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BNP men try to blast thru' police barricade

The second day sees 50 hurt

By Staff Correspondent

At least 50 people were injured in clashes, 30 of them in the capital, as life remained paralysed across the country yesterday, the second day of the Opposition-called three-day hartal.

In the capital, BNP activists vented their anger by exploding at least 50 home made bombs and crackers at different points

as police thwarted their attempts to bring out processions. Police lobbed tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets to keep Opposition activists off the streets and disperse pickets.

The BNP-led four-party Opposition alliance called the hartal protesting "unprovoked police attack" on its sit-in demonstration in the capital on

Sunday and demanding resignation of the government and immediate holding of election.

At least eleven bombs and crackers were blasted at Naya Paltan near the BNP central office. Five persons were injured there, witnesses said. Police picked up three youths from the spot.

Four policemen were also injured in the bomb explosions and pelting of stones by pickets. Outside the capital, the main trouble spots were Rajshahi and Narayanganj. At least seven people were injured in Rajshahi and 10 in Narayanganj in clashes between pro- and anti-hartal activists.

Police picked up at least 43 people from different areas of the city. Motiheel police alone arrested 30 people, most of those from around the BNP central office at Naya Paltan.

Of the injured, six were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They are: Abul Hossain (26), Liakat Ali (32) Mahmudur Rahman (30) Saidur Rahman (48) Shahid Mian (27) and Liton (22).

Driver Abul Hossain and passengers Liakat Ali and Mahmudur Rahman were injured when a bomb was thrown on a running auto-tempo at the north gate of Baitul Mokarram

Police intercepted and chased away BNP processionists from different city wards. Any 'suspicious looking' young men coming towards or passing by BNP central office at Naya Paltan were either searched by police or arrested. Even the staff of the office were not allowed to enter it, party MPs alleged.

More than 100 armed policemen in riot gear guarded rooftops, main streets, lanes and by-lanes in Naya Paltan area.

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All goes according to plan

By Nazmul Ashraf

The ruling party plan to "suppress" the opposition parties, especially the BNP, apparently proved successful yesterday, the second day of the on-going opposition hartal.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim and other senior AL leaders announced at a rally in the city on Monday about their plan to "flush out" BNP from streets in the remainder of the 60-hour hartal ending at 6pm today.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia lashed out at the government action terming it a breach of democratic rights.

The home minister also warned of stern action against those creating anarchy on the plea of hartal.

Accordingly, police and AL workers behaved yesterday.

Pro-hartal pickets were seldom seen on the Dhaka streets dominated mainly by anti-hartal activists of the ruling party and its affiliated bodies. The opposition-sponsored shut-down yesterday saw no significant incident of confrontation

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Cops keep BNP activists at bay

