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Transshipment plan prompts 30-hour hartal

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday called a 30-hour countrywide hartal from 6 am Monday protesting government's decision to examine the proposal for transshipment of Indian goods through Bangladesh's land routes.

The alliance components will also stage separate demonstrations and bring out torch processions on Sunday, and hold public meetings Tuesday afternoon when fresh programmes will be announced.

The programmes were taken at a hurriedly called meeting of

Monday morning to Tuesday noon

the Liaison Committee of the alliance, held at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament yesterday evening.

The Cabinet at a meeting on Wednesday approved in principle a proposal to examine transshipment of Indian goods by Bangladesh's transports using the country's land routes.

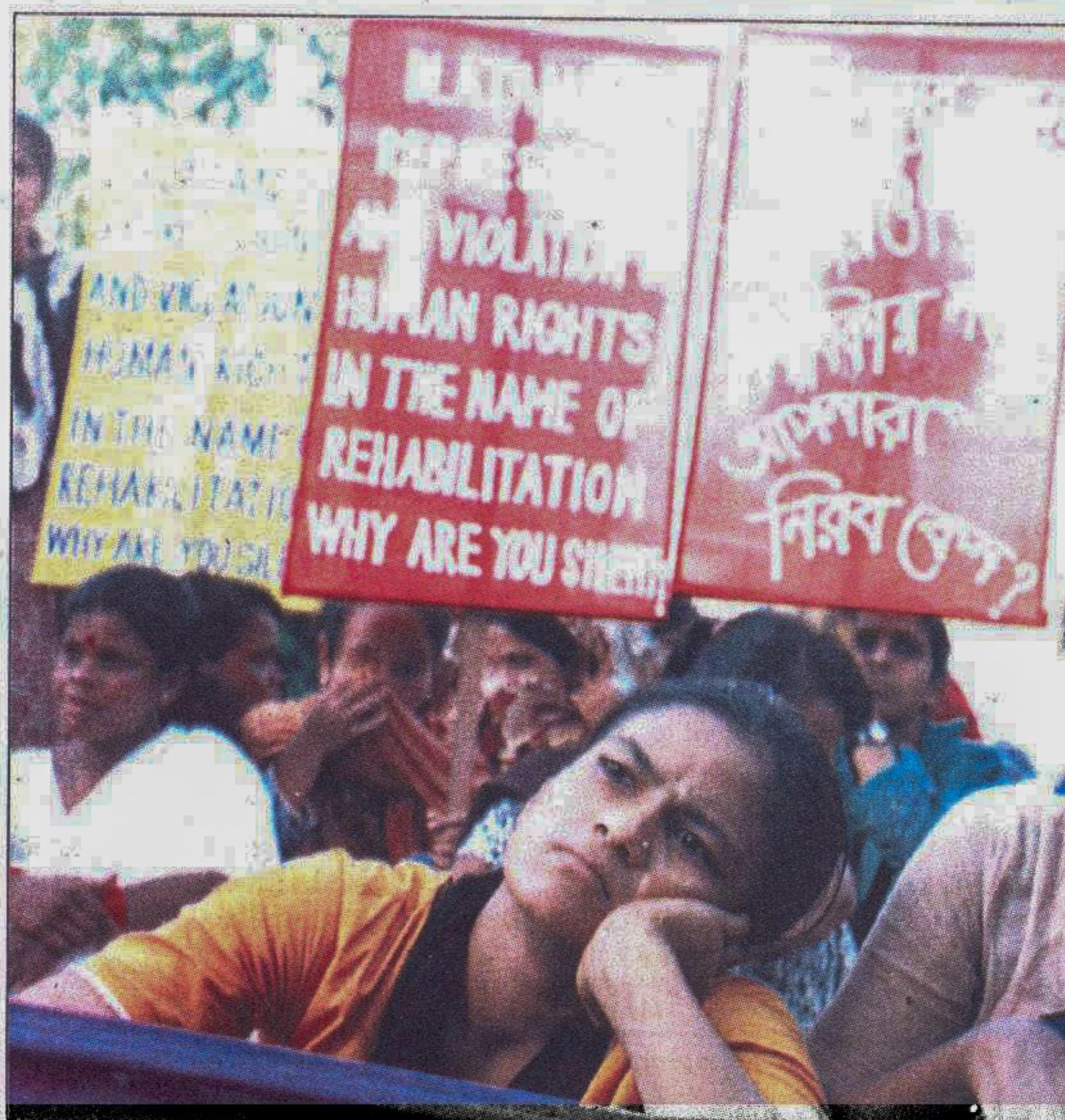
Briefing newsmen after the meeting, BNP leader Anwar Zahid said fresh programmes will be announced at the public meetings of alliance components on Tuesday. He said the Liaison Committee will sit before Tuesday to chalk out fresh agitation programmes.

