

TUs still rule Titas

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union took control of Titas immediately after the BNP's return to power.

After May 16, the authorities have transferred 19 officials as per a list made by the union. There are three BNP-affiliated unions in Titas.

Sources said the union has prepared another list of 68 employees for transfers and postings. The same union is now making a list to suspend officials. The restriction over, the unionists will start lobbying with the management for suspension of the targeted officials, sources said.

Besides, the union leaders were seen visiting the chambers of different high officials every day. "Nothing has virtually changed," said a source. Tampering with meters is also going on.

When activists of another union led by Fazlul Haq Mollah went to Titas headquarters yesterday noon, the activists of Habib-Shahnur union chased them and a clash ensued. Followers of Mollah were beaten up and driven out of the Titas premises.

Convener of the Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, Titas branch and General Secretary of Titas Gas Employees Union AKM Fazlul Haq Mollah yesterday told The Daily Star that the Habib-Shahnur group brought in some criminals from outside to Titas and launched an unprovoked attack on his union.

"They have beaten us up and broke chairs and tables," Mollah said. "They came from the Jatiya Party and are now pretending to be true Jatiyatabadis (BNP followers)."

Hoodlums of Habib-Shahnur were threatening different employees of Titas and were lobbying for transfers of employees, alleged Mollah.

His opponent Habibur Rahman refuted the allegations saying, "These unpopular leaders were disturbing the environment of Titas with the help of some outsiders, which is why general employees have resisted them."

A Titas high official, who preferred anonymity in fear of backlashes by the state minister, said, "When the minister himself has taken the side of the corrupt meter reader, how can any honest official

and employee work at this organisation?"

He said though the unions have agreed to stop their activities in Titas, their leaders are still interfering in the regular activities of Titas over phone.

"This three-month restriction is just eyewash. There is no political sincerity in it and Titas is home to corrupt and anti-state elements blessed by the government," he remarked.

Memo to PM

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cession at the Shahbagh crossing. Then, only three members of the student delegation went to the PMO and submitted the memorandum.

PM's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury assured the student delegates -- Tanvir Mithun, Shantanu Banik and Saifuddin Molla Shabu -- of the criminals' arrest.

The students alleged that the BUET authorities turned down their repeated appeals for action against JCD leader Mukammel Hayat Muki and his accomplices Sharif, Saiham, Swapan and Nesar -- all involved in Saturday's shootout.

The authorities closed the university in an hour's notice only to suppress their failure and foil the movement, they said.

The Engineering University Central Students' Union (EUCSU) at a press conference yesterday alleged that the BUET authorities did not go for any action against Muki and his gang despite their repeated demands for it.

Hasib Mustabsir, general secretary of the EUCSU, read out the written statement at the press conference attended only by JCD representatives.

To a question, Hasib said they would join the general students in demonstration if the authorities fail to take any action against the criminals and reopen the university by July 3.

Representatives of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) to the EUCSU in a statement later expressed their solidarity.

Different political organisations were continuing agitation yesterday, demanding arrest of and punishment to those responsible for the killing.

Donors

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said.

Saifur said, "They asked us to set up an independent anti-corruption commission and other institutions and separate the judiciary (from the executive) immediately."

He went on, "I told them those commissions are no problem for us, but the problem is finding persons acceptable to all."

The issues discussed by the donors included anti-corruption commission, human rights commission, office of ombudsman, reform and decentralisation of administration, strengthening of local governments and establishment of rule of law, it is learnt.

These are among the ruling BNP's election pledges and also mentioned in the new budget document.

This is the first such meeting after the Bangladesh Development Forum Meeting in Paris in March. The donors emphasised improving the governance and law and order at that meeting.

Saifur said, "I told them (donors) you are talking more, it is alright. But also give us some liquidity support. We have passed through a critical balance of payment situation. Anyhow, we have survived without the donors' support."

The poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) which is supposed to be the centre point of future development also came up for discussion.

The government is planning to formulate a three-year rolling investment programme in the light of the PRSP as mentioned in the finance minister's budget speech.

Saifur said he would launch a discussion on the draft PRSP next week and hoped that the strategy could be finalised within this year.

7 AL leaders

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according to meeting sources.

"Awami League does not want to lose its leaders, but wants to get them corrected," Hasina said while talking to newsmen after adjournment of the CWC meeting yesterday afternoon.

None of the leaders were stripped of their primary membership of the party, she said.

However, the leaders and workers facing punishment can appeal to the party's National Committee for revision of the CWC decision, according to party sources.

The CWC meeting also asked the party's front organisations to take action against those accused of breaking party discipline and to inform the party.

