

The Daily Star

on Friday

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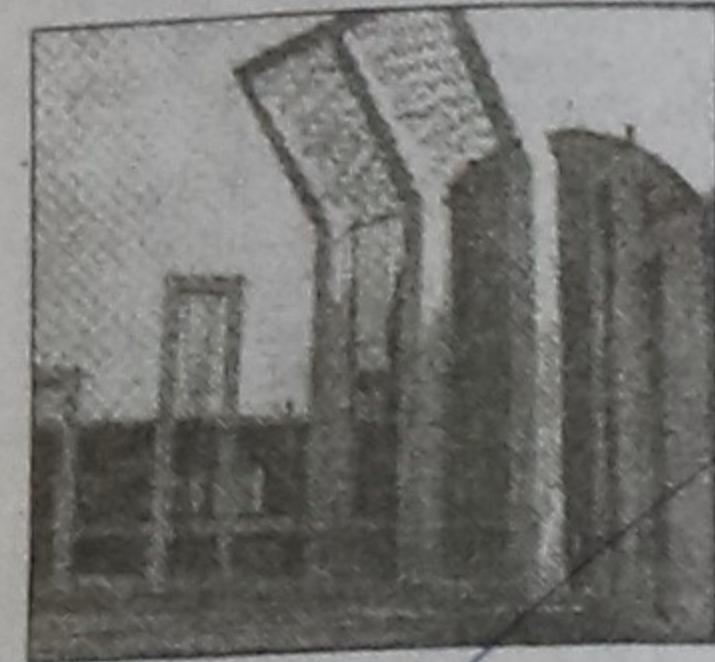
DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2000

3rd Millennium

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4 more dramas at Shaheed Minar today

By DU Correspondent

A large number of city dwellers thronged the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday evening where theatre groups from the city and across the country were staging street dramas highlighting the spirit of the Language Movement of 1952.

Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation organised the week-long Street Drama Festival at the Shaheed Minar in observance of the Amar Ekushey February.

Three dramas were staged on the third day yesterday. Malancha of Bhola district staged one drama *Chanda Mta* while Ganachaya and Kheyali of the capital performed *Kashai Khan* and *Kadamtar Army Camp*, respectively.

Four more dramas will be staged today. The dramas will be performed by Uddi and Dhaka Nattam of Dhaka and Samikaran and Chittagong of Chittagong district.

Meanwhile, the owners of bookstalls at the Bangla Academy were seen working round the clock to complete their stalls before the month-long traditional fair beginning on Sunday.

The decoration drive by the Academy authorities was also going on to hold the fair in colourful and festive manner.

Notice

Due to unavoidable reasons, we have been forced to truncate this issue of The Daily Star on Friday to 16 pages. We regret the inconvenience this might cause to our valued readers.

With the regular Weekend Magazine, the price of today's issue will be Tk 9.00.

—Management

Prayer Timings

February 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:45	6:15
Juma	12:15	1:20
Ajr	4:15	4:30
Magrib	5:55	5:58
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

EC proposes zero-tariff access for LDCs

Hasina seeks continued preferential facilities in EU markets

BRUSSELS, Feb 3: European Commission President Romano Prodi said the EC had put forward a proposal for unilateral opening of EU markets to LDC products granting them zero-tariff access that the least-developed countries are earnestly seeking, reports UNB.

"I am confident that the role of the Commission will be favourable to the least-developed countries, trade," he told journalists after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the EC headquarters here today.

Prodi billed the relationship of the European Commission with Bangladesh as very beautiful and deep. "Our meeting is the deep examination of all the relationships with Bangladesh as Dhaka enjoys best of relations with the EU.

"We have attached great importance to our relations with EU which is our largest export destination and biggest development partner in terms of total assistance that we receive from EU member states and the EU itself as an entity."

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh would appreciate cooperation, assistance and understanding that it has always been receiving from the EU. "Indeed, the EU can and is making invaluable contribution to our quest for economic development.

She said the present government was relying more on trade as an engine of growth and had succeeded in increasing exports very significantly during last few years.

The GSP and other preferential market-access facilities

provided to our products by EU have largely contributed to this success," Hasina said and thanked the EC for extending support during the last devastating floods.

Replying to a question about child labour the EC president said his Commission was giving protection to the children and trying to ensure a better living for the children working in different places.

About this issue, the Bangladeshi Prime Minister said her government had totally eliminated child labour from the garment factories. "We have stopped child labour and taken pragmatic steps for ensuring a better life for the children. Now the children, who were working in garment factories, are going to school."

