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RANGS GROUP

VOL. IX NO. 294 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA THURSDAY NOVEMBER 18, 1999

43 days to the 3rd Millennium

AGRAHAYAN 4, 1406 BS

SABAN 9, 1420 HIRI

16 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: TAKA 9.00



Probe committee empowered to go beyond Siddique's allegations

Star Report

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena yesterday said the inquiry committee has been empowered to go beyond the allegations made by Kader Siddique.

"Mr. Siddique has made specific allegations about 19 polling centres and against some of the officials. But the probe body has been given the power to investigate incidents at any other centre, apart from the 19, and examine conduct of any officials concerned it deems necessary," Abu Hena told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked whether he feels the entire administration failed to behave during the by-elections, the CEC said, "I won't say the entire administration failed to behave. But I have an impression, following reports from media and those from professional poll observers, that some officials in some places failed to prove that they were equal to the task given to them."

The CEC said some more officials might be penalised, if it was found that they were not neutral in conducting the polls.

"Besides, polls in all the controversial 19 centres would be cancelled. But it would all depend on the probe body report."

Asked whether he plans to

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Siddique meets Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique, who was "defeated" in Monday's Tangail by-election, had an exclusive talk with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night at her 29 Minto Road office in the city.

During the meeting, which lasted about 15 minutes, Siddique apprised Khaleda Zia of the by-election and how the government had rigged the polls and manipulated the administration.

Talking to newsmen, Kader Siddique said that he met the Leader of the Opposition before the election and met her again to inform her of the incidents that had taken place during the polls.

"I contested the by-polls to see with my own eyes the Awami style of vote stealing, rigging and other crimes that had taken place in the by-polls in my constituency," he added.

Replying to a question, he said the question to join BNP did not arise. Asked whether he will meet the Prime Minister, he said that he would not meet her as long as she remains the Prime Minister.

"There may be meetings with Sheikh Hasina in future, but on the streets," he added.

Ins de Today

Article

Government's offer of political dialogue Holding an Olive Branch or Attempt to Foil Opposition Movement?

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Dialectics of judicial independence and judicial accountability Page 5

Prayer Timings

November 18

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-55	4-10
Maghrib	5-20	5-25
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Tangail byelection

Results won't be gazetted till probe body report

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission yesterday formed a four-member probe committee to probe the alleged irregularities in the controversial parliamentary by-election in Tangail-8 constituency on Monday.

Besides, the EC has decided to wait for the probe body findings before gazetting results of the controversial by-elections.

It also has temporarily suspended four magistrates and four presiding officers who were on election duties at certain centres in the constituency during Monday's by-election.

The three-member EC headed by Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu

Hena took the decisions after receiving written complaints from Abdul Kader Siddique, Bir Uttam who contested the by-polls as an independent candidate. Siddique faxed the complaints to the EC Secretariat Tuesday evening and then met the CEC yesterday morning.

Headed by an Additional Judge, the four-member enquiry committee also comprises a Sub-judge and an Assistant Judge of Tangail and an EC official. The committee would submit its report in 10 days from the day it starts the job.

"We have already sought permission of the Supreme Court for allowing the judges to

work for the EC. The probe body will start its job as soon as we get the SC approval," said Additional Secretary of the EC Secretariat Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury.

The magistrates and officials who have been suspended from their respective jobs were on election duties at Kaliapara Arauhazar Madrasah centre, Baniachit Government Primary School centre, Barachona Government Primary School centre and Boali Government Primary School centres. Of the four, polling at the first three centres were suspended by Election Commissioner

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Ministers speak for Shahjahan

By Staff Correspondent

Ruling Awami League candidate Shawqat Momen Shahjahan, who was unofficially declared elected in the Tangail-8 by-election, yesterday alleged that independent candidate Bangabir Kader Siddique Bir Uttam had created a reign of terror before and during polling in the constituency.

Addressing a crowded press conference at AL central office in the city, Shahjahan thanked the voters for electing him despite "terrorism, threats and bribe" by his main rival Siddique.

