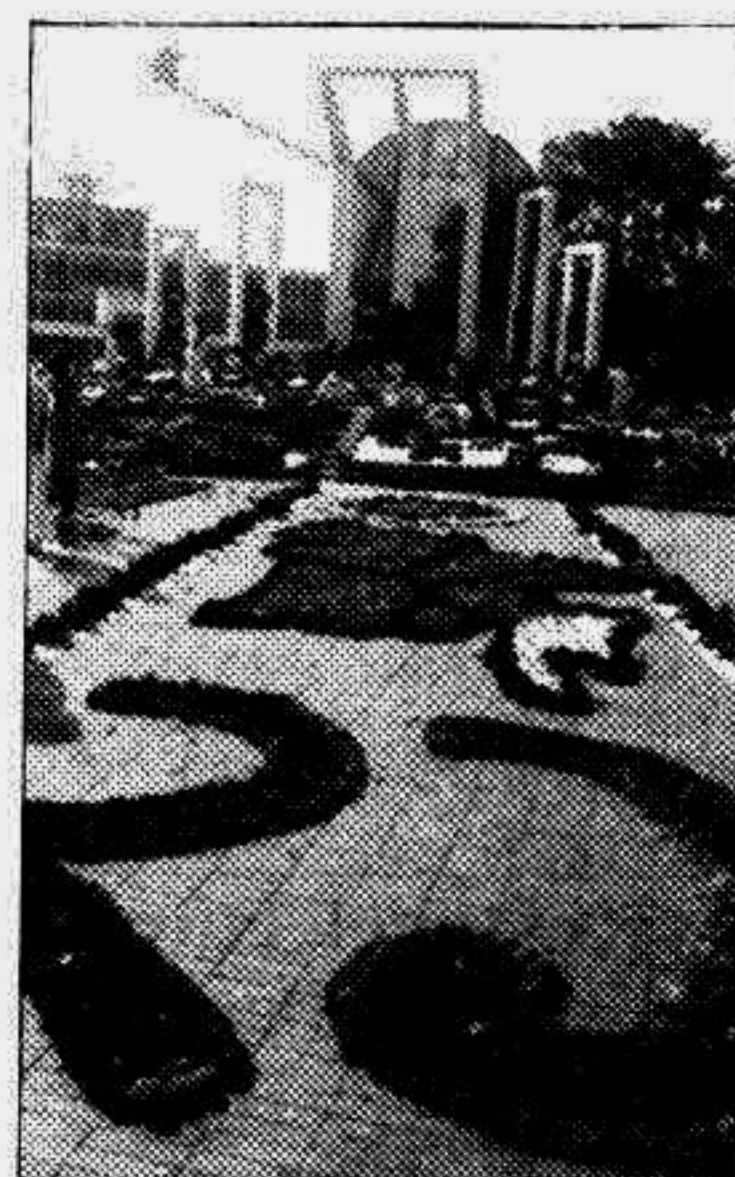




The Daily Star



Ekushey fair goes ahead

By DU Correspondent

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair, which was halted on Tuesday due to the countrywide hartal, commenced on time yesterday under adequate police surveillance.

A huge contingent of police was deployed at the main entrance and some points inside the Bangla Academy to avert any untoward incident.

The Academy authorities decided to keep the fair open during hartal hours after a visit by state minister for sports, youth and cultural affairs Obaidul Quader at Bangla Academy on Tuesday.

Most stall owners opened their stalls yesterday afternoon after the authorities assured them of a peaceful atmosphere.

A substantial number of book-lovers visited the fair yesterday.

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Larma may go to Calcutta for medical checkup

By Special Correspondent

Parbatyia Chattagran Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) supreme JB Larma, who had a long meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday in an effort to iron out differences on implementation of the CHT peace treaty, held talks with officials yesterday.

Sources said the PCJSS leader who is suffering from different ailments is likely to visit Calcutta for medical checkup. If he decides to go there he may leave Dhaka on Friday or Saturday, the sources said.

Larma held discussion with the official at a guest house of Chittagong Port Trust yesterday. He was unable to return to Khagrachhari due to the hartal.

The sources said his talks with the Prime Minister is likely to resolve a number of issues that had so far impeded the implementation of the treaty. Larma was nominated interim Chairman of the CHT Regional Council in October last.

Municipal polls
EC prohibits issuance of new VGF card

The Election Commission yesterday prohibited issuance of new VGF cards or fresh relief work by the disaster management and relief ministry in the municipalities until completion of municipal polls, reports UNB.

However, the relief programme taken up earlier will continue as usual and any emergency relief can be distributed through concerned DC after obtaining permission from the EC, said a press release in the city yesterday.

The non-party election to 140 pourasavas is scheduled for February 23-25.

