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# The Daily Star

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Law-enforcers to go tough on trouble-makers

**Khaleda warns AL**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said law enforcers would go tough on 'troublemakers' who will attack police and damage property in the name of hartal in future, in a sharp warning to the Awami League (AL).

"Resist the trouble-mongers," she asked people in a speech to a public rally at Chhatak High School in Sunamganj.

Sounding the warning to the AL, she said: "You will face stringent action if you damage public property," adding, "Law enforcers were asked to treat the chaos-mongers

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## Politics on coercive course over hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politics takes a coercive course as the government and the Awami League (AL) flex their muscle over hartal.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at a Sylhet rally yesterday said police would go tough on pickets, a warning echoed by Home Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury in parliament the same afternoon.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid at a press briefing yesterday warned that they would go for more hartals if their activists

were attacked during today's hartal.

The AL plans to gradually intensify hartal, from 12 hours today to 24 hours and then to 48 hours. Simultaneous actions to barricade rail tracks and roads have only heightened people's fear of disruption of normal life.

The AL has got support from a number of left-leaning and progressing parties in its anti-government action including the Gono Forum, the Communist Party of Bangladesh and Workers Party.

As politics has rolled onto the roads, parliament virtually lacks any

opposition members except two lawmakers Anwar Hossain Manju of the Jatiya Party (Manju) and Kader Siddiqui of Bangladesh Krishak Samik Janata League.

The AL has been trying to woo the two members out of parliament into their movement fold. AL President Sheikh Hasina contacted Manju and tried to convince him, sources in her party said. The party also reached Kader Siddiqui through Gano Forum.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) Chairman HM Ershad has not yet stepped out

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MICROCREDIT SUMMIT

Meet begins today to aid the poorest

Organisers ask AL to call off hartal, govt for security

STAR REPORT

A four-day conference on microfinancing in Asia, set to explore programmes to provide 100 million ultra-poor with microloan, begins in Dhaka today in a downbeat mood because of a hartal.

Organisers of the Asia Pacific Region Microcredit Summit at the Sheraton Hotel yesterday expressed disappointment over the general strike, called by the Awami Jubo League for today in the wake of police action against demonstrators in earlier strikes by the main opposition Awami League (AL).

About 1,400 delegates from home and abroad, including Queen Sofia of Spain, South African First Lady

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## Bina, her old rickshaw, and microloan

INAM AHMED

As microfinance champions rally behind their cause at today's conference, troublesome questions will eat away at their enthusiasm. Is this the most effective tool to fight poverty? What else should be in place? Are the ultra-poor getting the benefit?

In the villages far from 1,400 delegates meeting in Dhaka, they are more than mere academic questions. They wonder why the poor are not loaned enough to start a business that could raise them out of poverty, while those who are already well off get generous loans.

Bina Rani, 28, wanted a Tk 7,000 loan from Brac, an NGO with about four million households getting its cradle-to-grave services, for a new rickshaw for her husband. But the Gorma village in Netrokona, Barhatta union, could

only get Tk 3,000 -- enough for a used rickshaw.

"It is an old thing and needs repairs now and then," says Bina. "Before this, my husband used to rent a rickshaw for Tk 20 a day. Now, we have to repay Tk 85 in weekly installment and about Tk 10 on repair every day. This has hardly improved our life."

"New rickshaws need no repair for at least seven to eight months. We could have seen some real income then."

Microcredit is a useful tool to fight poverty, says Shafiqul Islam, head of Asa, one of the Top Four NGOs, with an outreach of 2.3 million borrowers. "But it alone is not enough. It has to be supported by a number of critical things such as health service and improved law and order."

Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed of Proshika, an

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Dawn-to-dusk hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami Jubo League enforces a daylong countrywide hartal today protesting attacks on the opposition leaders and activists including its Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak during Saturday's shutdown.

This will be the third hartal in five days, with Jubo League's parent organisation the main opposition Awami League enforcing a 6:00am-6:00pm shutdown across the country on Thursday and Saturday.

The AL and its other front organisations have thrown their weight behind today's hartal that holds immense political significance after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hinted at a rally on Saturday that the government supporters would take the opposition activists head-on if they go for any political programme to spark violence.

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BNP MPs seek law against general strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP lawmakers yesterday demanded legislation barring hartal and a parliamentary probe body to identify people involved in 'anarchic activities' across the country.

Standing on separate points of order at the Jatiya Sangsad, several ruling BNP lawmakers discussed on the issue for an hour. Blasting the main opposition Awami League (AL) for calling repeated hartals, they asked the government to take tough measures against those who create bedlam in the streets to ensure people's security.

The speakers also urged the main opposition to return to the House eschewing hartals.

Some of them suggested the

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Tk 47 lakh gold seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday seized 5.5 kilograms of gold ornaments worth Tk 47.37 lakh and arrested two airlines employees for their alleged involvement with the smuggling.

Customs officials said a Middle Eastern airlines flight arrived at the ZIA in the morning en route from Dubai to Kuala Lumpur.

Acting on a tip off, a customs team raided the aircraft and held Mohammad Abdul Rob Bhuiyan, an employee of Biman Flight Catering Centre, when he attempted to run away sensing presence of the officials with four packets of gold ornaments.

The team at the same time

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## BNP to make moves to keep AL isolated

REZAUL KARIM

The government policymakers are planning ways to keep the smaller political parties away from forging an alliance with the Awami League trying to topple the coalition government from office, highly placed sources said.

