

AL's 8-hour hartal today
4,000 law-enforcers on alert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 The main opposition Awami League (AL) enforces a countrywide eight-hour hartal from 6:00am to 2:00pm today to protest lack of security in public life and the slide in law and order.
 The strike, the second in a month called by the AL, coincides with tabling of the national budget in the parliament that will resume its session at 3.00pm this afternoon.
 The AL called the last hartal on May 13 to protest the reinstatement of a convict in the Bangabandhu murder case and an accused in jail killing case in government service.
 The decision to call the hartal today came from an impromptu joint meeting of the AL presidium
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Symphony the Saifur way

Crosscutting issues now need careful handling if investment has to rally

INAM AHMED and REJAUL KARIM BYRON
 Will he pause for a moment to brood over what lies ahead before entering the budget session today? Will he be on an even springier mood or in his ever carefree style? Wait until Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman's turn to present the pro-

posed budget for next fiscal comes today.
 Whatever magic Saifur might be carrying with him, he would better have a plan to push the average growth rate beyond the 5 per cent band. It has been quite a long time -- six years, to be precise -- that GDP has been stuck on that rung. Now it needs to go beyond, minimum 7 per cent, to break poverty barriers.
 And he would better come with new ideas for investment acceleration -- not only in the public sector, but private too. This effort will cut across a number of critical issues -- rolling back the law and order slide, fighting corruption and embarking on a monetary expansion
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Case against only two newspapers when 12 others carried same event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Salauddin Quader Chowdhury MP has sued the editors of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo for carrying out a report that was published in at least 12 other newspapers on June 3.
 Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser SQ Chowdhury filed the case accusing Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil of defamatory comments about him in a letter and the two editors for publishing the letter on June 3.
 According to that report, Awami League had urged the government to cancel nomination of SQ Chowdhury from the run for the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).
 On the same day, the other national dailies, including BNP's
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Major parties ignore EC registration rule

SHAKHAWAT LITON
 All major political parties are yet to apply for registration with the Election Commission (EC), two years after the enactment of a rule that requires the exercise to streamline general elections.
 But as the rule is not mandatory, all major parties including the Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh have not taken it seriously.
 The EC laid down the law in July 2001 through a circulation a got applications from 29 parties, mostly fringe outfits.
 The 29 include three factions of the Jatiya Party, each applying for 'plough' as election symbol. The Krishak Shramik Janata League, led by Kader Siddiqui, Bir Uttam, did also apply.
 Others are name-only political entities and do not have any representative in the Jatiya Sangsad.
 The applications are lying with the EC.
 "The process was initiated to ensure the participation of only major political parties in general elections and shed a huge bulk of documentation," an EC official said, requesting anonymity.
 But small parties are taking the opportunity to register themselves as national organisations, at least on paper, he added.
 "At the same time, all major parties are skirting around the provision as it is not mandatory, making the move meaningless."
 However, the registration process is on and two Jatiya parties, led by former president Hussein Mohammed Ershad and ex-minister Anwar Hossain Monju, are going to be listed soon.
 Former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammed Abu Hena initiated the process of mandatory registration and sent a proposal to the Awami League government to this end.
 Taking office next, M A Sayeed also took up the issue and held several meetings with political parties, but did not make the pro
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PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star Editor and publisher Mahfuz Anam, left, and Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman, right, come out of the court after getting bail with Dr Kamal Hossain, middle.

Editors of Daily Star, Prothom Alo sued for reporting AL's letter on SQ Chy

COURT CORRESPONDENT
 A court in Dhaka yesterday granted bail in a defamation case to the Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam and Bangladesh Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil.
 Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, MP, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka at 1:15pm, accusing Jalil of making defamatory comments about him in a letter and the two editors of publishing the letter on June 3.
 Ruling party lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and a host of BNP leaders and workers accompanied Chowdhury when he and his counsels demanded issuance of warrants for their arrest.
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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jail, left, comes out of court with Barrister Amir-Ul Islam after getting bail.