Briefing the newsmen about the outcome of the meeting Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad said all issues between Bangladesh and the European Union were discussed in the meeting, including trade and aid from the EU nations.

The EC leader appreciated Bangladesh for the liberalisation of policy by the Sheikh Hasina government.

Dr Samad said Prodi observed that Bangladesh was following the right track taking correct steps and predicted that the country would soon reach high growth-rate position.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and Foreign secretary C M Shahi Sami were present in the meeting.

President has no time for Golam Azam

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam did not get an appointment to meet President Shahabuddin Ahmed, reports UNB.

The Jamaat chief sought an appointment to request the President not to assent to the Public Safety Bill 2000.

The President did not give time to Golam Azam. By doing so he (President) has demeaned the prestige of his office ... The

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Ports, banks to be open on Saturdays

Fridays as well if needed

By Rafiq Hasan

The government has decided to keep port, customs, banks and some export related offices open on Saturdays for facilitating the clearance of export-import goods, sources at the NBR said.

However, these offices would remain open even on Fridays if there was day-long nationwide hartal (general strike) in the week, they said.

According to the decision, all ports, customs and export department of government banks would remain open today and tomorrow due to the 36-hour opposition-called hartal that ended at 6 pm yesterday, said one source at the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The decision was taken on January 2 during a meeting with the leaders of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) which was presided over by Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr S A Samad at the Prime Minister's Office, according to sources. Representatives from the ministry of finance, commerce, Chittagong Port Authority and other export related offices were also present at the meeting.

Following the meeting, the finance ministry issued an order to keep port and customs offices open during holidays for two days."

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The price of the 56-page Daily Star anniversary issue, inclusive of the normal 16-page spread-out, remains unchanged at Tk 6.00.

We Move Tonight

The offices of The Daily Star are moving to its new premises at Karwan Bazar tonight (Friday). Please direct all your mails to the address given below and contact us on the following telephone numbers from Saturday morning:

The Daily Star
19 Karwan Bazar
(2nd & 3rd floors)
Dhaka-1215

Phones: 8124944, 8124955 & 8124966

BRTA in testing trouble

New machines too sophisticated for Bangladesh standard?

By Morshed Ali Khan

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials are now puzzled with the installation of modern vehicle fitness testing units as the machines found more than 80 per cent of the vehicles tested fit to ply.

They are now lingering the process of starting vehicle testing with the computerised machines that cost Tk 44 crore under the Vehicle Inspection Centre Project. The funds have been provided by the Asian Development Bank.

The officials said they are now thinking of working out a standard for Bangladesh by modifying the original programme of the computers, imported from the Netherlands.

A BRTA official said setting

up of the centres was completed in June last year but they were not yet satisfied with the results. He said whenever the same vehicle is passed through the test for the second time, the readings are different from that of the first test.

"The company which provided us with the machines has to satisfy our operators first as regards their operation," he said.

BRTA officials said they tested 35 vehicles with the machines and only six passed the tests. Fitness certificates are now issued after a quick manual inspection of vehicles. It is alleged that fitness certificates

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INSIDE TODAY

SOUTH ASIA

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Traumatic recent events in Sri Lanka unfold a new crisis. Praful Bidwai explains in *A Turning Point* is Indian Prime Minister tackling terrorism the way he wants to, wonders M Abdul Hafiz in *A Losing Battle*?