Inside Today

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Alternatives

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Prayer Timings

February 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:25	5:29
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:10	4:20
Maghrib	5:55	5:58
Esha	7:10	7:20

Source: Islamic Foundation

Hartal claims three more lives, hurts another 150

Star Report



Tit for tat

An Awami League activist (top) and a BNP man (above) are being rushed to hospital after being beaten up by rivals at Jatrabari in the city during hartal yesterday.

— Star photos by Anisur Rahman

At least three people were killed and over 150 hurt in violence on the second day of the opposition-sponsored hartal in different parts of the country yesterday which continued to disrupt normal life. Yesterday's death toll to four.

One person succumbed to bomb injuries Dhaka, one died in Feni and a third was killed in Khulna city after pro- and anti-hartal activists fought with homemade bombs and guns.

Mamun, 24, sustained fatal injuries at Kabi Nazrul Islam College premises at 8:30 p.m. last night when he was allegedly preparing bombs. Three people were arrested in this connection, police said adding they recovered huge quantity of explosive materials from the spot.

Rivals shot Elias Hossain Elin, 22, a student of Feni College and vice president of district Chhatra League, dead on Trunk Road in the town during hartal hours yesterday. Quoting police and witnesses, news agencies said Elin along with a friend came under gunfire from rivals while walking down the road. The bullet hit him on the chest. Doctors declared Elin dead when brought to Cosmopolitan Hospital in Feni.

Sanjib Kumar, a Jubo League activist, was killed in a bomb attack on an anti-hartal rally, organised by the Awami League at Shromoni crossing in Khulna city yesterday evening. He died on way to Khulna General Hospital. Five others were injured in the same incident.

Over 50 people including a BNP MP Dewan Md Salahuddin were injured in a clash between pro- and anti-hartal activists in Savar. The MP was admitted to a local clinic, police said.

The city

In Dhaka city, 15 people were injured, 10 of them admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested 111 people on charges of picketing and violence. The city, which remained relatively quiet, had some trouble at Jatrabari, North-South Road, Paltan and Mauchak. A

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D-8 summit Mar 1-2 5 leaders confirm participation

By M Anwarul Haq

Bangladesh has started taking extensive preparations for hosting the summit of the Developing Eight or the 'D-8', single biggest gathering of international leaders in the capital on March 1-2.

A high-level national preparatory committee has been set up to organise the summit. Headed by foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad, the committee includes the finance minister SAMS Kibria, commerce and industries minister Tofail Ahmed, home minister Rafiqul Islam, state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, state minister for information Prof Abu Sayeed and state minister for youth, sports and cultural affairs Obaidul Kader.

The foreign ministry officials told The Daily Star that five leaders have so far confirmed their participation at the summit. They are President B.J. Habibie of Indonesia, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia, President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey, President Mohammad Khatami of Iran and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is also expected to attend the summit.

Nigeria, which is going for general elections on February 25, is expected to be represented by a high-ranking leader.

The leaders are scheduled to

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'My son is a victim of power struggle'

By Staff Correspondent

On the last day of his life on Monday, Sajal left home at around 9am. He had told his two sisters and mother that he was going out with friends. After appearing in the recently held BA exams, Sajal in fact had little else to do other than waiting for the results. He had told his cousins that he was expecting a second class in BA.

Sajal's father, Shahidur Rahman Chowdhury, a lawyer practising in Sylhet, occasionally visits his family in Dhaka where he owns a house.

Chowdhury, BNP Secretary of Dobagh Union under Baniabazar thana of Sylhet district, told The Daily Star yesterday that he did not know that his only son was involved in politics.

"Had I known I would have told him, most selfishly, not to indulge in politics. My son is a victim of power struggle being waged both by BNP and the Awami League. If this trend is not stopped, there will be many more fathers like me," a shocked Chowdhury said. After



Sajal

hearing the news, Chowdhury took the last flight from Sylhet and arrived in his residence at around 10 pm Monday.

"There is no law in the world that sponsors such a killing. My son was above all a citizen of this country and the government should seek justice for the brutal killing of a citizen even

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US energy official warns Delay in decisions may ruin Dhaka's chances

By Staff Correspondent

A US Department of Energy official said yesterday that Bangladesh might miss the opportunity to draw foreign investment in the energy sector if it continued to defer urgent decisions.

Addressing a group of the country's top businessmen, Calvin Humphrey said that Bangladesh should consider co-operating with India and Nepal in the energy sector as there is tremendous potential in it multilateral benefit.

At a discussion with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FCCI) in the city yesterday, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs, US Department of Energy Calvin Humphrey noted that the government should streamline this decision making process and ensure transparency.

The programme hosted by FCCI chief Abdul Awal Mintoo was also attended among others by US Ambassador John C. Holzman, and Additional Secretary of the Energy Ministry Syed Tanvir Hossain.

