

Bhuiyan tells JS Govt to enact law banning hartal, if necessary

BSS, Dhaka

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday emphatically said that the present government would bring an end to the hartal culture, if necessary, by enacting law in this regard.

Taking part in the thanks-giving motion on the president's speech in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, he referred to the earlier pledges of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina against hartal and said she had now broken her own promise by calling a hartal on the 50th day of the current popular government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

"I request you to come to the parliament and discuss the ways as to how we can get rid of such a curse from our politics in the greater interest of the national economy," he said, adding "Otherwise, we will stop hartal culture by enacting law in this regard."

Earlier, the minister congratulated former president Shahabuddin Ahmed, caretaker government, election commission and those directly involved in the election process for offering the nation a completely free and fair elections on October 1.

Shafiqul secy in-charge of establishment ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hectic lobbying among top bureaucrats to get appointment as establishment secretary did not work as the government yesterday appointed an additional secretary as secretary in-charge of the ministry.

The new appointee, Shafiqul Islam, was promoted to the rank of additional secretary on Saturday along with six other officials. Earlier, Islam was joint secretary for appointment, posting and deployment in the establishment ministry.

The vital post of establishment

Press Secy to president Removed

UNB, Dhaka

Rabindranath Tribedi, Press Secretary to the President, was removed on Saturday, said an official announcement yesterday.

Deputy Press Secretary to the President Abu Zafar Mohammad Iqbal will act as Press Secretary until posting of a regular officer to the post.

Tribedi has been "appointed or transferred" as Officer on Special Duty (Additional Secretary) to the Ministry of Establishment.

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The woes of a frontline state

Column: Perspectives

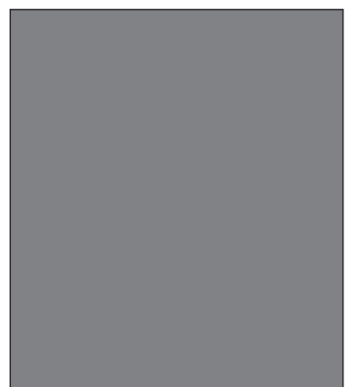
M Abdul Hafiz

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SIA comes with holiday package to explore slumping market

ROK farmers battle riot police

DSE, CSE price quotations



Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
17	3	-	5-14
18	4	5-02	5-14
19	5	5-03	5-14

JS scraps law providing state security to Hasina, Rehana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday scrapped the law providing lifelong state security to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana, two surviving daughters of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Amid deafening sound of thumping of desk by the treasury bench members, the House passed the Father of the Nation's Family Members Security (Repeal) Bill, 2001 by voice vote.

Several Jatiya Party (Ershad) lawmakers and two independent MPs abstained from the voting while main opposition Awami League has been staying off the parliament proceedings since the very first sitting of its maiden session.

The Awami League observed an eight-hour hartal in the capital city protesting the government decision to have the Act scrapped in parliament.

On June 20 this year, at the fag end of its term in office, the Awami League enacted the Father of the Nation's Family Members Security Act, 2001 providing lifelong state security to the two surviving daughters of Bangabandhu, who along with most of his family members was assassinated on August 15, 1975 in a military putsch.

Amid growing threats on Hasina's life, following the trial of the Bangabandhu's killers, the previous Awami League government announced Hasina and Rehana as VIPs, making them eligible for the Special Security Forces (SSF) coverage.



Hasina

Rehana

The government on July 2 also allocated Hasina the Ganobhaban, the prime minister's official residence, for security reason. Rehana was also given an abandoned house at Dhanmondi on July 11.

On August 16, exactly one month after the take-over by the caretaker government, Hasina left the Ganobhaban while Rehana did not move to the

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Shun anarchy or face stern action, Khaleda warns AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked the main opposition Awami League to stop 'creating anarchy' and join the parliament or face 'stern legal action'.

"We had showed utmost tolerance in 1996 (when her previous government faced non-stop AL-sponsored hartals). We will be still be tolerant but won't put up with any attempt to create anarchy," the prime minister told the Jatiya Sangsad.

