



# The Daily Star



VOL. VIII NO. 289 REGD. NO. DA 781 INTERNET: <http://www.dailystarnews.com> KARTIK 28, 1405 BS DHAKA THURSDAY NOVEMBER 12, 1998 RAJAB 21, 1419 HIJRI 16 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS: PRICE TAKA 9.00

## Captive Dhaka tastes freedom at six

By Sabir Mustafa  
Dhaka breathed the sweet air of freedom again yesterday evening, after being kept captive for three days and two nights by political activism of the mindless kind. As the 60-hour hartal imposed by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its allies drew to a close, the city stirred again and rose from the dead. Shops began to re-open early, some hours before the 6:00 pm deadline, public transport began to hit the road from around 4pm but owners of private cars stayed away till the threat of mob attacks, indiscriminate bomb blasts and clashes between rival groups were finally gone.

By 8:00 pm, the once-thriving city turned into a ghost town came alive again, as people rushed to visit relatives, went to shops to replenish depleted kitchens, took patients to hospitals.

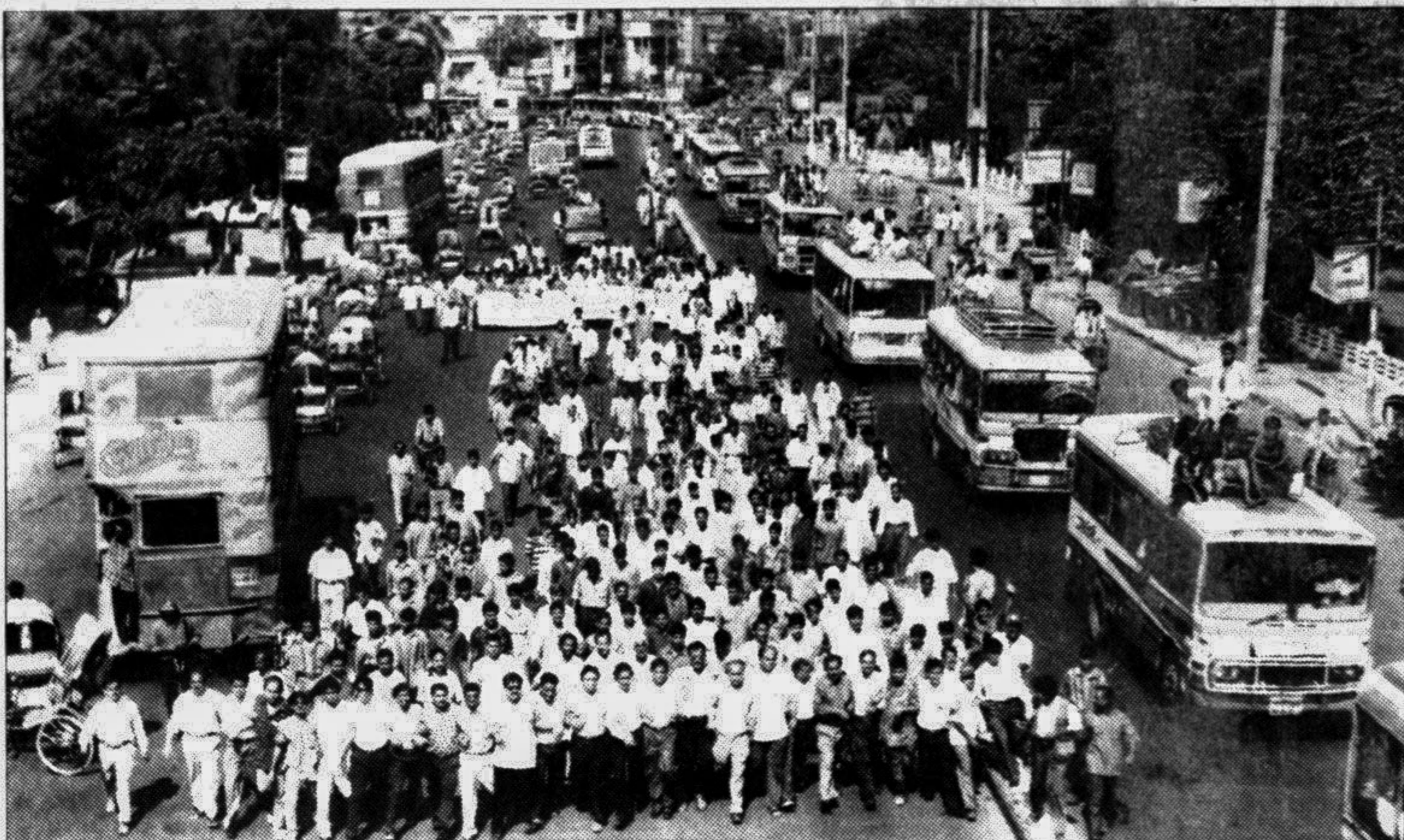
While the end of the hartal released the city from enforced captivity, it still left a bitter taste in the mouths of citizens who saw three precious working days frittered away by political jingoism.