Humphrey noted, "It is not our role here to pick a strategy

or impose a strategy, but rather to offer the benefit of our experience to help Bangladesh better assess the risks and rewards of various development options. But the decision on which strategy is best for Bangladesh lies with the people of Bangladesh; only they can decide what is their best interest."

"It is clear that Bangladesh's policy makers are committed to sober and calculated decisions

US energy team to sign three accords today

The mission of a 14-member US energy delegation ends today with the signing of three agreements on extended American cooperation in Bangladesh's gas and power sectors, reports UNB.

Energy Secretary Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury will initial the agreements on behalf of Bangladesh government with concerned US companies.

Acting Assistant Secretary

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that will advance Bangladesh's best interests," he added, "but this does not mean deferring decision making indefinitely."

"Time is money. Some development options are windows of opportunity that may close if they are not seized. I am hoping that Bangladesh will thoroughly review the merits of various options, and then move forward and decide on a strategy."

"I hope our energy partnership will help provide the information Bangladesh needs to build a consensus for the option that best suits the citizens of Bangladesh. But not to act would be the worst choice of all," Humphrey said.

He maintained that Bangladesh's energy potentials were tremendous but it would require enormous amounts of capital investment and technology from the private sector.

"But investment will only come with the right mix of legal, policy and regulatory frameworks. Developing recommendations for improved practices in these areas will undoubtedly be a focal point."

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Biman's troubled DC-10-30 comes home today

By Special Correspondent

A Bangladesh Biman DC-10-30 aircraft, which developed mechanical trouble at Brussels on February 7 on its way to Dhaka from New York with more than 200 passengers, is finally coming home today.

"Yes, it is returning at 11-30 a.m. today," Anwar Hossain Khan, Biman's corporate affairs general manager, told the Star last night.

The aircraft, which had been overhauled very recently, had landed at Brussels with all its batteries leaking. Biman engineers found flakes of snow covering the escaping water while it was in high altitude.

Replacement batteries were flown from Dhaka. But trouble

with customs at Heathrow airport in London delayed sending of the new batteries to Brussels.

Finally the aircraft was repaired and headed home on Monday. But on Tuesday it landed at Bombay airport instead of Delhi which was under dog.

As the Biman management prepared a relief aircraft with engineers and spares scheduled to fly at 10 pm last night, it received a message at 8-45 p.m.

that the aircraft was being fixed and would take off at 9-30 am (BST).

There had also been trouble with passengers who were taken to a hotel in Delhi.

In Dhaka, weary relatives of the passengers complained that Biman authorities had failed to inform them properly when the aircraft would return home.

Biman officials denied the allegation. They said they were planning to provide some kind of compensation to the passengers who had suffered so much during the troubled flight. But they would not disclose exactly what would be given to pay for their sufferings.

Politics takes the path of confrontation

By Nurul Kabir

The country's politics has taken the course of confrontation between the government and a conglomerate of the mainstream opposition parties, if the recent developments are any indication.

The opposition parties, currently agitating mainly for removal of the Chief Election Commissioner and reconstruction of the Election Commission, has been expressing its determination time and again to resist the ensuing municipal polls.

Whatever the case may be, the BNP-led alliance has, according to insiders, a long term scheme. Quoting the government of Sheikh Hasina through a 'mass movement' before the next general elections. They believe in the general notion that forcing a government to step down through agitation eventually gives political dividends to the opposition in the national polls that takes place after the detourment.

The opposition, therefore, would do almost everything to destabilise the government. And the symptoms are already there: the opposition now out to resist the ensuing municipal polls, is enforcing hartals all over the country including the divisional headquarters and the capital city, where there is no municipality. Besides, BNP Secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has already

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Fresh exchange of fire on Sripur border: Flag meet not held

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 10: The scheduled flag meeting between the BDR and BSF could not be held today due to exchange of fire on the Sripur border in Jaintapur thana.

Both the forces have deployed additional troops along the border, said an official.

When contacted, an official of BDR told The Daily Star tonight that Battalion Commander along with other officials had been in the bordering area at Jaintapur. The BSF members near the Sripur border opened fire at 12:20 pm and the BDR replied. The exchange of fire continued till 1:45 pm, said, adding that at least 150 rounds of blank shots were

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Of police, guns, bombs and phantoms

Hartal halts city for second day

By Shehab Ahmed and Reaz Ahmed

Playing hide and seek for more than an hour proved too much for police in the narrow alleyways of Gopibagh area yesterday afternoon. They were trying to catch the lawbreakers after pro- and anti-hartal activists chased each other, using broken bottles, homemade bombs and guns.