Shahjahan also accused Siddique of giving local and foreign press "false and baseless information about the by-election, held on Monday."

Some senior AL leaders and ministers, speaking on the occasion, denied allegations of rigging and irregularities, brought by Siddique.

They asked how Siddique could bag some 61,000 votes and win in 36 out of 78 centres if there was rigging. The AL leaders claimed that the people of Shakhipur and Bashail were 'frustrated' with Siddique who did nothing for development of the area.



Shahjahan

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Food and Agriculture Minister Matia Choudhury, Prime Minister's Political Adviser Dr. S A Malek, PM's Adviser on Establishment Khandakar Asaduzzaman, DCC Mayor Mohammad Hanif, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Choudhury, State Minister for

Information Prof Abu Sayeed, State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya, State Minister for Textiles A K M Jahangir Hussain and Rahmat Ali, MP were among the AL leaders who spoke on the occasion.

Replying to questions, Tofail Ahmed challenged Siddique's claim that he could not cast his vote. "Kader Siddique did not turn up to cast his vote. It's not possible for anybody to cast the vote of a person like Kader Siddique who is so known to everybody. His vote is still protected."

He said Siddique's defeat and Shahjahan's victory were nothing new. "Kader Siddique was defeated in the 1991 election and Shahjahan won the 1986 election... Pattern of voting in the by-polls is similar to the voting in the constituency in 1991 and 1996."

Siddique managed 19 candidates to campaign for him and help him win the by-election 'forcibly', the AL leader alleged. "This is unprecedented that candidates campaign for their rival."

The Election Commission

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets Saudi King Fahd at the Royal Palace in Riyadh on Tuesday.

— PID photo

Polls exposed govt: Siddique

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique who contested the Tangail-8 parliamentary by-polls as an independent candidate yesterday said election in the constituency has 'exposed the vote-thief government'.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the city he said he did not 'resist rigging just to expose the vote-thief government'. "I am satisfied that the government has been exposed."

He alleged that ruling Awami League, with the help of the local administration, rigged the polls in favour of its candidate Shawkat Momen Shahjahan.

Asked whether he would demand resignation of the government, Siddique said, "I want people to drag this government

He, however, failed to specify the number of polling centres where rigging took place. When newsmen referred to an Election Commission statement earlier that it received allegations of rigging in 19 centres out of the total 82, Siddique said, "No, no, I think rigging occurred in many more centres."

But he negated the idea of



Siddique

"I did not go to cast vote ..."

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique, who contested the parliamentary by-polls in Tangail-8 constituency as an independent candidate, yesterday acknowledged that he

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joining the mainstream opposition parties in their anti-government movement. "I will remain on the side of people. I will decide my future course of action through a convention within 15 to 20 days," Siddique said.

A newsmen reminded him of his pre-election statements that he would resist any wrongdoing in the by-polls. Siddique said, "I wanted to give the people of the country a chance to see how this government rigs elections. My losing this election is not a very big issue for me. Now, people will know who are vote thieves."

In this regard he also criticised the Prime Minister for calling two top leaders of two major parties as 'vote thieves'. Siddique alleged that even magistrates and presiding officers in many centres helped rigging party men rig the polls in favour of Shahjahan.

"All the 82 centres were occupied by groups of 70 - 80 cadres, led either by ruling party lawmakers or other leaders."

Siddique claimed that 60 per cent of over two lakh voters in

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Date for meeting of four party chiefs yet to be finalised

By Staff Correspondent
BNP Standing Committee in its emergency meeting last night agreed in principle to hold the proposed summit of the chiefs of four opposition parties.

But the date for the much-talked about meeting is yet to be finalised, said an influential member of the committee, who preferred not to be named.

Held at 29 Minto Road, with the party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair in the backdrop of 'constant insistence' from alliance partners, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami the meeting agreed to go for the proposed summit.

The member said the issue of the summit comprising BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Jamaat Ameer Golam Azam and Islami Oikya Jote chief Azizul Haq was discussed at

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US envoy urges BNP not to call hartal on Dec 2

US Ambassador in Dhaka John C Holzman has requested main opposition BNP not to enforce any hartal-like programme on December 2, the National Immunisation Day, reports UNB.

