

Another hartal today

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scholars and ulemas and kill opposition activists indiscriminately," said BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan while addressing a huge rally in the city yesterday afternoon.

BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote, JAGPA and Democratic League jointly organised the rally in front of BNP central office at Naya Paltan with city BNP President Sadeque Hossain Khoka MP in chair.

Announcing the hartal programme, Mannan Bhuiyan said there is clear indication of a mass upsurge in the country soon and asked opposition activists and people to fearlessly take to the streets.

He said Awami League is certain of its defeat in the upcoming national elections due to its miserable failure in running the country and incompetence in all sectors and is now trying to cling to power through conspiracy and evil activities.

The BNP secretary general said the government in a bid to cover up its failure is fomenting strife in the country, instigating riots among different groups to destroy atmosphere for future polls.

About yesterday's hartal, Bhuiyan said the government, as before, resorted to terrorism and repression across the country attacking opposition activists, but the heroic people confront the terrorists in the street.

He alleged that AL terrorists and police attacked pro-hartal activists at Jessore, Madaripur, Netrakona, Mymensingh, Chittagong and Dhaka and injured a good number of people as well as arrested many leaders and activists.

The BNP leader condemned the government for arresting IOJ Chairman Azizul Haq and harassing him on charge of killing. He said the

30 BCL, 20 JCD leaders, activists sued under PSA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Thirty BCL and 20 JCD activists were sued under Public Safety Act (PSA) by rival groups in Godagari thana of the Rajshahi district yesterday.

A case was filed under Public Safety Act (PSA) against 30 leaders and activists of the ruling party backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in Godagari thana. The case was filed in connection with the clash between BCL and the opposition backed Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Godagari Degree College on Saturday last that left at least 30 students injured.

Earlier a similar case under PSA was filed against 20 JCD leaders and activists in connection with the same clash.

Khateeb

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Bakar Siddique and two students of the IOJ chief Mezbah and Shafiqullah who wrapped the body of the police constable inside the mosque.

Abu Bakar and Mezbah have already been arrested in the case under PSA, filed with Mohammadpur thana and are in Dhaka Central Jail. Munsor and Shafiqullah are absconding since the incident.

The 37 include Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Azizul Haq and his son Mahfuzul Haq. The IOJ chief and 31 others have been arrested so far.

Following a prayer from Mohammadpur police, the CMM's court on Sunday placed Humayn Kabir, Akram Hossain and Hizbullah on a three-day remand. The rest have been detained at Dhaka Central Jail.

Meanwhile, police failed to arrest the five absconding accused. They are IOJ chiefs son Mahfuzul Haq, IOJ leader Maulana Arshad, Principal of Jamia Mohammadia Arabia Madrasah Abul Kalam Azad, madrasah teacher Abdur Rob Yusuf and Ismail, another student of the IOJ chief, who threw the gun of Badsha Mia in water behind Noor Masjid.

US to respond quickly

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Strategic Plans Branch at the Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon, headquarters of Allied Powers Europe in Belgium and as chief of staff, Allied Air Forces Southern Europe in Naples.

The air force general said Bangladesh and the United States have a joint air exercise programme under the name of 'COPESOUTH'. Joint air exercises are carried out every year with aircraft from the Pacific Command and the Bangladesh Air Force. Even huge C-130s from the Pacific Command join in the aerial exercises which include dropping of supplies, rescuing of the injured and other disaster management operations.

"The value of continued training and exercise is the key to maintaining high operational efficiency of an air force," Waskow said.

Asked whether the United States was looking forward to setting up new bases in the Pacific region, or in the South Asian neighbourhood, the airforce general replied in the negative and stated, "We'll visit bases of the host countries upon request, but

IOJ chief is an aged and respected ulema of the country.

Congratulating the countrymen for observing the hartal yesterday, Bhuiyan urged the people also to observe today's hartal and launch an all-out agitation to topple the AL government.

Speaking at the rally, JP secretary general Nazim Rahman Manjur blamed AL MP Makbul Hossain from Dhanmondi-Mohammadpur constituency for the killing of a police constable on February 3 inside Noor Masjid at Mohammadpur.

He said a person like Azizul Haq could never kill any human being as people say prayers standing behind the Shaikhul Hadith. He said the killing of the constable is a deep-rooted conspiracy of the government to foil the current movement. Manjur said the AL is an anti-Islamic party and conspiring to remove Islam from the country.

