

AL men, cops fight on hartal

FROM PAGE 1
They would not take part in any election under Justice KM Hasan, the likely chief of caretaker government, and MA Aziz as Chief Election Commissioner.

BANGABANDHU AVENUE
Led by Motia Chowdhury and Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, the AL brought out a procession from opposite the Jatiya Press Club at about 11:50am and staged a sit-in in front of Pir Yamany Market.

Bangladesh Awami Jubo League and Jubo Mahila League together brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the Hockey Stadium. Chaired by Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanuk, the rally was also addressed by Toifal Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Asaduzzaman Nur MP, Mirza Azam MP.

Addressing the rally, the opposition leaders vowed to resist any election in the country before implementation of the electoral reforms. Without participation of AL, no election would either be held or accepted in the country, they said.

Bangladesh Awami Svecchhasebok League also brought out a procession and held another rally in front of Mukti Joddha Club near Bangabandhu Avenue.

AL leader Asaduzzaman Nur MP brought out a procession from Motiheel. The police intercepted the procession and picked up five activists before chasing them away.

A mob was seen set afire at Fakirapool in the morning. After two homes were made bombs went off near Golapahar Mazar in Gulistan, police raided adjacent Hotel Ramna and arrested eight opposition activists as suspected bomb throwers. Demanding immediate release of the arrested activists, the Jubo League brought out a procession on the Bangabandhu Avenue in the evening.

MOHAKHALI
Riot police suffled with a rally led by AL leader and former lawmaker Dr HM Iqbal from 10:50am to 12:20pm at Nabisco intersection before forcing them to back track.

Police charged baton and dispersed the rally. When Farazi Azmal Hossain, a senior reporter of the daily Ittefaq, was injured in police action, other journalists in the area got locked in a scuffle with the police.

Regrouped, opposition activists led by Iqbal staged a sit-in demonstration there.

A group of agitating hartal supporters broke glasses of some vehicles plying on the Tongi Diversion Road as they were chased by the police.

Unidentified people hurled two homemade bombs at a police van under the Mohakhali Flyover at around 9:45am. Nobody was, however, injured.

Police also charged baton to disperse a rally led by AL leaders Maj Gen (ret) Subid Ali Bhatun and advocate Shahara Khatun near Government Titumir College at about 9:00am. Police rounded up several activists from there.

MIRPUR
Police clubbed and dispersed a procession at around 9:30am when

opposition activists tried to bring out a procession at Mirpur Section 11. Police picked up one hartal supporter from the spot.

Earlier police chased and dispersed opposition activists when they tried to bring out a procession near Mirpur-10 roundabout. Police picked up at least eight activists from the spot.

As pickets vandalised windows of a bus near Technical crossing at Sheorpara, a passenger was injured.

Police charged baton on an opposition procession at about 9:00am in Shyamur leaving at least six people injured.

In Lalbagh, AL leader Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin brought out a procession that police dispersed by baton charge.

Five people were injured when an opposition procession in Nawabpur came under police attack at 12:00noon.

Noor Hossain, 50, was critically injured when pro-hartal supporters stoned a Mirpur-bound bus from Demra.

The opposition combine also brought out processions at Sayedabad bus terminal, Motiheel, Khilgaon, Sabujbagh, and other parts of the city to support the hartal.

Police picked up Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Organising Secretary Salehin Reza, School Affairs Secretary Abdullah al-Mamun and Joint Secretary Jasim at Shahbagh intersection as they were marching towards DU campus with a procession.

Ignoring heavy rain in the morning, several hundred activists of BCL-led Chhatra Sangram Parishad brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus in support of the hartal.

Police halted the procession in front of the Fine Arts Institute where the parishad held a rally.

HASINA'S STATEMENT
Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina condemned the arrests and truncheon-charge on the opposition activists by police during the hartal hours yesterday and demanded immediate release of the arrested workers. In a statement, Hasina demanded immediate withdrawal of false cases filed against them.

COUNTRYWIDE HARTAL
Hartal supporters attacked a Panchagah bound train in Dinajpur yesterday and beat up the train driver Rabir Hossain and lineman Jahangir Alam. Rabir was sent to Parbatipur Railway Hospital for treatment as his condition was deteriorating, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Svecchha Shebok League activists threw bricks at the train near Dinajpur Zilla School around 10:30am, witnesses said. Later police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The hartal hours passed off peacefully in Khulna metropolitan city and elsewhere in the district, our staff correspondent from Khulna reports. AL and its allies brought out joint procession in the city around 11:00am in support of the hartal.

