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# Coordinated efforts a must to address arsenic problem

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday called for coordinated efforts to address arsenic contamination in groundwater.

They said that all efforts would go down the drain if the problem is not addressed collectively.

The views came at a seminar titled, "Arsenic in Groundwater: Searching for Alternatives to Rural Water Supply", organised by NGO Forum at BRAC centre.

The speakers said it was time that experiences and lessons learnt from dialogues are shared to solve problems effectively. They also urged upon the relevant organisations to launch more investigation and expand areas of research.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman who was the chief guest said, "In the face of the problem, the government alone cannot solve the crisis. In this regard, coordination between government and NGOs is essential to help carry out more research and find alternatives for safe water supply in the affected areas."

He said the government has launched three projects to ensure arsenic-free water supply in urban and rural areas.

Executive Director of NGO Forum SMA Rashid said, "Although we have achieved remarkable success in rural water supply over the last three decades, we now face even bigger challenge — the emergence of excessive arsenic in groundwater."

He said, "A national policy with focus on increasing use of surface water should be implemented. We should also focus on efforts on building awareness. For this, political commitment from the government is important."

In his speech as special guest, The Daily Star Editor

## Beximco plea

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Justice Ebadul Huq of Court-6 on Thursday last referred the matter to the Chief Justice for passing necessary order.

Earlier, following objection from the defence lawyers, Court Number-23 of the HC felt embarrassed to hear the case, which later went before the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice then sent the case to Court-6 for hearing.

Hearing of the case will begin in the court of Justice Ebadul Huq today.

Rafique-ul-Huq yesterday informed the court that he would not appear as Beximco lawyer in this case.

