



Pedestrians run for cover following a bomb explosion (background) at Topkhana Road in the city during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo

Hartals end: 25 injured

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for elections under a neutral caretaker administration.

Clashes between police and pickets took place in Mirpur, Farmgate and Nawabpur areas while bombs were exploded in many areas including Mohammapur, Mirpur, Azimpur, Gulistan, Motijheel, Jatrabari and Tejgaon.

In Mirpur, clashes started when pickets attacked a BRTC bus plying under police guard at about 10 am. The pickets pelted stones at the bus and police lobbed several tear gas shells to disperse them.

In Farmgate area, a police van was attacked by pickets when police picked up two persons at about 10.30 am. Police deployed in nearby areas rushed to the spot and dispersed the attackers.

A police van came under bomb attack by pickets in Nawabpur area. Police chased them away and picked up four people.

Police arrested one person from Topkhana Road at about 11.15 am after he was injured in a bomb blast following a rally

Joint statement

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Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Douglas Hurd, MP, to mark the latter's current visit to Bangladesh.

The joint statement said that a number of regional, humanitarian and human rights issues, including repatriation of the Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh, the water sharing problems with India, the repatriation process of the Bangladesh tribal refugees from India to three hill districts of Bangladesh and repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh to Pakistan came up for discussion.

It added that the British Foreign Secretary said that solutions to these issues, recognising the legitimate interests of each party, would accelerate the process of regional cooperation and development.

The two sides, the joint statement said, reviewed the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and emphasised the need for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the dispute.

They underlined the valuable work being done by UNPROFOR, to which both countries provide sizeable contingents whose safety is naturally of great concern.

The joint statement said the British Foreign Secretary paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister.

The statement said that the British Foreign Secretary had a meeting with the Finance Minister during which they discussed matters concerning British economic cooperation with Bangladesh and also signed two agreements relating to British aid to the energy and communication sectors of Bangladesh.

The joint statement said that the British Foreign Secretary called on the Bangladesh Foreign Minister and they held discussions on matters of mutual interest.

At the official talks bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern were discussed.

The Foreign Minister expressed Bangladesh government's appreciation for the cooperation and assistance extended by Britain towards the development efforts of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh side explained the developments in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) aimed at promoting understanding and cooperation among the member countries. The British side expressed sat-

BHRC report 43 died in jails, police custody last year

By Staff Correspondent
The Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC) yesterday claimed on the basis of news reports and its own investigation that 43 persons died in police custody and different jails in the country from January 1 to December 31, 1994.

According to the BHRC report, released to the press yesterday, 12 died in police custody and 31 at different jails.

Some 20 persons died and 67 were injured in firing by police and the BDR.

Over 2500 people were injured due to police lathicharge during rallies, processions and demonstrations last year.

The BHRC said death in police custody is a severe breach of human rights.

Although there is a democratically elected government, the number of deaths due to police repression increased in 1994 as against in the previous years," the report alleged.

Chairman of the BHRC Justice KM Sobhan and secretary general Akram Hossain Chowdhury expressed their deep concern over increasing deaths in police custody and demanded that the names of the police personnel responsible for the deaths be published and they be punished.

The report gives the thana-wise breakup of deaths in police custody as: Magura-1, Paikgacha-1, Gonainghat-1, Sandwip-1, Bagharpara-1, Mirpur-1, and 3 persons under Khilkhet thana of Dhaka and Babupur of Bogra.

Another 31 persons died in jails in the following places: Dhaka Central Jail-5, Sylhet-1, Madaripur-1, Chittagong-1, Jessore-1, Jhalakathi-2, Barisal, Habiganj, Rangpur, Magura, Patuakhali, Dinajpur and Narshingdi-1 person each, and Rajshahi and Bandarban jails — 2 persons each.

Opposition

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retary Zillur Rahman announced the programme at a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue. The AL will also hold a rally at the same venue on January 10 to mark the home-coming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Jatiya Party secretary general Khaledur Rahman Tito announced the programme at a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque, while Jamaat secretary general Moulana Matiuur Rahman Nizami made the announcement at the north gate of the mosque.