Police called in reinforcements. But catching the elusive 'enemy' still appeared to be a difficult task. As reinforcements arrived, policemen probed cautiously the alleyways, marching slowly and shouting before negotiating the twists and turns. They finally found an abandoned cracker at

KM Das Lane.

A policeman eventually hauled it from the street. Some one came up with water in a polythene bag, soaking the black taped box of chewing tobacco to defuse the explosive.

At this stage, two youths carrying a bag came under the probing hands of the policemen. The find was nothing but a video camera. They turned out to be professional videographers.

As these correspondents trailed the police, an officer came forward and demanded identity. It did not please him, especially when a foreign journalist was also around taking pictures.

"You know," the officer from Sutrapur thana told these correspondents without any explanation, "they (the phantoms) had been throwing bombs at police pickets."

Was it so? Panicked residents who were watching the whole episode said there had been a fight between the two groups — mostly drawn from rival neighbourhoods. Some of them had emptied iron-fenced cage of Coca-Cola rack outside a confectionery at Abhay Das Lane. The bottles later came handy as weapons.

Broken glasses littered the

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Vajpayee to travel to Pakistan, hold talks on Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will travel to Pakistan on February 20 aboard the maiden run of a cross-border bus service, press reports said today, according to AFP.

It will be the first visit to Pakistan by an Indian Prime Minister since Rajiv Gandhi in 1989.

Vajpayee told reporters accompanying him to the G15 summit in Jamaica he would be willing to discuss the sensitive issue of Kashmir during planned talks with his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in Lahore.

The visit will provide an opportunity to further official

level talks at the political level, he said.

The trip will come at the end of the three days of official Indo-Pakistan talks on Kashmir in New Delhi.

Vajpayee said he was also prepared to "probe" the issue of nuclear weapons — a subject that has so far only been discussed indirectly in separate talks with the United States.

Although final details have yet to be worked out, Vajpayee is expected to board the New Delhi-Lahore bus in Amritsar near the border and then carry on to Lahore.

Sharif may also come to the border to meet the bus. The two

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Opposition 'not aware' of killings in Feni, Khulna

By Staff correspondent

Opposition parties sponsoring the 60-hour hartal didn't know that a ruling party-backed Chhatra League worker was killed by pro-hartal activists in Feni town yesterday.

"We haven't heard of the Feni killing. If someone was murdered there, it was done by themselves (the ruling party-men)," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, MP said while briefing reporters about attacks on hartal workers across the country yesterday.

The briefing over, the murder of another pro-government activist of Jubo League during hartal hours was reported from Khulna.

Neither Bhuiyan nor any other leader of the four-party opposition alliance talked about neither the Feni killing nor the Khulna one while addressing the news briefing at Minto Road official residence of Khaleda Zia in the evening.

City BNP convenor Sadek Hossain Khoka, MP, Jatiya Party president Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Quamaruzzaman of Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ leader ARM Matin also spoke on the occasion.

They described and con-

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Only 12 working days likely in February

By Staff Correspondent

February is certainly poised to be a month of waste for all hard working people.

For all those engaged in business, trade, industry and for the teeming millions who depend on daily earnings, it may mean lost incomes, lost revenue, halted production and much hardship.

A look at the political and working calendar of February shows that it is likely to have only 12 working days.

Nearly a third of the month, i.e. nine days are closed to all work and business because of weekends on Fridays and Saturdays and one day of national holiday marking the immortal Ekushey February.

Add to it this the shutdowns due to the nation-wide hartals called by the Opposition parties and one has 16 off days out of the 28 in this month.

A two-day hartal on February 8 and 9 had already seen a day's extension. This has

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Khaleda threatens tougher action programme

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has again threatened to launch agitation programme to oust the government, reports UNB.

"We will give tougher action programme if the government continues its repressive measures," she said in a statement on the second day of the 60-hour countrywide hartal yesterday.

Begum Zia said people have become frustrated with the "corruption and politicisation of administration" by the Awami League government.

Referring to the enforcement of the Opposition in Parliament said the government has announced the municipal election schedule ignoring the opposition's four-point demand, including resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

She said Awami League is planning to capture the local government bodies by keeping

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Oil Tanker owners threaten strike starting February 15

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Oil Tanker Owners' Association (BOTOA) has threatened an indefinite strike starting from February 15, if their five points demands are not met within the specified period, a BOTOA press release said.

The demand includes: raising tanker fare, increasing lighterage rent, eradication of complications regarding issuing of 'load line certificate' and banning the import of new oil tankers.

"We submitted our demand to the Prime Minister and Chairman of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC), but no effective measures were taken by the concerned authorities," the statement said.

"We were given assurance by the State Minister for Shipping, but no step was taken even after three months," the statement added.

Usually the rent for oil tankers is raised every two years due to devaluation and other reasons following bilateral discussion between the government and representa-

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