



Syed Bukhari. — AFP photo

Bukhari arrested

NEW DELHI, Dec 8: Police today arrested Syed Bukhari and 50 other Muslim leaders when they set out to march on the Prime Minister's residence some 10 kilometers (6.25 miles) away, shouting slogans in defence of the fallen mosque, reports AFP.

A police officer said they would be released later today. Muslims number more than 100 million and are India's largest minority. The community has been outraged by the destruction of the Mosque in Ayodhya, nearly 700 kilometers (420 miles) from here.

Rao

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a split in the Congress parliamentary party. However, it is keeping all its options open. It expects Narasimha Rao to invite it for a coalition if he is not able to weather the storm. It also is in touch with Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar to see if one of them can muster enough strength to challenge Narasimha Rao.

Within the Congress party, some ministers are meeting their MPs in twos and threes to gauge the mood. That the party is perturbed over the happenings goes without saying. But it is not sure who among the three—Narasimha Rao, Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar—can win them the next election. With 12 per cent of the Muslim electorate completely alienated from the Congress, the party members are wanting a person or some steps to win them back. That explains the arrest of L K Advani, the Bharatiya Janata Party leader, and the steps so far taken by the government.

While most ministers of the Narasimha Rao cabinet are trying to prove their innocence by saying that they were not kept informed about the developments in Ayodhya, the general run of Congress MPs maintain that the government did not take any preventive measures to deal with the situation and had only been reacting to what the BJP and its allies were doing.

Indications are that the party on the whole feels that the majority community has felt sorry about the happening. It also believes that instead of taking harsh legal measures, the communal forces should be fought politically. In this context, it regrets that the Janata Dal and the SJD, to some extent, and the Left parties, instead of mounting a campaign against the BJP and its allies, are now interested in attacking the Congress.

In the party's reckoning, there is no scope for debate and all anti-communal forces must put their lot together to meet the serious challenge facing the nation.

Yet, the pressure on Narasimha Rao is relentless. There are rumours that he will be forced to quit, followed by a mid-term poll. The poll part is probably exaggerated reaction but the pressure on Narasimha Rao cannot be minimised. That is the reason why the Congress party spokesman has said that there is no question of changing the party leader, and that a mid-term poll was only a wishful thinking.

The strategy of the Congress, so far, is to fight the onslaught of critics as a party, showing no chinks within. Subsequently, where Narasimha Rao went wrong could be assessed and his popularity in the country to ascertain his equation with the electorate.

What may happen in the meanwhile is that Home Minister SB Chavan may be sacrificed so as to assuage the agitated opposition and the Muslim voter. The move to oust him is already gaining ground and a pointed reference is being made that VK Krishnamoorti had to resign from the defence ministry in 1962 after India's debacle at the hands of China. It is significant that this argument has been first used by Sharad Pawar, who is his rival in Maharashtra, from where SV Chavan hails. Meanwhile, Narasimha Rao, to gain confidence of his colleagues, has said, "I am ready to do whatever you suggest, gentlemen."

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Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at The Sangbad Ltd., 36, Purana Paltan, Dhaka. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No 11, Road No 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500091-4. Advertisement: 500091. Fax No 88-02-863036. GPO Box No 3257. GRAM: DAILY STAR DHAKA.

Four killed during hartal hours

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Committee called the 12-hour hartal demanding implementation of the four-point agreement signed between the Government and the Opposition that provides for Golan Azam's trial. The committee also tagged the Babri Masjid issue to yesterday's hartal.

Jamaat-e-Islami and some other right wing political parties also called the hartal protesting demolition of the 16-century mosque in the Indian town of Ayodhya. The hartal coincided with that called by the Nirmul Committee.

The hartal was complete in Dhaka as well as in other parts of the country. In Dhaka, supporters of the Nirmul Committee and the Jamaat activists fought pitched battle throughout the day at Purana Paltan crossing, Farmgate, Magbazar, Jatra Bari and Gullistan.

Police moved in between the clashing groups and used tear gas shells to keep them from getting at each other.

The rival groups used mostly stones during the clashes but several cocktails were also blasted intermittently at the time.

Witnesses said that the Jamaat supporters who outnumbered the Committee supporters near the Purana Paltan, were carrying hundreds of sticks.