Patkal Sangram Parishad (PSP) Panchagah.

Police were seen yesterday keeping watchful eyes on Proshika offices in Rajshahi region. "We're really panicked," said Asaduzzaman Shipon, Proshika's Rajshahi zone coordinator.

"Police were looking for us," he said adding that none of the staff came to the offices yesterday.

Senior officials of Rajshahi range police however remained tight-lipped. But several superintendents of police (SP) seeking anonymity confirmed that the government had issued a directive against Proshika staff.

"There was a written order on Thursday for detecting and arresting persons engaged in anti-state activities," said an SP adding that the government high ups later in another verbal order redefined the 'anti-state' activities as 'anti-government'.

Another SP said, "I have direct orders for arresting Proshika staff for their alleged activities against the government".

Corroborating them, three more northern SPs informed The Daily Star that the government is enraged by Proshika's role in educating the rural population about their electoral rights and the value of their votes.

Besides, Proshika's staff are linked with the recent AL announcement of a countrywide movement to topple the government, an SP said.

"The alliance government has kept Proshika on its toes by blocking funds from donors, arresting its workers, raiding its offices and threatening it with cancellation of registration since 2004," said a senior official of the NGO.

SKL Muhammad Lalon, Rajshahi chapter chief of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (Adab) condemned the crackdown.

"It is a constitutional right to criticise a government's anti-people actions. Arresting such people for anti-state activities is illegal and politically motivated," he said.

JESSORE
Our Jessore correspondent reported that five officers of the NGO were arrested by Jessore police on Saturday night from different places of the town.

The arrested include Divisional Coordinator of Proshika Aftabur Rahman, and Officers Fakrul Hossain, Iqbal Hossain, Abdus Satter and Anwarul Islam.

Second Officer of Kotwali Police Station Sub Inspector Sanaul Haque said there was no case against them. Police arrested them on orders from the higher authorities, he added.

A case was lodged against them after the arrests, accusing them of hijacking and hoodlignism. They were sent to a magistrate court which sent them to detention rejecting their bail prayers.

KISHOREGANJ
Our Kishoreganj correspondent reported that police arrested at least 25 Proshika employees from four upazilas in the district yesterday.

Six were arrested from the Rhoirat upazila area office of Proshika, five

also brought out a procession at Khalipur to drum up support for the hartal and to protest the killing of jute-mill worker Noor Mohammad Jashim.

The PSP will enforce a daylong hartal in the Khulna-Jessore industrial belt today and will lay siege to roads and railway lines from dawn to dusk tomorrow in a bid to realise their eight-point demand.

"At least 15 people were injured when pro-hartal demonstrators ransacked five buses in Patuakhali during hartal hours, our correspondent in Patuakhali reports.

Pickets also set up barricades on the Patuakhali-Kuakata and Patuakhali-Barisal highways.

Patuakhali police arrested five AL activists near Patuakhali-Kuakata highway.

Hartal supporters damaged a truck at Palbari area in Jessore yesterday, our Jessore correspondent reported.

Pro-hartal demonstrators vandalised two auto-rickshaws and a motorcycle in Faridpur yesterday, our Faridpur correspondent reports.

Our Rajshahi University correspondent reports that activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) presented a number of pro-Jamaat teachers from taking classes and conducting examinations in the university yesterday. The BCL also brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus in support of the hartal.

A group of anti-hartal activists stabbed Subhas Podder Lito, president of Bogra BCL district unit, at Chalopara area in Bogra during hartal hours yesterday, our staff correspondent in Bogra reports.

Critically injured Lito was admitted to Bogra Mohammed Ali Hospital.

Sources said Lito was attacked by BNP and Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal activists around 10:00am when he was picketing for the hartal.

BNP activists, however, denied their involvement in the attack and alleged that BCL men attacked BNP leader Abdul Kayum at Shatmatha in the afternoon.

Bogra police said five activists of AL and its front organisation were arrested.

14-PARTY MEETING
The 14-party held an emergency meeting last night at AL's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue with AL Presidium Member Toifal Ahmed in the chair. The meeting condemned the police attack on Mohammad Nasim and other 14-party activists during the countrywide hartal yesterday.

The meeting shifted the Agargaon gathering point to Mirpur-10 for tomorrow's Prime Minister's Office (PMO) siege programme. The other three points are Bangla Motor, Russell Square and Mohakhali intersection.

The opposition combine sits today to discuss the final preparations before the siege tomorrow.

AL acting General Secretary Obaidul Quader, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Bimal Biswas, Nurul Islam, Mainuddin Khan Badal were present at the meeting.