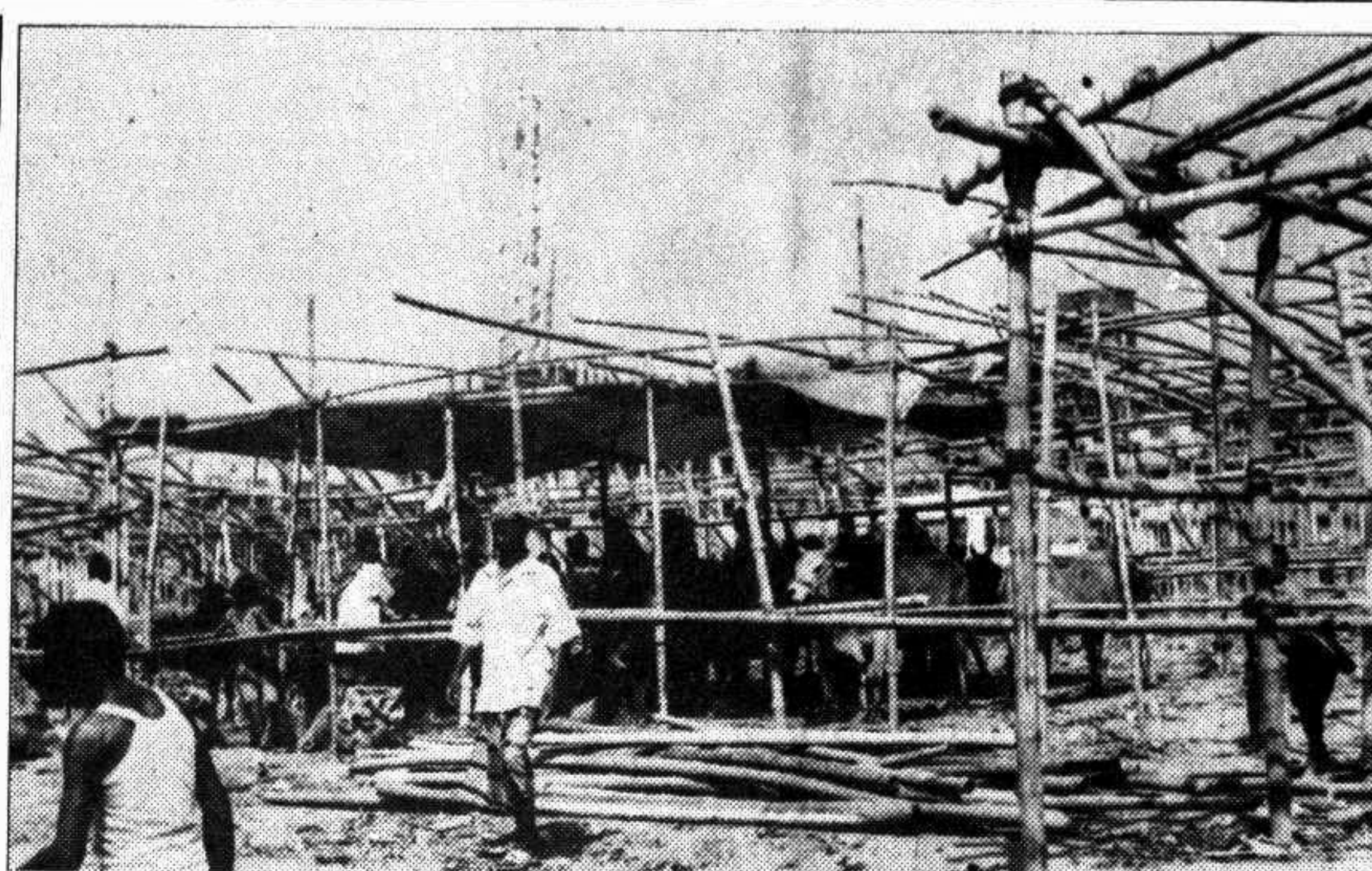
## 2 escape from police custody

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons escaped from police custody at Makim Katra under Lalbagh thana in the city Sunday.

Police were yet to arrest the two — identified as Mamun and Shakil — till last night. A police constable, Abdul Jalil, of Lalbagh thana has been closed in this connection.

Earlier police arrested Shakil, Mamun and their accomplice Javed from roof top of a house at Makim Katra at about 4.30 pm Sunday. Police claimed they recovered 150 cartons of smuggled cigarettes from their possession.



With the Eid-ul-Azha round the corner, cows and goats are being taken to different cattle markets in the city. The photo was taken at Kamalapur. —Star photo

# Khaleda: Lodge protest with Delhi

From Page 1

"You (the prime minister) must call the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka tomorrow and protest it," she said. "The government should also take immediate steps to bring the criminals of Bangabandhu movement in Bangladesh for trial."

Begum Zia said the government so far tried to hold Opposition parties responsible for the recent incidents in Kushtia and Jessore that left many people including JSD leader and valiant freedom fighter Kazi Aref dead and scores injured. "What the government will say now when the Bangabandhu terrorists themselves have claimed the responsibility for those?"

Former Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman formally joined BNP at the meeting. He presented a flower bouquet to Begum Zia and expressed allegiance to the ideals and programmes of BNP and its leadership.

Begum Zia said, the government fired the Home Minister because he said that the grenade which was exploded in Jessore could not be kept outside Army custody.

"The question of our Army's involvement in this incident does not arise at all. Our Army is very much patriotic. They guard every inch of CHT land sacrificing lives. But this government handed over the CHT in the hands of terrorists who fought against our Army and the people."

Referring to the Supreme Court's recent observation on the Prime Minister's comment on the judiciary, she said, "This clearly proves that she (PM)

does not speak the truth and always distorts information".

She also mentioned the death of two persons in a recent bomb explosion at the residence of a ruling party MP and said, "Houses of some ruling party MPs have now become bomb and arms factories and safe dens of terrorists". Ruling party activists are involved in incidents of murder, terrorism and extortion that are taking place in the country now, she alleged.

Law and order has deteriorated to such an extent that even foreigners have no security, she said referring to the British High Commissioner's recent advice to their citizens here in view of alleged rape of a British woman. "This incident has seriously damaged the image of Bangladesh abroad."

Activists of the ruling party's student wing have jeopardised academic atmosphere in universities and are involved in incidents of rape, she alleged.

The Opposition leader urged government officials and employees, particularly policemen, to discharge their duties neutrally and not to carry out any illegal order from the ruling party.

"The days of the government is nearing an end. You discharge your responsibilities neutrally without any fear. We must reward the policemen who are carrying out their duties neutrally and sincerely. We will also give promotion and reward to the officials of the republic who are punished by the present regime for defying illegal orders," she said.

Begum Zia also warned the policemen and government of-

ficials who are allegedly doing "excess and resorting to repression on innocent people".

The Opposition leader warned of launching an out-govern movement after the Eid-ul-Azha if it fails to meet its 4-point demand and cancel the municipal polls results.

Presided over by Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, convener of Dhaka city unit of BNP, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Prof AQM Badrudozza Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Moudud-Ahmed, Mir Shawkat Ali, Kurshid Jahan Haq, Mirza Abbas, Jahanara Begum, Fazlur Rahman Patal, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam, Barkatullah Bhulu, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Fazlul Haq Milon, Habibun Nabi Khan Sohel and Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Addressing the public meeting former Army Chief Mahbubur Rahman claimed that independence and sovereignty of the country was at stake.

"I have joined BNP to uphold national interest and protect the independence and sovereignty of our beloved motherland," he said.

"The country is passing through a crucial stage. People's life has become crippled due to failures of the government, serious deterioration in law and order and lack of security, and price hike of essentials," he said.

After the public meeting, a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star that several retired army generals would join BNP soon.