The rally was addressed others by acting Chairman of IOJ Maulana Mohiuddin, Jamaat secretary general Ali Ahsan Mujahid, BNP leaders ZA Khan, Mirza Abbas, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Amanullah Aman, Zainal Abedin Faruq, Nazimuddin Alam, Abdus Salam, Shirin Sultana and Sadiya Haq, JP leaders Saifur Rahman, Ismail Hossain Bengal, Taibur Rahman, Jamaat leaders ATM Azharul Islam, Jashimuddin Sarkar, ATM Masum and Rafiqul Islam, IOJ leaders Ahmed Abdul Qader and Abul Kashem, JAGPA leader Khandaker Lutfar Rahman and Democratic League leader Saifuddin Ahmed Moni.

Earlier, the component parties of the alliance held a series of processions and rallies in different parts of the city during the hartal hours.

Body recovered from inside drum in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of an unidentified young man from inside a drum at Chawkbazar in the city Tuesday night.

Police said that a young man had hired a rickshaw van Tuesday evening from somewhere in the Lalbagh area to carry a drum to Mirpur. When the van reached Chawkbazar, he asked the van driver to wait for him saying he would be back shortly. But he never returned.

After waiting for hours, the van driver called local people who opened the drum and found a dead body.

People immediately informed the Lalbagh police who recovered the body and sent it to Mitford Hospital for autopsy.

Police picked up the rickshaw van driver for questioning in order to find out more about the matter. A case was filed with Lalbagh police station in this regard.

Four injured in Rawalpindi blast

AFP, Islamabad

At least four people were injured when a bomb exploded at a crowded bus stand in the northern Pakistani city of Rawalpindi early Wednesday, police said.

"The bomb exploded in a man's luggage before he could board a bus," a police officer told AFP.

Red alert

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Hasina expressed deep shock at yesterday's train mishap and ordered immediate arrest of the saboteurs.

She condemned "the subversive act" and asked the law enforcing agencies to bring the culprits to book immediately.

The prime minister also conveyed her sympathies to the bereaved families and prayed for salvation of the departed soul of the victims.

Hasina asked the authorities concerned to ensure proper treatment of the injured.

will not establish bases."

How would then the Pacific Command based in Hawaii intend to manage disaster operations by air in South Asia?

In reply Waskow said, "We operate from Guam. If necessary, we'll do mid-air refuelling and there would be no problem."

When asked about the US presence at the southern tip of the Indian Ocean, he replied, "We have been in Diego Garcia with the British for the past ten years."

Asked how he viewed the efficacy of the seminar and the capability level of the Bangladesh Air Force and its airmen, the US Air Force general replied, "Unified Command and Control is essential for combating disaster effectively. With this international conference being held, a bridge of friendship would be created between the Bangladesh and the US Pacific Air Forces. It helps build personal relations which are crucial during crisis."

"It is a small airforce, but has acquired considerable skills."

PM announces special funds

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be limited to the central level but should extend to the grassroots," she told the meeting.

The Prime Minister also announced a number of decisions, including introduction of a national award for encouragement of IT professionals.

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria, Minister for Science and Technology Lt Gen (Retd) Noor Uddin Khan, State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Advisor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, member-secretary Tawfique Elahi Chowdhury, Computer Science teacher of Dhaka University Lutfur Rahman, FBCCI President Yusuf Abdullah Harun and Principal Secretary to the PM SA Samad were among others present at the meeting.

The meeting discussed possible means for removing hindrances to development of IT sector. Separate committees were formed for development of human resources in IT sector, expansion of export and domestic market, formu-

lation of legal framework and infrastructure and for identifying "Mission and Vision".

The Task Force meeting also decided that all service-oriented government offices should put up their own websites. All government forms, tender notices and recruitment notices should be made available on the web.

It also decided that the use of computer at government as well as private levels should be expanded and stressed the need for development of a system to help Bangladesh wage-earners abroad send their earnings through the internet.

Sheikh Hasina said the development of IT sector would be very effective for attracting talented youths to the line. "Our talents have made their mark internationally," she said referring to the success attained by Bangladesh's experts abroad.

The Prime Minister urged all concerned to bring the expatriate Bangladeshis and local IT experts under a network and maintain close

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking during a views exchange meet with Olema's and Islamic scholars at the International Conference Centre in the city.

HR activist Asma Jahangir says

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disclosure of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission report.

She also said the insensitive episode of Irfan Raja "should remind us" that the present time is the time for change and more appropriate than ever before.

In almost every country, human rights are being violated, said Asma, responding to a question on human rights. However, offences like extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh, "were not so many" as in other countries.

Asma appreciated the performance of human rights groups in Bangladesh but said much more needs to be done.