Acquitted of 3 cases

FROM PAGE 1
The same court will also hear the gold smuggling case filed against the deposed president on September 20.

The trial of the plot allotment case began in 1998. The court completed its hearing on August 13 this year and fixed August 27 for delivering the judgment.

The court framed charges against Ershad and acquitted the then Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) chairman Rahamat Ullah on March 9, 1992 as no conclusive evidence was found against him.

Ershad was acquitted in three graft cases last month amid the speculations about his joining the ruling BNP-led alliance ahead of the next parliamentary election.

PLOT ALLOTMENT CASE
Mohammad Sajjad Hossain, an official of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac), filed the case against Ershad with the Motiheel Police Station on April 22, 1991.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case pressed charges against the deposed president and Rahamat Ullah on December 9 the same year.

The then president Ershad directed authorities concerned to allot plots in Gulshan, Banani, Baridhata and Uttara residential areas to 49 people during 1988-1990, violating the government and Rajuk provisions, said the prosecution.

The court has so far recorded statements of only four prosecution witnesses although the trial began on April 23, 1998.

The court could not complete arguments of the case as the prosecution and the defence had sought time on different excuses since August 2002.

GOLD SMUGGLING CASE
On August 27, the same court adjourned the hearing of the gold smuggling case against Ershad

until September 20 following a time petition from the prosecution.

A team of customs officials held four people, including two foreign nationals, at Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 when they were attempting to smuggle around 3.6 kg gold worth about Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh, the prosecution said.

A smuggling case was filed against the four -- Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, the then manager of the airport Major (ret) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and an airport security guard Abu Taher, with the Cantonment Police Station the same day.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the chargesheet.

Rudiger, Chalmar Chaker, Ashraf and Taher were convicted and sent to prison on different terms on May 14, 1992.

The trial against Ershad did not start due to a stay order from the higher court.

7 hurt in N'ganj

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arrested six criminals -- Kabil, Swapan, Uzzal Hossain, Shah Alam, Afzal Hossain and Mohammad Ali -- from the spot. But the other abductees fled the scene with Amir Hossain.

Of the arrested, Kabil and Swapan suffered bullet wounds during the gunfight and were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

One of the injured Rab men was sent to Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka.

Rab recovered a foreign revolver and two bullet caps from the scene.

Driver held

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yesterday afternoon.

On Wednesday afternoon, armed muggers snatched Tk 21 lakh of KDS Apparels at the city's Oxygen intersection. Accounts Officer Anjum Ara and another staff of KDS Apparels were carrying the money on a microbus while driver Masum was on the steering.

The factory authorities filed a case with Bayezid Bostami Police Station the same evening and police took Masum to the police station for questioning. He was shown arrested that night and placed on a four-day remand the following day.

Masum committed suicide at around 12:00 on Friday night by hanging himself from the ceiling of the lock-up, police said, adding that Masum had been working as a driver of the factory for the last five years.

"We were quizzing Masum as a suspect of the case to get informa-

tion about the mugging and the criminals behind it. But he suddenly committed suicide, forcing a halt to our investigation for the time being," M Maruf Hossain, assistant commissioner (Panchala Zone) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police told reporters at the forensic lab of Chittagong Medical College Hospital where the driver's body was brought for an autopsy.

The police official dismissed the allegation of custodial murder.

Accusing police of torturing Masum to death in remand, General Secretary of Chittagong Light Motor Vehicle Drivers and Workers Union M Anwar Hossain said, "Masum was well when he was arrested. He can't take his own life. Why should he do that?"

He demanded a fair probe into the death. The union leaders and workers yesterday staged a demonstration protesting the 'killing'.

Electoral reforms

FROM PAGE 1
The opposition combine also sticks to its position that it will not join any dialogue if they are on the committee.

Such rigid stance of both the sides has stalled the move for dialogue on the reform agenda, raising fears of political confrontations ahead of the parliamentary election scheduled for January next year.

The business community took initiatives for a dialogue between the BNP secretary general and the AL general secretary but the BNP leader outright rejected that. "The proposal will have to come from the opposition. Such a proposal will not be made on behalf of the government," Mannan Bhuiyan said on Wednesday.

Initially, the AL had raised the reform issue at various discussions but government high-ups in March last year rejected it.

At the same time, they urged the AL that had been boycotting parliament to table the proposals in parliament, shunning street agitation to realise those.

Ending a long boycott, the main opposition AL however returned to the House, and AL chief Sheikh Hasina placed a set of reform proposals on February 12 this year.