Pistol shots were also heard from among the Jamaat-Shibir-Jubo Command supporters who controlled the Purana Paltan to Dainik Bangla crossing.

Nazrul, hit at around 11 am by a rubber bullet in his eye was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died after a few hours.

Near Farmgate, witnesses said, a group of Shibir supporters in the guise of Jubo Command workers attacked and chased a Nirmul Committee procession at around 8-30 am. The Committee supporters reorganised and attacked the Jubo Command activists and occupied the spot several hours later.

Both groups used brickbats for nearly three hours.

The Dhakeswari Mandir (temple) areas were the major trouble spots during the hartal where a mob launched a three-pronged attack to damage the Hindu shrine.

Police exhausted their tear gas shells and had to get fresh supplies to check several thousand people trying to reach the temple site. The areas were strewn with bricks.

Three temples in Thatari-bazar, Narinda and Shamir Akra were damaged by agitators.

More than 100 people were injured in Dhaka, 35 of them were rushed to the DMCH from different city points. Eleven of the injured were admitted at the DMCH. A number of policemen and photo journalists were also injured.

Police detained more than a score of protesters but arrested only three, thana sources said.

Witnesses said that Tuesday's hartal was more effective than many previous ones in the year.

All sorts of vehicles, excluding a negligible number of rickshaws, stayed off the roads in Dhaka. The inter-city buses remained parked at four

city terminals. Steamer services from Sadarghat and train services from Kamalapur were also disrupted because of hartal. Educational institutions were closed and attendances in offices thin.

The Nirmul Committee and the Jamaat-e-Islami held separate rallies in the afternoon and announced their next courses of action.

The Nirmul Committee leaders at a rally in front of the GPO urged the people to make the human chain programme on Thursday a success while the Jamaat decided to organise a procession Thursday to hand over a memorandum to the Indian High Commission.

Jamaat will also observe Friday as 'Babri Masjid Day'.

Fire Department sources said that at least seven temples and houses were damaged by demonstrators in Bhola, one temple in Jhenidah, one in Kushiha and nine temples were also set on fire in Sylhet district.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in Bhola from 4 pm Tuesday after several hundred people attacked a number of temples and shops in the town.

The authorities asked the people to stay in homes until further order.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds: Normal life came to a halt in the port city and its surrounding areas yesterday following a dawn to dusk hartal here as elsewhere in the country. The hartal was held peacefully barring some stray incidents of violence.

Police and witnesses said two rival groups of supporters of Nirmul Committee and Jamaat-e-Islami fought a pitched battle for two hours beginning 11 am at Anderkilla.

At least 15 persons were injured, two of them seriously. The critically injured were rushed to the local clinics. Police and BDR intervened to disperse the battling supporters.

Police fired blank shots and resorted to lathicharge when both battling groups freely used arms and exchanged brickbats. Some unruly activists of a rival group also stoned at the offices and shops damaging their window panes and doors around Anderkilla.

Besides, during the hartal period all kinds of vehicles including rickshaws stayed off the roads and highways while shops and markets remained

closed. Offices, both public and private could not function. The mills and factories could not operate. The cargo handling at Chittagong Port was hampered due to hartal, official sources said.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna adds: Dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed without any untoward incident. However, Section 144 was imposed in Digholia area. All roadside shops, bazars, business organisations, banks, insurance and private organisations remained closed. Govt offices and autonomous bodies were open with thin attendance.

All sorts of vehicles including rickshaws and long route coaches went off the road. Launch services in all the 28

ing. All traffic stayed off the roads.

A temple was damaged at Rugganj while two persons were arrested when they attempted to set fire to the Laxminarayan Akhra. Police identified the arrested persons as Ranjit (20) and Mintu Chandra Paddar (22).

Our Correspondent from Natore adds: No major incidents were reported other than an attack on a temple at Vatopara village under Sadar thana today. All statues of the temple were set on fire in the incident.

A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed. Heavy contingents of police and BDR were deployed in different areas.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent adds: Dawn-to-



A BDR man consoling a child as residents of Azampur Colony came out in the street to protest indiscriminate tear gassing which caused injuries to many including children.

routes to and from Khulna city remained suspended. But mills and factories in Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Atrai industrial zone were in normal operation. Loading and unloading at Mongla Port was not hampered.