The probe committee in its report said activities of the leaders and workers contrary to the party interest caused defeat of some AL nominees in the election.

For overhauling the party, the meeting had a detailed discussion of its strength at all level. It asked party committees at thana and district levels to complete their conferences by September 31 and October 31 respectively.

For holding AL's biennial central conference and council on December 22-23, the meeting formed three subcommittees. These are a 21-member constitution amendment and declaration subcommittee headed by Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, an 11-member financial sub-committee headed by AMA Muhiut and a seven-member election tribunal sub-committee headed by Syeday Johora Tajuddin.

The meeting extended the tenure of the party's Central Committee for six months, up to holding of the next biennial central conference in December. The tenure expires on June 23.

It decided to dissolve district committees in Magura, Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia, Sylhet and Pirojpur and suggested convening committees in these districts.

BIWTC

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There are also three other vessels to carry the people up to Barisal and Bhola," he added.

Poor service resulted in decrease in the number of passengers. Poor maintenance and high operational costs of the wretched vessels, and theft of fuel oil and irregularities by a section of unscrupulous elements in connivance with some dishonest officials of the organisation, had been forcing BIWTC to incur the loss for the last five years.

The Commercial Director of BIWTC S M Aynul Karim told The Daily Star "all the previous three vessels of Tagong-Barisal route are also in a wretched condition and need proper maintenance or repair work." The director felt the necessity of adding new and more vessels to the BIWTC fleet in different routes for a better service for the people of coastal areas of the country that comprises around one tenth of the total population.

General Manager (Operations) Mohammad Ali while talking to this correspondent said all the nine vessels of rocket service were built or around 1928 with an expiry period of 20 years and all those are wretched now.

"The existing three vessels of Chittagong-Barisal route that opened in 1965 are also far beyond their expiry date," he said.

"As such these wretched vessels consume larger quantity of fuel and a good amount of money has to be spent for their repairing and maintenance every year," Ali said.

The vessels with a slow speed of around 7/8 knots per hour often takes time far more than the scheduled 20 hours to cover a distance of 145 kms in Chittagong-Barisal route, he said.

He said addition of the new vessel could mitigate the suffering of the coastal people.

According to sources, BIWTC carried 441888 passengers and 8515 tons of cargoes in its coastal routes earning around Tk 1.50 crore while 416767 passengers and 7021 tons of cargoes in its Dhaka-Khulna route earning around Tk 3.08 crore in 2001.

New army chief

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the previous government.

General Hasan was earlier superseded when Major General Harun-ar-Rashid was appointed the army chief on December 25, 2000. In fact, General Harun superseded seven officers when he was made army chief. They are Major General Anwar Hossain, then serving as ambassador abroad, and Major General A M Mansur Ahmed, who was appointed as director general of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and subsequently joined as Military Secretary to new President Prof. AQM Badruddoja Chowdhury.

The other senior officers who were passed over and in the meantime, have retired are Major General Wahab, Master General Ordnance; Major General A K Fazlur Kabir, former GOC, Chittagong; Major General Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, who retired while serving as ambassador abroad (now on contract as ambassador to Oman); and Major General Mustafa Kamal, the then director general of BISS.

Although there were speculations for quite sometime that the government was considering a new chief, the change happened yesterday with the prime minister giving her assent and the president signing the files.

General Hasan, who is on the active army list, was called back to Dhaka from the UAE for "consultations" on Monday. The retiring army chief also returned from nine-day long trip to China the night before.

General Hasan held a number of important staff and command positions. He served as the Divisional Commander of Bogra and also as commander of the Bangladesh contingent in the Gulf War in 1991.

He also served as the Chief of General Staff (CGS) and headed the two most prestigious defence institutions of the country. General Hasan was Commandant of Staff College and Commandant of National Defence College. He is a graduate of Army War College in the USA.

Hailing from Sylhet, General Hasan opted to serve as an envoy when he was superseded and was then appointed as ambassador to

the UAE.

Incidentally, the BNP-led coalition government has picked both the navy and air force chiefs from among officers who were superseded during the Awami League government.

Lt. General Harun-ar-Rashid, who was a gallant freedom fighter and a meritorious officer, hails from Hathazari of Chittagong. He first joined the Pakistan Air Force and left it when he was not allowed to fly. Later, he joined the Pakistan Military Academy in 1970 as a member of the War Commission on September 6 that year.

He was awarded Bir Pratik for his outstanding bravery during the War of Independence.

After the previous government took office, he was appointed the Principal Staff Officer to the Prime Minister in September 1996 and served till early 1998.