Reacting to this, the prime minister on February 28 blasted the AL in parliament for the proposals and also for the delay in placing those.

She however proposed to form a committee with representation of the ruling and opposition parties to reach a consensus on the reform agenda.

But the BNP took 20 days to initiate formation of the committee, and in the last six months there was no significant development in this regard other than exchange of letters between the BNP and the AL.

Meanwhile, ignoring the opposition demand for reforms in the EC to ensure constitution of it on consensus, the government unilaterally appointed the chief election commissioner (CEC) in May last year, two election commissioners in January this year and another last month.

CEC MA Aziz has repeatedly made it clear that the present EC will conduct the next election. But the opposition combine remains rigid on its stance that it will not participate in polls under the EC heads.

On the other hand, the PM has launched a fresh campaign against the opposition's reform proposals, and declared that the chief adviser of the next interim government will be that person who is mandated by the constitution.

EC admits

work is proved against any organisation, the EC will ban them for a minimum of three years."

Asked about fund misuse by some NGOs in the name of election observation during the union parishad elections in 2003, he said, "We are trying to finalise a policy on election observation."

"There has been no policy so far in this regard and we could not take any action against these organisations."

The EC secretary said they are planning to give those who have not registered their names in the updated voter roll a chance. He, however, said the EC will finalise the matter.

An eligible voter can include his/her name in the voter list even one day before the election, he added, urging voters left out of the updated list to contact with the upazila election officers for registration.

Meanwhile, the EC Secretariat is now busy with the process of publishing the updated voter list. The procurement committee will sit tomorrow and then the EC will begin the tender process.

"We will float the tender within this month," the EC secretary said. He refused to accept the increase in voters' number as "unusual", saying the increase in 2000 was 32 per cent.

The latest updating of the existing voter list was conducted from August 28 to September 5 and the number of voters on the updated list stood at a surprising 9.30 crore as it registered 17 lakh more voters than on the nullified draft of the fresh voter list.

Afghan governor

FROM PAGE 16
Kandahar and Helmand.

94 militants were killed in Kandahar province's Panjwayi and neighbouring Zhari districts late Saturday and early Sunday and were separate to more than 40 Taliban who died in fighting in the same areas earlier Saturday, Nato spokesman Maj Scott Ludsy said.

The killings were part of a Nato-led Operation called Operation Medusa, which began Sept 2 and has killed at least 420 insurgents, according to the alliance. Purported Taliban spokesmen have disputed the high death counts.

Ruling lawmakers

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State Minister for Water Resources Gautam Chakraborty assured the lawmakers that he will try his best to fulfil the assurances in the remaining time of the government.

BNP lawmaker Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury alleged that the Water Development Board has built an embankment instead of digging a canal in his constituency. "At least, 80 per cent of the allocated money for the project has been embezzled," he said.

State Minister Gautam said he is aware of the allegation and will initiate steps to investigate it.

Ruling BNP lawmakers Kazi Golam Morshed, Selim Reza Habib, Rasheda Begum Heera and Jamaate-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee also alleged that the state minister assured of implementing different projects in their constituencies but has not fulfilled them.

Huji commander

FROM PAGE 1
injured on April 14, 2001.

In the forwarding report placed before the court CID Inspector Abu Hena Mohammad Yusuf, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, said Hannan might be involved in the blasts and he needs to be intensively interrogated to find out vital clues and whereabouts of the culprits responsible for the blasts.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsul Alam granted the petition for showing Hannan arrested in the case and placed him on an eight-day remand.

Hannan was arrested at Madhya Badda in Dhaka on October 1 last year after several years of absconding. Later, he was shown arrested in different cases filed with different police stations in connection with the serial bomb blasts across the country last year.

Hannan was finally sent to the Dhaka Central Jail on January 23 after 112 days of being in remand.

In the Ramna Batumal blast case, police have so far arrested 12 people but all of them were granted bail from the High Court at different dates.

Of them, Moulana Akbar Hussain gave a confessional statement to a metropolitan magistrate on June 14, 2001 where he disclosed the names of others involved in the blasts. But later on June 28 the same year retracted his statement saying that he suffered inhuman torture during remand and was forced to give the statement.

RMG workers

FROM PAGE 1
demands of the garment workers after an intense labour unrest, it said.

According to the deal, the garment owners were supposed to provide appointment letters, identity cards, withdraw cases lodged against the leaders of the workers' organisations, make weekly holiday effective and fulfil other demands within one month, but these were still to be implemented, they mentioned.

