

Hartal observed in Comilla protesting attack on ex-AL whip

UNB, Comilla

A half-day hartal, called by Awami League, was observed here yesterday protesting the armed attack on former whip of Jatiya Sangsad and district Awami League organising secretary advocate Mujibul Haq Mujib.

Educational institutions remained closed and motorised vehicles stayed off the road although rickshaws plied normally. Attendance was thin in government offices and courts during the shutdown.

The leaders and workers of district Awami League and its front organisations brought out a protest procession that paraded different streets of the town demanding immediate arrest of and exemplary punishment to the culprits responsible for the attack on advocate Mujib.

A rally was also held at the "Pubali Chattar" of Kandirpar at noon, with district Awami League president Prof Khorshed Alam in the chair. District AL general secretary advocate Afzal Khan addressed the rally.

Advocate Mujibul Haq was seriously injured in an attack by armed miscreants on Tuesday. He was admitted to Dhaka's Sikder Medical College with grievous eye injury.

14 sued for killing Fakirhat AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Kulsum Begum, wife of slain AL leader and Bahirdia UP Chairman Atahar Ali, has filed a case with Fakirhat thana accusing 14 people of killing her husband at midnight on Monday.

Police on Tuesday arrested one Moslem Shaikh, 32, in connection with the murder.

Atahar Ali, President of Fakirhat unit of Awami League, was gunned down by unidentified assailant, in front of his house at about 11 pm.

Officer-in-charge of Fakirhat thana said that the murder was a sequel to dispute between Chairman and members of Bahirdia Union parishad over a project worth Tk 3 lakh.

Awami League leaders have alleged that BNP leaders Farid Kazi, Kamrul Islam Gora and Jamaat leader Mofazzal Haider were waiting in Fakirhat thana during the incident.

Sugar traders call off strike after BDR gives in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Sugar traders and transport owners yesterday decided to resume trading and transportation of sugar.

They took the decision after they were assured of release of the sugar-laden trucks seized by the BDR.

Sugar traders and transport owners enforced an indefinite strike on Monday protesting harassment by the BDR.

Chittagong Chamber President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury discussed the matter with Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury over phone yesterday afternoon.

He drew the attention of the minister to the alleged harassment and the unstable situation in the sugar market created by the strike. The minister assured him of release of the seized sugar-laden trucks and also agreed to consider other demands of traders and transport owners.

Blix hits out at officials in Pentagon



Hans Blix

AFP, London

Outgoing chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix has described certain members of the US administration as "bastards" who set out to undermine him during his three years at the helm.

In an uncharacteristic outburst to a British newspaper published yesterday, Blix said: "I have my detractors in Washington. There are bastards who spread things around, of course, who planted nasty things in the media. Not that I cared very much."

In his interview to The Guardian, Blix also accused Washington of regarding the United Nations as an

"alien power" which it hoped would sink without trace.

Asked if he believed he had been the target of a deliberate smear campaign, Blix told the daily: "Yes, I probably was at a lower level."

With regards to the way he was treated over weapons inspections in Iraq, Blix said: "By and large my relations with the US were good" but claimed that as the war against Iraq loomed, Washington "leaned on" his inspectors to produce more damning language in their reports.

He added that US President George W Bush's administration was particularly upset that the inspectors did not "make more" of

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Tk 21,595cr audit objections await scrutiny

STAR REPORT

Three standing committees -- public accounts, estimates and public undertakings of the Jatiya Sangsad have failed to fulfil the constitutional obligations to keep government expenditure, misuse of state resources and corruption under control.

The Committee on Public Accounts is yet to resolve audit objections amounting to a staggering sum of Tk 21,595 crore in the last three decades, observes a report of the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC).

The commission attributed this

failure to lack of political will, reluctance to uphold parliamentary norms, culture and practice, and rare consensus among lawmakers on running the affairs of the Sangsad.

Since independence the parliament could only resolve 16.16 per cent or 150 out of 928 audit reports involving 10,828 objections, according to the commission report. The remaining 778 audit reports have been gathering dust, without having been called in for discussion even.

This sorry scenario shows how poorly the parliament fails to live up to its constitutional obligation to supervise the executive wing of the government and ensure transpar-

ency and effectiveness in the use of public resources.

The importance of the three committees is clearly stated in the constitution. But as there is no specific deadline, all the governments, present and past, took unusually long time to form these committees.

The Awami League government took 18 months to form the three committees for initiating some reforms in standing committee systems.

The ruling BNP meanwhile formed the committees only last

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PHOTO: STAR

Close to the mayor's office, the road from Gulistan to Bangabhaban is now all mucky and broken down.

BNP asks AL to cancel hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP urged the Awami League (AL) to withdraw its hartal call today, the budget day.

"I was surprised to learn about the hartal from newspaper reports. I don't see any reason behind the move, except the motive of making the Jatiya Sangsad ineffective," said BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan.

Talking to reporters yesterday at his secretariat office, Bhuiyan, who is also the minister for LGRD and cooperatives, said the budget was for the nation, not for any party.

"The budget has great importance, as it will shape the financial destiny of the nation during the next one year. It has nothing to do with party politics," he said. "I hope the AL will withdraw the hartal call and attend the budget session."

'BNP killing AL men to crush opposition'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leaders said yesterday the party's call for resolute movements has unnerved the ruling BNP and it is now out to eliminate the opposition forces to avoid facing them politically.