"We will be tough on whoever is found guilty of creating anarchy. Nobody from top to bottom will be spared," she said while blasting the AL for enforcing yesterday's eight-hour hartal in the capital. The first-ever hartal by the AL against the coalition government of Khaleda Zia was in protest at the repeal of a law

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addressing the concluding sitting of the first session of Eighth Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.



Police beat up Awami League MP Ahsanullah Master and ripped his T-shirt in front of the AL's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue (left) and pro-ruling party men carrying sticks chase AL activists during hartal hours yesterday.

Police beat AL MP, keep leaders confined to party office

39 arrested in city during eight-hour hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police beat an opposition Awami League lawmaker and picked up at least 39 activists during an eight-hour hartal called by the party in the city yesterday.

The police action kept senior AL leaders and former ministers confined to their "besieged" Bangabandhu Avenue party central office and pro-hartal activists indoors during most of the hartal hours.

The party leaders said the police action was "unwarranted and an infringement on the right to assembly".

AL enforced the hartal to protest annulment of a special law withdrawing lifelong state security to its president Sheikh Hasina and "unabated repression" on members of the minority community in the country. The hartal was the first by AL in less than two months of BNP's takeover of power.

Police by far outnumbered AL activists in the Bangabandhu Avenue and did not allow them to assemble. As police encircled the AL office, party activists

played hide and seek and hurled crackers from nearby alleys. The entire area was off-limit for pedestrians and vehicles.

Police beat AL activists indiscriminately while allowing stick-wielding anti-hartal activists to bring out processions in the area although the DMP Commissioner banned stick procession only a day before.

At times, police and slogan chanting anti-hartal activists swooped on the marginalised AL activists on Bangabandhu Avenue and nearby alleys. The anti-hartal activists chanted slogans like "Khaleda Zia zindabad".

As policemen picked up pro-hartal activists from in front of the AL office and pushed them inside a police van, the stick-wielding anti-hartal activists coming from the direction of Golap Shah Mazar beat their opponents, even inside the police van.

At around noon, when AL lawmaker from Gazipur-2 Ahsanullah Master protested the police beating and

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Palestinian suicide blasts in Israeli cities kill 27

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian militants stepped up a major bombing campaign in the heart of Israel's cities yesterday, killing 16 people in a bus attack in Haifa just 12 hours after two suicide bombers killed 10 and injured more than 170 in a lively Jerusalem night spot.

US peace envoy Anthony Zinni was visiting the site of the central Jerusalem blast when a bomb ripped apart a bus and damaged another in the northern port city of Haifa, dealing yet another blow to his mission to end 14 months of violence that have claimed more than 1,000 lives.

Israel's security cabinet was meeting to weigh its response to Saturday night's attack, which turned a popular pedestrian precinct into a bloodbath, when the bomb rocked Haifa.

The hardline Islamic group Hamas yesterday said its armed wing carried out Saturday's triple bombing in Jerusalem, in a state-

ment posted on its website. "The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades are responsible for the operation in Jerusalem," said the statement, despite an earlier claim of responsibility by its smaller rival, Islamic Jihad, in a statement issued to the BBC.

Israeli troops earlier swooped on the houses of two Hamas militants suspected of being behind the attack, Israeli radio said.

Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority "strongly" condemned both attacks, and the Palestinian leader called an emergency meeting to take "very important and forceful decisions," the secretary general of the Palestinian cabinet told AFP.

Arafat was under enormous pressure to stamp out the bloody attacks which have skyrocketed since Zinni arrived with orders from US Secretary of State Colin Powell to find ways of ending the spiralling violence and enforce a workable ceasefire.

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Despite his condemnation Saturday night of the twin kamikaze blasts which were followed up by a car bomb explosion as rescue services streamed into the area the violence only increased Sunday.

Aside from the slaughter on board the Number 16 bus in Haifa, two gunmen from the hardline Islamic group Hamas shot dead a Jewish woman settler in the northern Gaza Strip, before being blasted themselves by Israeli tanks.

Following the security cabinet meeting, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres summoned all ambassadors to the Jewish state for a meeting to impart the "extreme gravity of the situation."

Israel made no immediate military moves after the Jerusalem attack, although officials pledged a "commensurate response."