## Bus service: Trial run delayed

By Staff Correspondent

The proposed trial run of Dhaka-Calcutta bus service due to begin today has once again been deferred, sources concerned said.

Dhaka yesterday communicated to Delhi through diplomatic channels that in view of the Independence Day and ensuing Eid holidays, "it would be difficult to complete the formalities and organise the trial run this month".

Bangladesh has now proposed that the trial run begin in the first week of April.

## CMM's court

From Page 1

going to move today for a stay of the High court order.

Law minister Abdul Matin Khasru and Attorney General Mahmudur Rahman were not available for comments.

The sources said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday discussions the situation with both of them.

Meanwhile, the Law Minister is leaving Dhaka today to perform Hajj.

The High Court in a verdict on the writ filed by Advocate Idrisur Rahman observed that appointments and postings of CMMs in the Metropolitan Magistracy, Dhaka since 1992 were made in violation of the mandatory provisions of Article 116 of the Constitution.

It further observed that the President of the Republic should take steps for framing rules as per Article 116.

Article 116 of the Constitution says: The control (including the power of posting, promotion and grant of leave) and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service and magistrates exercising judicial functions shall vest in the President and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court.

Idrisur Rahman, told The Daily Star that the verdict would enhance the prestige of the judiciary and ensure its freedom. He had filed the petition in 1994.

BBC, quoting a former Deputy Attorney General, Hasan Arif, said the High Court judgement will not affect the orders passed by the CMMs court prior to the (HC) verdict.

## Morshed Khan

From Page 1

three other directors were also served with similar notices. However, they obtained stay orders from the High Court against the notices.

With Morshed Khan and his family members, eight out of 10 members of the Board of Directors of AB Bank have now been served with notices under Section 17.

Managing Director of the bank, A Rahim Chowdhury, was earlier put under suspension for "illegally sanctioning" loans

# Hearing adjourned

From Page 1

said his party brought peaceful processions so that people could run their normal businesses without troubles.

Awami League processions were peaceful and did not compel anybody to do unlawful things, but only urged people not to participate in pro-hartal activities, Zillur submitted before the court.

"None was assaulted during Awami League processions. So, peaceful processions of Awami League cannot be termed an offence and treated as criminal acts," argued the ruling party.

"Rather," it says, "the supporters of Awami League who took part in the peaceful processions were assaulted and seriously injured, and even killed by pro-hartal activists."

In order to maintain law and order, deteriorated by the pro-hartal activities, law had to take its own course to prevent them from doing so, the AL general secretary observed.

BNP Secretary General, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, also submitted his reply to the court through Barrister Moudud, also his party colleague, challenging the rule.

"Unless there are any proceedings before the High Court relating to any matter, provisions of 561A of CrPC cannot be applicable. The High Court has neither jurisdiction to issue such rule nor dispose of the rule issued by this court," says the opposition in its response.

It further contended that hartal is a historically recognised democratic right exercised by political parties at different times in this subcontinent.

"Hartal is a peaceful weapon to force those who rule to stop repression and exploitation and injustice, used in order to make British rulers to quit India prior to 1947," the opposition submitted.

Mannan Bhuiyan also pointed out that hartal was used against the then Pakistani rulers and without which the movement for independence of Bangladesh could not achieve its momentum.

"Hartal is a democratic right exercised under the basic structure of the constitution of Bangladesh. Though it causes disruption in daily life of the people, it is the most peaceful expression of protest."

Bhuiyan said general strikes cannot be successful without active support of the people. A hartal is called for a genuine cause for the welfare and greater interest of the people.

Hartal as a political action is used as a last resort. When democracy is not practised and norms of democracy are not followed and when the ruling party takes a non-responsive stand, then hartal is a necessary weapon, he said.

"Country's law-and-order situation has reached a stage when no citizen feels safe and

the government failed to ensure security of public life and property. Police are reluctant to accept complaints," the opposition said to justify their action programmes like shutdown.

They alleged that Dhaka city had been flooded with more than 10,000 illegal arms. State power is not neutral in enforcing laws. Police are engaged in "destroying society and the opposition parties".

Postings, promotion, appointment and recruitment of police are made on the basis of "allegiance" to the party in power and competent officers are deprived of serving in key positions.

"Human rights violation has exceeded all the past records. Thousands of leaders have been jailed under Special Powers Act and false cases are being filed against them."

During earlier hearings, the Attorney General had submitted affidavit-in-opposition for home secretary containing that Awami League while in opposition observed 173 days of hartal in five years.

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Golam Rabbani and Latifur Rahman had earlier issued rule upon AL secretary Zillur Rahman, BNP secretary Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and secretaries of home and law ministries to show cause as to why pro and anti-hartal activities should not be declared cognizable offences and the police and criminal courts not be directed to take action accordingly.

