from May next, report agencies.

Replying to a question from Dharendra Nath Saha (AL-Narail), the prime minister said taka fifty crore has been earmarked in the budget of the current fiscal for launching this scheme.

Hasina told the House that the government is determined to free the country from the curse of illiteracy by 2006.

In reply to Dr Md Rustam Ali Farazi (JP), Hasina said a new education policy is now at the final stage.

She also informed the JS that the government has fixed a target of disbursing Tk 247.75 crore as loans to youths under the self-employment generation scheme.

The money will be disbursed

See Page 12 Col 2

## HSC candidates go on rampage in city, damage 25 vehicles

**By Staff Correspondent**

A group of HSC candidates went on a rampage in front of the National Press Club yesterday afternoon and damaged at least 25 vehicles.

Police arrested ten students on charges of damaging the vehicles from the spot soon after incident. They are likely to be produced in the CMM's court today, police said.

Witnesses said more than 50 students of different colleges in the city brought out a procession demanding shifting of the HSC examination which is scheduled to begin on May 28 this year.

When the processionists reached in front of the Press Club at about noon, police tried to resist them from holding a rally there. At one stage police chased them and used batons to

See Page 12 Col 4

## Violence during workers' barricade: 20 hurt in Ctg

Stray incidents of violence marked the country-wide day-long industrial strike and railroad barricade programme called by the jute and textile workers' yesterday, reports UNB.

Patkal Sramik-Karmachari Federation, Suta-Bastrakal Sramik Federation and Bastra Shilpa Sramik League jointly enforced the programme demanding formation of the fifth wages commission and immediate implementation of their eight point demands.

The programme was partially observed as many mills at Adamjee, Tongi, Khulna and other parts of the country continued production during the strike call.

Trade union sources claimed production in Dhaka Jute Mills, Chan Jute Mills, Karim Lal Bawani Jute Mills, Narsingdi UNC Mills, Sirajgarj Kamwi Jute Mills, Chittagong Amin Jute Mills was totally stopped due to the strike.

At Postagola in Dhaka, the workers came under police attack at about 9 am when they were trying to raise barricade on Dhaka-Mowa highway near the Buriganga Bridge.

Police charged batons on the workers and dispersed them.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong adds: At least 20 persons including three police personnel were injured during clashes between rival workers at Oxygen Crossing and Aturar Depot areas in the city.

The injured were admitted to hospital and private clinics for treatment.

Police said a series of cocktails exploded when a group of anti-strike workers of Amin Jute Mills tried to remove the barricade by jute mill workers

See Page 12 Col 6

## Minister tells JS Police investigating Mar 24 incident at Jatrabari

Home Minister Rafiqul Islam yesterday told the House that police are investigating the March 24 incident at Jatrabari from which Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia escaped a possible accident, reports BSS.

Rafiq told the House that a truck was about to hit the jeep of Begum Zia in Jatrabari area when she was going to Narayanjan to attend a party meeting. The police on duty instantly arrested the driver on charges of reckless driving.

Police have filed a case and the matter is now under investigation," the minister said. "I want to inform the Jatiya Sangsad that all measures have been taken to ensure the security of the Leader of the Opposition," he added.

## Indemnity Ordn had no legal basis: AG

Attorney General K S Nabi in the Supreme Court yesterday submitted that the Indemnity Ordinance of 1975, now repealed was promulgated by the usurper of power and hence had no legal basis, reports UNB.

Initiating arguments in the hearing of appeal against the High Court judgement that declared valid the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Act of 1996, Barrister Nabi contended that Khandokar Mushtaque Ahmed had proclaimed martial law to usurp the power.

The full bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice A T M Afzal, Justice Mustafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice Abdur Rouf and Justice Burendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury heard the submission of the Attorney General.

Barrister Nabi said that Khandokar Mushtaque Ahmed had proclaimed martial law on August 20, 1975 giving retrospective effect was neither commander of the army,

## 'Decision on political cases soon'

# Ban on holding public meeting at Manik Mia Avenue goes

**By Staff Correspondent**

The government yesterday lifted the restriction on holding of rallies at the Manik Mia Avenue in the city as part of a deal signed with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party last month.

