

What's on today....

**Discussion meeting:** A discussion meeting in memory of A H M Yunus Chowdhury will be held on the occasion of his first death anniversary. Prof Syeda Feroza Begum will preside over the meeting. Poet Shamsur Rahman, A Begum and Z M Obaiddullah Khan, Sadek Khan columnist Saadullah, and Prof Muzaffar Ahmed will speak on the occasion. Venue: Dhaka Club Swimming Pool area. Time: 6:30 pm.

**DCH workshop:** Dhaka Community Hospital (DCH) will hold a workshop on "Doctor-Patient Relationships". Venue: DCH auditorium, 190/1 Bara Moghbazar, Wireless Road. Time: 9:30 am - 5:00 pm.

..... and tomorrow

**Biennial Conference:** The 12th biennial conference of the Zoological Society of Bangladesh will be held. Chief guest: Begum Motia Chowdhury. Minister for Agriculture. Venue: Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) at DU campus. Time: 9:00 am.

**Seminar:** The College of General Practitioners of Bangladesh will hold a seminar on "Asthma". Venue: College premises at 215/A Outer Circular Road, Boro Moghbazar. Time: 9:00 am.

**WVA meeting:** The general meeting of Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) will be held. Venue: WVA auditorium at House No 20, Rd No 16 (New), 27/Old, Dhanmondi. Time: 10:00 am.

**Conference:** The 12th annual conference of the Bangladesh Society of Ultrasonography will be inaugurated. Chief guest: Lt General Mohammed Noor Uddin Khan PSC (Retd). Minister for Science and Technology. Venue: Hotel Sonargaon. Time: 10:30 am.

**Exhibition:** A 2-week solo exhibition of Allnoor will be inaugurated. Chief guest: Rafiqun Nabi. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. Time: 5:30 pm.

**Exhibition:** The first solo painting exhibition by Maya, an amateur artist will be inaugurated. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 4 pm.

Chief guest: Chairman of Prime Bank Limited Nader Khan will inaugurate the exhibition. Some 32 pieces of work in oil by the artist will be on display at the three-day exhibition.

Weather

Light rain likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers may occur at many places over Rajshahi division, at a few places over Sylhet division and at one or two places over Dhaka and Khulna divisions and the regions of Comilla in next 24 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, the Met Office predicted.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 28.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 11.0 degrees at Jessore and Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.46 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.39 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in Percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.8	15.8	57	63
Chittagong	27.0	14.0	78	71
Rajshahi	21.7	14.8	96	8
Khulna	27.3	13.6	84	2
Barisal	26.7	12.5	90	30
Sylhet	23.1	13.6	83	75
Cox's Bazar	28.2	15.0	67	76



General secretary of Mymensingh Press Club Moshraf Hossain handing over a cheque for Taka five thousand to Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam, Director General of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) to the medical fund for Rafiqul Islam Khandoker (Nasim), an official of the institute on January 30 last.

Bomb blast

From page 1  
from the room, which included some papers, curtain and parts of a broken TV.

Police picked up three persons - Motahar Howladar, Ripon and Rizvi - from the fifth floor of the building. They claimed that they were employees of the party and were working as peons and messengers.

One Nasir, who claimed himself to be a peon at the Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, said he was sleeping when the explosion took place. Another person, Latif, aged about 75, was detained by Motijheel police when he went to file a General Diary after the explosion. QC Mohsin said they were all charged under Sections 3 and 4 of the Explosives Act.

The body of Ismail was sent to DMCH morgue for autopsy, police said.

A large contingent of police kept the entire area guarded.

At 4.45 pm, a large BNP procession approached the office, chanting various anti-government slogans but baton-wielding policemen chased the processionists, beating many of them.

At 5:30 pm, several BNP MPs tried to enter the office but were not allowed.

Obituary

Prof A B M Abdus Sattar, former Principal of Barisal and Sylhet Medical Colleges, died of heart ailment at Suhrawardy Hospital yesterday afternoon, reports BSS.

Sattar was admitted to hospital with heart ailment on January 6, family sources said.

