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Sporadic clashes mark hartal

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tendance in government offices was relatively thin.
Air, rail and launch and steamer services to and from the city remained unhindered.
Mirpur, Jatrabari, Malibagh, Paltan, Farmgate, Mahakhali, Kantaban, Kakrail, Topkhana Road and the road in front of BNP's central office at Naya Paltan were the main trouble spots in the city yesterday.



BDR patrolling the street in front of the Secretariat during hartal hours yesterday. — Star photo

Starting from early morning, chase and counter-chase between police and pickets continued till post-hartal hours at Naya Paltan area. Police lobbed teargas shells time and again as pickets from nearby alleys made occasional stone-pelting attacks on them and burnt tyres on the road. One Nurul Islam, 35, was injured there when a gas shell hit him around five in the afternoon. He was admitted to DMCH.
A procession of JAGPA came under baton charge by police at around 11 in the morning at Naya Paltan. Police arrested the party's general secretary Anisur Rahman from the spot.
Police lobbed at least 15 tear gas shells when pro-hartal activists pelted stones on passing the jeep of DMP Commissioner Al Mamoon in front of the BNP office at around 10:45 am. Earlier at 10:30 am, a BNP rally was foiled by police there after party acting secretary general Abdullah Al Noman and Amanullah Anan, MP addressed the party workers.

At nine in the morning, police arrested Jatiyatadabi Shechhashebek Dal President Rizvi Ahmed from near the Jatiya Press Club premises, Jatiyatadabi Ulema Dal Convenor Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari was arrested from the same spot at 4:40 pm. The BNP front organisations tried to hold rallies there but police foiled their attempts.
Police picked up four pickets from Tikatulul area at 2:30 pm and beat them up. After providing first aid at the DMCH, police

AL ready to face BNP

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weakness and have been doing whatever they like. But such things cannot go for long. People have already rejected their terrorist policy and programmes."

About BNP and other opposition parties' hartal and blockade programmes, the Awami League leader said "it is unfortunate that BNP is trying to create chaos on the street, obstruct foreign investment and destabilise the political situation."

About controversy over restriction on street meetings in the city, Rahman said the decision was taken following complaints from different strata of society against street meetings.

This decision, he said, is applicable for both the ruling party and the opposition.

On consultation with political parties, the Dhaka City Mayor selected seven sites for holding meetings to ease the traffic jam, which has been appreciated by the people.

He said Awami League would also abide by the decision and hold its first public meeting at Osmani Uddyan on September 30.

Rahman said the government has a plan to construct a permanent rostrum at Osmani Uddyan so that political parties and other organisations could use it.

In this context, he said late President Ziaur Rahman turned historic Paltan Maidan into a stadium while ex-President Ershad closed the traditional meeting venue at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram by constructing fountain there.

Being in the opposition, Awami League did not oppose those decisions for the interest of the people.

Khaleda

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omy, culture and religious values, and disrupted the people's life and property," she alleged.

Begum Zia further accused the government of using police against the people, trying to gag the voice of opposition, harassing, injuring and arresting the BNP activists, and unleashing attacks on the BNP office.

She called upon the people to observe other party programmes — district and thana-level demonstrations tomorrow and the nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal of Thursday.

Begum Zia demanded immediate release of Jatiyatadabi Ulema Dal convenor and former MP Sved Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari, Shechhashebek Dal president Rezvi Ahmed and other party activists arrested during the hartal yesterday.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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President visits venue

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ground and enlarge its capacity. According to highly placed sources, the President was told that the wall now separating the area from the Hockey Stadium could be removed to make room for more people.

The sources said the President will visit the Osmany Uddayan today to see its capacity.

They said the Pioneer League ground, a part of the former Paltan Maidan, the traditional meeting ground of the years, is likely to be the venue of future rallies in the city.

Authorities are considering to develop it before the Awami League holds a rally there on September 30, to be addressed by AL Chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Earlier it had decided to hold the rally at Osmany Uddyan.

The Awami League held its council meeting at the Pioneer Football League ground in May this year.

The ruling party wants to show that a large rally can be held at the Premier League ground to counter our opposition claim that it is not possible there or at the Osmany Uddayan, the two-designated venues for rallies in central Dhaka, sources in the AL said. They hope that it would end the current series of confrontation over the issue.

The last public rally at the maidan was in 1978. Meanwhile, Mayor of DCC Mohammad Hanif, in a statement yesterday again appealed to all political parties to sit and reach a consensus over selecting sites in the city for holding public meetings.

DCC sources said last night that the Mayor's office will issue fresh letters to all political parties separately today (Tuesday) inviting them to participate in a meeting. Date for the meeting is yet to be decided, they said.

The Mayor, in a August 31 meeting with leaders of some political parties, decided to ban holding of public meetings on city thoroughfares from September 1 and designated seven sites for such meetings. The meeting, held at the Nagar

workers went on rampage managing private and government vehicles, and engaged in arson and looting causing immense suffering to the commonman.

Press Note

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The Press Note said as per democratic norms, the opposition can always protest and give alternative suggestions to the government if they disagree with any government decision. "But the BNP, in this case, had reflected a most undemocratic and intolerable behaviour which is not acceptable."