AG Mahmudul Islam appeared for the government while Additional AG Mahabub Alam stood for AL Secretary Zillur Rahman. Barrister Moudud Ahmed stood for the BNP Secretary.

Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan and Barrister Zakiruddin Sir-car as amicus were present in the court.

## Khulna

From Page 1

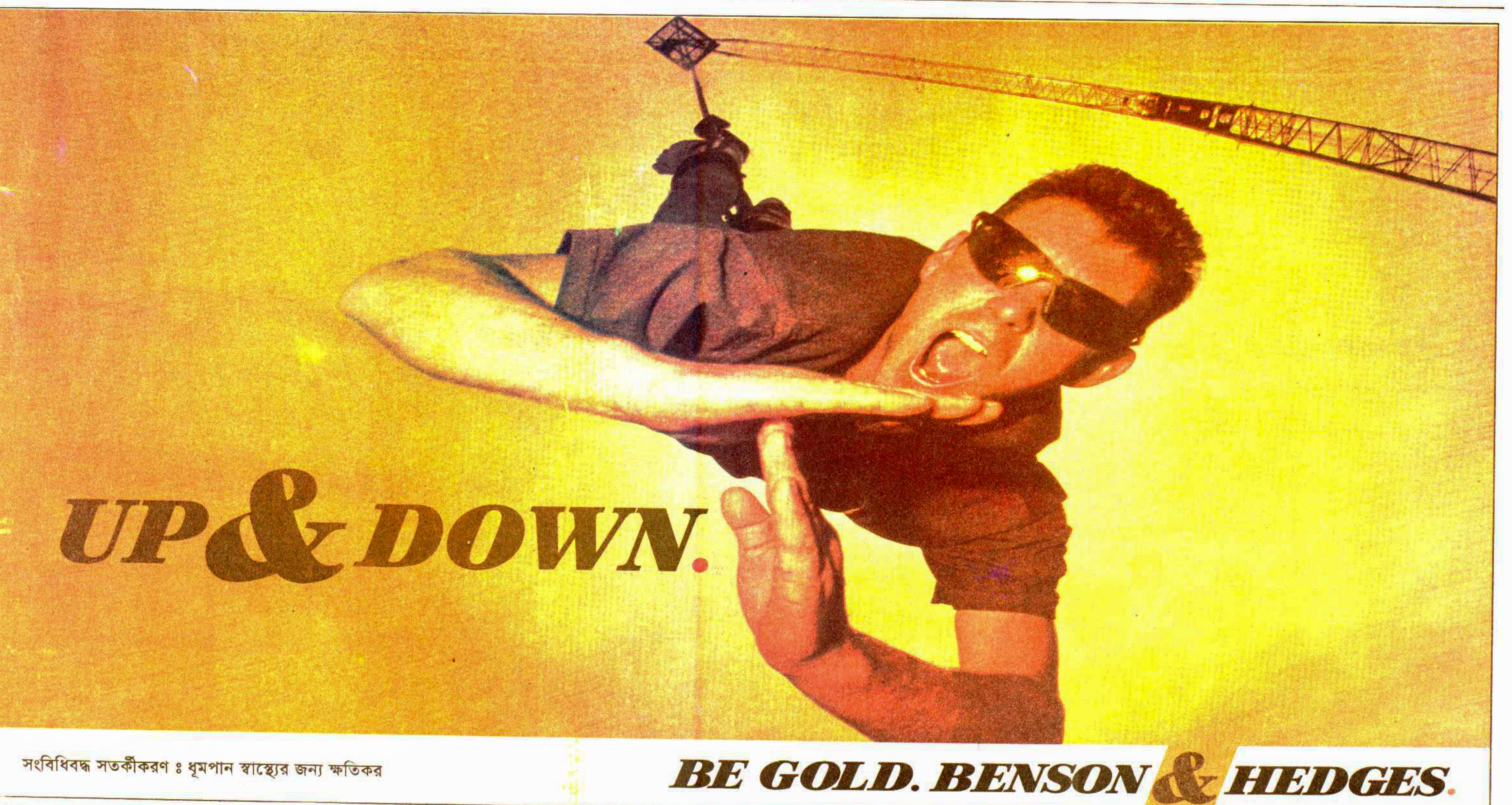
witnesses said.

The bus drivers started beating the van drivers indiscriminately when they forced the Khulna-bound bus to stop at Phulala Bus Stand, police said.

Later, van drivers reassembled at Damodar Union and launched an armed attack on transport workers at the bus stand sparking fresh clash. Both the groups used firearms and bombs during the clash.

Police lobbed tear gas shells and fired at least 20 shots to bring the situation under control. At least 20 vehicles and one hundred stops were damaged during the clash, police said.

Transport services between Khulna-Jessore and Khulna-Satkhira routes came to a halt as two groups put up barricades protesting the killing.



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