He was 65, and is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

He was buried at the Mirpur Intellectuals Graveyard in the evening, the sources added.

Opposition

From page 1  
He hinted that there was no possibility of a hartal before the February 7 (Monday) programme. Fresh agitation programmes would be announced at the joint public meeting on that day.

However, the BNP leader said that there was possibility of a countrywide non-stop two-day hartal or railroad blockade programmes in the second week of this month.

Announcement of another combined procession by the opposition MPs in the second week of this month is also expected on Monday, he added.

The leader said top-notch opposition leaders, including Khaleida Zia, HM Ershad and Matur Rahman Nizami along with their aides held lengthy meeting at 29 Minto Road Tuesday night and unanimously decided to launch a militant movement against the new black law.

Jayalalitha

From page 1  
She heads the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Party, a regional party which has been part of several national coalition governments. Her decision to withdraw her support led to the collapse of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist-led coalition in April 1999.

She then aligned with the Congress Party, led by Sonia Gandhi, but Vajpayee's coalition was voted back to power.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Party, which currently heads the Tamil Nadu government, filed six bribery cases against her in 1996.

She has been acquitted in two of the cases and she is facing trial in another three cases. One of them relates to amassing wealth and property worth 666 million rupees (dhs 15.5 million).

No early solution in sight to city's low-gas pressure problem

Almost a year has already gone since the launching of the projects for resolving the low gas-pressure problem in the capital, but there is no headway due to various hurdles, reports UNB.

Titas, the gas supply company that operates in the capital, took up 7 projects early last year to facilitate smooth gas supply to the city-dwellers. Under the projects, Titas is replacing the thinner pipes with thicker-diameter ones.

The stipulated time for completing these projects is over, but bar one, all the projects are still in implementation process.

The deadline was December 15 last year.

The seven projects are: Hotel Sonargaon-New Model Degree College Project, Godnail-Fanchabati Project, Rokeya Sarani Project, Panthapath-Green Road Project, Loharpool Area Project, Science Laboratory-Hatirpool Project and Moghbazar Area Project.

Only the Hotel Sonargaon-New Model Degree College Project has been completed and the Rokeya Sarani Project will be completed in next few days.

The Titas officials mainly blamed the City Corporation for delaying permission for digging roads to install the pipes.

However, in many areas, it has been alleged that the contractors were obstructed by extortionists.

The city residents have been facing low-pressure of gas problem for a decade. The gas crisis deepens every year during the winter as the demand of gas increases heavily.

The main reason for the crisis is that the supplying authority did not change the supply pipelines while the domestic connections shot up 30 per cent during the period.

However, the Titas authorities blamed the city fathers for the crisis, and also related it with the high-rise buildings, commercial and industrial plants in the residential areas and of course the illegal connections.

"Planners did not think about high-rise buildings while planning installation of pipes two to three decades back," said a senior officer of the Planning Department of Titas.

The other reasons are inability of the thinner pipes to meet the excess demand, non-cleansing of the old pipes that are filled with dirt over the years and excess use during the winter season.