The city roads, it reminded, are increasingly becoming busier with the rising number of vehicles and also because of passing of vehicles from one end to the other end of the country through the capital in absence of alternative roads and arrangements.

Besides, the traffic system is often disrupted with the holding of rallies, meetings and processions on city roads everyday, for which an intolerable traffic congestion has become a normal phenomenon, it said.

The Press Note said such traffic congestion has a serious impact on the country's socio-economic condition. Ambulance carrying a serious patient is not even spared from this situation.

It said the people had long been demanding to get relief from such a suffocating situation of traffic jam. To ease the situation, the DCC had invited all the political parties to a discussion to select the meeting venues, but BNP stayed away from attending that discussion meeting.

Following this, the DCC had discussed with other parties and selected seven venues for holding political meetings. This was hailed by people from all walks of life.

The government hopes that all would behave with tolerance and anybody having alternative suggestions for the meeting venues should come forward for a proper solution through discussion with the city corporation, the Press Note added.

Walkie-talkie snatched

By Staff Correspondent

A group of unidentified young men snatched a walkie-talkie from a policeman near the BNP office at Kakrail in the city late Sunday.

Motijheel police said the group attacked a Sub-Inspector (SI) of the Special Branch while he was passing through the BNP office area at about 11 pm. The attackers chased the SI and pelted stones at him. They also damaged his motor bike.

Police could not recover the walkie-talkie till last night. A case was lodged with Motijheel thana in this regard.

Traffic became normal after 1 pm : DMP

Traffic on the city streets started returning to normal after 1 pm as pickets retreated following police intervention during the BNP-called hartal yesterday, reports UNB.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a press release said activities in offices continued while movement of water vessels and aircraft were normal on the day.

Mills and factories remained open during the hartal hours and regular activities in almost all the garment factories were normal, the release said.

It said BNP activists started gathering at various points of the city since morning and made obstacles in movement of vehicles on the city streets.

Bangabandhu Museum

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was confined after his arrest in the Agartala Case. Hasina thanked the army for preserving the small room bearing the memories of Bangabandhu's confinement.

Hasina said the Agartala Conspiracy Case is an important event of the history of liberation, which was instituted after the father of the nation had declared 6-point charter of demand in 1966 to liberate the nation from the discrimination and repression of the then Pakistani regime.

She said the people of this land never bowed down to any injustice and resisted all conspiracies of killing Bangabandhu to halt the movement for liberation.

Later, the Prime Minister unveiled the plaque of the museum, went round the project building and talked to the accused of the Agartala Conspiracy Case who attended the function.

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Mahbubur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Among the accused of the historic case, Capt (retired) Brig Khurshid Uddin Ahmed, Col Shawkat Ali, Risaldar AKM Shamsul Huq, Maj Shamsul Alam, Sergeant Abdul Jalil, Mohammad Khurshid, Commander Rouf and Mahbub Uddin Ahmed were present.

Bhaban, was attended by representatives of Awami League, Muslim League, Zakir Party, Jatiya Janata Party and Ganotantr Party.

BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Left Front did not attend the meeting. Left Front had said that it would not sit in a meeting where Jamaat was invited.

BNP defied the DCC decision and continued holding meeting on city roads. A top DCC source told The Daily Star that a separate meeting would be held with the Left Front in view of its stand as regards the Jamaat.

Meanwhile, BNP acting Secretary General Abdullah Al Noman in an interview with the BBC yesterday evening alleged that venues for holding rallies and demonstration had been fixed to secure petty partisan gains of the ruling party.

Noman also said that his party was not consulted before selection of the seven venues by the Mayor.

"All the venues are not suitable for holding rallies and demonstrations. Holding rallies on the streets and roads are nothing new. Mayor Hanif who himself held rallies on streets for weeks together is now talking against," Noman said.

Rallies were still being held at Bangabandhu Avenue, Noman said without mentioning that the Awami League head office is located in that area.

Noman in his interview also alleged that Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim held a rally on the road in front of the T&T Board office the same day when BNP was stopped from holding a rally in front of its office.

Bangabandhu Murder Case hearing resumes today

By Staff Correspondent

The hearing of Bangabandhu Murder Case in the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka could not be held yesterday.

The hearing of the case will, however, resume today.

The hearing was adjourned yesterday following a prayer from prosecution side about the adverse circumstances of the day, including the 'transport problems'. When contacted, some of the defence lawyers said that they also could not reach the court due to transport problems and adverse circumstances of the day.

A dawn-to-dusk hartal was enforced in the city yesterday at the call of BNP, the main opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad.

CHT accord

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homes in Chittagong Hill Tracts is expected to resume shortly.

About 43,000 refugees, crammed in different camps in South Tripura, are awaiting repatriation.

About 7,000 tribals have returned home under a package deal after the assumption of office of the present government.

Much the same number of them, who fled homes amidst ethnic strife and tribal insurgency in the CHT, had returned home during the BNP rule.

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No decision on sharing duty

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The government estimates that the importers concerned have to pay about 50 million US dollars as duties.