She said besides participation of the people in the improvement of their human rights condition, there is also need for active involvement in economic development.

"Every country of the South Asian region is suffering because they are not cooperating enough."

"Conflict within Pakistan and that between Pakistan and India are bringing themselves down."

She also referred to internal and conflicts in Nepal and Sri Lanka. "It is time now for working for a better South Asia. We cannot depend only on the business community, but on the concerted efforts by the civic society for development."

The human rights activist referred to the launching of a movement for establishing human rights in south Asia. She said an organisation called "South Asia for Human Rights" has been formed at a meeting of concerned citizens from several countries in Nimrana, Rajasthan last year. The organisation, she said "should be a voice of reason in the region" and will try to increase the awareness of human rights and contribute to its establishment in South Asia. The participants would meet again in Delhi in November this year.

The participants at the initial conference included I.K. Gujral, and Kuldip Nayar from India and Justice Naimuddin and Matiur Rahman from Bangladesh and from two

other South Asian countries. "The organisation will grow and I am hopeful that in 10 years it will become a big movement."

Asma said yesterday it is important to have the judiciary act with integrity in the South Asian countries. "Unless we have a judiciary of integrity, we will not have politicians of integrity."

She described several incidents from her own life and others involving Pakistan's judicial process. She also said inaction and compromise by the judges in her country have stunted the growth of democracy in her country.

"In Pakistan, if one goes to court, whether he or she will get justice or not is doubtful," said Asma Jahangir. There is not a single instance of a general's son being convicted but there are many instances of politicians' sons being punished in Pakistan, she said.

Asma was delivering her speech at the Aminul Huq Memorial lecture at the Supreme Court Bar Association. The lecture in memory of the revered late attorney general was organised by Ain O Salish Kendra and Bangladesh: Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST).

Dr Kamal Hussain, chairman of BLAST, opening the memorial lecture, said Aminul Huq was totally dedicated to human rights. He fought fearlessly and relentlessly against the military rule and always came in aid of victims.

Asma Jahangir described late Aminul Huq as the "unsung hero of this part of the world who fought for ideals and principles"

The human rights activist said the lawyers too like Aminul Huq, who raised their voice against the military rule and moved for their legal conviction, must perform their duties to the society and country.

Quoting a former chief justice of South Africa, she said there were two types of lawyers: the non-partisan activist lawyers and the partisan professional lawyers.

contacts with them for regular advice and cooperation for the growth of information technology.

She stressed the need for formulating laws to guide and monitor the IT sector and advised all concerned to take assistance from the existing IT laws and rules of other countries.

Sheikh Hasina mentioned her government's steps in this field, including tax exemption on computers and introduction of the modern technology in schools. She also stressed the need for implementation of the plan for laying submarine fibre-optic cables, under the Bay of Bengal, to connect Bangladesh with the rest of the world through the information superhighway.

The Prime Minister told the meeting that the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) would be restructured empowering the body with more responsibilities to monitor and oversee the development of IT, the fastest-growing economic sector of today's world.

The strike was called by the powerful All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) to pressurise the provincial and the federal governments to deport some 50,000 refugees settled in the state since 1964.

The tribal Chakma refugees have been living in Arunachal Pradesh as 'stateless citizens' after fleeing the Chittagong Hill Tract region in Bangladesh.

BCS viva voce shifted to March 15

UNB, Dhaka

The viva voce of the 21st BCS candidates, scheduled for today, has been shifted due to unavoidable circumstances.

The test will now be held on March 15 at the same time and venue, said an official release yesterday.

Biman

FROM PAGE 12
The agitation by Biman employees who had been offered nine per cent stake also discouraged major airlines, the consultants said.

After discussing the latest proposal from the Citibank, Biman authorities sent it to the Board of Management, which met on Tuesday. The Board directed Biman authorities to refer the proposal to the World Bank for its vetting, sources said.

Commenting on the press, Asma said the power of the independent press is growing. However, while appreciating the vocal role of the press in her country even under a military regime, she said the electronic media are full of fundamentalist and military messages.

"One sees mainly visions of boots and beards on Pakistan television."

Speaking about Pakistan military administration she said, "Pakistan's new agenda are to create devolution at the lower level and sharing the power at the higher level."

Summing up the lecture Barrister Amirul Islam described Asma Jahangir as a voice of hope in South Asia. He said Asma's husband Malik Gulam Jillani was the only person in Pakistan who could understand the ethos of the people of Bangladesh.

"His house in Lahore was a home for the people of Bangladesh. Asma belongs to that house. So you belong to our home," Amirul said.

