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BCL, Shibir clash at 3 colleges

88 hurt as Khulna BL College, Meherpur, Dinajpur govt colleges erupt in violence over welcoming admission seekers

STAR REPORT

At least 88 people, mostly students, were injured as Bangladesh Chhatra League and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists locked in clashes at three colleges in Khulna, Meherpur and Dinajpur yesterday.

All the clashes were over welcoming aspirant freshmen to admission tests in colleges.

Fifty people, including two policemen and four photojournalists, were injured in a fierce clash between Chhatra Shibir and Chhatra League around 12:30pm at Daulatpur Government BL University College.

The college authorities imposed a ban on all political activities on campus and closed two dormitories for indefinite period after the clash.

Six of the injured were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital of whom two Shibir men are in critical condition.

The clash erupted when Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Chhatra Shibir men chanted abusive slogans against each other on

campus after the freshmen admission test ended.

They used bricks, sticks and iron rods against each other during the clash that continued till 4:30pm on and around the campus.

Police had to fire 18 teargas canisters to disperse the feuding groups.

Chhatra League men allegedly ransacked Mohsin Hall and Shaheed Titumir Hall of the college. These two dormitories were under the control of Chhatra Shibir, sources told our staff correspondent at Khulna.

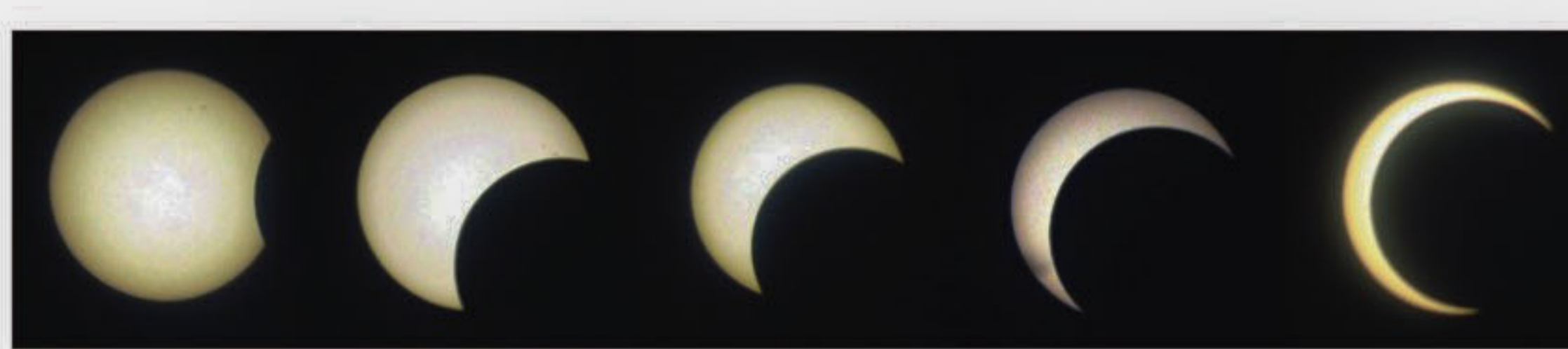
Chhatra League men while denying allegations of ransacking the dorms said men of Chhatra Shibir attacked them first.

However, Principal of the college Ahmed Reza said he was not aware of who attacked whom first.

Chhatra League later laid siege to the administrative building of the college demanding expulsion of Shibir men from the college and dormitories.

Four platoons of police were deployed in

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An urchin tries to have a glimpse of the first annular solar eclipse of the year while another assists him at an eclipse observing camp on DU campus yesterday. The eclipse was seen from Dhaka between 12:44:07pm and 4:58pm. An AFP photo sequence, above, shows the moon obstructing the view of the sun in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday.

Year's first solar eclipse observed

STAR REPORT

Science enthusiasts and nature lovers yesterday witnessed the first annular solar eclipse of the year.

The eclipse started at 10:05:24am and lasted till 4:07:36pm. The highest point of the eclipse was observed at 2:31:37pm at St Martin island. In Dhaka it was seen from 12:44:07pm to 4:58pm.

The full string eclipse was viewed the longest at St Martin's island and Cox's Bazar. Hundreds of people gathered there to witness the natural phenomenon. The duration of the eclipse at St Martin's island was 8:29 minutes while it was 5:29 minutes at Cox's Bazar.

