

## Ban on JCD goes, new body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling BNP yesterday withdrew the suspension of activities of the central committee of its student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and announced a 31-member convening committee by dissolving its earlier committee.

Shahabuddin Lattu, who was general secretary of the former JCD central committee, has been made convenor of the new committee.

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia approved the new committee last night, sources in BNP said.

ABM Mosharrar Hossain, Monir Hossain and Azizul Bari Helal, who held important posts in the earlier committee, have been made joint conveners of the new convening

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## BUET students call half-day hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has called a half-day hartal in the city and a daylong strike at the educational institutions across the country today in protest at police attack on hunger-striking students on Sunday.

The Students Unity against Atrocities yesterday urged all to make the hartal a success.

The main opposition Awami League, the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Eleven Parties, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) avowed their support for the hartal call.

The pro-AL Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has also called a hartal today to protest the BUET incident.

Meanwhile, some students under the banner of the Conscious

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## 2 killed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed gang shot dead a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist at Shantibagh in the city's Motijheel area last evening.

Shamsur Rahman, 24, son of late Wahidur Rahman, was shot in the chest and abdomen at 6:30pm.

The critically injured was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. The body of the victim was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

The reason behind the killing of young man could not be known immediately.

Meanwhile, police recovered the body of a young man in front of the Shah Ali Girls School near the Muktiyoddha Market at Mirpur Section One in the city last night.

The victim was identified as Sujan, 20, son of one Akhtar Hossain, police said.

The body was sent to the DMCH for autopsy, said our DMCH Correspondent.



PHOTO: STAR

Police club and chase members of the Progressive Students' Unity (PSU) at Muktangan in the city yesterday, when they brought out a procession in support of today's hartal.

## No let-up in police action on students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the second day running, police clubbed and dispersed agitating students of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in the city yesterday.

At least nine student leaders of different organisations were arrested from the Dhaka University campus, where they were demonstrating against Sunday's police atrocities at the BUET. Earlier, the students tried to bring out processions defying a police prohibition.

Several hundred policemen besieged the entire Dhaka University, BUET and Central Shaheed Minar area and did not allow any kind of demonstrations there. Police also placed barbed

fences at different points of these areas.

They also clubbed agitating BUET students in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, the hunger-striking BUET students broke their eight-day fast into death programme yesterday following request from intellectuals of the country.

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Prof. Muzaffar Ahmad and Language Movement veteran Abdul Matin, among others, helped them break the fast at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 12 in the noon.

Meanwhile, the agitating students at a press conference in the city yesterday revised their hartal programme and announced that

they will now enforce a half-day hartal in the capital today. Earlier, they had called for a daylong hartal today.

At the conference, they demanded immediate reopening of the university and punishment to the persons who attacked the hunger-striking students. They also called a daylong student strike at all educational institutions across the country today.

The students under the banner of "BUET Students against Violence" blamed the BUET authorities, police, activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islamic Chhatra Shibir for Sunday's attack.

They said though they have agreed to break their fast, their movement against the BUET

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## Hunger strikers leave hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hunger striking students of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) who were hospitalised in the last few days left hospitals yesterday.

Four of the students -- Rony, Moin, Sharifullah Ahmed and Indranil Palit-- were admitted to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH) and some others to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition.

Rony was transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU) and he left the hospital yesterday morning with his mother, Sharifullah Ahmed, Moin and Indranil Palit left later.

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## Farmers bear brunt of power tariff hike

REAZ AHMAD and RAZIUR RAHMAN

Water has become costlier for farmers to irrigate croplands across the country following the recent rise in power tariff.

Upward revision of power tariff on irrigation pumps by five per cent, for the first time in 14 years, is in contrast with the long-pursued farm subsidy policy of Bangladesh, sources pointed out.

Over the last one decade, power tariff was increased more than a dozen times, but each time subsequent governments exempted the state-subsidised sector -- agricultural irrigation -- from the enhanced levy.

But this time the government brought irrigation pumps also under the latest power tariff rise that came into effect on August 1. Earlier on January 1 this year, the government had raised power tariff, but exempted agricultural irrigation from it.

Per unit cost of power used by over one lakh electricity-run irrigation pumps in the country has now gone up

to Tk 1.84 from Tk 1.75, affecting millions of farmers. Power tariff on irrigation pumps was raised to Tk 1.75 from Tk 1.70 per unit earlier in 1988 by the autocratic regime of General H M Ershad.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Mahmud told The Daily Star the latest rise in power tariff would affect only 20,000 farming consumers in the urban command area of the Power Development Board (PDB).