He also said the government is contemplating filing criminal charges against those Bangladeshi exporters who had faked certificates falling under schedule A. He did not elaborate on the point.

Schedule A contains 383 certificates of which 160 were never issued by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and were forged by exporters.

"We have asked the buyers to share the duties from the profit they made in the last three years," he said.

About the fresh request by the EU to re-examine 2253 GSP certificates, Tofael said these represent 28 per cent of the schedule C which were verified by the EPB once. These certificates were issued based on LC papers, he added saying, some of those may be cancelled in fresh verification finds any fault.

Once irregularities are detected in issuance of rules of origin certificates, there will be no option but to cancel these, he said. "Had we not cancelled these, GSP facility for Bangladesh would have been withdrawn for all items," he

said. Bangladesh gets GSP facility for a whole range of items including garments, leather, jute, and frozen foods.

He claimed to have taken the decision to cancel the certificates taking consensus from all parties concerned including BGMEA and BKMEA, the two main associations of garment manufacturers.

He denied taking too long a time in cancelling the certificates saying it was easier for countries like Laos, Cambodia and Nepal because their quantity of export is small.

"We tried our best to solve the problem without cancelling the certificates. But there was no alternative. The Consultative Committee of the Commerce Ministry also gave its verdict in favour of cancellation," Tofael said.

Tofael said his team was warmly received by the EU counterpart in Brussels during his trip because of cancellation of the certificates.

Tofael also met the leaders of the Euro-Commerce Association, a body of EU buyers, during the trip.

"We talked about the effect of the cancellation," he said. "I told them that European importers had to pay the duties on

cancelled GSPs even if Bangladesh did not cancel the certificates. They were convinced of the fact and were happy with the talks."

Tofael said cancellation of the GSPs will give the strength to the EU member states to tell other countries opposing it that it is a faultless system for the LDCs.

Now that the certificates have been cancelled and a re-examination of 2253 certificates under schedule C will be completed soon, the derogation decision will come 'very soon', he also said. "It may take a maximum time till November 1."

The commerce minister expressed the hope that with the solution of the problem, the country's exports would shot up. "Our exports are already strong," he claimed. "We had crossed the target for the months of July and August by about nine per cent."

When asked whether actions would be taken against those bureaucrats involved in the issuance of false certificates, Tofael said an inquiry committee headed by an additional secretary has already been made to investigate how the whole scam took place. "In proper time, the report will come out," he vaguely said.

Blasts rock DU campus during hartal hours

At least 25 home-made bombs were exploded on Dhaka University campus during yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the main Opposition BNP, according to campus source, reports UNB.

In support of the hartal, JCD leaders and supporters brought out a procession and held a rally on the TSC road island in the morning, JCD president Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anie and leaders Monir Hossain, Shahabuddin Latif, Nasiruddin Osim, Selimuzzaman Selim, Nurul Haq Zitu and Munjur Elahi addressed the rally.

Against the hartal, BCL activists brought out procession and held a rally at Aparajeya Bangla, which was addressed by Enamul Haq Shamim, Ishaq Ali Khan Panna, Bahadur Bepari, Ajoykor Khokhon and Rafiqul Islam.

UNCTAD Secy Gen in city

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Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Rubens Ricupero arrived in the capital last night on a two-day visit to Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed received him at the Zia International Airport.

Dolphin

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try's only dolphin in zoo. Dolphin is usually found in sea.

Curator of the zoo Afsar Ali said the dolphin was netted by a fisherman and was later handed over to one Ali Hossain, owner of a Chinese restaurant in the city. Hossain kept the dolphin in a large pond near Savar and later handed it over to the zoo on Friday last.

About five years ago, another dolphin was brought to the zoo from Bhola but it survived only two months. Its taxidermy can now be found at the zoo's museum.

Afsar said fishermen in Munshiganj netted a 4.5 feet Graval (Gharial), a near-extinct animal, in the Padma river near Tungibari on September 17 and handed it over to the zoo on Friday. With its arrival, the Graval population in the zoo now stands at 5.

The curator also said that the six pythons, hatched a few months ago, were now able to swallow chicks. The cobra has laid about thirty eggs," he said.

Accord on bus

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Calcutta) and will be extended to Ajmeer Sharif at a later stage.

It is gathered that once an agreement is reached between the two sides, operation of two-way bus service between Dhaka and Calcutta will start early next year.

Loadshedding Hartal observed at Barguna

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Sept 22: A half-day hartal was observed in the Barguna town and its adjoining areas today.

The Barguna Electricity Consumers' Association called the hartal protesting irregular power supply to the Barguna town.

Shops, banks and offices were remained closed and vehicles were off the roads during hartal hours.

RU student falls from rooftop, dies

From RU Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Sept 22: A female student of Rajshahi University met the tragic end of her life as she fell from the rooftop of her dormitory during heavy rain this noon.

According to witnesses, Salma Akhter Kabita, a second year student of the Geography Department of Rajshahi University went to the rooftop of Begum Rokeya Hall with some of her friends for bathing in the rain. While they were bathing, suddenly Salma fell to the ground.

She was rushed to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where she succumbed to injuries in the afternoon.

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