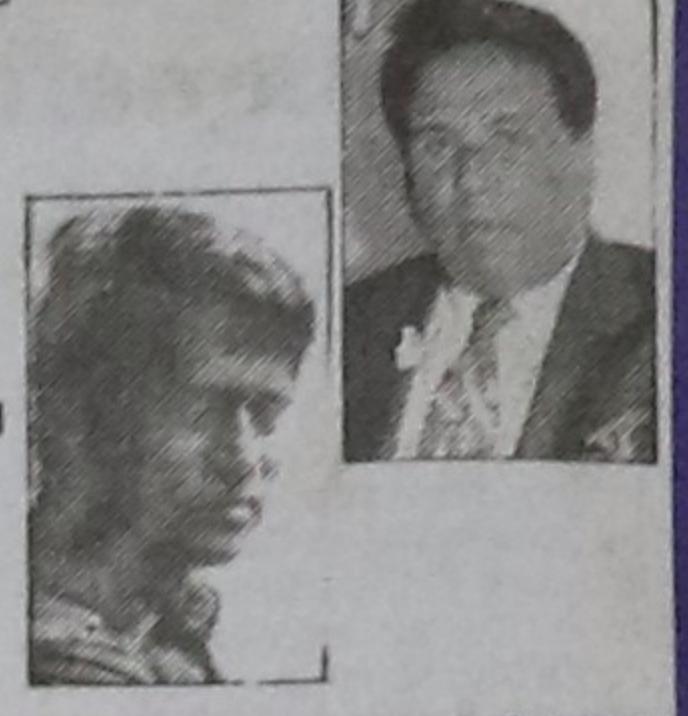
COMMENTS

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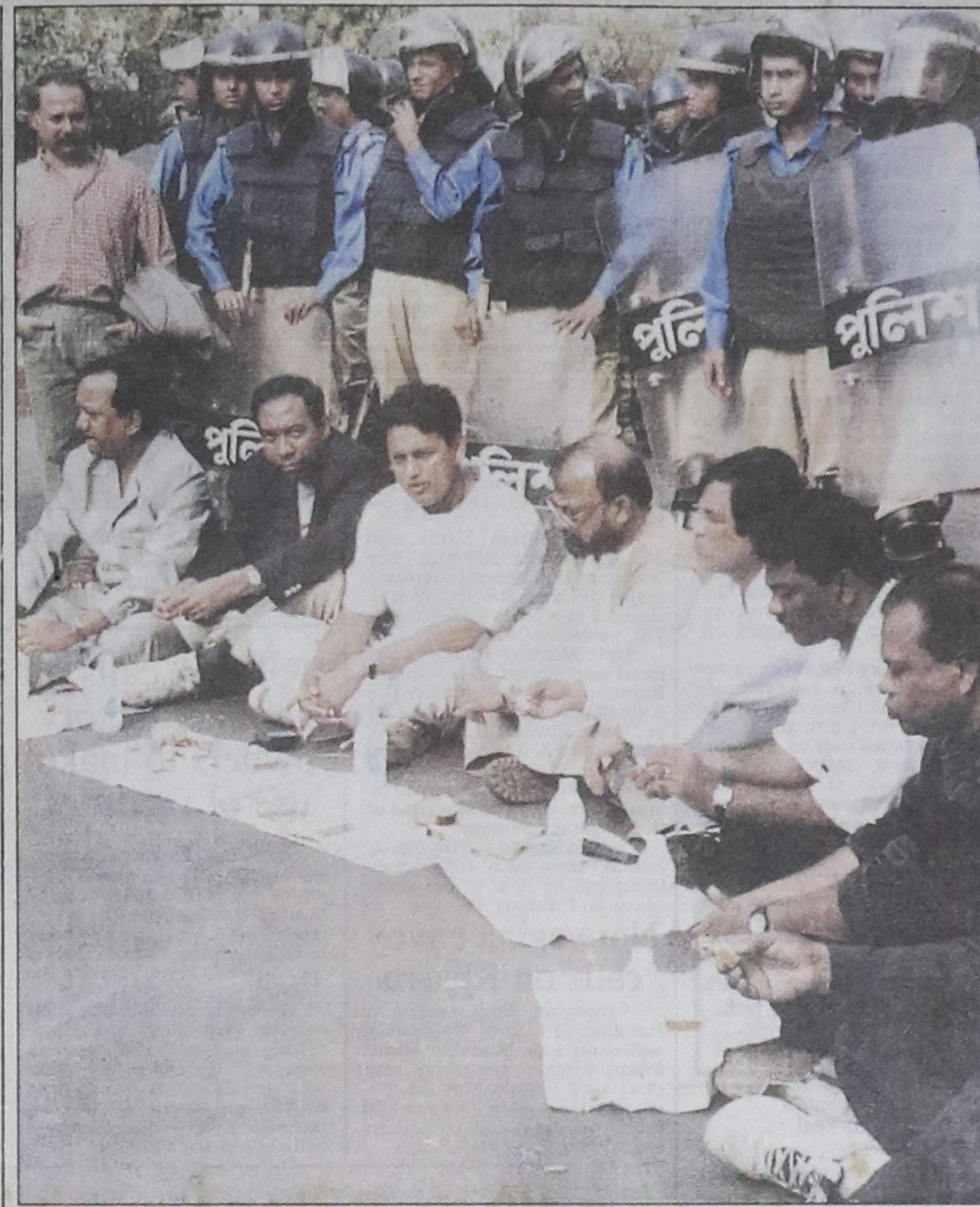
Dr Muhammad Masum's Root Cause of Current Law and Order Situation

PEOPLE

Former president of the Bangladesh Computer Samity (BCS) Aftabul Islam face to face with A Maher Noted educationist Professor Kaiser Haq talks about his teenage days to Navine Murshid



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Under siege

BNP leaders break for a snack on the street after they were not allowed to enter the party's central office yesterday.