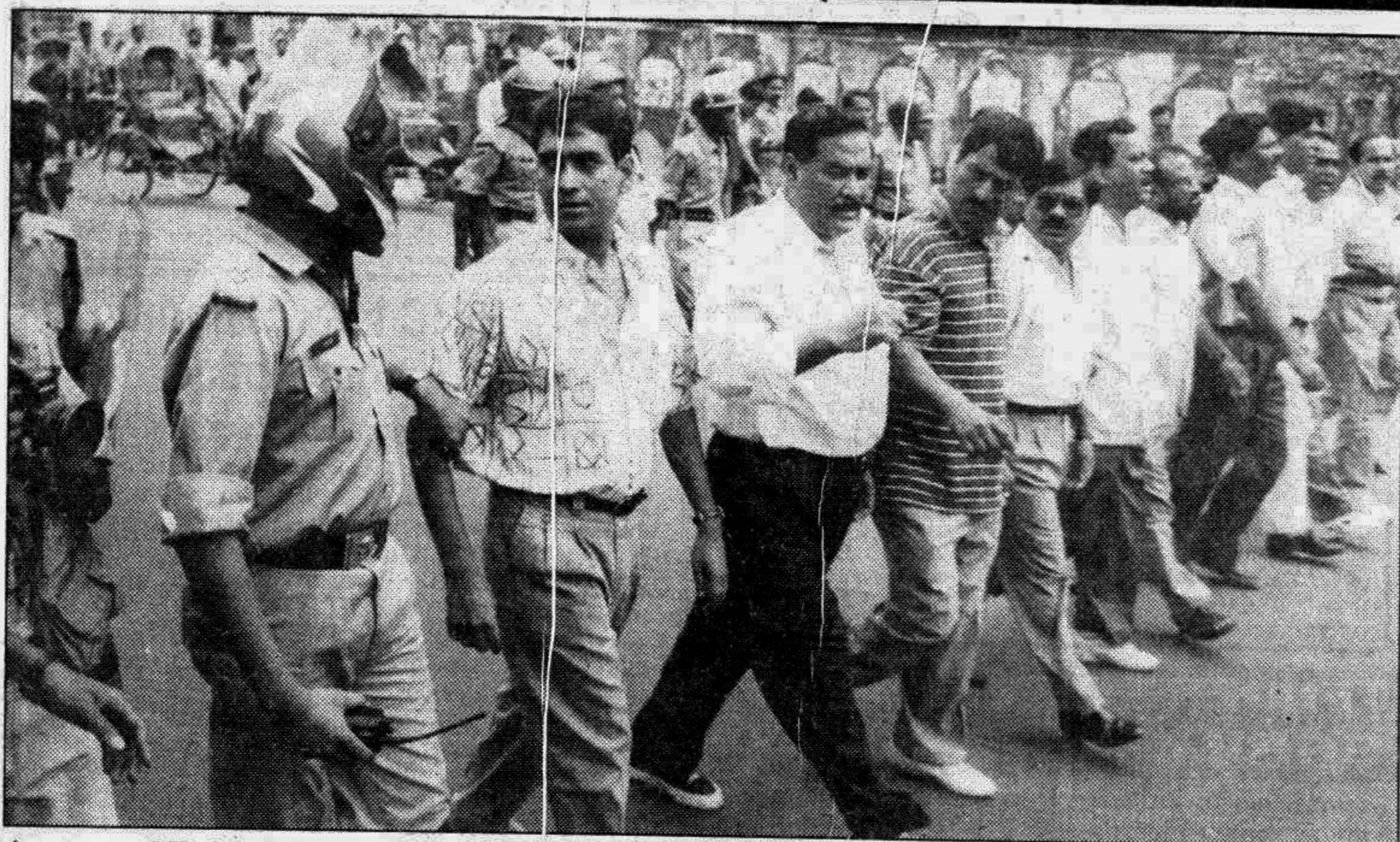
By Staff Correspondent

All BNP activities were systematically suppressed yesterday as police sealed off lanes, by-lanes and main roads around party offices in the city barring everyone except members of parliament from entering those or assembling there.

The second day of the three-day hartal in the city passed off with police allowing gatherings and processions by opposition Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party and those by ruling Awami League.

Police intercepted and chased away BNP processionists from different city wards. Any 'suspicious looking' young men coming towards or passing by BNP central office at Naya Paltan were either searched by police or arrested. Even the staff of the office were not allowed to enter it, party MPs alleged.

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Are you an MP, Sir? No, said the man, walking in tandem with eight BNP members of parliament and a former major general (extreme right) at Naya Paltan in the city. BNP leaders claimed that only the MPs were allowed to march through the city streets yesterday. The man, whose identity could not be known, was taken into custody. The officer did not explain why. —Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Kibria promises to force reform pace

By Staff Correspondent

With the donors warning that aid flow could be reduced due to slow implementation of reform measures, Finance Minister S A M S Kibria has said the government will push ahead with reform programmes further despite the difficulties involved in it.

"We will try to maintain aid flow," said the finance minister at a press briefing after the conclusion of the two-day mid-term review at the NEC conference room yesterday. "We will see how it (reforms) will affect us. The government will continue to strengthen reforms."

Asked if the donors have set any timetable for the government to implement the reforms to avoid aid slashing, Frederick T Temple, Country Director of the World Bank (WB), said Bangladesh has a clear agenda for reforms.

"It is up to the government to say what timeframe it fixes to

implement reform," he said. Kibria earlier said that in making the reforms faster, the government has to take into account real political and other difficulties and 'proceed accordingly'.

"So, the progress will be mixed. It will be faster in some areas, while it may be slower in other areas. There are political and other difficulties involved in the reform process and we need to take people's opinion into consideration," he said.

Briefing journalists about the two-day meeting, Kibria said the aid-givers were concerned at the eviction of slum dwellers and sex workers, which they said were in violation of human rights.

"We assured them that the government would certainly safeguard the interest of the common people.

"Donors also felt that public administration reform was not

fast enough and the recommendations of the commission should be implemented fast. We told them that actions would be taken soon."

"The government remains committed to combating corruption as the economy can not move forward if corruption holds us back. We agreed that corruption must be fought on all fronts."

About financial sector reform, the government told the donors that substantial progress has been made in this sector, the finance minister said.

"We shared the view that incomplete reform will not be good for the economy," Kibria said. "We also felt that there is no regulatory framework for NGOs which take deposits from their members. We are trying to institute a framework in this regard."

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Temple triggers tension

By Inam Ahmed

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria and donors were embarrassed by a scathing wrap-up statement by World Bank Country Director Frederick T Temple at the end of the mid-term review meeting yesterday.