The request was made when Holzman called on BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the party central office yesterday afternoon.

Holzman also handed over a formal letter in this regard to Bhuiyan and sought cooperation from BNP on Immunisation Day.

The US envoy had elaborate discussion with the BNP secretary general about the National Immunisation Day and various US projects to keep the children of Bangladesh safe.

They also discussed the current political situation. BNP chairperson's advisory council member MM Rezaul Karim and Political Counsellor of US Embassy Dan Mozena were present.

8 of a family die in trawler capsized

BARGUNA, Nov 17: Eight members of a family drowned and three others sustained serious injuries in a trawler capsized in the river Khakdon during a pleasure trip today, reports UNB.

Six bodies were recovered by local people. They are Sabuj, 7, Marzina, 6, Kali, 2, Faisal, 7, Rahela, 65, and Amena, 70. Bodies of two other children — Ruma, 10, and Shahid, 5 — could not be traced.

Witnesses said Sonamuddin Boyati of village Potkhal in Sadar thana bought a trawler two days back. He arranged a "milad mahfil" at 10 am on the inaugural ceremony of the vessel and after distribution of sweets the owner arranged a pleasure trip towards the river Bishkhali from the Khakdon with over a hundred local enthusiasts on board.

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Manarat School teacher found dead

By Staff Correspondent

A teacher of Manarat International School was found dead inside a bathroom of the school building at Gulshan in the city yesterday morning, police and hospital sources said.

The dead was identified as Abul Hasan Mia, 27, a resident of city's Modhubagh area, police said.

There was no injury mark in the body and police were suspecting that Abul Hasan committed suicide. Police, however, could not ascertain the reason behind the alleged suicide till last night.

According to Gulshan police, Hasan attended his classes on Monday. The school remained closed on Tuesday due to hartal.

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PDB employees to observe 24-hr strike Dec 2

By Staff Correspondent

Workers, employees and officials of Power Development Board (PDB) will observe a 24-hour work stoppage on December 2, protesting government move to enact new laws in the sector, said a press release of the Bidyut Unnayan Board Samik Karmachari Karmakarta Oikya Parishad.

The government was framing these laws under pressure from the donor agencies without considering its pros and cons, the release said. The government would have to bear the consequences of the work stoppage.

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New Pak law to disqualify corrupt politicians for 21 yrs

Hundreds arrested, Sharif's family repays \$6m loan

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: Pakistan's military government enacted a tough new anti-corruption law today and began arresting hundreds of the country's wealthiest people, reports AP.

The new law disqualifies politicians found guilty of corruption or defaulting on loans from holding office for 21 years. The new law also provides a jail term of up to 14 years.

The arrests began just hours after a Tuesday deadline expired for those with outstanding bank loans to repay their debts or face criminal charges.

Those being arrested in-

cluded former chief ministers, major landowners, big industrialists and politicians belonging to all of Pakistan's political parties.

Soldiers in green army jeeps roared up to the palatial home of Nawaz Kokhar on the outskirts of the federal capital of Islamabad to arrest him.

In the border city of Peshawar, a senior leader of the left-leaning Awami National Party (ANP), Bashir Ahmed Bilour, was arrested, said police officials.

In Pakistan's most populous province of Punjab there were reports from police and intelligence agencies that as many as 450 people were arrested today, some for outstanding loans and others for various corruption offences.

Among those who also were arrested were Manzoor Wattoo, a former chief minister of Punjab and head of his own party, Akhtar Rasool, former captain of Pakistan's national hockey team and Anwar Saifullah, a leading politician

and industrialist. Kokhar is a former lawmaker in ousted prime minister Benazir Bhutto's party.

"We hope we will get justice," Kokhar told reporters before being arrested. "We are not going to run."

Previously, those found

guilty of corruption in Pakistan faced a maximum five-year jail term and were kept out of politics for seven years.