9 criminals held after gunfight with police

UNB, Dhaka
 Police arrested notorious criminal Yunus along with his eight accomplices from Keraniganj in the early hours of yesterday after a fierce gun battle.
 Officer-in-charge of Keraniganj police station Mustafizur Rahman Khan, who led the predawn raid, was injured in the gunfight. He sustained a gunshot injury in the hand.
 Police said Yunus, who raised a gang in the area, was wanted in over two dozens of cases, including that of murder, robbery and looting.
 Acting on a tip-off that Yunus was going to Khagail village in a trowler to unload firearms and drugs at about 2:00am, police rushed to the scene.
 Sensing an impending raid, the criminals opened fire on police leading to a fierce gunfight as police returned fire.
 During the 30-minute gun battle, both sides traded some 200 rounds,
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BNP leaders surprised at SQ Chy's suit filing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Chowdhury, who has been nominated for the post of OIC secretary general by the government, filed the case, apparently to harass the editors of the two leading national dailies, they believe.
 The leaders said although the news item was published in almost
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Civil cop teams' cosy links with criminals prove fatal

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM
 The relations of some civil team members of different police stations with criminals are putting the lives of policemen in danger.
 Such a 'dangerous connection' came to light in an investigation into sub-inspector Humayun Kabir killing case.
 Kabir was killed when a gang, allegedly led by Pichchi Hannan, opened fire on a police team which was going to raid their hideout in an under-construction building at Agargaon on June 3.
 Every police station has at least one civil team, the members of which move in plain clothes to find out and nab criminals.
 "We have evidence that a nayek called Hannan minutes before the incident to alert him," a senior police officer said, requesting anonymity.
 The Detective Branch of police (DB) in their probe found that Nayek Bellal allegedly alerted Hannan before the police team could hem in his den.
 Bellal was picked up from in front of the Tejgaon Police Station a day after Humayun's killing and was sent to the Rajarbagh Police Lines.
 Another junior officer manning the civil team of the Motijheel Police Station was withdrawn from duty for his reported hobnobbing with alleged notorious gangsters Manik and Jishan.
 "We're probing such links in the killings of DB-men at Malibagh and a police man at Azad cinema," a senior police official said.
 "The culprits will not be allowed to go scot-free," a DB official stressed.
 About the necessity of civil police teams, a top official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said they helped investigators contact criminals in investigation into criminal offences. "But they should be careful so that criminals could not use them as their plants in police," he added.
 Humayun Kabir's death was the fourth police fatality in the capital in 20 days.

Suicide bombing kills 16 in Jerusalem after Israeli missile claims 6 in Gaza

REUTERS, Jerusalem
 A suspected Palestinian suicide bomber killed at least 16 people and injured more than 60 on a bus in Jerusalem yesterday, a day after an Israeli assassination attempt against a militant leader.
 The blast, which tore through a bus near the city's main open-air market, was followed almost immediately by an Israeli missile strike on a car in Gaza in which witnesses said at least six people including a top Palestinian militant were killed.
 Palestinian militants had threatened revenge attacks after Israel tried to kill Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, a leader of the radical Islamic group Hamas, in a helicopter missile strike in the Gaza Strip Tuesday.
 US President Bush condemned the Jerusalem attack in the "strongest possible terms," the White House said.
 The new cycle of bloodshed threatened to wreck a US-backed peace plan which was launched just a week ago by Bush during talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian premier Mahmoud Abbas in Jordan.
 The plan -- known as the "road map" -- had created a rare glimmer of hope after 32 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence.
 "I heard the bomb and I came to help take people off," witness Benny Peretz said. "I opened the door and I saw the terrorist's head on the ground."
 Ambulances rushed to the area on the city's main Jaffa Road and medics pulled dead and wounded from the bus. The vehicle's windows were shattered and its roof partly blown off.
 "It was a suicide bomber," Jerusalem police chief Mickey Levy said. Police and medics said at least 16 people were killed and 65 people were injured.
 David Baker, an official in Sharon's office, told Reuters: "This was another example of unbridled
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