Amirul Islam described the late Bangladesh attorney general as a symbol of fight against military rule and injustice.

Benapole customs
FROM PAGE 1
Abdul Hannan.

C&F agents alleged that the shed in-charges and other people involved "in stealing goods from the warehouses and selling those outside were involved in the fire to conceal their crimes".

Police reinforcements and two platoons of paramilitary BDR personnel have been deployed in the area.

Port officials said the gates of the land port were locked in view of opposition-called countrywide hartal. Loading and unloading did not take place at that time.

PM urges Ulema

FROM PAGE 12
State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam, Director General Islamic Foundation Maulana Abdul Awal, Islamic leaders Maulana Moshleuddin, Maulana Wahiduzzaman, Mirza Nurul Huq, Mufti Mohammad Shahidullah, Maulana Habibullah Katchpuri, Maulana Ilyas Hossain Helali, Alhaj Maulana Zahurul Islam and Maulana Abdul Jalil Miaji also spoke on the occasion.

On the other hand, many of the AL leaders are of the view that BNP's toying the fanatics' line of action has brought an opportunity for the party to unmask the 'ultra-rightist face' of the combined opposition.

They believe that the more the government would show efficiency of its propaganda machinery against the fanatics' vandalism, the more it would muster support of secular masses.

They are also hopeful about the possibility of NGOs taking a hard stance against BNP's joining hands with the zealots.

Their hope of forging a greater unity of pro-liberation forces against the fanatics further brightened when some leaders of left leaning parties extended their support against rise of fundamentalists in the country.

However, a cautious and somewhat conservative lobby in AL is in favour of taking a more 'guarded

position' while taking the fundamentalists into task so that religious sentiments of the masses is not hurt.

Envoys of Muslim countries have been briefed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take them into confidence while launching more police raids on fanatics' hideouts.

The AL leadership is now busy having consultations in party forums to chalk out a publicity campaign against the zealots and their political mentors because some of the party's previous plans did not work as planned.

AL's plan to alienate BNP from its three other partners did not click so far. When BNP regretted Jatiya Party's appeal for waging a movement for Ershad's release, AL thought that it would strain intra-alliance relations. But now that BNP has finally given in to fanatics' pressure for hartal call, AL sees a bleak prospect of any immediate rift in the Opposition alliance.

Strike in Assam demanding deportation of Chakmas

AFP, Guwahati

A two-day strike demanding the deportation of thousands of Bangladeshi Chakma refugees paralysed normal life in India's northeast province of Arunachal Pradesh yesterday.

Most shops, schools, colleges, financial institutions and offices remained closed in the provincial capital Itanagar, and other cities in Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China and Myanmar.

"The strike has affected normal life across the state," a police spokesman said by telephone from Itanagar.

The strike was called by the powerful All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) to pressurise the provincial and the federal governments to deport some 50,000 refugees settled in the state since 1964.

The tribal Chakma refugees have been living in Arunachal Pradesh as 'stateless citizens' after fleeing the Chittagong Hill Tract region in Bangladesh.

Police local people and railway officials said that the accident took place minutes before some local people attempted to stop the train from crossing the spot.

Those people who were irrigating their lands near the track before the accident told this correspondent that they saw some persons on the track at about 2 am yesterday.

"We saw them working on the track. We heard the sound of beating of metal. When we challenged, they said they were preparing for Wednesday's hartal to disrupt train communication. They left the place soon after," said one of the witnesses.

The witnesses also said that they put up a red cloth on the bridge to signal the train driver not to cross it. But since the train was moving in high speed, the driver could not stop it.

In the meantime, they ran towards Gunagati station to inform railway men. But the accident took place before they reached the station, they said.

Later on the day, the witnesses recognised one of those who removed the fishplates. He was identified as Mazharul Islam, a madrasah student. They went to Mazhar's house, caught him and handed him over to police.

JP plans hartal

FROM PAGE 12
Sources said the JP is now discussing the matter within the party and has decided to make a formal proposal to the BNP leadership. Senior JP leaders sat for discussion last night to finalise the matter.

They said the JP would itself call the hartal in case the BNP and others refuse to call it jointly. But in that case, it will ask for moral support from the alliance in favour of the planned shutdown.

JP insiders said the BNP previously refused to call any hartal or announce any programme on behalf of the alliance to press for Ershad's release on the ground that the deposed president was jailed in a corruption case.

They said that JP, by strongly supporting yesterday's hartal in demand for releasing Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Azizul Haq, hopes that its gesture would be reciprocated by the alliance by calling a similar hartal on the issue of Ershad's release.

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