However, the ruling coalition leader BNP thinks AL's forming an alliance with the smaller parties ahead of the general elections may not hit the ruling alliance as the smaller political parties do not have a vote bank as such.

Still, the BNP bigwigs believe a street movement by a united opposition may damage the government image and are desperate to resist any move to float an alliance with the Awami League, the sources added.

Several BNP policymakers are in constant contact with the leaders of Left-leaning political parties like Workers Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal and Gono Forum.

They are also in touch with the top leaders and parliament members of deposed president HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party.

Several top leaders and minis-

ters, who had once pursued Left politics, have continued contact at personal level with the heads and policymakers of the Left parties, BNP insiders said.

Similar talks are also on with other smaller rightwing political parties and BNP leaders, who had once belonged to the Right.

Meanwhile, efforts are underway to further split the Ershad-led Jatiya Party, BNP sources said. They said there are two camps within the JP -- one pro-BNP and the other pro-AL. Discussions aimed to keep the JP away from the AL have taken place at different levels of the party, they added.

The home ministry has instructed the intelligence agencies to review the files on all pending cases against Ershad and the secret agencies have mounted watch on the deposed president.

The BNP is mulling over wooing other smaller parties having representation in parliament like Anwar Hossain Manju of Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) and Quader Siddiqui of Krishak Samik Janata League, sources said.

Former prime minister and JP leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed, who

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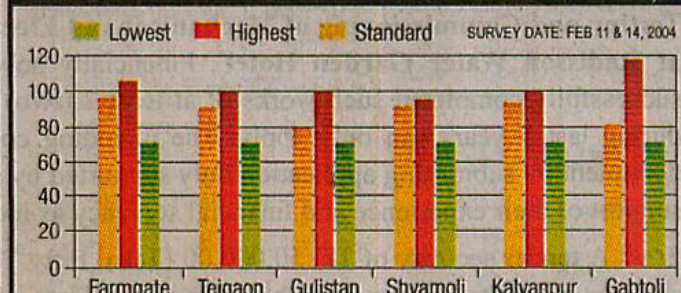


Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, front far right, talks to Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, centre, while frontline Awami League leader Abdus Samad Azad, left, and Justice KM Sobhan, right, look on at a condolence meeting at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday where speakers paid tribute to Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya.

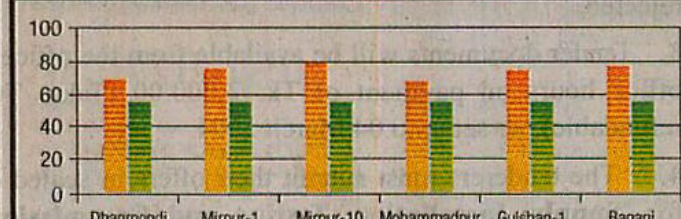
PHOTO: STAR

## Law to muffle noise soon

Noise Pollution in Commercial areas Daytime acceptable noise-level 70 decibels



Noise Pollution in Residential areas Daytime acceptable noise-level 45 decibels



Ban on hydraulic horns, bar on loud speakers likely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Forest and Environment has drafted an amendment to the Noise Pollution Control Act 2004 that will bar or restrict the use of hydraulic horns, mikes, loud speakers, brick grinding machines, generators and other loud machinery.

The use of microphones and sirens for religious purposes like calls for prayers and predawn meals during Ramadan, state functions and during emergencies will be outside the purview of the law.

Environment minister Shajahan Siraj disclosed the decision at a press conference yesterday.

"Noise pollution has reached an alarming level. The law will be

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20 injured as train derails in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Twenty passengers were hurt as three compartments of a Dhaka-bound inter-city train derailed at Eklashpur in the district yesterday morning.

Witnesses said the accident took place when Upokul Express reached Beparihari in Eklashpur, in between Sonapur railway station and Laksam railway junction, at 6:30am. Three compartments became disjoined from the rest of the train and derailed due to faulty rail line.

Of the 20 passengers injured,

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FBCCI asks opposition to find alternative to hartal

STAR REPORT

Expressing deep concern over the damage to economy wrought by consecutive hartals, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday decided to urge the opposition political parties to find an alternative to hartal.

The country's apex body of businessmen will submit a set of recommendations to the ruling as well as the opposition political parties this week, advising them to sit together and start a dialogue on how to overcome the present politi-

cal volatility.

"We have discussed the issue at our extended emergency board meeting today and decided to recommend the opposition political parties alternatives to hartal and to seek their support in stopping violence," FBCCI First Vice President Kamaluddin Ahmed told reporters after the meeting.

The FBCCI in conjunction with other business leaders will submit its recommendations to the general secretary of ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) so that the government takes an initiative to

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Petroleum dealers threaten indefinite shutdown

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Petroleum Dealers Association (PDA) yesterday threatened to shut down filling stations for indefinite period if its demand for higher commission and subsidy on operational losses were not met by February 27.

"We will refrain from withdrawing fuel from depots at our own expense if the government does not share operational losses incurred through transportation, leakage and evaporation," said Mohammad Nazmul Huq, secretary general of the association, at a press conference.

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## Hosts stumble at the end

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh came tantalisingly close to pulling off the first upset in the ICC U-19 World Cup before going down gamely against New Zealand by two wickets at the

Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With the exciting victory of the Kiwis, four top teams, playing on the opening day of the 16-nation meet, got off to winning starts at different

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