"The hartal is a gross violation of our human rights," said a Dhaka resident. "The hartal denied us the right to free movement and the right to make a conscious choice."

"What kind of a democracy is this, when people's freedom of movement can so easily be violated by a hartal?" said another resident who kept his Dhanmandi shop closed out of fear.

For 60 hours, only rickshaws pulled their way through the hartal, as compliance would have pushed these day-labourers and their families to the door of starvation. Others could not travel to their place of work, children were forced to stay away from school, shops and markets lost three days of revenue.

All in the name of democracy.



TIME TO TAKE ON THEM! An Awami League procession led by state minister Mofazzal Hossain Maya moves in tandem with a bus rally towards the Zero Point in the city leaving behind the troubled Purana Paltan crossing. —Star photo

## Another death on third day

By Staff Correspondent  
One person was killed in the city and around 100 were injured in the country yesterday, the last day of the 60-hour hartal called by the BNP-led Seven Party Alliance.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Islam, 25. He was fatally injured at Roy Saheb Bazar crossing at about 5:30 pm and died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital an hour later.

Police said the victim was wounded while the bomb he was carrying exploded.

But the attending doctor at DMCH said "the marks of injury did not appear like that of

bomb injury. He died of trauma in the head."

Besides, a rickshawpuller, injured in hartal-related violence on Tuesday at the city's Khilgaon Bazar, died yesterday

morning at the hospital, reports our DMC correspondent.

He was identified as Arshadul Huq, 25, a resident of East Kazipara, hospital sources said.

Earlier, two persons were killed in clashes between pro-

and-anti-hartal activists in the city on the first day of the hartal.

Police yesterday arrested 235 people in the capital, most of them in the old part of the

city, raising the total to 548 in the capital alone. Many more were picked up in other areas of the country.

Life swung back to normal with the fall of darkness yesterday marking the end of the marathon shutdown that had

its toll on the economy.

BNP and its allies called the hartal, the longest during the 28-month Awami League rule, to protest 'attempt on the life' of Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia.

Train service between Dhaka and Chittagong was disrupted for four hours on the day as pickets removed tracks near Nangolkot Station in Comilla.

Police presence in the Old City, particularly in Nayabazar area where the city BNP office is located, was strengthened.

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## BNP's marred Paltan meeting stirs storm in parliament

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a stormy debate between the government and the main opposition BNP holding each other responsible for thwarting the latter's November 7 public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city.

Besides, some other controversial issues that dominated the national politics over the past few days also came up in both the rounds of the fiery debate, separated by the day's scheduled businesses.

Other issues include: series of clashes between the rival groups during the nationwide 60-hour hartal that ended yesterday evening, BNP chief Khaleda Zia's staying at a residence in the Dhaka Cantonment and the alleged linkage of the opposition agitation to the historic judgment in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

The unscheduled debate, participated by ten members in the Treasury and the Opposition benches, started minutes after the BNP lawmakers returned to the House at 6:30 pm, ending their 60-hour hartal since Monday morning. The BNP MPs refrained from attending the session on Monday and Tuesday. However, none of the three MPs of the Jamaat-e-Islami, another sponsor of the hartal, did not attend yesterday's sitting of the Sangsad.

