

AL's no-confidence day foiled by tough cops

AL to march towards JS today; Hartal on April 28-29;
BNP takes to street to counter opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wholesale arrests, barricades and highhandedness by police foiled the first day of main opposition Awami League's (AL) three-day 'mass no-confidence programme' in the city yesterday as part of its plan to overthrow the government by April 30.

The AL has called countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartals for April 28 and 29 and a nationwide agitation programme on April 27 at a press briefing last night in protest at the mass arrests and demanding resignation of government and mid-term elections. The 'mass no-confidence programme' will continue today and tomorrow.

As part of the previously announced programme, AL MPs will march toward parliament today that coincides with the resumption of the adjourned 11th session, demanding withdrawal of the proposed 14th amendment bill to the constitution.

The ruling BNP meanwhile has also announced a programme to

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Awami League (AL) lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor tries to free a woman activist as she resists arrest by policewomen in the city's Motijheel heart yesterday, the first day of AL's three-day agitation expressing 'no-confidence' in the government.

PHOTO: STAR

Watch tightened on key points ahead of AL deadline

Additional force deployed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has put the law-enforcement agencies on high alert in Dhaka and adjoining districts in the run-up to the main opposition Awami League's (AL's) April 30 deadline for unseating it, home ministry officials said.

Although the four-party coalition appeared relaxed about the deadline, it still beefed up security of key government buildings, deployed additional forces, brought efficient officials to the capital, acted promptly on intelligence reports side by side with adding spark to its political programmes.

The administration tightened security around key installations including the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, Bangladesh Secretariat, Zia International Airport, Bangladesh Bank and diplomatic zones in Baridhara, Gulshan and Banani to preempt 'sabotage'.

"We reinforced uniformed and undercover police units in important areas yesterday. Armed police battalion personnel were in the streets and paramilitary BDR troops were ready to act," a top home ministry official said, requesting anonymity.

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7 GIs, 4 cops killed in Iraq blasts

US mulls sending more troops

AGENCIES, Baghdad

A series of explosions across Iraq has claimed the lives of seven US soldiers, four police officers and 18 Iraqi civilians.

The incidents occurred both in the Sunni Muslim north of the country and in Shia dominated areas, including the volatile Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City where explosions killed eight Iraqis.

Insurgents struck a US military base north of Baghdad with rockets at dawn yesterday, killing five American soldiers, an official said, while a rocket crashed into a crowded market in the Iraqi capital, killing at least 13 Iraqis and injuring 30 wounded.

One woman was killed in a separate attack in the same area when a mortar bomb hit her home. Her daughter was wounded.

At the same time, police seized a truckload of explosives and arrested three Iraqis suspected in a series of suicide attacks in British-occupied

southern Iraq that had killed 74 people on Wednesday.

In Taji, just north of Baghdad, five US soldiers were killed and six more were wounded -- three of them critically -- when a rocket was fired at their base, a military spokeswoman said.

A truck that had been used to fire the rocket was destroyed by a US military helicopter after the troops called for reinforcements, she said.

Two more US soldiers were killed and one wounded in a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack on a convoy near the southern city of Kut, police said.

The latest casualties brought to 718 the American military death toll since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March last year, including 520 killed in action, most of them fighting against insurgents.

In another incident, four Iraqi policemen were killed when a booby-trapped car exploded near a US military base in the northern city

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Conspirators won't be successful: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the conspirators have never been and never ever will be successful in executing their design to foil the development process initiated by the government.

She was addressing the National Conference 2004 of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (Dab) at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center yesterday.

"Guard against the conspirators," the prime minister told the Dab, a body of physicians who support the BNP.

Khaleda mentioned that Dab members, apart from their professional job, work spontaneously with the nationalist ideology in the struggle for maintaining democratic rights.

She recalled, with appreciation, the role of the physicians in the country's language movement, War of Independence, anti-autocratic and other democratic movements.

The prime minister expressed her hope that the scientific session and discussion in the daylong conference would have a far-reaching impact on expansion and improvement of healthcare service in the country.

Referring to professional duties of the docs, Khaleda regretted that the government, despite resource constraints, is supplying medicine,

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MUNICIPAL POLLS

CEC irked as officials don't report real law, order situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed expressed annoyance at high government officials at a meeting yesterday for not reporting the real law and order situation in 143 municipalities going to polls next month.

The Director General of the Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Major General Saidek Hasan Rumi identified 43 of the municipalities as vulnerable, but the divisional and district officials found nothing wrong with the areas ahead of the polls from May 5 to May 10.