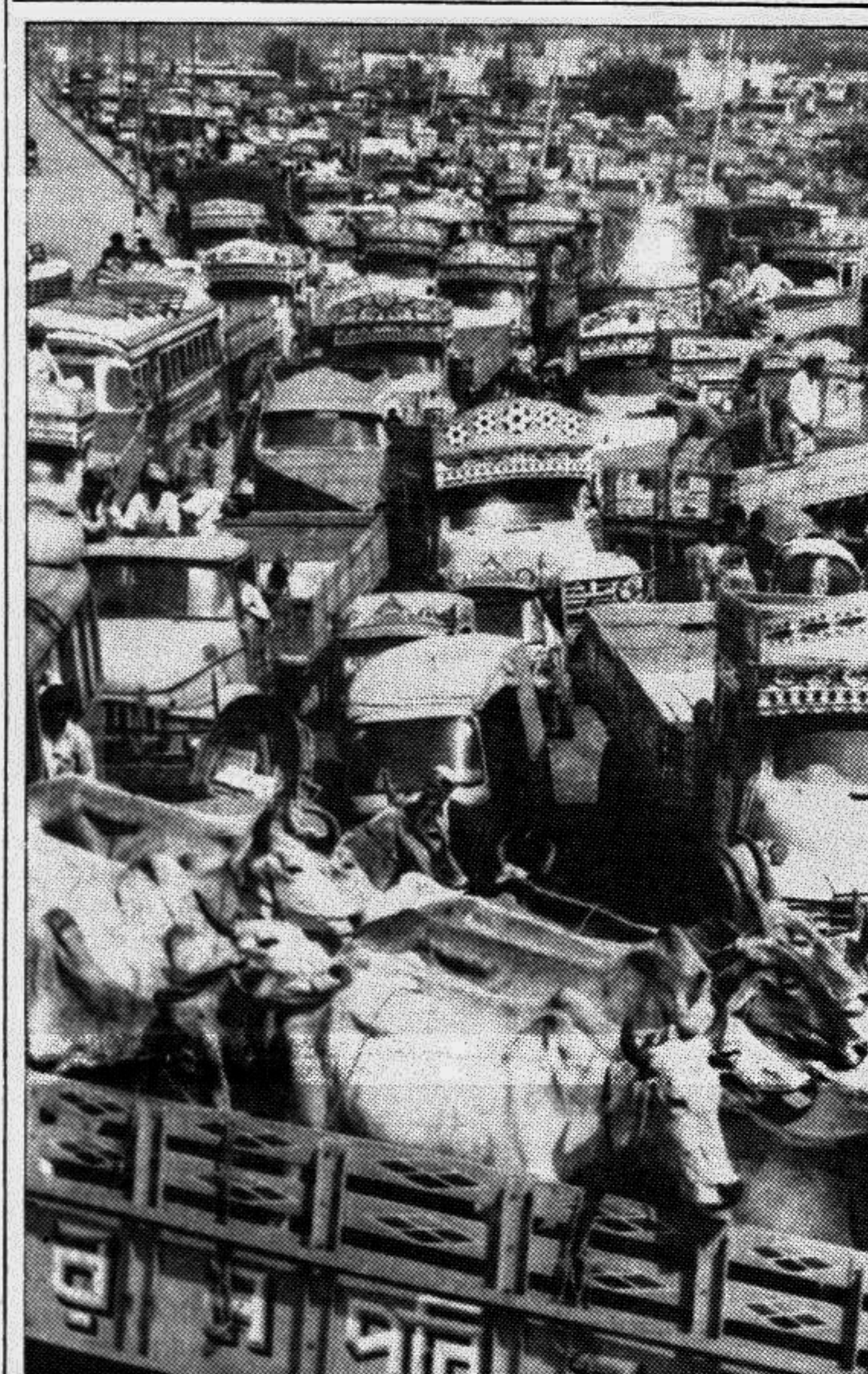
The announcement came from Public Works and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim who had substantially contributed to the signing of the deal that made the opposition party return to the Jatiya Sangsad on March 8, ending a six-month boycott.

"Let me announce on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that Manik Mia Avenue will remain open for holding political rallies from now on," Nasim said in parliament referring to the four-point accord signed with BNP on March 2 last.

With the announcement, the government fulfilled one of its obligations in the agreement, although the announcement was supposed to be made by March 17 last. Dhaka City Corporation had imposed a ban on street rallies in the city a few months back.

Meanwhile, the government side informed the Opposition Chief Whip at a meeting last night that the Home Ministry

See Page 12 Col 8



As Eid-ul-Azha is drawing nearer, trucks carrying cattle for the Gabtoli market are creating heavy traffic jam on the Mirpur Road. — Star photo

## Young man found dead

**By Staff Correspondent**

A young man, aged about 30, was found dead beside a lake at Nawaberbagh under Mirpur thana in the city yesterday.

The unidentified body had severe injury marks, police said.

Local people found the body on the slope of the Beribadh in the morning.

After being informed, police recovered the body, wearing a full sleeve shirt and jeans trousers, at about 8 am.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

None, however, was arrested till last night in this connection. A murder case was lodged with Mirpur thana in this regard.

