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## Madrasa students storm police station in Hathazari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Hundreds of madrasa students went on the rampage and stormed Hathazari Police Station in Chittagong yesterday over rumours that an imam was killed earlier in the day in clashes between police and religious militants in Dhaka.

Clashes that followed left more than 10 people, including five police, injured.

Police said students of Darul Ulum Moin Ul Islam, a local religious institution, brought out a procession at about 6:30pm protesting police action on the activists of Anti-Quranic Law Resistance Committee in Dhaka.

The procession became unruly while passing by the Hathazari Police Station as rumours spread that an imam was killed in clashes between police and religious militants in Dhaka earlier in the day.

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## 20 injured as JCD, BCL in Dhaka Medical College clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 students of Dhaka Medical College were injured in clashes between Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday.

Students said tensions had already been mounting in last few days between the student wings of the BNP and the Awami League over recruiting freshers into their organisations.

They said the JCD activists swooped on their rivals at about 10:30am yesterday following an altercation Thursday between the two groups during the celebration of the 65th day of K-65 batch, this year's intake in the medical college.

Chase and counter-chase followed for nearly two hours in which 20 students were injured. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

A fifth year student, Sayed, said

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## SECOND DAY OF PROTEST IN BAITUL MUKARRAM AREA

# Violent clashes with cops leave 200 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of Islamist outfit members yesterday clashed with police for hours on the second day of violent protests against the national women policy in the city's Baitul Mukarram National Mosque areas, leaving over 200 people injured.

Police used batons and fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to disperse those staging demonstrations in defiance of the state of emergency. Some 17 people were arrested in connection with the clashes.

At least 52 policemen and five journalists were among the

injured. Eyewitnesses said violence broke out at around 1:35pm, minutes after Jum'a prayers when police barred a procession brought out from the north gate of the mosque.

Earlier on March 8, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed announced the national policy for women development, causing a firestorm of protests among Islamist organisations.

Since then, some radical groups have been claiming that the policy gives equal inheritance rights to men and women, whereas there is no such provision in it.

In efforts to scotch the discontent, four advisers of the caretaker

him up. They snatched his rifle and broke it up in pieces.

Some 50 people were wounded in Thursday's fight between the Islamist groups and law enforcers.

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## Call for calm, solving crisis thru' talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In reaction to yesterday's violent clashes between irate Islamists and police over the country's new women's development policy, members of the civil society and human rights activists called upon all to maintain peace.

They also wondered aloud why the khatib of National Mosque was not issued a show cause notice.

Questions were also raised regarding how and why bamboo poles and bricks were kept in Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, and if some quarters were trying to take advantage of the situation to divert public attention from more crucial national issues.

Around 200 people, including 52 police personnel, were injured in clashes between the law enforcers and mostly Muslim men incited

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## Demand for women's equal rights logical, says CJ

*It's a must to become well educated democratic nation*

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin yesterday said the demand for equal rights for women in every aspect of life is logical.

"Women are about a half of the total population. Hence, their demand for equal rights is logical. Then why various incidents are taking place now centring the issue?" he wondered.

The chief justice was addressing the inaugural session of a two-day workshop titled 'Justice System Education Initiative on Gender Equality Issues', arranged by Khan Foundation in its Democracy Auditorium in the morning.

He urged the country's judges to play their roles in courts on various gender issues with compassion towards the women.

Abdul Moyeen Khan, the event was addressed, among others, by Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, and Executive Director of Khan Foundation Advocate Rokhsana Khondker.

Ombudsman of the state of West Bengal of India Samareesh Banerjee, addressed the event as the guest of honour.

Referring to a part of the country's constitution that guarantees equal rights for women, the chief justice said without establishing women's rights Bangladesh will never become a well educated democratic state.

He urged the country's judges to play their roles in courts on various gender issues with compassion towards the women.

Justice Fazlul Karim also laid emphasis on the sympathy of judges when dealing with cases filed by women seeking justice.

He said, "We, the judges, always try to pronounce objective verdicts. But sometimes because of our unconscious minds, a woman might become a victim of injustice. So, be very careful, put yourself in that woman's shoes."

Samareesh Banerjee said judicial systems in South Asian countries are not well equipped to deal with crimes on gender issues.

Gender justice is a new jurisprudence all over the world, he said, and underscored the need for initiating judicial education on gender issues in Saarc countries.

## Saifur resumes unity move as rivals to go to higher court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Saifur Rahman, acting chairman appointed by the BNP standing committee, has taken a fresh initiative to reunite the party before talks with the Election Commission (EC) and the caretaker government.

Leaders of pro-Khaleda faction, meantime, are planning to appeal the High Court (HC) verdict dismissing detained Chairperson Khaleda Zia's writ challenging the EC's invitation to pro-Saifur faction for the dialogue on electoral reforms.

Insiders said Saifur, a former finance minister, has already called a few pro-Khaleda leaders including Khandaker Delwar Hossain, standing committee members RA Gani and Shamsul Islam, and the chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah with conciliatory proposals.

