

PHOTO: STAR

Traders wearing black scarves on the face stage a sit-in on the road in front of Chawkbazar Shahi Mosque in the old city during yesterday's strike called by more than 40 traders' organisations protesting rampant extortion and murder.

Old Dhaka becomes violent over Jubo Dal, League clash

Traders observe strike to protest crime, police frame-up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten people were injured, including former Awami League lawmaker Haji Selim, in a violent exchange between activists of Jatiyabadi Jubo Dal and Awami Jubo League over occupation of a place for rally at

Lalbagh yesterday.

The confrontation took place amid a daylong strike called in a large area of Old Dhaka by over 40 local business bodies protesting a police raid on the business establishment of a local AL leader at Nalgola and subsequent ransacking of it allegedly

by Jubo Dal cadre Monday.

Shops stretching from Lalbagh to Islampur were kept shut yesterday and a human-chain was formed on Chawkbazar Road as part of the strike, which also condemned the rampant extortion, threats and murders in the area.

The skirmish between the activists of youth wings of ruling BNP and main opposition AL erupted after Haji Selim, along with some local businessmen, dismantled a stage made for a Jubo Dal rally at Imamganj crossroads at midday. The Dal earlier

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Khaleda will be holding her May 1 rally as ex-PM

48-hour hartal likely April 7-8, more to follow, Jalil says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday reaffirmed his party's vow to unseat the government by April 30 through a mass movement including indefinite hartals.

"Khaleda Zia will address her (planned) rally in the city on May 1 not as an incumbent, but as an ex-prime minister," Jalil told newsmen

after emerging from a meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) held at its Dhanmondi office yesterday to finalise its plan of action for the government's ouster.

He said the main opposition party will soon launch a massive countrywide oust-government movement to make good on its forecast of the government's over

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Israel targets entire Hamas leadership

Army chief hints Arafat next on hit list

AGENCIES, Jerusalem

Israel will try to kill the entire leadership of Hamas without waiting for another attack by the militant group, security sources said yesterday, citing a decision made by Israeli security chiefs following the assassination of Hamas' founder.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and top aides approved an order to target all senior militants after the wheelchair-bound cleric, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was killed in an Israeli missile strike outside a Gaza mosque Monday, security sources said.

"Anyone who is involved in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank or anywhere else in leading a terror group knows from yesterday there is no immunity," Internal Security Minister Tsahi Hanegbi told reporters. "Everyone is in our sights." "There is no immunity to anyone. And that means anyone to the last person," he said.

The killing of Yassin threatened to escalate three and a half years of Israel-Palestinian fighting.

Fearing attacks that Hamas has pledged to avenge Yassin, Israeli forces went on high alert. Previous

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Foreign currency worth Tk1.8cr seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate at Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized foreign currency reportedly worth at Tk 1.8 crore Monday.

Acting on a tip off, a team of customs headed by Customs Inspector Ashok Barua went to a field in front of Biman GSE building to find a handbag in a bush.

The handbag with tags of Biman's Dhaka flight No. BG-606 and Dubai flight No. BG-011 contained Saudi Rial 5.32 lakh and Tk 27.50 lakh.

Dhaka condemns killing of Yassin

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has strongly condemned the killing of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin by Israel in Gaza City on Monday.

In a statement yesterday, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said Dhaka consistently opposed any extra-judicial killing of civilians.

He called upon the parties concerned for immediate resumption of the peace process.

Bangladesh has always been consistent in its policy towards Palestine, the foreign minister said, adding "Dhaka strongly supports the Palestinian cause and advocates for the independent Palestine with Al-Sharif Al-Quds as its capital."

WorldTel's phone project yet to take off

BTTB did not sign interconnection deal

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The WorldTel is yet to start implementation of a \$300 million fixed phone project in the capital nearly three years after a contract on it as the authorities have refrained from giving the company interconnection and frequency.

The authorities were supposed to

allocate spectrum and interconnection to the WorldTel within 90 days of the signing of the contract back in July 2001. The company was to run a 300,000-line fixed phone network on build-own-operate basis.

The state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) did not sign interconnection

agreement with the company to retain its monopoly in fixed line phone as the company got co-exclusivity to run fixed phones, industry sources alleged.

BTTB Chairman Md Nurul Islam said the issue is now pending with Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). He

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New savings scheme for pensioners on cards

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government will introduce a special savings certificate for government and private pensioners.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday approved the scheme proposed by the Internal Resources Division (IRD).

This planned savings certificate will mature in three years and offer 11 percent interest.

A pensioner after serving their full term would be eligible to invest a maximum of Tk 15 lakh in the instrument and withdraw profit every three months.

To avail oneself of the savings scheme, a private sector retiree will have to show employer's certificate and income tax certificate.

IRD sources said the government is trying to reduce interest rates on all savings instruments and make them market-based in a bid to meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions.

The government has already closed some savings instruments and reduced interest rates in the last two years. The interest rate on the five-year certificates was reduced to 11 percent from 12.5 percent and three-year ones to 10.5 percent from 12 percent on January 1 this year.

Graft, bad politics damage Bangladesh's image

British high commissioner tells TV channel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner David Carter yesterday said confrontational politics and corruption have damaged the country's image abroad.