Star photo: A K M Mohsin

Hartal ends
Last 12 hours pass rather peacefully

By Staff Correspondent

At least 10 people including three policemen were injured in sporadic incidents of violence in the city on the second day yesterday of the Opposition-called 36-hour countrywide hartal, which was by and large peaceful.

The hartal that began at 6 am on Wednesday paralysed normal life, economic activities and halted traffic across the country.

No incident of violence was reported from other parts of the country till the lifting of this report at 10 last night.

One person was killed in the city and at least 50 were injured in the country on the first day of the hartal.

The BNP-led four-party opposition alliance called the hartal to press its demand for scrapping of the Public Safety Act.

In the capital, three police personnel were injured yesterday when some hand bombs were hurled at police near the Jagannath University College at about noon, witnesses said.

The three -- Abdur Razak, Jewel Sarker and Soheb Hosain -- were admitted to Rajbari Police Hospital, police said.

Opposition activists and police clashed repeatedly in Bijoynagar and Dholalpur areas.

At least two persons were injured in clashes at Dholalpur. One activist was arrested from there.

Police fired a number of tear gas shells as pro-hartal pickets exploded bombs and pelted stones at police in Naya Paltan, Bijoynagar and Dholalpur areas.

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Access denied

Police cordon off BNP central office

By Staff Correspondent

Police banned entry of BNP MPs, leaders and activists into their party central office at Naya Paltan since 5:00 pm Thursday to hand over charge of the offices, the DMP Commissioner Matiur Rahman told The Daily Star last night.

Rahman said this denying claim by some BNP leaders that the keys were handed over to the owner of a *paan* shop near the BNP office at Paltan.

Police earlier took over the office breaking it open for investigation of an incident of bomb blast inside the office early Wednesday. Movement of people across the road during the day was also restricted for the sake of investigation and safety of the people, he said.

"It is obvious and clear that bomb makers got it done. The symptoms reflect that the bomb got off inside the building and it was not thrown from outside," Rahman observed.

The windows would not have fallen outside the building had the bomb been thrown from outside, he said.

"The building is never kept under police vigilance except during hartals when people from the building get involved in illegal activities," the commissioner said in reply to a question.

In the past many police personnel were injured by bombs thrown from this particular building.

People committed this nuisance from inside a room of the building, the Commissioner claimed.

Haj Milon along with other leaders came there one after another.

At about 10:35am, JASAS leader Washimul Bari Rajib reached there and prepared for holding a rally in presence of the MPs and leaders. But police foiled the attempt with tear gas shells and batons. The MPs and other party leaders strongly protested the police action.

Police also obstructed passers-by from crossing Naya Paltan road.

Police did not allow BNP activists to assemble in front of the "sealed" party office from early morning till 10:15am.

BNP MP Jaijan Abedin Faruq, who came in front of the party office at 10:10am asked the policemen to leave the place and allow party men to enter the office.

Another procession was brought out from in front of the party office at about 1:30 pm. The procession went up to Bijoynagar. As it started returning to the BNP office premises at about 2 pm, it was obstructed at the Nightingale crossing by a huge contingent of police who also put up a barbed wire barricade there.

Within few minutes, some more BNP MPs including Sadek Hossain Khoka, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam, Shamsul Alam, Pramanik, Faizur Rahman Patul, Ruhul Qadruddin, Talukder Dulal, Ehsanul

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Opposition's demonstration day tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will observe demonstration day tomorrow to protest what it said government's bomb attack on BNP central office in the city and "sealing" of the office by police.

The alliance will bring out a combined procession of opposition MPs and professionals and intellectuals in the city at 3 pm on Monday to protest enactment of the 'anti-people and black' Public Safety Act. Other component parties of the alliance are Jamaat-e-Islami, Jatiya Party (JDP) and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ).

Details of Monday's programme will be announced later. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said while announcing the fresh programmes at a post-hartal press briefing at the official residence of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia.

Tougher programmes will be announced during Monday's programme if the government does not withdraw the 'black law' and hand over power to a caretaker administration, he said.

Mannan said police arrested BNP office superintendent Abdul Latif, 76, on Wednesday when he and party leader Mahbubdin Khokon went to file a GI in connection with the bomb explosion at the BNP central office. Police also arrested 'innocent' BNP office staff like typists and peons, he said.

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