Processions both by Nirmul Committee and Jamaat-Shibir were brought out in the city in the morning and evening.

Additional police force were deployed at all vulnerable points of the city.

The man who killed in police firing Monday night was identified as Delwar Hussain—a jute worker.

Our Comilla Correspondent adds: Agitated people set the Mohatma Gandhi established Hindu hostel, 'Abbot Ashram' on fire in the small hours of yesterday.

BNP, Awami League and JSD brought out separate peace processions in the city, condemning the Ayodhya incident and urging people to maintain communal peace. The BNP procession was led by Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu.

UNB adds: Section 144 was enforced on Ghior thana for an indefinite period from 6 pm Tuesday to ward off violence sparked by demolition of a mosque in India, officials said.

Scores of temples and homes and shops owned by Hindus were ransacked as angry Muslims went on a rampage to protest the destruction of the Babri Mosque in India by militant Hindu extremists.

Violence occurred in Ghior, Shibabala, Doulapur and Sadar thanas, police sources said.

At least 28 people were injured in clashes between mobs and local people who obstructed attacks on temples.

Our Gazipur Correspondent adds: One person was injured when pickets clashed with shopkeepers in Tongi during hartal hours. All transports stayed off the roads and most factories remained inoperative.

Our Correspondent from Narayanganj adds: The hartal was observed peacefully in the district barring some stray incidents.

A local train from Dhaka was damaged by pickets near the No 2 railgate in the morn-

ing. All traffic stayed off the roads.

UNB reports from Feni: At least eight Shibir activists were injured in a clash between the supporters of Chhatra Shibir and Ghatrak Dalal Nirmul Committee in Feni during the hartal period Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a group of angry mob attacked and damaged 13 monasteries at Shahadevpur village in Sadar thana yesterday.

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Opposition call to resist communal forces

By Staff Correspondent

A combined meeting of Awami League, PDF, Five-Party and Ganatantri party in a resolution appealed to all the countrymen to resist the communal force of the country unitedly.

The Bengalis must protect peace and preserve brotherhood by upholding the tradition of non-communal ideals, the resolution said.

The meeting held at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Sheikh Hasina at Mintu Road was also presided over by Sheikh Hasina.

The meeting also condemned the attack on the Babri Mosque terming it as a heinous act.

It was also attended among others by Abdul Mannan, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Zillur Rahman, Nurul Islam Nahid, Suranjit Sen Gupta, Dilip Barua and Matia Chowdhury.

The meeting viewed that the Jamaat-Shibir elements had started fanning communal hatred for their political ends on the pretext of the demolition of the Babri Mosque.

They also said the Jamaat leaders earlier held meeting with the BJP leader Advani and made the blue print of communal disharmony in both the countries.

Home Minister visits city temples

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury visited different places and temples of old Dhaka City on Monday, reports BSS.

He visited the house of member of parliament Shudangsu Shekhar Haldar Monday night according to an official handout. During his visit to Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Ramkrishna Mission, Shib Mandir, Dhakeshwari Temple, Joykali Temple, Rishipara and other Hindu populated areas. The Home Minister talked to the people and enquired about their welfare, safety and security.

He told the members of the Hindu community that the government had taken special measures for their security and protection of temples. He said law enforcing agencies had been deployed at their areas to ensure security and safety.

The local people of the areas told the Minister they were maintaining communal harmony. The Minister told them to exercise maximum restraint. He urged them to be ever vigilant against the opportunists.

He assured them that the government would do everything possible in maintaining law and order and communal harmony.

Journalists of different dailies and student leaders accompanied the Minister during the visit.

AL orders party units to form peace brigades

Bangladesh Awami League yesterday strongly condemned the demolition of the age-old Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, reports BSS.

The Executive Committee of the party in a meeting with its chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair in a resolution said the incident is tantamount to naked attack on the religious, sentiment of the Muslim community of India. Such an incident was unprecedented and a scandalous chapter in the history of the sub-continent nations and at the same time had disturbed the communal harmony in the countries of the region.

The resolution noted that like in the past the people of Bangladesh despite provocations had shown restraint and patience and would continue to uphold the same tradition.

The meeting called upon the people to keep vigilance so that communal harmony was not disturbed.