Abdul Kalam

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Congress which had just a day earlier requested incumbent President K R Narayanan, who hails from the southern state of Kerala, to be their joint candidate if Alexander was chosen by the ruling combine nominee.

Prime Minister consulted a host of opposition stalwarts, including Congress President Sonia Gandhi, CPI(M) leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI leader A B Bardhan and Samajwadi Party chief Mulyam Singh Yadav, on Kalam's choice before the formal announcement was made Monday night. He also spoke to AIADMK chief Jayalalitha, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu state, who has agreed to Kalam's choice as the Presidential nominee.

Kalam emerged as the compromise candidate of the ruling alliance after BJP and some of its allies were in disagreement over Alexander.

Telugu Desam Party, which rules Andhra Pradesh state and is a crucial supporter of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, had opposed Alexander's candidature and backed Krishan Kant.

PSC Chairman calls on PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday hoped that merit and qualification would be given due importance in recruiting officers of the Republic.

She was talking to the newly appointed chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC) Dr ZN Tahmidia Begum who made a courtesy call on the Prime Minister at her office.

They discussed matters relating to the 21st, 22nd and 23rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations during the meeting.

Damage suit

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Dhaka, for publishing his photograph with a story captioned 'Beware of Bangladesh' in the April 4 issue of FEER.

The plaintiff stated that the weekly in its story described him as a fundamentalist and identified Bangladesh as a Taliban state.

He said the weekly collected his photograph from a procession brought out from Baitul Mukarram Mosque on March 1, protesting the riot in Gujarat.

Barrister M I Chowdhury and Advocate Sajjad Hossain moved the suit on behalf of the plaintiff.

CU JCD factions

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randum to the Vice Chancellor today.

According to the sources and witnesses, some cadres led by JCD president Sujuddin, who was expelled from the CU for cheating in examinations, and general secretary Saifur Rahman Shaphat appeared at the station at around 8.15 am and attacked Milton who was waiting for the CU-bound shuttle train.

Kamrul, who was also waiting at the station for the shuttle train, came under attack.

Hearing the news of attack on their leader, other JCD leaders and activists of Milton group brought out a procession on the CU campus and urged the university authorities to take punitive action against the attackers.

Great German grit

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saw both sides finish with ten men and seven bookings a side - a new World Cup record.

The Germans had Carsten Ramelow sent off in the first half while Cameroon's Patrick Suffo went for an early bath in the second.

Cameroon had been chasing an historic win which would have seen Africa have a second representative in the last 16 for the first time, Senegal having marched on after an earlier draw in Group A with Uruguay.

But despite the ill-discipline on both sides the Germans kept their heads enough to avoid crashing out in the first phase for the first time since 1938.

Klose's fifth goal of the tournament sent him back to the top of the goalscoring charts ahead of Denmark's Jon Dahl Tomasson - and also ensured Germany won their group.

Bode said Germany, who will now play either Spain, South Africa or Paraguay, were deserved winners.

"The conditions were very difficult in the second half as we were down to ten men," explained the 32-year-old veteran from Werder Bremen.

"We wanted to put Cameroon under pressure as we knew they had their weaknesses and we did so. The main thing was to go through and it's great that we have."

Cameroon's German coach Winfried Schafer was frustrated as his side failed to capitalise on almost 40 minutes played with an extra man.

"It should've been visible that we had the extra man. I told the players to play over the flanks but they didn't. We conceded a lot of possession in the middle and that's how the first German goal arrive. Ramelow's sending off was decisive. I'd have rather he'd stayed on and (Samuel) Eto'o score," Ramelow having fouled the Cameroon striker as he bore down on goal.

"I've had rather he'd stayed on and (Samuel) Eto'o score," Ramelow having fouled the Cameroon striker as he bore down on goal. "If we'd beaten Ireland in the first game we'd have made it," added Schafer as he reflected on a 1-1 draw in the opening match against the Irish, who beat them into second spot by beating Saudi Arabia 3-0 on the night. The greasy

pitch after heavy afternoon rain rendered the conditions far from perfect. But that was not the reason for the wetter of red and yellow cards -- seven bookings for each side plus the two dismissals - dished out by Spanish referee referee Antonio Lopez Nieto, beating the nine recorded in Italy's quarter -- final victory over Nigeria in 1994. Ramelow was dismissed five minutes before the interval for pulling down Samuel Eto'o just two minutes after receiving a first yellow card, while Suffo went 13 minutes from time for tripping an opponent. The slippery pitch was no excuse for Klose earlier treading all over Cameroon defender Rigobert Song, which left the latter with a bloody nose. But the class moments came from the Germans as well. Klose turned provider on 50 minutes, playing a pinpoint through ball to Bode, on at half-time for the lumbering Carsten Jancker, and he slid the ball low past keeper Boukar Alioum and inside the far post. Schafer reeled by sending on Daniel Ngom Kome for Salomon Omedbe - but to no avail as Klose nodded in from a Michael Ballack cross with 11 minutes remaining.