AL rally

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city yesterday evening.

Agitations like hartals will not be needed if the government accepts the Opposition demand for elections under a non-party, neutral and caretaker government," he said adding Party Chief Sheikh Hasina had made this clear much earlier.

Referring to the Prime Minister's pledge to abide by the provisions of the Constitution, Samad Azad said, "If you (PM) mean so, then the present Parliament is to be dissolved within 90 days from the day it lost its legitimacy from the political, constitutional and moral points of view."

The AL leader reiterated their pledge to realise the Opposition demand through agitation if the ruling party failed to resolve the crisis peacefully.

Chaired by a city AL leader, Monir Hossain Khan, the rally was also addressed by party presidium members Tofael Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu, Quamruzzaman and other central leaders including Abdul Jalil, Prof Abu Sayeed, Obaidul Kader, KM Jahangir, Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Mannan and city unit leaders Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya and others.

Tofael Ahmed said the Prime Minister did not announce her readiness to resign ahead of the next general elections even until the last minute negotiation between the Government and the Opposition to avert the en masse resignation of MPs. She did not even specify her plan to resign in her address to the nation, Tofael said. But the ruling party leaders were now claiming that the PM had announced this, he said. "It's an attempt to befool the people," he added.

Amir Hossain Amu said that they would remove the BNP government through continued agitation if it failed to accept the Opposition demand.

Zillur Rahman, announcing a fresh agitation programme, said no repression by the government could stop them from going ahead for realising the demand for a caretaker administration.

Abdul Jalil called upon the AL workers to mobilise the masses for the Opposition agitation.



The evening chill forced many to seek the warmth of a bonfire in the city yesterday. — Star photo

ECNEC okays Tk 1381 cr family planning project

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved a family planning welfare project at a cost of Tk 1381 crore, reports UNB.

The approval came at a meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair at the Secretariat cabinet room.

The project scheduled to be completed by 1997-98 include a foreign exchange component of Tk 442 crore.

Of the total, Tk 211 crore with foreign exchange component of Tk 85 crore would be spent for the project in the current fiscal year (1994-95).

The project aimed at improvement of family planning service, maternal and child health care by strengthening the family planning institutions at the field level. Reducing mortality rate of mothers from 5.6 to 4.5 per cent and infants from the existing 110 to 80 per 1000 is also under the project agenda.

The ECNEC meeting also approved two other projects — the integrated food assisted rural development project and construction of 4 white oil storage tanks at the Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL).

The Tk 112 crore integrated rural development project is aimed at constructing 1200 km rural growth centres (Bazar) connecting roads throughout the country. It is scheduled to be completed by 1997-98 and involved a foreign exchange component of Tk 10 crore.

Four white oil storage tanks at the ERL will be constructed at a cost of Tk 15 crore involving foreign exchange component of Tk 7 crore by December '95, the meeting decided.

Each of the tanks will have a storage capacity of 11000 metric tons, increasing the overall storage capacity of the ERL by 44,000 metric tons, said an official handout.

Janakantha office attacked

By Staff Correspondent.
A group of unruly youths attacked the Daily Janakantha office in Motijheel at noon yesterday, protesting the publication of a news item on the "defection of 17 Jatiya Party MPs" in the paper's January 3 issue.

According to witnesses, the attack was made from a procession brought out from the National Press Club after a rally of the Jatiya Party.

Some of the processionists, while going to the Shapla Square, pelted stones at the Janakantha office and tried to break the lock of the collapsible gate.

About 10 crackers were also exploded.

Police rushed to the spot and managed to disperse the processionists, who were chanting slogans demanding the release of deposed president Ershad, resignation of the present government and elections under a neutral, caretaker administration.

Some window-panes of the office were damaged, but there was no report of any injury.

No case was filed in this connection either.

Salam

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legal complications.

Citing the opinion of legal experts and several recent press reports, he said, "They have shown the right way." He declined to elaborate.

He said the BNP would decide its next course of action after the Speaker gives his decision about the resignation letters.