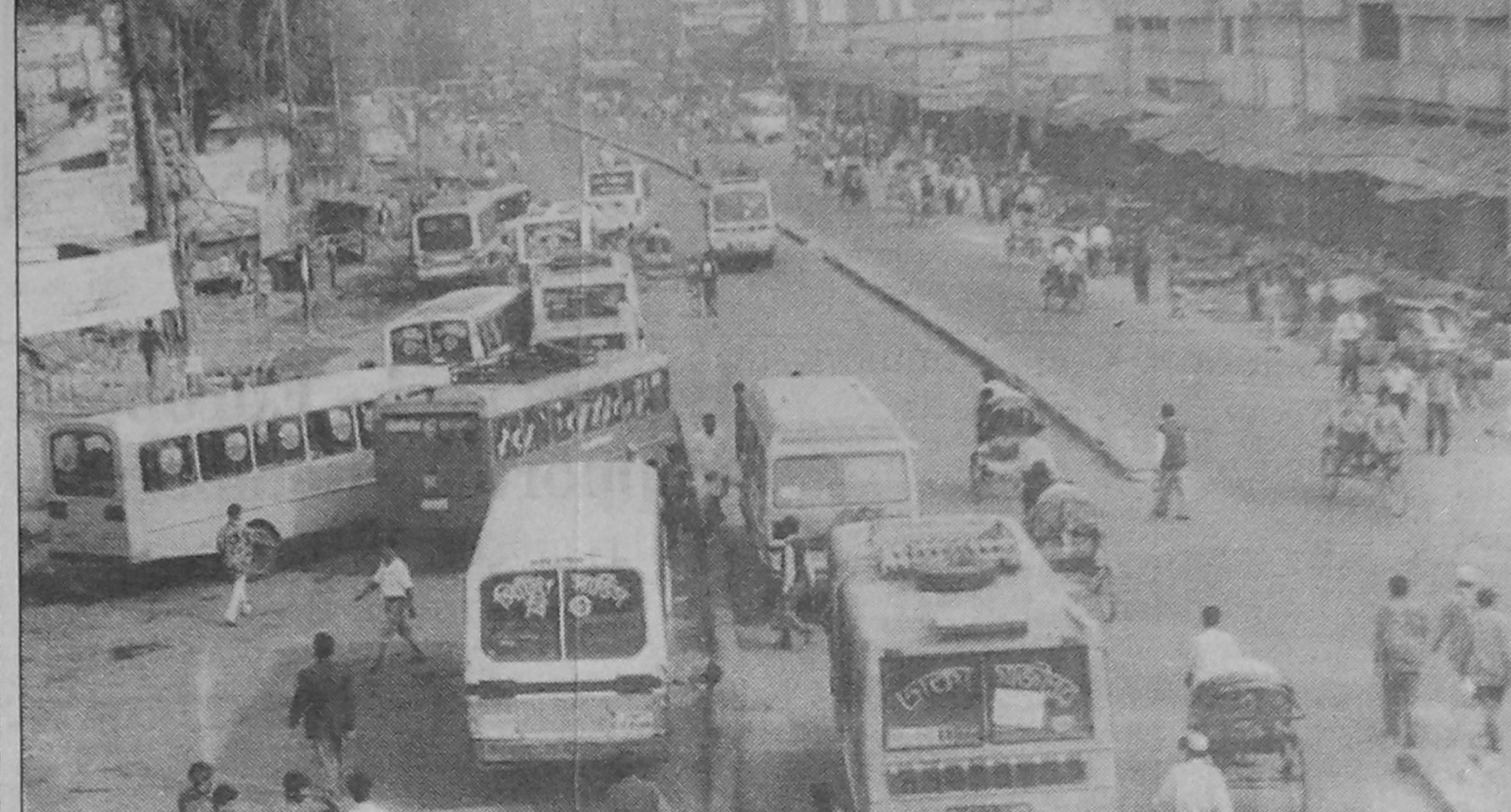
Demand of gas always shoots up during winter season because of the diversified domestic uses of gas. "There are many families who even dry up their cloths on gas fire," said the Titas official.

Compared to a demand of 2350 crore cubic feet, the normal supply of gas in the capital is only 1800 crore cubic feet.

"If these projects are completed, Titas will be able to supply more than the present demand," said the official.

He said if all the old pipes are not replaced soon, the problem would not be solved because of the thinner pipes in the lanes and by-lanes.

"Everyday, new people are constructing new multi-storied buildings thus bringing new inhabitants in the area adding to the pressures on Titas connections," he said.



Some buses, through short of passengers, plied on the streets yesterday during the first day of the 36-hour shutdown called by the four party alliance. This picture was taken from city's Gulistan area. — Star photo

BPC's clarification

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) in a clarification on a news headlined "BPC by passes bidding" published in The Daily Star on January 28, denied any scope of "underhand dealing by the high ups of BPC" in the diesel purchase procedure.