On July 22 last year, thousands of people thronged Panchagarh town and other places of the northern districts to observe total solar eclipse.

The next total eclipse will be seen from Bangladesh 105 years later, in 2114 while the next annular solar eclipse in 2064.

The people of the capital and

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No need for army in DCC polls

Says EC

BSS, Dhaka

Army or paramilitary forces deployment will not be required in the upcoming Dhaka City Corporation polls as the election code of conduct is now stricter than the earlier.

The election commission took the decision at a recent meeting, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) M Sakawat Hossain told BSS yesterday.

"The EC is focusing more on executing election code of

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ARSENIC THREAT Govt plans paradigm shift in agriculture

REAZ AHMAD

With arsenic creeping into farmlands and the water table falling fast due to excessive groundwater mining for irrigation, the government has planned for a paradigm shift in agriculture.

Under the new plan irrigated-rice boro will be relegated to the position of secondary crop allowing rain-fed aman to regain its previous status of the main crop.

"Arsenic is creeping in and farmers have to dig deeper for irrigating rice [of dry season], as over the years our secondary crop [boro] has become the main crop," said Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury.

In an exclusive interview to The Daily Star, she revealed her ministry's plan to rejuvenate the rain-fed rice and lessen the over dependency on winter rice, boro -- cultivation of which becomes taxing for agro-ecological balance.

"Last year, farmers in Barendra area [in the northern region] had to dig wells and then set up their pumps to irrigate boro, as the groundwater table had fallen," said Matia Chowdhury.

The agriculture minister said, "We'll rather provide all crop protection measures [that are usually provided for boro] to aman so that we get the maximum output from the rain-fed rice."

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TIB hails bill for MPs' code of conduct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh has welcomed the private member's bill on "Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament 2010" placed in parliament on Thursday.

"If adopted, this will not only fulfil a key electoral pledge of Bangladesh Awami League, but also go a long distance in institutionalising democracy, promoting democratic practice and meeting public expectation."

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said this in a

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TEESTA WATER SHARING Bangladesh for JRC meet in Feb

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is likely to propose India for a minister level meeting of Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) in February to discuss the issue of sharing Teesta water.

Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen yesterday told BBC that a process is being initiated to hold the meeting in line with the decision taken by the premiers of both the countries.

A letter might be sent to New Delhi on Sunday in this regard, he added.

The joint communiqué, issued during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India, said that a minister level meeting of JRC would be held by March.

Bangladesh will send a letter to India with the proposal of holding the meeting in February, Ramesh said.

The minister also mentioned that Bangladesh would

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Hasina to brief media on India trip today

Khaleda's briefing tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will brief the media this afternoon about the outcomes of her recent visit to India.

Opposition Leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who was also supposed to make her formal reaction before the media today regarding the prime minister's India visit, last night postponed the press conference until tomorrow.

Khaleda deferred the event because of the prime minister's press briefing, said a

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Dr Zafar Iqbal injured in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Eminent writer and professor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Muhammed Zafar Iqbal, two of his colleagues and three others were injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway yesterday morning.

The accident occurred when a microbus carrying them collided head-on with a passenger bus at Madhabpur in Habiganj at 7:40am after the driver of the microbus lost control over the wheel, police and witnesses said.

Apart from Zafar Iqbal, the injured are Head of mathematics department in SUST Rashed Talukder, Associate Professor of the department Sujit Chakrabarti, President of

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The photo taken at Rayerbazar yesterday shows the age-old Haikkar Khal being filled up as a real estate company has been pumping sand on the west side of the Martyred Intellectuals' Monument.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Haikkar Khal facing encroachment again

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The age-old Haikkar Khal in Rayerbazar is once again under threat of being filled up as a real estate company has been pumping sand on its bank on the west side of the Martyred Intellectuals' Monument.

The developing activity of Bay Dredge and Development also defies a ban imposed by the Public Works Department on any construction work near the monument to protect its sanctity and aesthetics.

The entire area through which the canal flows is earmarked for a city graveyard and the government has already initiated a move to acquire 102 acres of land there for the purpose, sources in the Public Works Department said.

The Haikkar Khal, one of the last

remaining natural canals in the city, has been in a pitiful state with nearby tannery waste outlets depositing huge amount of toxic sludge into it.