His other four goals at the event have also been headers.

Lauren had hit the woodwork in the 73rd minute for the African and Olympic champions but they showed little imagination up front.

Ballack should have made it 3-0 in the closing stages but sent a header straight at Alioum.

German midfielders Dietmar Hamann and Christian Ziege as well as Ramelow will all be suspended for their second-round match.

TEAMS
Cameroon: Boukar, Tchato (Suffo, 53), Song, Kalla, Lauren, Wome, Njitap, Foe, Olembe (Kome, 64), Eto'o, Mboma

Germany: Kahn, Linke, Metzelder, Ramelow, Ziege, Hamann, Ballack, Schneider (Jeremies, 80), Frings, Janker (Bode, 46), Klose (Neuville, 84)

Goals: Bode 50, Klose 79

Red cards: Suffo 77 (Cameroon); Ramelow 40 (Germany)

Attendance: 47,085

Referee: Lopez Antonio (Spain)

Meter reader Mahbub

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Energy AKM Mosharrar Hossain is speaking in favour of Mahbub in public.

At a seminar in the city Sunday, Mosharrar primarily blamed the systems loss in the gas sector on a section of consumers. According to the minister, the second and third causes of such loss were due to a section of Titas officials and the unions respectively.

He criticised the media for carrying news on the corruption of meter reader and union leader Mahbub. "Recently many reports were carried on how a Titas meter reader became a millionaire. But we cannot make a decision on the basis of newspaper reports. These require administrative investigation."

Continued Mosharrar: "We've come to learn that the said meter reader was not with the Titas Gas for six years. He might have made fortune through hard work in those six years."

But sources contradict the minister's claims. Moreover, in the past there had been several instances where the authorities acted against corrupt employees on the basis of press report.

On February 14, a general manager in a note recommended administrative action against a deputy manager and two employees on the basis of a newspaper report. The authorities on the same day sent the deputy manager into forced retirement. But, no action was taken against the employees.

The authorities at the time had said the publication of such news items was damaging the image of Titas and so, stringent actions should be taken immediately.

A general manager was made officer on special duty (OSD) after a newspaper financed by an industrial group published news against him. The manager reportedly irked the industrial group over collection of pending gas bill.

"It's not true that no action is taken on the basis of newspaper report," commented a Titas high official. "Rather such comments (of the state minister) are basically aimed at defending the corrupt people for petty political interest."

Official documents on Mahbub also contradict the state minister's claims about the origin of his wealth. Appointed in 1987, Mahbub was suspended in April 1996 and then terminated on March 12, 1998. Using his political connection, Mahbub however got back his job on November 24 last year.

In his prayer for reinstatement in the job last year, Mahbub had said since 1996 he remained unemployed and that he was looking forward to re-joining Titas as a meter reader.

Mahbub was arrested on April 27 at the Zia International Airport before flying off to Singapore with his family. His passport identified him as a 'businessman'. However, the police had to free him when a top political leader intervened.

He owns two flats at Purana Paltan in the city, a car and two industries. He also uses a three-

storey residence in the city. Moreover, he used a jeep of Titas gas full time. However, the jeep was withdrawn following a report in The Daily Star.

An investigation into the origin of his wealth reveals that he made it all by tampering with gas meters of the industries located in Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Narsingdi.

Following press reports on him, the authorities formed an investigation committee, members of which were reportedly selected by Mahbub himself. The probe committee is yet to come up with its report. When asked about the status of the probe report, a top Titas official said when a minister has vouched for Mahbub that he is honest, "why should we try to dig into his dishonesty?"

Meanwhile, the immigration authorities also did not file any case against him for using a fake passport.

After his arrest, Mahbub was surprisingly sent to court under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) although a case under the Immigration Act is the normal procedure. At the time, the Airport police told the court that a regular case would be filed against him under the Immigration Act.

Investigation Officer of the case, which was filed under section 54, Nazmul Ahsan told The Daily Star that the Special Branch of Police was delaying in giving a report on Mahbub.

Meanwhile, the third date for filing of the police investigation report has been refixed on June 15. Earlier, two dates were deferred. No regular case can be filed against Mahbub without the investigation report.