According to newspaper reports, about 4.5 billion rupees (100 million dollar) was recovered when the deadline expired. Among those repaying money

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: Pakistan's military government today named two former prime ministers as being involved in corrupt practices. The National Accountability Bureau said Nawaz Sharif was one of several people either wanted as a defaulter or in an accountability case, and that former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was "wanted in a number of cases," reports Reuters.

was the family of deposed premier Nawaz Sharif, who repaid 271 million or nearly 6 million dollar.

Sharif, who has been in army custody since his increasingly unpopular government was thrown out of power on Oct. 12 has been charged with treason and hijacking charges that carry the death penalty or life in prison.

One of the first major promises of Army Chief Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf after taking power was to clean up the country's deeply corrupt political system and revive the economy.

It's estimated that as much

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Shibir-BCL clash at RU: 25 injured

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Nov 17: At least 25 people were injured, 14 of them seriously, when the activists of BCL and Chhatra Shibir clashed at Rajshahi University last night.

According to witnesses, a BCL activist had on altercation with Shibir leader Mizan at around 11.30 pm over occupying a room at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall.

At one stage, the BCL activist assaulted the Shibir leader in Room No 208 of the hall.

When the news spread on the campus, the Shibir activists closed main gate of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman and Sher-e-Bangla halls and swooped in

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Snatchers throw acid on two young women

By Staff Correspondent

Two young women sustained burn injuries when two snatchers threw acid on them near the city's Shantinagar crossing yesterday morning.

The victims were identified as Asma, 20, and Rita, 16, residents of Kafil hospital sources said.

With burn injuries on their faces and other parts of the body Asma and her cousin Rita were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Hospital sources quoting the injured said the incident occurred when they were crossing

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Govt employees outline action programme

Employees of various government offices have threatened to launch a series of action programmes if their five-point demand are not met by November 30, reports UNB.

The employees under the banner of Bangladesh Government Employees Samannay Parishad (BGESP) announced the programmes from a rally held at the Institution of Engineers in the city yesterday.

The two-month-long programmes include work abstention and demonstration across the country from December 1; rallies, meetings and demonstrations in all the government offices and directorates from

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Gangrene detected in arsenic patients

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka Community Hospital has detected 20 patients who have developed gangrene in their legs and arms due to use of groundwater contaminated with arsenic, officials of the hospital told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The cases were detected during a survey on arsenic patients in 28 districts in the southwestern and central regions of the country," said Shamimul Islam Shimul one of the officials. So far, 3000 patients have been detected in those areas, he added.

Arsenic poisoning, clinically called rsnicosis, leads to

"some degree of gangrene," he said.

Tube well water in these districts showed presence of arsenic more than the WHO-permitted level of 0.05 mg/L, the hospital officials said.

In Pabna, nine out of 13 members of a family at Doyalnagar village in Bera thana were found suffering from arsenicosis, Shimul said.

Four of the patients were brought to the hospital on November 11 for treatment. They are Sona Banu, his son Hanif Sheikh, daughter Rahela Khatun and grand daughter

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Rivals gun down PCJSS men

From Staff Correspondent

ma alias Samir, was admitted to a local hospital.

Police said today that the attackers burst from a jungle and shot Sunita Chakma and Bodishatta Chakma at Betchi local market in the morning. The attackers fled away.

Sunita died on way to hospital.