The canal originates from the Turag near Shoalmachi and winds its way through a vast marshy land, beneath Basila road and beside the Martyred Intellectuals' Monument before joining the Buriganga in the south.

Dhaka City Corporation tried to fill up the canal 10 years ago for the construction of a truck terminal. The DCC project was, however, cancelled when a report in The Daily Star triggered outcry among the locals and environmentalists.

Even with extremely poor navigability now, mechanised boats laden with construction materials like sand and bricks ply the canal during high tide. It was once

a great source of fish for the adjacent villages and Rayerbazar kitchen market.

As the real estate company installed a 1km long pipe to pump in sand from a barge in the Buriganga, locals said it would be the last nail on the canal's coffin.

"They are only two feet away from the dried up canal, it is clearly encroachment. The sand will automatically roll onto the canal bed and silt it up totally," said brick trader Delwar Hossain.

Officials at the Dhanmondi PWD office said the land that the developer is filling up belongs to hundreds of private owners. A PWD engineer said the deputy commissioner's office could intervene since the canal is under its jurisdiction.

Dhaka DC Md Zillar Rahman said he

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Staff recruitment at DMCH suspended

Probe body formed to find reasons behind chaos

KAILASH SARKAR and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The government yesterday suspended the recruitment of class-IV employees at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital following chaos there over the last few days.

After an emergency meeting early afternoon, Health and Family Planning Minister AFM Ruhul Haque told The Daily Star, "We have called off the recruitment and formed a three-member committee to probe the untoward incidents at the DMCH."

He said measures would be taken according to findings of the probe body.

Syed Modasser Ali, health and social welfare adviser of the prime minister, attended the meeting convened to discuss allegations of corruption in the DMCH recruitment.

Health's joint secretary (hospital and nurs-

ing) will head the probe committee, which has been asked to submit report as soon as possible, said a ministry official.

Alongside DMCH high-ups and pro-Awami League doctors and medical students, some quarters close to ministers and lawmakers are involved in hectic lobbying over the recruitment, said DMCH sources.

In many cases, they had the authorities bend the rules to pick their favoured candidates, depriving the eligible ones, added the sources.

The alleged irregularities have caused anger among the hospital employees and job-seekers who on Thursday attacked the doctors and students with ruling party allegiance, injuring at least 15.

The violence disrupted services at the

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Two outlaws killed in bomb explosion in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two extremists, including a local commander of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (ML-Janajuddha), were killed in a bomb explosion at a field at Baro Mangalgram village in Faridpur upazila yesterday evening.

Local commander Shajahan Ali alias Kuza Shajahan died on the spot while party member Mohammad Rafiq died on the way to hospital.

Police and local people said the explosion took place when the extremists were making bombs.

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3 robbers beaten to death in Brahmanbaria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Three robbers were beaten to death by mob at Bitghar village of Nabinagar upazila in Brahmanbaria while they were taking preparation to commit a robbery early yesterday.

The dead were identified as Tiger Samad alias Saimma, 36, of Kaitala village under Nabinagar upazila, and Elias and Mafiz alias Aziz of Chittagong.

Villagers and police sources said a gang of robbers led by Tiger Samad, accused in 12 cases, gathered at a house of Kaitala village with their guns to commit a robbery on the night.

Nabinagar police later went to the spot after nearby people informed them about the matter. Sensing danger, the robbers fired five rounds of bullet at police prompting the law enforcers to fire 13 blank shots.

Local people later chased the gang members who were fleeing from the scene after the exchange of gunfire.

The mob caught three of the robbers from nearby Bitghar village and gave them a good beating, killing them on the spot around 2:00am.

Police recovered a local gun (LG) and nine rounds of bullet

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6 gunrunners held, 2 arms seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police arrested a six-member gang of gunrunners and drug peddlers in the last few days. The law enforcers seized seven stolen vehicles and two firearms with 12 bullets from the criminals.

DB Deputy Commissioner (South) Md Monirul Islam told The Daily Star late last night that the six criminals were arrested in different parts of the country.

"The criminals are involved in illegal arms dealing and drug peddling," he said. The vehicles--six cars and a motorbike--also do not belong to them, he added.

Another DB source said the criminals also have links with

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