"The confrontation between the major political parties... corruption, which is so much associated with this country, problems of bureaucracy and infrastructure, cumulatively, I think, are damaging Bangladesh's image," the envoy told the ntv television channel yesterday. Speaking at the "Frankly Speaking" programme of ntv hosted by Nadeem Kader, he added, "Yet, we

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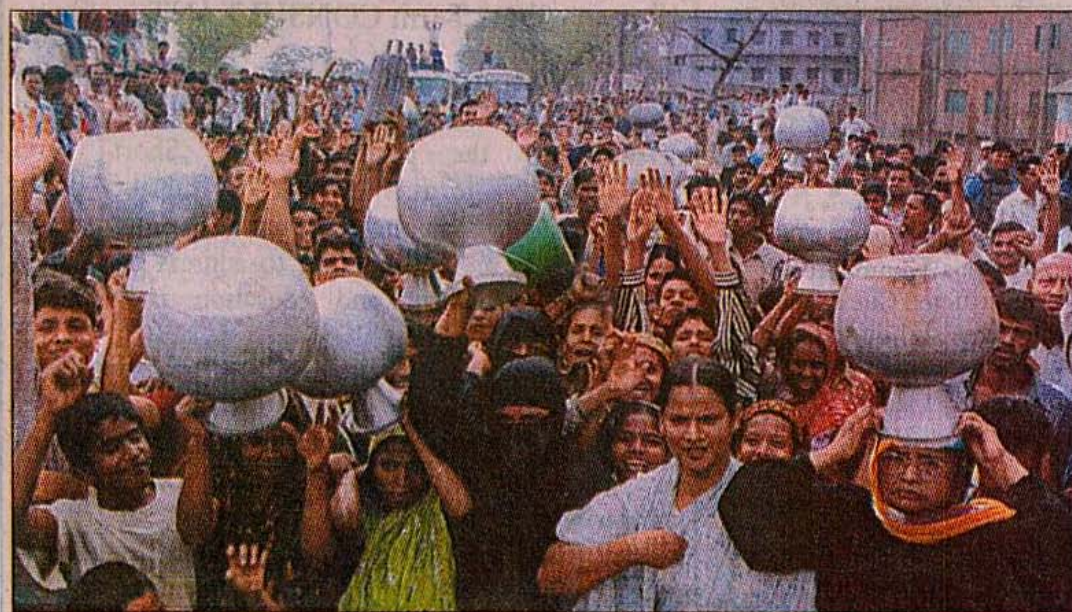


PHOTO: STAR

Residents of the city's Jatrahari area took out a procession with empty pitchers yesterday demanding end to the acute water crisis in the area.

Water-starved locals block Dhaka-Ctg Rd at Kajla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Angry residents of Demra suffering from a weeklong water deprivation barricaded the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Kajla yesterday morning.

A few hundred agitated locals of Shanir Akhra, Jatrahari and Kajla blocked the commercially vital national highway for about two hours from 8:30am causing long queues of vehicles stretching from Kanchpur Bridge to Kajla at one side and from Sayedabad on the other.

The demonstrators alleged they had been going without any water supply from the Wasa (Water and

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Govt fears attack on high-profile people, takes security steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken strong security measures for important personalities following intelligence reports that attacks like that on Prof Humayun Azad are apprehended.

Intelligence agencies came to know about a 'conspiracy' to kill or injure some intellectuals, politicians, university teachers, journalists and businessmen in an attempt to destabilise the government, sources at the home ministry said yesterday.

Some in the government think-tank meanwhile linked the intelligence reports with the April 30

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Raped, denied justice, she takes her life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An 18-year-old girl committed suicide in Noakhali on Monday night out of desperation triggered by her rape and village arbitration that sentenced the rapist to only 20 lashes but did not allow her to speak up.

Nasima Akhter of Gazirbagh village in Noakhali took poison at home and struggled her way out to die close to the house of Shahadat, accused in a case of raping her on her way to a wedding. The 24-year-

old man hauled Nasima back home -- limp from poison.

"I lost my daughter. She went to attend a wedding on the afternoon of March 15 and she was raped," said her mother, bursting into walls of anguish.

Nasima returned home crying and blurted it out to her brother who informed local Union Parishad Chairman Hafizur Rahman.

Rahman scheduled arbitration for March 20 inviting other elite of the village, but none of the accused

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China slates Taiwanese referendum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The People's Republic of China has termed the recent referendum held by the Taiwanese authority illegal and invalid.

In a press statement released by the Chinese embassy in Dhaka yesterday, the government of China slated the 'so-called peace referendum' held on March 20 as a provocative attempt to undermine cross-strait relations and split the motherland.

The press release went on to say that facts have proved that the referendum is an illegal act, which goes against the will of the people and that any attempt to separate Taiwan from China was doomed to failure.

Lahore ready for battle royale

BBC ONLINE, undated

The stakes could not be higher ahead of the one-day series decider between Pakistan and India in Lahore.

A sell-out crowd will watch the game at the Gaddafi Stadium and millions of supporters will also be

glued to TVs and radios awaiting the outcome.

Pakistan had the chance to wrap up the series on Sunday before Rahul Dravid and Mohammad Kaif's 132-run stand steered India to a five-wicket win.

Another win would see India

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