## BUETTA demands removal of 15 resigning teachers

**By DU Correspondent**

The BUETTA Teachers' Association (BUETTA) yesterday demanded removal of the 15 teachers of the Architecture Department for what it said defying the decisions of the Syndicate and the Academic Council of the university and propagating fabricated stories against the teachers and the Academic Council.

The demand was made at a meeting of the BUETTA held on Monday with President of BUETTA Dr Abdur Razzak Akhand in the chair, said a press release yesterday.

The 15 teachers had resigned protesting the new admission rules of the department. The crisis arising out of the new admission rules was however resolved and admission tests were held according to the new rules after the Prime Minister and the Education Minister interfered. The fifteen teachers later withdrew their en masse resignation letter.

The BUETTA meeting also urged the university authorities to declare architects Majharul Islam and Rabul Hossain and Iqbal persona non grata on the BUET campus for their "interference" in the academic activities.

See Page 12 Col 5

## Bangabandhu Murder Case

# Farooq had made a statement confessing his role: IO

The investigation officer in Bangabandhu murder case yesterday told the trial court that accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq Rahman made a statement to him confessing his role in killing President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports UNB.

The forwarding report to produce accused Farooq before the court was sent on December 19, 1996 with my signature, where I mentioned that he made a confessional statement to me," said ASP Abdur Kahhar Akhand during the cross-examination by the defence.

Akhand, the prosecution witness 61 in the case, denied a defence suggestion that he himself made the confessional statement and showed it under section 161.

He also denied that Farooq's statement under section 164 was a duplicate of the statement under section 161.

Replying to advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, the counsel for principal accused Syed Farooq Rahman, the witness agreed that Farooq's service file was not recorded, but was reviewed.

Replying to a question regarding the then 16 Bengal Infantry unit located at Joydevpur, the witness said he was not confirmed that when the unit was staying during the August 15 carnage.

However, he said most officers and jawans of 16 Bengal were outside the unit on the day of August 14, but returned at night.

"Amin Ahmed Chowdhury was made Commanding Officer and sent to Joydevpur a day after the incident. But I didn't get such information that he came back as he could not join," Akhand said denying a suggestion.

Replying to a query from advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, the witness said he didn't visit Joydevpur cantonment for investigation of the case, but interrogated one person of the infantry unit.

Asked whether he sought a list of officers in Joydevpur during the incident, Kahhar Akhand told the court that he sought the list of all concerned of 46 Brigade in Dhaka. "Joydevpur unit was under the 46 Brigade."

The witness said in a forwarding report, he had said that the involvement of Naik (ret'd) Sheikh M Yunus Ali and Abu

See Page 12 Col 4

## One killed as AL, BNP clash in Narsingdi

**NARSINGDI, Mar 31:** A clash between Awami League and BNP supporters at Sheikh Bazar in Monohardi thana today left a man killed and 12 people injured, reports UNB.

The identity of the victim could not be known immediately.

Police said the clash took place at about 6:30 pm when BNP supporters from a procession chanted slogans against Minister Noor Uddin Khan.

The injured were admitted to Monohardi thana health complex.

Additional police have been deployed as tension was mounting in the area.

No case was filed till filing of the report at about 11 pm.

## Wife allegedly beaten to death

**By Staff Correspondent**

A 20-year-old housewife was allegedly beaten to death by her husband and other relatives at South Jatrabari under Demra thana in the city yesterday.

Police identified the dead as Shiuli, daughter of Abdul Malek. The father of the victim claimed that his daughter's condition became critical after she was beaten up by her husband, Alamgir, brother-in-law and mother-in-law at their residence at about 12 noon.

As she became unconscious, Shiuli was rushed to the DMCH where the doctors declared her dead at about 1:30 pm. The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Meanwhile, relatives of her husband told our DMCH correspondent that Shiuli committed suicide by hanging herself inside her room following a feud with her husband yesterday morning.

Police arrested Halima Khatun, mother-in-law of Shiuli in this connection yesterday. Alamgir and his brother have been absconding since the incident. The body was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Father of the victim filed a murder case with Demra thana in this regard.

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See Page 12 Col 5

## Last Hajj flight leaves for Jeddah

The last Hajj flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines for non-ballotee pilgrims left Dhaka for Jeddah yesterday, reports UNB.

With this, Biman carried a total of 9,008 non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims with 28 flights that began on March 10, said a press release yesterday.

Biman also carried 8,040 ballotee Hajj pilgrims this year operating 23 ballotee Hajj flights from March 3 to 22.

The return Hajj flights of Biman for both ballotee and non-ballotee Hajj pilgrims will begin on April 12.