Kibria, who looked startled, requested the WB official to "rephrase and re-view" the statement which bitterly criticised the government for failing to come up with a clear and specific plan about where and how to complete the unfinished reforms, according to sources who attended the meeting.

Temple said the two-day meeting reflected "the disappointment of the donors about the pervading corruption, slow reforms and poor human rights situation."

Reflecting on the current overall situation, he said that politics had now been taking a collision course rather than one of dialogue.

He said lack of transparency

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Valuables pinched from for eign delegates

By Staff Correspondent

Three foreign delegates lost their valuables at the donors' mid-term review meeting held at National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday evening.

According to sources, Fredrick Temple, World Bank Country Director lost a camera, Swiss Development Cooperation official Suzan Muller lost her purse with about Tk 2000 and a master card and Director of AUSAID Sunee Lee lost US\$ 600 in cash and US\$700 in TCs at the NEC auditorium.

Kazi Nurunnabi, a senior assistant secretary of Economic Relations Division lodged a case with Tejgaon Thana.

None was arrested in this connection and police had not recovered any of the goods till writing of this report.

Prime accused in Jalal murder released on bail

By Staff Correspondent

Inspector Ziaul Ahsan, the prime accused in Jalal Ahmed Shaif murder case, was released from Dhaka Central Jail on bail on Monday following an order of the High Court on Sunday.

CID had arrested Inspector Zia on the night of April 6 after recovery of the decomposed body of Jalal, reportedly a DB informer, from the roof-top water tank at the Minto Road WB office in the city in the morning of March 25.

According to a CID investigation, Zia in collaboration with Havildar Billal, constable Rauf and canteen man Anwar, killed Jalal following a dispute over distribution of money, gained illegally from different DB operations led by Inspector Zia.

In recent times, two murders involving DB created widespread public resentment. The first one was the killing of university student Shamim Reza Rubel in DB custody on July 23 last year and the second one was the murder of Jalal.

A total of sixteen DB men, including an Assistant Commissioner and two inspectors were detained at the Dhaka Central Jail as arrested accused in the murder cases.

Proceedings of both the cases are going on in the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court. In-

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Hartal victims They arrived home, yet couldn't be home. There were about 1500 of them, coming from different parts of the world yesterday, who found themselves camped all day at the arrival lounge of ZIA. —Star photo by Anisur Rahman

BNP rejects talks offer

BNP gave a cold shoulder to the Prime Minister's offer of a dialogue with the opposition for resolving the issues for which they are agitating, reports UNB. "There's no need of talks with the government... all problems will only be resolved if the government accepts our demands," said BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a fresh offer of dialogue with the Opposition on Monday with an assurance that her government would do only what is good for the country.

The offer came when Hasina addressed the nation over radio and television on Monday as the country remained under a shutdown enforced by the opposition.

Talking to UNB over telephone

Nasim orders police camps to nip opposition campaign

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim has instructed the IGP to set up temporary police camps at all shopping complexes in the city and elsewhere in the country to help ensure normal business activities during hartal or similar programmes, reports UNB.

He also requested private shop and transport owners, associations and their leaders to keep shops and business houses open and ply vehicles without any fear and continue their normal day to day business ignoring "illogical" hartal activities.

Talking to newsmen at his Secretariat office yesterday afternoon, the Home Minister said the government would do everything to provide security to public life and property.

He said the police camps to be manned by police and BDR would work as temporary control room in respective areas and would remain on alert to extend any necessary help to maintain normal life and economic activities.

"Being the Home Minister I assure owners of shopping centres, business houses and their association leaders that I will ensure their security... resume your businesses defying unreasonable hartal," Nasim said.

He said the law enforcers would come forward also to protect the rights of citizens who

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Citibank wins bid to become Biman consultant

By Shehab Ahmed

Citibank of New York has qualified as top bidder to become the consultant to design a blueprint for privatisation of Bangladesh Biman under a World Bank aided project to offload its 49 per cent shares by the middle of next year, Biman sources said.

Citibank topped the three firms who participated in the bid, opened on Monday, under the two million dollar project.

The Biman board will evaluate the technical and financial package offered by Citibank on Sunday.

It will be forwarded to the civil aviation ministry for final approval by the government and the World Bank. After approval, Biman will hold negotiations with Citibank on its offer, the sources said.

Besides Citibank, ABT Associates of US and V&Z Bank of UK also participated in the bid, after review of offers made by four firms selected out of 43.

The selected consultant will help find a 'strategic partner' for Biman who would be offered

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Cancerous deal

By Naimul Haq

The government is going to purchase a Cobalt-60 machine for the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) in the city.