In anticipation of Israeli revenge strikes which in past months have included F-16 fighter bomber and Apache helicopter raids on

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PM's statement a blatant lie, says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has termed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's statement in parliament yesterday a 'blatant lie' and said it was intended to hide her government's 'misdeeds' and 'failures'.

"What she (prime minister) said in the parliament is blatant lie. If she goes through statistics, she will find a different picture," Hasina said at a hurriedly called press briefing yesterday at her Dhanmondi residence Sudha Sadan.

The prime minister in her speech in the parliament said that the immediate past AL government destroyed the economy and every other sector during its five-year tenure.

The former prime minister and Leader of the Opposition, whose party stayed away from the maiden session of the parliament, reacted sharply.

Sheikh Hasina, giving statistics of

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Illegal lines have clogged sewerage network, polluted lakes & rivers

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Thousands of city dwellers and scores of industry owners have resorted to running their sewers and toxic waste lines illegally to the 284-kilometre network of storm sewerage, box culverts and natural canals.

This long-continued illegal practice has not only clogged the existing storm sewerage network meant for draining rain and other non-toxic freshwater of the city but contributed largely to polluting the rivers Turag, Balu, Buriganga and also the city lakes as well. Due to its designated usage for non-toxic water, the discharge points of these storm sewerage lines were understandably connected to the canals, rivers and wetlands surrounding the metropolis.

Sources in the WASA and the DCC said the phenomenal growth in urban population and the failure of the authorities to provide adequate drainage system have forced the public to find this 'dangerous' alternative.

A section of WASA officials

posted to different local offices, have silently benefited from this practice, as one after the other homeowners dug up roads and connected their sewers with the storm sewerage lines running in front of their homes.

The WASA officials said the capital with more than ten million population has a network of only 635 kilometres of sewers, 207 kilometres of storm sewerage, seven kilo-

metres of box culvert and 22 natural canals over an area of 70 kilometres serving as storm sewerage. In addition, they said the DCC maintains 15,000 kilometres of surface drains.

The entire drainage system, particularly that of 635 kilometres of sewers, is grossly inadequate and

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Draft Afghan power-sharing accord

Symbolic role for Zahir Shah

AFP, Bonn

A draft power-sharing accord presented by the UN to Afghan groups meeting in Germany provides for a symbolic role for former king Mohammed Zahir Shah, such as presiding over the convening of a Loya Jirga or traditional grand assembly of tribal elders.

The United Nations yesterday outlined a draft agreement for Afghanistan's future, saying a text submitted for approval by rival

Afghan groups provided for a 20-30 member authority to rule the war-torn country for six months.

UN spokesman Ahmad Fawzi said the draft accord also provided for a supreme court and a 21-member special independent commission to organise the convening of an emergency Loya Jirga a traditional grand assembly of tribal elders.

According to the draft text, a Loya Jirga would in turn pave the way for a two-year transitional

government, a constitution and then finally a broad-based government.

But Fawzi emphasised the four Afghan delegations meeting here had still not submitted their nominees for a new government.

"There is an important missing link here the names. We are still waiting for the names."

"We've not yet a list from the United Front (or Northern Alliance), or any other group for that matter."

"When it comes down to names, it gets very difficult," he said. "It is important we discuss and finalise a list of names in Bonn."

Fawzi said a symbolic role had been proposed for Afghanistan's former king Mohammed Zahir Shah in the interim period, possibly in convening and presiding over a Loya Jirga.

"It has been suggested he play a symbolic role. But this is just a proposal," he said, adding the four groups were scheduled to discuss the draft accord at 3.30 pm local time yesterday.

AP says, the United Nations intends to finalise a list of names for

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Mockbul arrested, gets one month's detention



Police arrested former AL MP Mockbul Hossain last night.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested former Awami League legislator Alhaj Mockbul Hossain from his Mohammadpur residence in the city in the early hours of today, family sources said.

Police also swooped on residences of some other party leaders to arrest them, party sources claimed but could not say who they were.

Mockbul was arrested without showing any warrant, family sources said. A team of Detective Branch police and Mohammadpur thana police cordoned their Tajmahal road residence at about 1 am. They entered the house saying they want to search it on information that some terrorists are hiding inside, the sources said.

The policemen then asked Mockbul to accompany them to the thana, they said.

Our Court Correspondent adds: Mockbul was produced before the

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