Visibly annoyed by the officials' remarks, the CEC said the review of law and order in the run-up to the

elections became futile, sources close to the Election Commission said.

"Now we'll gather information through field level election officials. After reviewing the information, we'll ask the government to deploy army personnel to ensure peaceful polls, if need be," Syed told journalists after the meeting.

At the National Economic Council Auditorium meeting, inspector general of police, divisional and deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and other officials from 50 districts assured the Election Commission of free and fair polls.

They said law and order in the

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WB president pledges more assistance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

World Bank President James D Wolfensohn has assured Bangladesh of additional support to implement the reform agenda aimed at faster economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Talking to Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in Washington Thursday, Wolfensohn encouraged the government to continue its reform process, pledging strengthened support from the International Development Association (IDA).

The WB president lauded the government's achievements in overall economic growth, poverty reduction and making improvement in human development index.

The meeting was also attended by WB Vice-president for South Asia Praful C Patel, WB Bangladesh Country Director Christine I Wallich, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Syed Hasan Ahmad, Alternative Executive Director of WB Dr Akbar Ali Khan and Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan.

1,000 more netted in blanket arrest drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested over 1,000 people in Dhaka yesterday as they continue blanket arrests across the country in the run-up to the April 30 deadline of the main opposition Awami League (AL) to unseat the BNP-led coalition government.

The police drive to hunt down opposition leaders, activists and supporters began in the capital on April 18 and elsewhere on April 23.

The number of arrestees in Dhaka alone exceeded 6,069.

Of the total, 4775 were arrested under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance and sentenced without producing them before magistrates and giving them no scope of self-defence.

The rest 1,294 were shown arrested in different cases filed earlier with police stations in the capital. But their names were not in the First Information Report of the cases.

The arrestees suffered immensely as they were kept in court hajat crammed with people five to six times its capacity. Many of them alleged they were kept under the open sky without food and water.

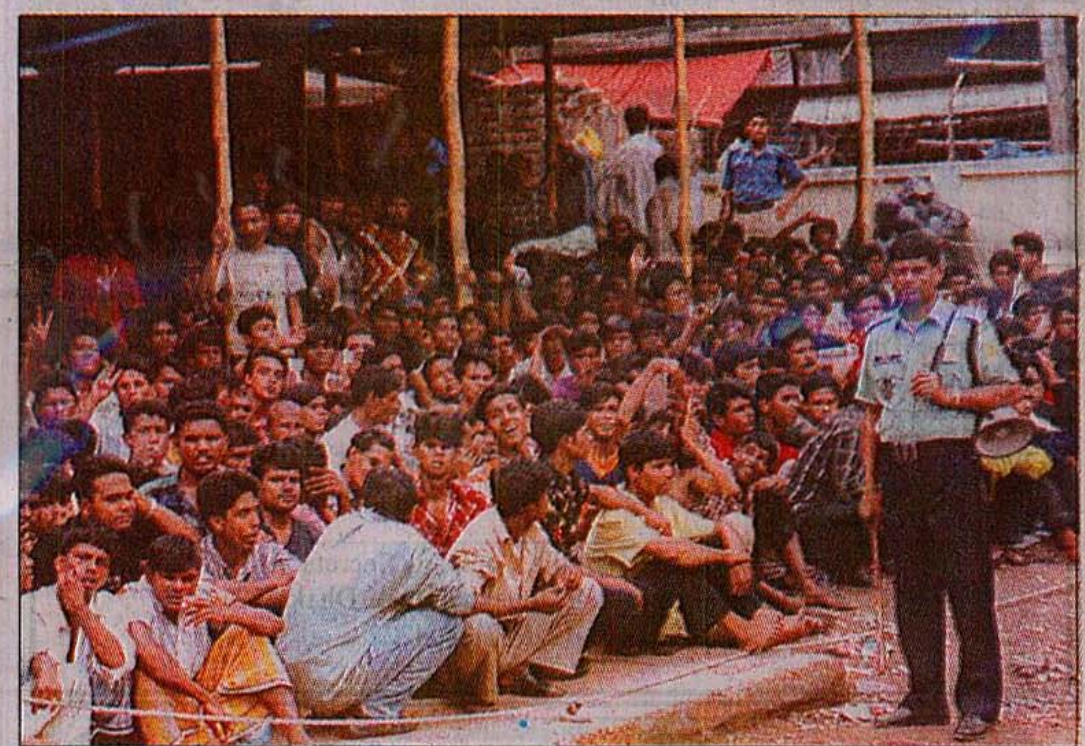
Police are also picking up many people under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), ignoring the High Court verdict that any arrest on suspicion is illegal.