Talukdar leaves for his Jamalpur constituency today for three days. During his absence from the capital other ranking party leaders would handle the situation, he added.

Responding to a question if some Jatiya Party leaders were likely to join the BNP, he said, "Some of the senior leaders of the JP have contacted us, expressing the desire to join the BNP."

Shahjahan Straj, MP, and Amanullah Aman, MP, were present during Talukdar's conversation with the reporters.

Hasina

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former Leader of the Opposition who led a mass resignation of the opposition MPs on December 28 over the caretaker government issue.

She urged the people not to give in to any threat and advance the current struggle to its logical end.

One shot dead by rivals in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG Jan 4: One person was allegedly shot dead here this morning by his rivals due to a land dispute, police said.

Tapan Kumar Chowdhury (40) died on way to hospital as he was fired upon with a gun by his rivals in Patharghata area of the city.

Tapan was attacked while he was supervising a construction work on the disputed land.

Meanwhile, Kotwali police in a raid on a residential hotel at Nondankanan this afternoon arrested four persons along with arms.

Those arrested are Aungsu alias Tutul, Azmal Khan, Halzur Rahman and Polish Pal.

Police said, they were arrested when they were preparing to commit criminal acts.

10 hurt as BCL rivals clash in Habiganj

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET Jan 4: Ten persons were injured in a clash between two rival groups of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P) in the Chunarughat Government College of Habiganj district today.

The groups known as Rahim and Taher group used lethal weapons during the half an hour clash on the college campus while observing the founding anniversary of BCL.

The Midnight File

Contact group on Bosnia meets in Bonn today

BONN, Jan 4: The five leading powers seeking a political solution to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina will meet in Bonn Thursday to discuss how to further the peace process, the German Foreign Ministry said today. The contact group states — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — will meet at expert-level in the light of the newly-agreed ceasefire to consider what steps could be taken to continue the process of political efforts for peace. It said, reports AFP.

Israeli soldiers kill 4 Palestinians in WB

JERUSALEM, Jan 4: Israeli soldiers shot dead four Palestinians in the West Bank village of Beit Lqia near Ramallah today, Israeli security sources said. They said the troops opened fire after gunmen shot at the soldiers and wounded one, reports Reuter.

3 die in city incidents

By DMCH Correspondent
One person was killed in a road accident, two others committed suicide and a minor girl was raped in the city yesterday.

Abul Kalam, 30 was seriously injured Tuesday night when a motor cycle ran over him near Kawran Bazar. He died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 10:15 am yesterday.

A maid Josna, 25, committed suicide early yesterday morning at her master's house at Matuul under Demra thana. The cause of her committing suicide could not be immediately ascertained.

Jamela, 25 wife of one Lalma, committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling of a room with a bedsheet at Amtola, Savar, for unknown reasons.

A nine-year old child, Hosne Ara, was kidnapped and raped by one unidentified youth at the old airport premises yesterday afternoon.

Hosne Ara, a student of Class one, was returning home at Sheorapara slum from Esho Part Primary School at 1 pm when the youth grabbed and took her to the old airport.

She was admitted in a critical condition to the DMCH in the evening.

Jatiya Party

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for a stronger agitation because of religious festivals like the Biswa Ijtima and Shab-i-Barat this month.

The new action programme includes processions throughout the country from January 11 to 13, mass contact tours on January 14 and 15, a torch procession on January 18 and a rail-road blockade across the country on January 19.

The JP secretary general urged the Prime Minister to sit with the Opposition to discuss the method of her resignation since she had agreed to resign, as stated in her address to the nation on the first of this month.

He, however, warned the JP would resist any move of the government to hold 'farceful' elections by keeping the mainstream Opposition out of the polls. The government will have to hand over power to a caretaker administration for holding elections, he asserted.

Rafiq Faiz said the government could not suppress the Opposition agitation by hatching any conspiracy or resorting to repression.

20 hurt in clash near Aricha Ghat

MANIKGANJ, Jan 4: At least 20 people were injured, four seriously, in a clash between workers of a motor-transport company and some armed miscreants about one km south of Aricha Ghat here today, reports UNB.