The hartal, the longest of its kind since the Awami League came to power 29 months ago, was enforced to protest, among other issues, flogging of the November 7 public rally and the killings during the just-ended general strike across the country.

During the debate, members in both the sides shouted and hurled abuses at each other and jumped to their feet, frequently disrupting the proceedings.

Rising on a point of order, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof. AQM Badruddoza Choudhury opened the debate accusing the government of depriving his party of its constitutional rights for holding public gatherings.

He accused the ruling party "terrorists" of hurling crackers and the police of firing teargas shells at the Paltan Maidan where a BNP rally was in progress on Saturday.

Amid shouts by some AL lawmakers, Choudhury went on alleging that the AL activists also attacked processions marching towards the meeting venue around the Paltan Maidan on that day.

Describing the acts of terrorism that foiled the rally halfway, he further alleged that police lobbed teargas canisters targeting Khaleda Zia on the podium as well as on her car parked nearby. "It was an attempt on her life," he remarked.

Interrupted by shouts from across the bench, the deputy opposition leader blamed the top government leaders for issuing untrue statements on the floor of the House regarding the November 7 incidents.

"We called a two-day hartal on November 9 and 10 to protest the government action against our holding of public rally and it was later extended as three pro-hartal activists were killed," Badruddoza Choudhury explained.

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## Agri loan up to Tk 15,000 to be rescheduled

The government has decided to reschedule agricultural loans up to Tk 15,000 taken by the farmers since 1996-97 fiscal year, reports UNB.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria said this in Parliament yesterday, replying to Md Wazi Uddin Khan (AL-Pabna).

The minister said the instalments of loans, taken before fiscal 1997-98 and already fixed for payment during the last and current fiscal years, will also be rescheduled.

He said the government has decided to make a huge investment in the country's agriculture sector for ensuring successful implementation of the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

The government attached priority to this sector, Kibria said, adding that the amount of total loan for the farmers is unprecedented in the country.

In reply to another question, he said a total of Tk 8,007.40 crore was earned as import duty during the last fiscal year.

## JP leader killed in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent  
KHULNA, Nov 11: A leader of Phultala thana unit of Jatiya Party was hacked and then gunned down by some unidentified assailants this afternoon at Phultala Bazar today. Doctors at Khulna Medical College hospital declared him dead when he was taken there.

The murder of Md Saleh Ahmed, who was a former leader of the bazar committee sparked off tension in the area and a mob went on rampage. Eye witnesses and police said the mob put up barricades on roads, disrupting transmovement on Khulna-Jessore highway till 4 pm. They damaged several cars and shops.

Police fired teargas shells and blank shots to bring the See Page 12 Col 7

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## NCBs' loan to Shinepukur raises questions

Star Report

Three Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) are taking a Tk 70 crore consortium loan exposure on Shinepukur Holdings Ltd, which many think is too big a risk being taken without adequate analysis and safeguards.

The role of the lead bank for the loan, Sornali Bank (SB), has become even more controversial for deviation from norms it permitted to push the project through.

SB has already disbursed Tk 35 crore loans to Shinepukur, a sister concern of Beximco Group which has colossal loan liabilities with SB amounting to Tk 158 crore. Some of its loans have been rescheduled many times and on extraordinary terms.

Janata Bank (JB) and Rupali Bank (RB), the other members of the consortium, have also approved the loan but are yet to disburse the money.

RB sources said they are waiting for a 'joint assessment'

of the project. But this becomes a mockery as the loans have already been approved by all and already disbursed in one case.

JB approved the loan although many of its own conditions to clear the project remained unmet. Both JB and RB have not been able to accurately evaluate the project costs and viability. But they acted on the basis of SB's evaluation, which many think is not fully correct.

The loan has also created controversy because of its nature -- part of it will be used for purchase of land. Land purchase is neither an industrial activity nor a trade for which banks seldom, if ever, provide finance.

Experts say when the government's policy is to rehabilitate the flood-affected industries, "such wasteful" loans should not be allowed.