He explained that farmers mostly consume power supplied by the Rural Electrification Board (REB) and the rates are determined by the palli bidyut samities.

But according to sources in the REB, which supplies electricity to 82,253 irrigation pumps throughout the country, farmers in its command area would also have to bear the increased cost as the REB now has to buy power at an enhanced rate from the PDB. Instead of Tk 1.95 a unit previously, the PDB is now charging Tk 2.05 per unit from the REB, they pointed out.

The tariff hike would raise irrigation costs in at least

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## TU-ruling party nexus leaves Titas in tatters

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Patronisation of trade unions by ruling party leaders over the years has sent the state-run Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited hurtling down the road to complete breakdown.

The ruling party leaders, sometimes cabinet members even, have backed corrupt union leaders to further their partisan and personal interests. With their tacit support, reward, and not punishment, for irregularities and corruption has become a regular practice in Titas.

Trade unionism gone awry is one of the major reasons behind the recent developments at Titas. And again, a few leaders, of the

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) this time around, have played a key role in this regard.

Should such a noxious trend continue, the state-run company,

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which loses gas worth Tk 200 crore every year through pilferage, may well become another Adamjee Jute Mills Limited.

Trade union activities began at Titas in 1968 when the gas transmission and distribution company went into operations. Back then, there was only one registered trade union, which was apolitical.

The trend continued until another union was formed in 1989 with the backing of the autocratic government of military ruler HM Ershad.

In 1991, after the fall of Ershad, the same trade union started enjoying blessing from of the ruling BNP. At around the same time, two more trade unions came into being. Interestingly, these two also were affiliated to the BNP.

Meanwhile, the first trade union established a political link with then main opposition Awami League (AL). Thereon began criminalisation of trade union at Titas. Armed clashes became a regular feature.

The balance of power at Titas

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## Maoists kill 85 more in yet another massive attack

PTI/AFP, Kathmandu

In yet another massive strike Maoist rebels attacked security posts in district headquarters of Sandhikhark, killing 85 security personnel and injuring 22 even as thousands of rebels virtually seized the area and set ablaze various government offices.

Out of 200 army and police stationed in the district headquarters in Sandhikhark, 300 km west of the capital, 85 security personnel

were killed during the gunbattle overnight that lasted for several hours, Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Bala Bahadur said.

Twenty two security people who were injured during the fighting were taken on army helicopter to Pokhara Hospital for medical treatment, Home Ministry sources said. No detailed information on casualty was available as the communication link between Kathmandu and Sandhikhark has been broken.

Over 2,000 rebels chanting pro-Maoist slogans entered the district headquarter on Sunday night and started attacking the security forces deployed in the area, according to reports.

The Maoists exploded bombs at various government installations including district police office, army barracks, district administration office and looted cash and valuables from local banks in the district, official sources said.

AFP quoting state radio adds: Maoist rebels killed at least 65 police and soldiers in attacks on security posts and government buildings yesterday a day after the guerrillas lined up and executed nearly 50 security personnel.

Sources told the wire service as many as 4,000 rebels were involved in the overnight raids at Sandhikharka in Arghakanchi district, 215 kilometres southwest of Kathmandu.

The fighting, which continued for seven hours, left 31 policemen, 17 armed police officers and 17 soldiers dead, with 32 people injured, the radio report added.

Minister of State for Home Devendra Raj Kandel said 56 security force personnel had died but added the toll could rise. He said three policemen had been taken hostage as the rebels escaped.

Officials said they feared the

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## Drive to discipline rickshaws starts in city today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Traffic Department of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) jointly launch a month-long special drive today to bring discipline to plying of rickshaws on city roads.

"During the drive we will take steps against the rickshaws violating traffic rules," Abu Musa Mohammad Fakrul Islam, deputy commissioner of the DMP traffic department, told The Daily Star yesterday.

An estimated 87 thousand rickshaws plying the city roads have genuine license while four lakh rickshaws don't have DCC authorisation.

Transport sector experts blame rickshaw-pullers to a great extent for traffic congestion in the capital, as most of them do not go by the rules.

Sources in the traffic department said that the DMP had planned a drive to seize illegal rickshaws to improve traffic situation in the city.

But the traffic department was forced to change its plan, as there was argument that city dwellers would suffer even more as there has already been a vacuum in public transport in the city since the banning of auto-rickshaws on September 1.

Taking advantage of the transport scarcity created due to the ban on 12,500 two-stroke auto-rickshaws from September 1, most of the rickshaws are back on the city roads.

Because of the large number of rickshaws, severe traffic jam results on roads where there are no restrictions on the movement of non-mechanised vehicles.