Meanwhile, General Secretary of Dhaka Bar Association Borhan Uddin yesterday said sentencing of people without producing them before magistrates and not giving them the opportunity of self defence is a gross misuse of law.

"Magistrates have jurisdiction to award punishment to arrestees but they must be given the scope of defending themselves," said Nuruzzaman Nani, former general secretary of Dhaka Bar.

"It is a violation of human and

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Police herd prisoners together outside a court hajat at Sadarghat yesterday as such facilities in the city are now packed with thousands of people arrested in the run-up to the Awami League's April 30 deadline for unseating the government.

PHOTO: STAR

Lift ban on Ahmadiyya publications

AI asks government to ensure freedom of religion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Amnesty International (AI) has urged the government to immediately rescind the ban on Ahmadiyya publications and not yield to Islamist groups' demands that are discriminatory in nature and amount to violation of Ahmadiyya rights.

The international human rights watchdog also asked the government to publicly declare its full support for the freedom of religion and ensure that no acts of intimidation or violence against the Ahmadiyyas are tolerated and all perpetrators are brought to justice.

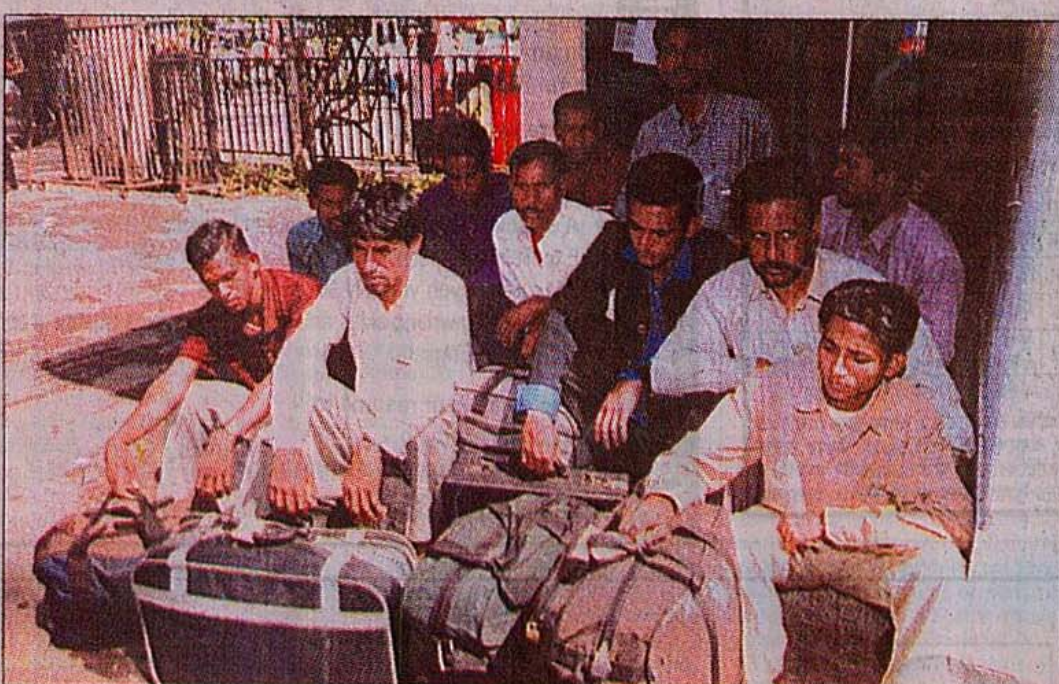
The AI made these recommendations in a report titled 'Bangladesh: The Ahmadiyya Community - their rights must be protected' posted on its website Friday.

The report said Ahmadiyyas have been the target of a hate campaign organised by a number of Islamist groups in recent months, adding these groups mobilised crowds to chant anti-Ahmadiyya slogans, sought confiscation of Ahmadiyya mosques, and demanded that the government declare them non-Muslims.

About 100,000 Ahmadiyyas have been living in fear of attack, loot and murder since around October 2003 when the anti-Ahmadiyya agitation began, it said.

It urged the government to institute an independent and impartial international-standard investigation by a competent authority into

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Conned by a fake overseas manpower recruiting agency, these men ended up in the war-ravaged Iraq before managing to return to Dhaka yesterday.