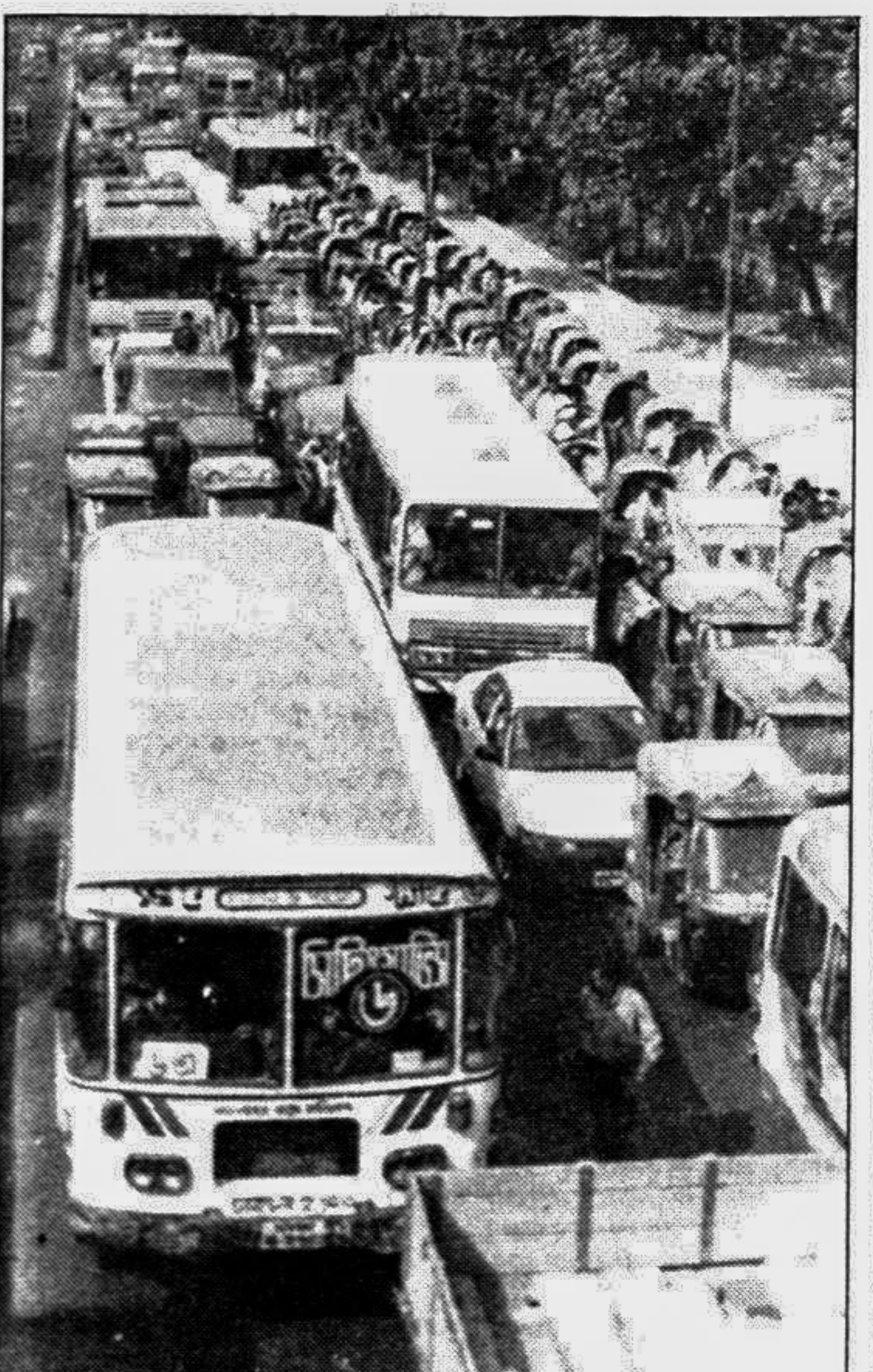
In another incident, some tribal youths called Arun out of his house at Borkaka village under Panchhari thana yesterday evening. They took him to a nearby hilly place, shot him dead and fled the scene, police said. Tension is prevailing in Khagrachhari after the kill-

ings. Security has been beefed up, police said.

Police and other security force are searching different areas to arrest the killers.

Talking to this correspondent this evening, Rupak Chakma, General Secretary of Prashit-Sanjoy faction of Panchari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) denied their involvement in yesterday's attacks that left two tribal people killed in Khagrachhari.

"Whenever anything happens in CHT, PCJSS take the opportunity to blame us as we opposed the peace treaty," Rupak said.



The city witnessed worst traffic jam in many areas yesterday. The photo was taken from near the Ramna park.

— Star photo