It also directed the party units to form peace brigades comprising people irrespective of religion, caste and creed to foil attempt to disturb communal harmony.

150 tribal refugees back home

KHAGRACHHARI, Dec 8: More than 150 tribal refugees returned here during the last one week despite close vigilance of Indian Border Security Force and Shantibahini men, officials said.

It was learnt that most of the returnees came from Kathalechhari and Karbuk frontier refugee camps

The Midnight File

Benazir postpones anti-govt march

KARACHI, Dec 8: Pakistan's main opposition leader Benazir Bhutto postponed today an anti-government march because of the situation created by the demolition of a mosque in India by Hindu fanatics. Bhutto said the opposition would instead hold rallies throughout the country on Friday, the scheduled day of the march, to express indignation at the desecration of the ancient mosque, reports AFP.

Rockets pound Kabul

KABUL, Dec 8: Rockets pounded Afghanistan's war-weary capital for a fourth straight day Tuesday as the beleaguered government sought to negotiate a cease-fire with Iranian-backed Shiite rebels. "At least three times they have called for a cease-fire and each time they attack the high peaks around the city," said a Defence Ministry spokesman, who spoke on condition he not be further identified. "They are trying to fool us," reports AP.

Hindu temples in England set afire

LONDON, Dec 8: Fire gutted a Hindu temple at West Bromwich in central England early Tuesday and the BBC quoted firefighters as saying they thing the blaze was started deliberately, reports AP.

There was no immediate indication whether the fire at the Shree Krishna temple was associated with the Hindu-Muslim rioting in India over the disputed holy site at Ayodhya which has left more than 200 people dead.

But it follows fire bomb attacks Monday on Hindu temples in Derby and Bradford in northern England.

West Bromwich, Derby and Bradford all have large immigrant populations whose area of ethnic origin is the Indian subcontinent.

The fire at the temple at West Bromwich was first spotted about 3 am (0300 GMT) on Tuesday. A total of 70 firefighters were sent to fight the blaze, the fire brigade said in a statement.

The BBC said the roof and balcony of the two-storey Victorian building had collapsed and the interior was destroyed.

It quoted the temple priest as saying the fire was "an act of barbarism." But it said he urged no one in the local community to seek revenge.

Prime Minister John Major's government appealed Monday to Muslim and Hindu communities "everywhere" to

Joint procession

From Page 1 Col 8
The meeting called upon the people irrespective of their religions and parties and political opinions to maintain peace, discipline and communal harmony throughout the country and said it was the sacred responsibility and duty of the people to uphold the glorious tradition of communal harmony in Bangladesh.

The meeting decided to bring out a peace procession jointly by BNP and its front organisations today at 3 pm from city BNP office at Nawab Yusuf Market to maintain peace, discipline and communal harmony in the country.

All leaders and workers of BNP and the people have been requested to participate in the procession.

The meeting also called for uniting all sections of the people throughout the country and bring out peace processions to maintain communal harmony.

The meeting directed the ward committees of BNP and its front organisation to maintain peace and communal harmony in the city by organising all sections of the people.

National flag

From Page 1 Col 7
between the Jamaat workers and the local Ghatrak Dalal Nirmul Committee supporters following the attack on the Muktijoddha Sangsad office.

NDC leader Walid Islam was injured when he tried to quell the fighting groups. Heavy contingents of police and BDR were deployed at different places of the town to avert further clashes.

Meanwhile, in Maheshkhali island off Cox's Bazar coast, mobs burned down three temples and 14 homesteads protesting demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya.

Several people were injured in the mob attack.

SAARC

From Page 1 Col 7
In Dhaka, rumours were rife throughout the day that summit was about to be put off.

Meanwhile, the Standing Committee is drafting its report to be placed before the Council of Ministers, a SAARC Secretariat official said last night.

The Standing Committee that has been dealing with a long agenda including most substantive matters is to finalise its report today, the concluding day of its three-day meeting ahead of that of the Council of Ministers.

He also condemned the decision to rebuild the mosque and to outlaw religious fundamentalist organizations, calling them "Provocative, myopic and repressive steps."

"This is a repressive measure. We have not indulged in any act of violence," Advani told reporters as he was led away.

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