Distraught they return

Cheated by manpower agents, 13 finally land in Dhaka after a brush with harsh realities in Iraq

STAR REPORT

Cheated out by manpower agencies, 13 Bangladeshis returned home from Iraq yesterday ending their harrowing ordeal of a week.

Each of the young fortune-seekers paid between Tk 120,000 and 160,000 to the recruiting agencies, Kazi Air and Greenline International, for jobs in Jordan.

They could not realise they only had transit visa for Jordan and tour-

ist visa for Iraq as agency men gave back their passports and so-called employment documents just before they boarded a Gulf Air flight on April 17.

Oblivious of the reality, the young men went to Amman via Dubai, from where the agents took them to Iraq by a car.

"Rolled and bumped, the car went on, for about a thousand kilometres," said Sarwar of Rajshahi at the Jatiya Press Club premises on

arrival. "Looking at signboards, we were startled to know that we are in Baghdad. Panicked, we started to ask the driver why he has brought us to Baghdad."

The driver dropped them in the Masco area without giving any satisfactory answer.

As they stepped into the war-ravaged city, they soon realised how mercilessly they were cheated out and burst into tears.

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US warns Sharon on Arafat threat

AGENCIES, Ramallah, West Bank

The United States has insisted that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon honours a promise not to harm the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

"We have made it entirely clear to the Israeli government that we would oppose any such action and have done so again in the wake of these remarks," a senior Bush administration official told Reuters. "We consider a pledge, a pledge."

Arafat meanwhile responded defiantly yesterday to new threats against his life by Sharon, telling a crowd of supporters he would embrace "martyrdom."

"All of us are martyrs-in-the-making," Arafat said in the compound of his Muqata headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, where some 4,000 people chanted they would sacrifice their 'blood and souls' for the veteran leader.

On Friday, Arafat appealed to world leaders to over the threats, his chief advisor said. "Arafat called this evening on Egyptian, Jordanian, Arab and European leaders to warn them of the consequences of the escalation of the violence in the Palestinian territories and the threats by Sharon against him," said Nabih Abu Rudeina.

In fresh violence in the West Bank, Israeli forces killed three Palestinians, at least two of them militants, in disputed circumstances.

Sharon, in comments that could rally support in his right-wing Likud party before its May 2 vote on his Gaza pullout plan, said on Friday he no longer felt bound by a pledge he made three years ago to Bush. "I release myself from this commitment regarding Arafat," Sharon told Israel's Channel Two television, giving no indication any action was imminent.

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150,000 Die of **CANCER** every year in Bangladesh



One Million people suffer from CANCER in Bangladesh, out of whom 150,000 die every year. Existing hospital facilities can provide treatment to only 15,000 of them in a year. Most of the patients go outside the country for treatment. Poor are to die in untold sufferings and pain.

To make a difference

Dhaka Ahsania Mission, a voluntary (non-profit) social welfare organization, started a 42 bed Cancer Detection Centre and Hospital in Mirpur, Dhaka in 2001. It is now going to establish a full fledged 160 bed modern Cancer Hospital.

Please join the Mission in the establishment of the proposed Cancer Hospital.

Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital
Location : Sector # 10, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka.
Land : 3 Acres (already purchased).
Project Cost : US\$ 15 Million or BDT 840 Million.
Govt. Approval : Obtained.
Architect : Design Alliance, USA.
Construction period : 2004-2007

Donate generously to establish this Cancer Hospital
Any amount of donation will be gladly accepted. You will be treated as one of the sponsors of the Hospital against a one-time donation of US\$ 17 thousand (BDT 1 Million). You may also consider bearing the cost of bed, room, ward, wing or equipment in memory of your parents or nearest and dearest ones. We also accept bequest for the treatment of the poor. Proposal for capital investment in the project is also welcome.

Sent your donation to:



Agrani Bank
Dhanmondi Branch, Dhanmondi,
Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh
A/C Name : Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital Fund
Savings Account, A/C # 36698

Standard Chartered Bank
Dhanmondi Branch, House # 6 Road # 5,
Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh
A/C Name : Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital Fund
Current Account, A/C # 01 128263801

Dhaka Ahsania Mission is a voluntary social welfare organization of international repute having Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC & Operational Relations with UNESCO and it is the recipient of several prestigious national and international prizes/awards including Independence Award-2002 from Govt. of Bangladesh, UNESCO International Literacy Award-2003, UN ESCAP Human Resource Development Award-1994, Grand Prize from Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO-1996 and National Literacy Award-1998

For any question or query please contact:

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Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital Fund
Initiated by: **DR. KAZI AIR** & **THE DAILY STAR**