The owners are now advocating for extending the time limit for fixing minimum wages for the workers ignoring the agreement, the organisations alleged.

A total of 15 garment workers' organisations including the Garment Sramik Olky Forum, Bangladesh Garment Sramik Mukti Andolan, Jatiya Garment Sramik Karmachari Jote, signed the statement.

Indo-Pak leaders

FROM PAGE 1
attend the gathering of the 116-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which represents more than half the planet's people but struggles to maintain its relevance in a post-Cold War world.

Washington is expected to keep a close eye on the summit, which brings together its fiercest foes but also several of its allies and its main oil suppliers.

Among the prominent leaders slated to attend is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has defied UN demands that he halt uranium enrichment, the process used to make nuclear reactor fuel but also atomic bomb material.

Ahmadinejad's delegation will seek to draw solidarity from the movement for its legitimate right to develop nuclear energy," according to Cuba's vice foreign minister Abelardo Moreno.

The NAM backed Iran in the standoff during two-day ministerial meeting in Malaysia in May, stressing the right of all nations to develop nuclear technology for research and energy production.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, another key figure in the troubled Middle East, will also be among the leaders at the summit, which gets underway on Monday with meetings of senior officials and concludes on September 16 after a two-day summit.

"The NAM can play a future role in bringing peace, stability security to the Middle East region," Syrian Information Minister Mohsed Bilal said in Cuba, adding it could also help "cool off the hot heads in Washington."

Rice research

FROM PAGE 1
of hybrid rice using the technique is profitable in many ways.

First of all, he said, it can be harvested in the shortest possible time. "No rice other than ratoon rice can be harvested in 75 to 80 days. It takes 90 to 120 to produce a yield of hybrid rice cultivated from seeds," he added. He claimed that cultivation of hybrid rice from ratoons may curtail production cost by 50 per cent and the farmers may use the savings to purchase seeds and to prepare seedbeds.

RDRS carried out the research to find out a way for alleviating munga (near famine situation) in the northern region, he said. He explained that now the farmers may harvest hybrid rice in September also and may cultivate robi crops during October and November, creating an opportunity for the agricultural day labourers to stay employed through the munga season.

AL demand

FROM PAGE 1
ruling and opposition parties agree on it.

Though the speaker maintains that the opposition notices for discussion were not placed at the meeting, the documents show that the AL lawmakers had submitted as many as 81 notices calling for discussion on issues including reforms, price hike of essentials, power crisis, Pulbari killing and militancy.

The Bac meeting glossed over the notices for discussion after adjourning the scheduled businesses of the House, sources said.

Jamiruddin Sircar said he would look into the notices if any submitted by the AL members.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday told The Daily Star that they will try to speak out on issues of public concern that include reform proposals.

When asked about the AL's reform proposals, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday told the media that the matter will not be discussed in the House. First, it should be settled outside the House, he added.

In response to the opposition proposals, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on February 28 proposed forming a committee with representatives from both the ruling and opposition alliances to discuss the reforms issue.

Attaching conditions to the formation of the committee, AL is in fact trying to avoid discussion on the reform proposals, Moudud observed.

If the opposition withdraws its conditions, discussion can take place tomorrow, he added.

The AL lawmakers will join the session this evening. Before that, the AL Parliamentary Party will meet to set its strategy in parliament.

The Bac meeting held without the AL representatives decided that the JS session that began yesterday will continue till September 27. The speaker said the current 14-workday time frame could be extended if necessary.

Jamiruddin Sircar presided over the meeting attended among others by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed.

Later in his inaugural address to the JS sitting, the speaker claimed that he has been discharging his responsibilities neutrally.

Referring to the existing provisions for formation of the caretaker government, he told the House that an interim government will be formed and a free and fair election will be held within 90 days after dissolution of the current parliament.

He lauded the government's performance in last five years.

Iran, EU see light

FROM PAGE 16
the EU prefer a face-saving compromise that might lie in getting Tehran to curb enrichment after the start of a process to implement the benefits package.

It was the second day of meetings, following talks on Saturday that focused on the package and Iran's August 22 reply to it, which Western leaders criticised as obstructive.

"Suspension is an issue that is in the past. We cannot return to the past. We want talks without any precondition," spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a weekly news conference.

But an EU diplomat, asking not to be named due to the topic's sensitivity, said the critical issue of how to sequence an enrichment halt and negotiations was discussed in Vienna.

Tensions surged after Iran ignored an August 31 deadline, approved in a Security Council resolution sponsored by the United States, three major EU allies and Russia and China, to stop enrichment work before talks to curb enrichment.

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