Seriously injured people admitted to the Manikganj Sadar Hospital and the rest were released after first-aid.

Eye witnesses said a group of 20 armed miscreant, who were travelling by a boat, attacked an Aricha-bound boat loaded with cattle in the river Jamuna this afternoon and compelled the driver of the cargo to unload those at South Shibabaya near Aricha Ghat.

Jamaat

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13, mass contact from Jan 14-15 and demonstrations on Jan 18.

Nizami said the people have given their verdict in favour of the Opposition demand for elections under a caretaker government by observing half-day hartal in last three days.

The Jamaat Secretary General warned that the Opposition would cripple the BNP government if the demand was not met.

Referring to the Prime Minister's speech regarding her resignation 30 days ahead of the election, he said she should have come up with this proposal much earlier. "This government has never acted timely", he observed.

He said the Prime Minister must make specific proposal if she has the good intention to resolve the current political crisis.

City Jamaat president ATM Azharul Islam presided over the meeting, also addressed by party leaders Mohammad Kamruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah, Sheikh Ansar Ali and Saiful Alam Khan Milon.

Press confce

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companies would not want to miss the opportunity if there was continued economic stability and progress.

Douglas Hurd, who leaves Dhaka tomorrow after a three-day official visit, said he had talks with Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman and a joint communique would be issued, carrying the details. He said he was looking forward to meeting the Prime Minister later in the day, yesterday.

Hurd, referring to Bosnia, said he had discussions with the Foreign Minister and wanted cessation of hostilities for a durable settlement. He mentioned that both Bangladesh and Britain had sizeable contingents in Bosnia.

Replying to a question about a negotiated settlement, Hurd said, "In Bosnia, Britain is performing. Bangladesh is performing. Many others say, but do not perform."

At the outset of the brief press conference, the British Foreign Secretary in his remarks said he found his trip to Bangladesh very fascinating and productive. He said he was also impressed by the hard work and sense of commitment of the people involved in deterrent projects. Hurd, particularly referred to ODA-aided projects in Parbatipur that he visited yesterday morning.

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Peter J Fowler was also present at the press conference.

Rice prices

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cerned, this parboiled rice is likely to come from Pakistan, India, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Market monitors believe that the recent price hike of rice could easily be averted if steps, such as withdrawal of import duty, government procurement through local tenders and OMS operations were taken in time.

A shortfall in the rice supply was apprehended when a prolonged drought affected aman production in the northern region, but the authorities failed to correctly assess the situation then, said an expert.

Well placed sources in the government said that the ministries of Food and Agriculture differed on the scale of the likely shortfall due to decreased aman production.

The Food ministry in October predicted a 30 per cent shortfall in aman production while the Agriculture ministry said it would not exceed 7 per cent.

And this controversy caused the delay in taking timely measures to avert the price hike," said a source in the Food ministry.



Chechen volunteers take cover near the presidential palace in Grozny during heavy combats for control of the Chechen capital Tuesday. Russian forces have abandoned the city centre, in ruins, leaving about 100 bodies strewn in the streets. — AFP photo

Bombing of Grozny

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attack on Tuesday that left four residents dead and seven wounded.

The villagers, who belong to the Melkhi ethnic group, said two Sukhoi fighter-bombers accompanied by three helicopters swooped over the settlement and fired rockets without warning onto a muddy main street where a family was walking.

In one of the attacks Tuesday, a Russian legislator said 100 people were killed when Russian planes bombed the town of Shali, 30 kilometers southeast of Grozny, according to a report by commercial Moscow Echo radio.

The report said the local hospital was destroyed and several bombs exploded in the town's marketplace.

AIDS cases cross 1 million mark

GENEVA, Jan 4: The number of declared AIDS cases has for the first time gone over one million mark, a figure that represents a 20-per cent increase in the last year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

As of December 31, 1,025,073 cases of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome have been recorded since the disease was first detected in the late 1970s.

But the organisation believes that more than 4.5 million adults and children actually carry the deadly virus and are not represented in official figures because of incomplete statistics in various countries.