Multi-metering

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along with valid licenses to avoid multi-metering. BTTB officials said.

When asked BTTB Chairman SATM Badrul Haque told The Daily Star that the decision to introduce multi-metering system has been taken by the government.

"We don't have any authority to take decision. We are implementing the government decision."

He claimed that multi-metering will enhance people's access to telephone since a caller will be precise in talking, not to waste time and money.

There was a move earlier in February to introduce the multi-metering system. But it was disapproved by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

BTTB then challenged the authority of the BTRC and sought a decision from the law ministry, which finally gave a decision in favour of introducing the multi-metering system.

BTTB had also decided to enhance the monthly line rent of ISPs to Tk 1,200 from Tk 150. However, it could not implement the decision following intervention by the BTRC.

BTTB has some seven lakh fixed telephone subscribers all over the country.

BUET: Gangsterism

FROM PAGE 1
enrolment in Master's on charge of his involvement in crimes.

Prof. Nooruddin has set down the violence to student politics. Every problem will be solved if student politics is banned, the VC felt. He said armed cadres are born in student politics. "If you want to stop such violence, what you should do first is ban student politics."

Muki initiated disorders on the campus when he became general secretary of the JCD BUET unit in 2000. Also assistant joint secretary of the JCD's central committee (now suspended), Muki led a gang in the night guard or bidding with the Dhaka University-based Titu-Tagar faction of the JCD on the BUET campus on Saturday. Unfortunately, the shootout left no other than Sabequn Nahar Sony, a BUET student, killed.

Sources said the shootout was the first such untoward incident in the BUET's 50-year academic history. Earlier, there had been two killings and some petty crimes like cracker-explosion and ransacking.

An armed gang killed Ahmedullah, a BUET student, in 1995, and Alak, a Dhaka University student, in 2000 on the BUET campus. But none of BUET students was involved in the incidents.

Records show that on various occasions, BUET students and student organisations showed restraints in joint agitation.

Sometimes, they damaged vehicles, of course. Until the emergence of Muki, there was no charge of killing, extortion or mugging against any BUET student or student leader.

Unlike other university students, the BUET students did not go for

agitation without a justifiable cause, which distinguished them from others. But Saturday's shootout tarnished that image.

A resident of Jamal Khan Road in Chittagong, Muki was a polite student. With good track-records in SSC and HSC examinations, he enrolled in the Department of Materials and Metallurgical Engineering at the BUET in 1993. But his meeting with former JCD leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu initiated him into the crime world. Also, Muki was blessed by an influential ruling party leader in Chittagong.

He started hanging around with some JCD activists loyal to Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in Lalbagh area. The youths used to grab extortion from various markets in and around the BUET, including the Palashi Market. Then, he was introduced to firearms and now possesses several.

Meantime, Muki did his bachelor degree and got admission to Master's. He concentrated on making up his own gang as assistant organising secretary of the central unit of the JCD and emerged as the first BUET student leading a criminal gang in 2000.

He along with Pintu's supporters occupied a floor of the Titumir Hall and was staying there illegally.

His opponents in Saturday's gunfight incident -- Benazir Titu and Tagar of Bangabandhu and SM halls of Dhaka University -- always tried to manipulate BUET's bidding in the past. This time, Muki wanted to take control of the bidding -- the reason leading to a rivalry with Titu and Tagar.

Freed from traffickers

FROM PAGE 12
Their father, Shahjalal from Sakharipota village under Sarsha upazila in Jessore, said, "My family of three daughters, two sons, my wife and myself crossed over to India in March last year for lucrative jobs offered by traffickers. We were among a group of 24 people. We reached Bongaon, a bordering town in West Bengal. But while boarding a Kolkata-bound train in the evening, we (my family) were made to board two separate compartments."

He told this correspondent that his police arrested him along with his two sons and daughter Rubiya and brought them out of the train at Nohati station in West Bengal. His wife and two other daughters were in another compartment. "We did not know what happened to them and they also were in the dark about our fate," he recalled with tears in his eyes.

"I was allowed to stay with my children for 45 days in President's Jail in Kolkata. Then I was separated from them and taken to another jail. I was kept there for seven months and 10 days," said Shahjalal.

He was arrested under the foreigners' act and was no more allowed to see his children. At a stage, he was released from jail and

'pushed back' into Bangladesh. Later, he found his wife and two other daughters who had come back from Mumbai after spending miserable days on the streets of that city for about two months, he said.

His sons were kept at a shelter home run by West Bengal government. Praajak, a local NGO, informed the BNWLA about the two brothers around two months ago.