The story of Shinepukur's loan goes back to the middle of this year. It proposed to buy land and develop two townships, Sun City at Savar and

Gulshan Lake Town at Badda. The company said it had purchased 4.3 acres of land at Badda and 67.86 acres at Savar investing approximately, as it claimed, Tk 44 cr.

Shinepukur said it would purchase additional 10 acres of land at Badda and 60.14 acres at Savar, for which it had made additional initial payments.

To get the money, Shinepukur in July this year planned to raise 17 million dollars from the international finance market under an 'unconditional guarantee' from ANZ Investment Bank in London.

The kind of 'unconditional guarantee' by SB had surprised financial experts who termed it 'highly unusual', specially in favour of a company which is facing charges of manipulation in the share market and whose sister concerns borrowed tens of crores of taka under ficti-

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## Find other means than hartal

Business blasts 'indifferent' political parties

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of business, in a statement illustrating their frustration and anger, Tuesday lashed out at political parties for their 'indifference' to the cause of the economy and 'discriminate use of hartal' hurting the commonman.

Five of them, representing top chambers and exporters' groups, issued the statement to denounce the political parties for 'ignoring' their 'appeals during the last several years' to find alternative mode of

protest.

"Trade and industry regrets that its repeated appeals during the last several years to the political parties to make an objective review, if hartal serves any purpose, do not appear to have been given due consideration," their joint statement said.

"The trade and industry is deeply aggrieved at the indifference of political parties to such appeals and indiscriminate use of hartal to express their

grievances ignoring how hartal affects the economy and hurts the poorer sections of the people, small traders, rural industries and export trade.

"Hartal programmes, which ignore such aspects of economic life of the people, cannot be termed to have the support of the people, particularly when nearly all sections of the people have been badly affected by the recent floods.

Frustrated though, they re- See Page 12 Col 8

## HC receives Bangabandhu Murder Case judgement

The records of the Bangabandhu Murder Case along with the judgement reached the High Court yesterday, reports UNB.

The Additional Registrar of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court received the reference records at 1 pm. The records were being compared with the index of the contents of the records covered with a red cloth.

Kazi Golam Rasul, Judge of the Dhaka District and Ses- See Page 12 Col 2

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The Daily Star will organise a public dialogue on "26 Years of Our Constitution and Bangladesh Today" on Saturday, 14th November '98 between 3-6 pm at the British Council Auditorium. The main speakers will be Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed, Barrister Amirul Islam and Suranjit Sen Gupta MP.

The discussion will focus on our present day situation compared to the fundamental rights, basic freedoms and social and economic commitment as enshrined in our Constitution.

All interested persons are invited to attend

## Occidental awaits PSC renewal

By Sharier Khan

The government may extend US company Occidental's PSC for blocks 13 and 14 after "successful negotiations" over a Tk 600 crore compensation claim by the Directorate of Environment, sources said.

All other disputable and

the claim was highly inflated", they claimed.

The environment minister, on the other hand, said that Occidental's find in Bibiana was supposedly very big and therefore the US company could compensate from the Bibiana

## Deal on damage claims

non-disputable issues including various claims relating to the Magurchhara blow-out have been settled with the US company.

Sources said Petrobangla and Energy Ministry have "cleared" Occidental's file regarding extension of its PSC following "detailed negotiations with and clarifications from Occidental". The file was expected to be cleared by the prime minister three weeks ago, the sources said.

But as the extension is being delayed, Occidental's high officials from USA are now in the city for talks on the environmental claims of the government.

In a meeting with Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury Tuesday, Occidental officials agreed to pay for the environmental damages.

Meanwhile, Occidental's work in these blocks are suffering heavily because of the delay in extension of the PSC.

The draft of the extended PSC says that when approved, it would be effective retrospectively from January 11, 1998. Like the original PSC, the extension would be for three years.

"Therefore Occidental has already lost valuable time in progressing its work there," said a source.

Occidental's PSC for these two blocks expired in January 11 last because of the company's failure to fulfill the "minimum See Page 12 Col 4

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