Presided over by BNP Vice-chairman M Shamsul Islam MP, the meeting was attended by BNP leaders Anwar Zahid and Sadek Hossain, Khoka, Jatiya Party leaders Kazi Zafar

Ahmed and ABM Golam Mostafa, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, Abdul Kader Mollah and ATM Azharul Islam, and Islami Olyka Jote (IOJ) leaders Fazlul Haq Amini and ARM Abdul Matin.

Sources said the hour-long meeting that began at 7 pm also decided that tougher action programmes will be announced if the government does not withdraw its decision immediately.

A member of the liaison body told The Daily Star over phone last night that the al-



Destination unknown
A sex worker, one of those evicted from Tanbazar, stares blankly at her future as she joins others at a sit-in demonstration in front of the UNDP office in the city yesterday.

(Story on back page)

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Swap transit

Business wants exchange of benefits

Star Report

The business community yesterday generally welcomed the government decision to give transit to India saying that this would help the country develop its transport and infrastructure sector. But some people are sceptical and feel that this is a premature decision that would seal Bangladesh's prospect to explore the north-east Indian market.

However, most of them feel that Bangladesh should swap some benefit for the transit facility to India. They said zero access of selected Bangladeshi goods to Indian market should be the best thing to exchange.

"Transit is provided in SAPTA and also in the Joint Economic Commission agreement between India and Bangladesh," said a MCCI spokesman. "The successive JEC meetings also endorsed transit facility. From that point of view, there can not be any inconsistency in principle for the government to provide

transit facility."

In fact, MCCI found that this will yield benefit to the national economy and it carried out a study by an expert which showed that the country will gain from the facilities. The benefits will come in terms of employment generation in transport sector, port revenue, river dredging and road improvement.

"But what is required is to use it as a leverage for getting access to the 25 identified Bangladeshi products into the Indian market at zero tariff," said the spokesman.

The MCCI also feels that since this is a politically sensitive issue, the matter may be referred to relevant parliamentary sub-committee for political consensus. The experts as well as the trade and industrial bodies may be invited to give their views as about ways to protect national interest.

However, one industrial as-

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Khaleda terms transshipment anti-state act

"We'll rather give our lives than corridor to India"

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia called an "all-out resistance" against government's bid to give transit to India that she termed an anti-state act, reports UNB.

"The people won't accept this destructive decision. We'll give our lives, not corridor," she declared.

She made a call for national, patriotic and Islamic forces to join the resistance movement against transit.

"In the name of giving transit, the government virtually has taken the decision of giving corridor to India," the BNP chief said in a statement last night.

She said national independence earned at the cost of bloods of 30 million martyrs cannot be sacrificed to "expansionist" India.

"This decision of the Awami League government runs counter to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bangladesh."

The opposition leader alleged after assuming power, the

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Anachronistic academies

A madrassah boy gets 69% more than a secondary student

By Gobinda Bar

The government spent Tk 980 for a secondary school student and Tk 1652 for a madrasah student in the last financial year.

The expenditure for a madrasah student was 69 per cent higher than that for a secondary school student, according to an estimate made by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

Government expenditure for a madrasah student shot up by over 68 per cent between 1994-95 and 1998-99 financial years. The expenditure for a secondary school student increased by 42 per cent over the period, the estimate said.

In 1994-95, government spent Tk 980 for a madrasah student, which rose to Tk 1652 in 1998-99.

On the contrary, government spent Tk 629 for a secondary school student in 1994-95, which rose to Tk 980 in 1998-99.

The estimate covers non-government high schools, junior high schools, government high schools, non-government Dakhil, Alim, Faizil and Kamal madrassahs and government Kamal madrassahs.

In fiscal 1998-99, the government spent Tk 623.59 crore for 63,63,868 students of 13,019 schools, Tk 329.01 crore in 1995-96, Tk 204.48 crore in 1995-96, Tk 206.28 crore in 1996-97, Tk 268.58 crore in 1997-98 and Tk 329.01 crore in 1998-99, the estimate said.

On the other hand, government expenditure for madrassahs was Tk 180.13 crore in 1994-95, Tk 204.48 crore in 1995-96, Tk 206.28 crore in 1996-97, Tk 268.58 crore in 1997-98 and Tk 329.01 crore in 1998-99.

Under the MPO, there were 5,605 madrassahs in 1994-95, which rose to 5,785 in 1995-96, 5,841 in 1996-97, Tk 5,972 in 1997-98 and Tk 6,087 in 1998-99.

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1997-98 and Tk 619.75 crore in 1998-99.

The number of secondary school students also rose from 51,15,461 in 1995 to 55,85,806 in 1996, 61,24,325 in 1997 and 69,15,280 in 1998. The number of schools also increased from 11,027 in 1994-95 to 11,370 in 1995-96, 11,380 in 1996-97, 12,309 in 1997-98 and 13,019 in 1998-99, the estimate said.

The total allocations for schools was Tk 352.73 crore in 1994-95, Tk 409.24 crore in 1995-96, Tk 409.74 crore in 1996-97, Tk 525.50 crore in 1997-98 and Tk 619.75 crore in 1998-99.

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