The clarification further said that, under a state to state deal, BPC was currently negotiating with ADNOC, UAE over the purchase of diesel and no deal was finalised and maintained that the price offer of ADNOC in this regard was found competitive.

"However, some terms and conditions proposed by ADNOC for refined petroleum products were found very unfavourable for BPC. To bridge up the differences of terms and conditions of ADNOC, negotiations are still going on between BPC & ADNOC regarding procurement of refined petroleum products," the clarification added.

"ADNOC sells its products on bi-lateral basis at Government Selling Price (GSP). It does not participate in international tenders now," it added.

BPC has been purchasing Murban Crude Oil from ADNOC under annual term sales contract at GSP since 1974.

In '98, BPC took initiative to procure 6 lakh metric tonnes of Murban Crude from ADNOC. But ADNOC refused to sign the annual term contract for that year. However, it continued to supply the crude on spot basis till April '99 when ADNOC informed BPC that it was unable to supply the crude further due to 10 per cent cut imposed by OPEC.

Bangladesh then tried to pursue ADNOC to continue the supply of Murban Crude. As a result, ADNOC agreed to supply 4 lakh tonnes of the crude for the period of July-December '99 on the condition that BPC would have to buy refined petroleum products from 2000.

BPC is continuing negotiations with ADNOC in order to relax some terms and conditions ever since.

'BNP, its allies out to create anarchy'

CHITTAGONG, Feb 2: Chittagong City Awami Jubo League convener Syed Mahmudul Huq and joint convener Chandan Dhar, Mashur Rahman and Shafluke Adnan today condemned city BNP leaders' move to involve Jubo League and Chhatra League activists in bomb explosion in BNP office at Nasim Bhaban on Tuesday, reports BSS.

In a statement today they said the explosion at BNP Nasim Bhaban office occurred when its activists were making bombs for using them during hartal.

BNP and its allies are out to create anarchy and frustrate the government efforts to implement massive development programmes, they said, adding that Jubo Dal activists were making bombs on the directives of BNP leaders.



A young man being taken into police yesterday. Police arrested people from the 4-party alliance procession at Bijoy Nagar in the afternoon, for no apparent reason, it was alleged by party activists. — Star photo



Two children sit on the steps of a closed shop at Bangabandhu Avenue during the hartal hours yesterday. The shops of the market remained closed. — Star photo

'Opposition parties encouraging terrorists'

Awami League leaders yesterday said the opposition political parties are encouraging terrorists, extortionists, women oppressors, thieves and dacoits by calling hartal to resist the Public Safety Bill, reports BSS.

BNP and its allies are opposing the bill at a time when lawmakers passed an effective law to check terrorism, extortion, snatching and dacoity and ensuring security of public life, they said at a rally at Paltan Maidan.

The rally was held to protest 36-hour hartal, called by the BNP-led opposition for creating terrorism and anarchy.

Organised by Dhaka City Awami League, the rally was

addressed, among others, by Awami League Acting President and Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Awami League President Member and Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, President Member and Industry Minister Tofail Ahmed, Organising Secretary and Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Agriculture and Cooperatives Secretary and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury, Publicity and Publications Secretary Abdul Mannan, Dhaka City Awami League General Secretary and State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Office Secretary Siddique Rouf Khan and Pankaj Deb Nath, Dhaka City, AL Vice-President Reazuddin

Ahmed presided over the rally.

Referring to the BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleida Zia's declaration at a business conference to call frequent hartals to create a deadlock situation and oust the elected government at any cost, the leaders said this proved that BNP had no confidence in the Constitution and parliamentary democracy.

In fact their (opposition's) aim is to protect the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and to go to power through backdoors, they said.

The AL leaders gave a clarion call to resist the conspiracies of the evil forces who are unleashing a reign of terror and anarchy.

Opposition image

From page 1  
Chittagong city office on Tuesday afternoon.

Termining the recently enacted Public Safety (Special Provisions) Act a repressive law, the BNP leader said the government had gone for the law to save itself from the public wrath for repression on the opposition. "The Awami League went for the Special Powers Act with the same intention, but that failed to protect it. In the same way, the PSA would not be able to keep it in power."