The equipment which uses gamma rays to destroy cancerous cells is being purchased at a cost of about Tk five crore. Earlier in 1994, a similar machine was purchased at a price of about Tk two crore, sources concerned said.

"Cobalt therapy is not recommended for cancer treatment anymore," said Professor Emeritus A B M F Karim, known as 'father of brain cancer treatment.'

When contacted over telephone in The Netherlands, Prof Karim said, "Cobalt therapy is an old technology to destroy abnormal cancerous cells. With the use of Cobalt machine, curative and adequate therapy is not possible. In the cases of p-dosteriotactic radiation, destruction of deep tumour (small cell) is not possible. In the cases of 'conformal radiation', normal tissue sparing is not possible."

He said, "With the use of more advanced technology like linear accelerator, cure rate is much higher and complication is much less."

According to e-mail information received from abroad,

various manufacturers in the field of tele-therapy radiation have now switched over to manufacture of more advanced machines like linear accelerator, instead of cobalt. Linear accelerator uses high-power deep X-rays to destroy tumour cells.

Director of NICRH Prof Fazle Elahi was informed about expert opinion on more advanced technology now available and its merits and demerits.

Prof Elahi told this correspondent that he had been instructed by the health minister to buy 'the most modern cancer treatment machine' whatever the price.

"Yes, I agree that there are better options for cancer treatment. But Cobalt-60 is ideal for developing nations like Bangladesh. In fact, it is also recommended by the World Health Organisation."

He said, "Cobalt-60 machine being purchased for the institute is appropriate. It requires minimum maintenance and it does not break down as often as other machines. And above all, it costs less."

However, it was learnt from other sources that besides the Cobalt-60 machine, the government would also procure three linear accelerator machines.

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Inside Today

Focus

Designing the pay structure and formulating the pay plan

Prayer Timings

September 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:20	5:00
Zohr	12:15	1:20
Asr	4:30	4:45
Maghrib	6:15	6:18
Esha	7:45	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Plan to price power 'more commercially'

By Sharier Khan

The Power Cell of the Energy Ministry is formulating a policy seeking a series of fresh reforms in the power sector to make it more commercial by introducing cost reflective tariff and withdrawing direct subsidies by PDB or DESA.

This may drastically increase the power tariff in phases, sources concerned said. Under the reform proposals, which aim at minimising the role of Power Development Board (PDB) and empowering the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB), future subsidies would be provided by the government and its liabilities would not be passed on to the utilities.

The Power Cell is now seeking opinion from different business communities as well as experts, the sources said. The business circles have al-

ready given their opinion that power tariff in the country was already costlier than in any other country and any more increase would make cost of living 'unbearable'.

The point is, the power sector is incurring loss not because of low tariff but because of high level of corruption. Every month, DESA alone falls to realise nearly 44 per cent of its total billing," said an official source. "If you do not address that problem, you will never be able to make profit in the sector."

"Already, the power tariff is much higher than what is permissible under people's income. If you increase it further, theft of power and revenue will increase proportionally.

cost of power. Then, how Power Cell can be so sure that tariff should be increased?"

Implementation of some of these reforms has already been started through formation of the PGCB and Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO). The major reforms may be implemented within the next two to three years.

The existing power stations of PDB will become separate business entities in the public sector, having individual 'profit centres'. Each power station will calculate its costs separately and its revenue target will be set under a standard Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to be signed with the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

commercialised involving the private sector in generation, transmission and distribution. Besides, there will be an independent regulatory body to ensure a high quality of service.

According to the draft Policy Statement on Power Sector Reforms, generation, transmission and distribution of power will be completely separated by forming new companies. Commercial arrangements will be introduced for bulk sale of power.

The new companies will have 'adequate autonomy' and operate commercially. Under World Bank pressure, the government earlier implemented some reform measures by forming the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) out of the Power Development Board (PDB) to increase efficiency and reduce system loss.

But those reform measures failed miserably as transparency and better financial management could not be ensured. As a result, the power sector has about Tk 5000 crore unrealised bills now.

"Like the past, reforms, the proposed reform measures also do not give emphasis on transparency and strict financial management. These will also be useless if transparency and better financial management can not be ensured," said an expert.

The Power Cell identified lack of autonomy as the main constraint. The power sector has to follow government rules as regards administration and pay structure. There is little incentive for the staff to improve performance, it said.

Identified lack of accountability and discipline among

the employees of PDB and DESA and overlapping in duty as the major constraints. Trade unionism is the cause of indiscipline.

It criticised the centralised system run by PDB and said it is difficult to identify the areas of poor performance and take necessary corrective measures because of this.