He also made a phone call to Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and requested him to help the factions patch up differences.

Delwar did not agree to talk to Saifur. But others told the pro-reform stalwart that BNP remains

united under the leadership of Khaleda Zia and Khandaker Delwar, secretary general appointed by her.

Asked yesterday about Saifur's phone call, Hannan Shah told reporters that he had been contacted several times in the past. "But now we'll have to think twice before responding to any such contact. When he (Saifur) speaks he speaks with all modesty but that departs when he acts," he added.

Sources said Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin, acting secretary general appointed at a standing committee meeting last year, too has tried to reach Delwar, but to no avail.

"We have taken steps to unite the party and discussions are on," he told reporters after a meeting with a Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) delegation at his Banani residence.

"I want to go to the Election Commission for the dialogue along with all senior leaders including Khandaker Delwar, Hannan Shah and Goyeshwar Chandra Roy," he said.

Referring to the court verdict, he

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## Indian cabinet okays train service deal

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian cabinet yesterday approved the agreement with Bangladesh to resume passenger train services between Kolkata and Dhaka after a 43-year hiatus.

The approval came at a cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh three days before the "Moitree Express" chugs off from Kolkata's Chitpur station at 7:00am this Monday on the occasion of Bangla Nababarsha in Bangladesh and West Bengal.

The corresponding inaugural train from Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka will also begin its journey to Kolkata on April 14.

Earlier in Dhaka, the Council of Advisers with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair approved the draft of Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service on April 6.

A formal agreement between Bangladesh and India to this effect was signed in Dhaka on April 10.

The "Moitree (friendship) Express" will travel between Cantonment Station in Dhaka and Chitpur Station in Kolkata through Darshana border. Two trains will simultaneously leave Dhaka and Kolkata every Saturday and return on Sunday.

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## NO LET UP IN MARKET SITUATION

# Middle-class, limited income group grapple with prices

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and WASIM BIN HABIB

Middle-class people and those with limited income have been rendered helpless by the spiralling price of edibles as well as by the spike in expenses on other heads.

House rent and cost of education, medical treatment and transport also saw a steady rise in the last few months.

Frustration is growing among these groups, as neither their income has increased nor they are getting any support like that of the government safety net programmes for the poor.

A recent study of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab) reveals that lifestyle expenditure of

people increased by 16.78 percent in 2007, whereas in the previous year there was an increase of 13.52 percent.

The price of essentials and living expenses especially shot up in the last three months, the Cab leaders said.

Mostly, the teachers of different schools, colleges and government universities, officials and employees of different government and non-government institutions and small traders are bearing the brunt of the situation.

The Cab study also says that the price of rice rose by Tk 7-8 per kg while the price of flour by Tk 5-6 in the last three months. At the same period, the price of pulses increased by Tk 15 per kg and edible oil price

leapt by Tk 10 to 15 on an average.

Besides, house rent, cost of education and medical treatment and transport charges also saw a steady rise while the income of these groups remained static, making it harder for them to make ends meet, Quazi Fazlul Haque, programme coordinator of Cab, said.

A large section of them are showing signs of being incapable of dealing with the sudden price hike of essentials, he said adding that many of them are not accustomed to standing in queues for hours to buy rice.

Lots of them are now almost buried under debt with some forced to discontinue their

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## Retailers yet to reduce prices of coarse rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The retail price of coarse rice, which rose steadily in the last 10 days, is yet to come down in the city's retail markets despite a fall in its wholesale price by over Tk 2 per kilogram (kg).

Meanwhile, the government has increased the amount of rice to be sold in the capital's open market sale (OMS) outlets to 586 tonnes from 386 tonnes a day.

The number of fair price outlets run by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has been increased to 75 from 50. BDR members will start selling essentials at the new outlets from tomorrow, said BDR officials.

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## Farmers selling boro before harvest for pittance to survive

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Sixty-two year old Abul Hossain of Ikholah village in sadar upazila would have earned his retirement by now had he held a job.

Instead he struggles to gather two square meals a day for his family.

For Abul is a marginal farmer in wait for his boro harvest, fighting to keep the hunger wolves from his door as the price of rice keeps rising higher and higher.

With no fixed income or savings, Abul is dependent on his two teen sons working at a tea stall to get the money to buy rice each day.

"What can I do? I have spent all I

had to cultivate my fields; till the boro harvest comes through, I have nothing," he says.

"We just get hungrier and poorer each day," he adds.

"I took my sons Mintu, 14, and Noor, 13, out of school to work. What kind of a father does that?" Abul asks, as the lines on his sad face deepen in pain.

To add to his troubles his daughter sent her two young sons to her parents a month ago because she can't feed them.

"We used to cook rice three times a day and use up 4 kg rice," his wife Anwara told the Daily Star.

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# বৈশাখী ফিউশন কনসার্ট

অর্বাব

নাইলা

নর্গিস

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