The BNP-led opposition called the hartal to protest enactment of the controversial PSA.

Referring to the government claim that the PSA would not be used for political gains, Bhuiyan said, "The party made similar promises while enacting the SPA in 1974. But some 40,000 opposition activists were arrested under the law until August 1975. Even the government of Sheikh Hasina has arrested 10,700 opposition activists in 1999 only."

Noting that "almost all sections of the society and the press have already criticised the law, Bhuiyan once again called upon the government to scrap the anti-people law. The only solution to the present crises lies in announcing fresh national polls and handing over power to a caretaker administration."

Giving an account of police atrocity on the opposition activists during hartal hours, the BNP leader said police swooped on processions across the country and arrested hundreds of opposition activists.

City BNP leader Sadek Hossain Khoka told newsmen that some 200 activists were arrested in the capital alone, adding he was yet to get a complete picture. He demanded immediate release of his activists.

Jatiya Party leader Mostafa Jamal Haider, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Kamruzzaman and Islamic Ulekyia Joke leader Masud Khan also spoke at the briefing. They said that none of their party activists were arrested during yesterday's hartal. All of them, however, condemned the government's bid to tarnish the image of the opposition by planting bombs inside the BNP offices.

Meanwhile, UNB adds: Bhuiyan said the government started new process of bombing party offices to foil the current

member panel to review the constitution was taken at a cabinet meeting.

The commission, likely to be headed by former Chief Justice of India M N Venkatch, will examine in the light of the last 50 years as to how best the constitution can respond to the changing needs of an efficient, smooth and effective system of governance, and socio-economic development of modern India within the framework of parliamentary democracy," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan.

The cabinet decision comes in the backdrop of the opposition led by Congress charge that the "hidden agenda" of the BJP is to "safronise" the constitution.

Last week, President Narayanan and Vajpayee had sharply differed on the reviewing of the constitution.

Cautioning against changing the basic character of the constitution, Narayanan had said, "We have to consider whether it is the Constitution that has failed or whether it is we who have failed the constitution."

Vajpayee, on the other hand, defended the government move saying, "even the mightiest forts need repair."

The ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance does not have two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha needed to approve constitution amendments.

Mahajan said the commission would talk to political parties before submitting its recommendations. The recommendations will be tabled in parliament for through debate, he added.

All educational institutions remained closed and business activities came to a halt.

All modes of transports except a small number of few rickshaws kept off the roads.

Leaders and activists of BNP, JP and Jamaat brought out separate processions in different areas of the city and held rallies to make the hartal success.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent reports: The first day of the 36-hour hartal passed off peacefully in the district. Activists of both the ruling and the opposition parties remained inactive during the hartal. Vehicular movement to and from Narayanganj remained suspended. But ready-made garment (RMG) factories and Adomjee Lute Mills operated.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent adds: Six persons were injured in a clash between police and pro-hartal activists at Kedon Sardar crossing in the town at about 8 am.

The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh  
Headquarters: Ramna, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh  
Mechanical Engineering Division

Sixth Annual Paper Meet (APM) and International Conference on Mechanical Engineering in the 21st Century

Date: 17-19 February, 2000 (Shifted from 27-29 January, 2000)  
Registration: 16 February, 2000, 10 AM-8:30 PM at IEB HQs  
Venue: IEB Headquarters, Ramna, Dhaka

Registration Fee: Int'l Authors & Delegates- US \$ 100, Bangladeshi Delegates- Tk. 1000, Accompanying spouse (Int'l Delegates)-US \$ 50.

An exhibition will be arranged concurrently with the APM and International conference. For stall booking please contact the persons mentioned below.

On behalf of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh and Mechanical Engineering Division of IEB, I am pleased to invite engineers, technologists, academics, researchers and interested professionals from home and abroad to participate in the SIXTH APM AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. The engineering institutions and organisations are also requested to send their strong delegations to the conference.

Engr. A.N.H. Akhtar Hossain  
Honorary General Secretary

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