The main opposition party leaders alleged that in a planned way, the ruling party men are killing prospective AL candidates for the next general elections.

They said the murder of former AL lawmaker Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed

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RAT nabs Hasnat Abdullah's son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief whip and Awami League leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah's son was arrested in Dhanmondi yesterday by Rapid Action Team (RAT).

Details about Moin Abdullah's arrest could not be known immediately as RAT officials remained tight-lipped.

When contacted, Dhanmondi police said they heard about the arrest, but Moin Abdullah was not turned over to them.

Hasina in London

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina arrived in London from Washington yesterday to attend the installation ceremony of UK unit of Awami Jubo League as chief guest.

The ceremony will be held at Shyanwala Hall today at local time 5:00pm, said a press release.

Seven lakh acres welfare land in grabbers' hand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Encroachers have grabbed nearly seven lakh acres of public land under the Waqf Administration.

The social welfare and service-oriented government organisation is now left with only 2.15 lakh acres.

Created back in 1962, the Waqf Administration had 9,05,497 acres of land.

This was revealed at the first meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Religious Affairs yesterday, held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. It was also the first meeting of any standing committee on a ministry under this government.

Due to administrative weaknesses, the Waqf Administration is unable to supervise its property and take effective steps to recover lands from the encroachers, the ministry told the standing committee.

Officials of the religious affairs ministry informed the meeting that nearly 400 cases were filed with different courts against the encroachers.

The Waqf Administration's manpower hardly increased in the last four decades. It has only 99 officials and employees, they mentioned.

Besides the head office, it has poorly equipped offices in 24 out of 64 districts, many of which are run by lower grade officials and

employees. The ministry told the committee that to make the Waqf Administration dynamic, its manpower should be increased.

Committee member Shahiduzzaman of the BNP told The Daily Star they discussed ways to recover the encroached lands and that the process would continue.

The meeting also discussed various issues concerning the Islamic Foundation and the Hajj Office and activities of the welfare trusts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians.

The meeting, chaired by commit

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Govt plans project for error-free textbooks

ADB willing to finance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering reforms in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) to produce quality and error-free textbooks in time.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is willing to finance the project allocating about Tk 50 lakh.

The process is to start in 2005, Education Secretary Mohammad Shahidul Alam told The Daily Star.

He said a committee has recommended that seven books of classes IX and X be published under private initiatives. The books are on English second paper, algebra,

social science, general science, physics, management and history.

English second paper books of classes VI to IX may also be given to the private sector eventually, Alam said.

"We hope this would help reduce yearly hassles of getting the books to the students in time," he said.

The curriculum will be prepared by the NCTB, but the books will be published and delivered by private companies.

In December last year, teachers and educators suggested complete overhauling of the NCTB by establishing three separate entities -- the

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Tk 32 lakh gold seized at Ctg airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Customs officials at Shah Amanat International Airport yesterday seized gold ornaments worth over Tk. 32 lakh from two passengers.

Customs sources claimed that the two persons were carrying 1223 pieces of gold chains weighing 4.6kg from Singapore in a Thai Airways flight, evading tax.

On a tip-off, customs officials held them at the Red Channel of the airport after Thai flight TG 309 arrived at 1:40pm.

Shamsur Rahman and Motiur Rahman, both hailing from Gazipur, were held in this connection.

They were being interrogated.

20 vessels fined for polluting environment

UNB, Chittagong

A mobile court at the port here yesterday fined 20 vessels, including a cargo ship of Singapore, Tk 34.24 lakh for emitting excessive black smoke, polluting the environment.

Magistrate of the court M Manir Chowdhury fined MV Maritime Saith of Singapore Tk 20 lakh and 19 local vessels, including seven cargo ships, seven fishing trawlers, one tugboat and four cargo trawlers, Tk 14.24 lakh.

The fishing trawlers and cargo ships were asked not to enter the port.

Gaibandha road mishap kills 8

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Eight people killed and 17 others injured in a road accident on the Gaibandha-Bogra Highway at Komarpur under Gobindapur upazila of the district yesterday.

Four of the dead were identified as Shahida Begum, 26, Margina Begum, 38, Babul Mia, 30 and Fakir Ali, 45. Identity of the rest four could not be known.

The injured were admitted to Gobindaganj Health Complex.

Locals and police said, the accident occurred at about 7pm when a Gaibandha bound bus collided head on with a speeding truck leaving eight of the bus pas-

sengers dead. However, the truck managed to flee the scene.

UNB from Kushita adds: Three fish traders were killed and six others injured in a road accident at Choraikol in Kumarkhali upazila yesterday.

They were identified as Farid Ali, 30, Lojen, 36 and Hossain, 38. Witnesses said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound truck they were travelling in fell into a roadside ditch at about 9am.

Four of the injured -- Ajimuddin, 40, Amir Ali, 40, Nasiruddin, 24 and Babu, 30 - were admitted to local hospital.

Police seized the truck but the driver and his helper fled the scene.



PHOTO: AFP

Israeli police inspect a bus destroyed in a Palestinian suicide attack in Jerusalem yesterday. Sixteen people were killed when a suicide bomber ripped through a bus on Jaffa street in west Jerusalem.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 12	4-15	6-47 pm
June 13	5-10 am	

Prayer Timings		
June 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-53	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation