

Kibria family warned

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my husband," Asma Kibria told a press briefing at her Dhanmandi residence. She was announcing the 'silent, peaceful protest' programme taken up for today to demand impartial investigations into all political killings and a stop to violence. The countrywide programme starts from 3:00pm to continue till 3:30pm.

Alleging that the government has been harassing them in many ways, she asked, "Don't I have the right to seek justice in a democratic country?"

Referring to a particular news item aired recently on a private television channel owned by a ruling party member, she said it was used to propagate a threat against Kibria family. She, however, did not utter the name.

Rejecting allegations of tarnishing the country's image, she asked, "How could seeking justice damage the reputation of the country?"

"The government has already smeared the country by killing internationally-famed economist SAMS Kibria," she added.

Mrs Kibria called upon people from all walks of life, especially the pro-liberation forces, to unite in opposition to the rise of religious extremists. "Wherever you are, please join these protest."

Asma asked people to wear black badge and stand in an open space with a black flag in hand for today's protest.

She said that the family would also launch an international campaign against the killing of the former finance minister.

Seeking a robust role by the country's freedom fighters in the movement, she said their presence will renew the spirit of the youth and remind them of the great courage that Bengalis once showed to earn independence.

She said this when a delegation of the Muktiyoddha Sangsad led by Dr ABM Zaforullah and Mohammad Salahuddin visited her at the Dhanmondi residence.

Recalling the contribution of freedom fighters to freeing the coun-

Bhuiyan blames

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Bangladesh and political situation in Nepal," Bhuiyan said, adding, "The political crisis in Nepal is an internal matter and the security situation in Bangladesh is quite good."

"The killing of Kibria is an isolated incident and such an incident does not prove that the government is unable to ensure security for a few guests," he said.

He said the AL is trying to reap political benefit from Kibria's killing.

BNP will hold a rally at Muktangan in the city and all the districts across the country on February 7 protesting 'destructive politics of AL', Bhuiyan said.

Georgian PM

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Zhvania, 41, was at a friend's apartment when the leak occurred, Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili said in a live broadcast on Rustavi-2 television.

"It is an accident," Merabishvili said. "We can say that poisoning by gas took place."

Ministry asked

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approval again, but the committee said it back to the ministry saying the proposal needed to be trimmed down.

The committee felt that the ministry was offering the contractor excess benefits. The 5km Jatrabari to Gulistan flyover project is being awarded to Belhasa-Acom JV, a Bangladesh-UAE-India joint venture.

It (cabinet body) instructed the ministry to revise the proposal in conformity with the newly approved Bangladesh Private Sector Infrastructure Guideline (BPSIG) within 15 days.

Belhasa-Acom JV has been enlisted in the private infrastructure projects. This is the first such enlistment since the BPSIG was approved a few months ago.

"The proposal did not reflect the (BPSIG) guideline. We have told them (the ministry officials) to trim the proposal as per the guideline," Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told journalists after the cabinet committee meeting.

The proposal says the government will acquire land for the project and give it to Belhasa. And the government will pay demurrage to the private developer if the traffic flow over the flyover is less than 70 percent of the estimated flow.

The Belhasa consortium has also been offered exemption of tax, VAT and excise although a year ago the cabinet committee had clearly said that this was not acceptable.

"They suggested tax, VAT exemption. We said this is not possible. Our local investors are not given this opportunity—why will we give it to the foreign companies? It is not possible to give such benefits by distorting the fiscal or monetary system," said Saifur.

The flyover toll rates proposed by the ministry range between Tk 5 and Tk 200. For a single trip on the flyover, a motorcyclist will have to pay Tk 5 each time, a CNG autorickshaw Tk 10, car Tk 35, minibus Tk 100 and trailer Tk 200.

The toll rates should be

try from Pakistani repression, she said "My husband was one of you and I know that even his own modest contributions to the struggle for liberation had not gone unappreciated. You, the 'band of brothers' who won freedom for our country, is one short of a member today."

"Still, enough of you are left to make a difference, to turn the tide of the battle, and to sweep away the forces of evil," she added.

The delegation requested Asma Kibria to lead the movement against violence and anarchy instigated by the axis of anti-liberation forces.

Replying to a query, she said they did not request postponement of the Saarc Summit. But the government could have done that on its own, she said adding, "Kibria had drafted the original Saarc charter. I feel bad when I see lights glow bright as part of holding of the Saarc summit."

Earlier, leaders of Muktiyoddha Sanghati Parishad and Amra Muktiyoddhar Santan met her to express solidarity with today's programme.

Different professional bodies and political organisations in separate statements expressed solidarity as well with the programme.

Organisations that expressed solidarity include Communist Party Bangladesh (CPB), Sammilito Ainijibi Parishad, Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad and Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad.

Our CU correspondent adds: The Chittagong University Teachers Association (CUTA) yesterday expressed their solidarity with today's 30-minute 'silent protest'.

Cuta in a statement said they would come up with all-out cooperation for the movement spearheaded by Asma Kibria.

The Cuta leaders also requested the civil society members to gather on the local Shaheed Minar premises at 3pm today to register protest at the brutal killing of SAMS Kibria.

Pak PM

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chairman, told APP here that Pakistan was in contact with the member states to agree on a new date for the postponed summit.

He said the postponement of SAARC conference would have a negative impact but emphasized contacts among member countries should not be affected and the SAARC Mission should move forward, the report of APP said.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid M. Kasuri yesterday said India's decision to keep away from the Dhaka SAARC summit citing security concerns was "not justifiable" as many countries witnessed acts of violence.

"Of course we are greatly disappointed," he said while referring to the postponement of the summit.

Asked about his comments on the reasons given by India for not attending the summit, he said, "Abstaining to attend the summit citing fears on law and order situation was not justifiable as many countries witnessed acts of violence."

He said in future people who were against progress being made at SAARC could keep it a hostage to the stepped up violence.

Incidents of violence have been taking place in India's North East, Baluchistan in Pakistan, Nepal and many other countries, Kasuri said.

Indian train collides with tractor: 42 die

AFF, New Delhi

More than 40 people were killed and eight injured when a train collided with a farm tractor pulling a trailer full of people at a level crossing in central India, police said Thursday.

"Forty-two people have died and eight are injured and have been hospitalised," Pran Kankhade, superintendent of police for Indian Railways at Nagpur, told AFP.

The accident happened near the village of Kanan, 688km east of Bombay in Maharashtra state.

The tractor was pulling as many as 40 people who had attended a marriage and were passing from one village to another when the train struck them at the unmanned crossing, Kankhade said.

The dead included a three-year-old boy.

"The people travelling in the train coaches are largely unhurt," said Indian Railways spokesman Santosh Kumar.

The injured have been taken to hospital in Kanan.

In December, a head-on train collision killed 38 people and injured 52 because of a signalling fault in the northern state of Punjab.

The December crash brought opposition party calls for the resignation of Railways Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, who is currently campaigning for state assembly polls in his native state of Bihar.

Parliament is not sitting at present. India's railways transport more than 13 million passengers daily on networks that sprawl 108,700 kilometers across a nation with a population of over one billion.

The system records around 300 accidents every year.

24 Iraqis

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"Aman was arrested at the scene of the attack but was freed due to lack of evidence," said Captain Amjad Saad.

A soldier and a woman were killed in a bomb blast targeting an army convoy at Shorgal, 300km north of Baghdad, a police officer said, explaining that the woman was driving behind the convoy.

In a rare case of civilians fighting back, villagers killed five insurgents who attacked them for taking part in the elections, police said yesterday.

The insurgents launched the raid Wednesday after earlier warning the inhabitants of Al-Mudhriyah, south of Baghdad, against taking part in Sunday's vote, said a police captain.

Twelve Iraqi soldiers were killed in an ambush late Wednesday outside of Kirkuk, the worst single attack since Sunday's landmark vote.

The body of a driver working for the US military was found in the Tuz region, 200km northeast of Baghdad, police said.

An Iraqi employee on a US military base was gunned down and four of his colleagues wounded on their way to work Thursday in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, a medical source said.

Further north, a mortar attack on a US position Wednesday fell short and killed two civilians and wounded six in Tall Afar, the US military said.

"The insurgent minority attempted to fire mortar rounds at the Tall Afar Castle, instead missing and killing and wounding innocent Iraqis," a statement said.

Three other Iraqis were killed in separate attacks on Wednesday, a source at the interior ministry said.

One was a man who was working on a US military base in Baghdad and was shot dead by unknown gunmen.

A member of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a leading religious Shiite party, was also gunned down in the northern Baghdad.

And in the southern province of Muthanna, an Iraqi army captain was killed and two others soldiers wounded in clashes with gunmen, two of whom were captured.

Two US marines were killed in action Wednesday in the conflict-torn western province of Al-Anbar, the US military said Thursday.

"A marine assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action yesterday bringing to two the number of marines who died while conducting security and stability operations in the Al Anbar province," a statement said.

The deaths raised the overall toll for US troops killed in Iraq to 1,438 since the US-led invasion of March 2003, according to Pentagon figures.

Excavation suffer

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The archaeological department's rules provide for such excavation under the supervision of a person employed by it, and it is hampering the work, the excavation team said.

In the first phase of excavation in 2000, a team of JU students led by Mustafizur first traced some remains of the ancient city in Belabo thana of Narsingdi.

During the second- phase excavation in March last year, the team discovered a mortar-made floor and a road in that area, and a Carbon-14 dating showed the two villages (Wari and Bateshwar) as the site of the ancient city, drawing attention of archaeologists from home and abroad.

"We have excavated only one percent of the site while a huge excavation is needed to unearth the shape of the fort city which, I believe, is one of the most ancient sites in this sub-continent," said Mustafizur. "But fund crisis and rules of the archaeological department are forcing us to stop excavation."

Bangla Bhai's men

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Shafiqullah, arrested from JMJB operative Joyнал's house at Chaksadu village of Gabtali upzila with explosives on January 16, also told police that JMJB carried out the bomb attack on a jatra show in Laxmikola village on January 14 that killed one and injured 40.

"The attack on Laxmikola under Shajahanpur was just a preview of JMJB's plan of carrying out attacks on jatra and theatre shows," a policeman, who interrogated Shafiqullah in the JIC (joint interrogation cell), quoted Shafiqullah as saying.

"The attack was meant to threaten people and to restrain them from performing and organising such cultural programmes," said Shafiqullah, adding, "But it was unfortunate that the attack killed a rickshaw-van puller."

Shafiqullah, who denied his involvement in the jatra show attack to First Class Magistrate SM Ferdous Alam, told police that he was inclined to join the bomb attack in Laxmikola.

But Joyнал refused to take him as he was a stranger to the area, and would not have been able to flee since he did not know his way around, said Shafiqullah, adding that locals might also have been suspicious of a stranger in their locality.

A top Bogra police official told this correspondent that the police department fears attacks on those movie theatres that run pornographic movies. "We have asked the owners of such movie theatres to be alert and take preparations against such untoward incidents," he said.

The detective Branch (DB) of Bogra police also expressed its suspicion of JMJB's involvement in the Mymensing attack. Quoting sources, a DB policeman said JMJB took the decision long ago to carry out bomb attacks on movie theatres. He also mentioned that JMJB chief Abdur Rahman's origin is in Jamalpur, a close district to Mymensing where a couple of camps are located.

Bogra police are preparing to bring Shafiqullah in for another 10-day fresh remand, said a police source, adding that the Dhaka office has ordered related local police to take the necessary steps in this regard.

Meanwhile, it is alleged that some people are collecting tolls to carry on Islamic activities from Cornipara village under Gabtali upzila, the origin of Bangla Bhai.

Abdur Razzak, a member of Gabtali Sadar Union Council, denied the allegation, however,

US ambassador

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press, human rights, the recent series of bomb attacks and political violence.

When asked about India's allegation of a deteriorating law and order situation in Bangladesh, the ambassador refrained from making any comment, saying he could only comment on specific issues. "I would not say the overall law and order situation is getting worse, but the crime that happened should be solved," he commented.

Reiterating the statement of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the ambassador urged for a vigorous investigation of all acts of political terrorism, including the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj.

He said failure to bring to justice the perpetrators of acts of political violence fosters a climate of insecurity and impunity and therefore, encourages further attacks. "The Bangladesh government needs to act quickly to identify, arrest and prosecute those responsible for political terrorism," he said.

When asked about the failure of investigations into such incidents, the ambassador said Bangladesh faces all the challenges for criminal investigation that other developing countries face, i.e. lack of equipment and forensic facilities. He said the US government is considering the Bangladesh government's request for assistance with the recent investigations.

He also mentioned that the recent New York Times Magazine article titled "The Next Islamic Revolution?" did not damage Bangladesh's reputation as the author has reported whatever was reported earlier in local media.

He said the author would not have heard of 'Bangla Bhai' if his activities were not published in local media. "We trust the prime minister's order to nab Bangla Bhai will be implemented soon," he added.

Alliance to face

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summit and said the Indian government apparently gave importance to a particular political party instead of regional cooperation and bilateral relations, according to meeting sources.

"They (AL) convinced India not to come and join the Summit," said Bhuiyan.

The meeting decided to mobilise public opinion against the AL.

The alliance leaders expressed deep shock at the killing of AL leader and former finance minister SAMS Kibria.

Mannan Bhuiyan said the AL always opposed holding of the Saarc summit in Dhaka and had called hartal when it was first scheduled in January and also this time using the death of Kibria as an excuse.

The AL had also called hartal during the 7th Saarc summit in Dhaka in April 1993, the LGRD and Cooperatives minister said.

Security reason shown by the Indian government for not attending

saying no such incidents have occurred in his area. But he admitted that a small amount of money, obtained from selling skins of cattle sacrificed during Eid, was donated to a newly formed madrasa, a common practice for the last couple of years.

Asked about Bangla Bhai, a representative of locals said he has been seen in the area for the last couple of months. Many of his operatives are active in Mahisban, Gordah, Masterpara and other surrounding areas.

"Many JMJB operatives were seen in those areas with the pilgrims who came from Afghanistan during last Ramadan," said the representative.

Our Natore correspondent adds: the arrested JMB militants in Natore told investigators that they were undergoing training in preparation for attacks against NGOs.

They also confessed during a primary investigation after their arrest that their comrades have sprouted throughout the district and neighbouring areas.

"We were jogging inside the mosque to train ourselves both mentally and physically against NGOs", a senior police official quoted one arrested militant as saying.

"Once upon a time the East India Company captured our country in the name of business; NGOs are the new form of the company. They are patronising anti-Islamic activities and taking people away from religion. We must prepare ourselves both physically and mentally to face them," the arrestee elaborated.

The highly placed police source said that most of the arrested persons were fresh recruits while two or three of them have been working for JMB for three years or more.

"They (militants) used to collect members in villages in the name of Islam and later inspired them with a revolutionary zeal", said Faruk Hossain, officer in charge of the Natore police station.

The arrestees include Alauddin, a madrasah teacher and the president of a Jamaat-e Islami Bangladesh (JIB) ward in Halsha union in Natore, as well as Jamaat activists Shahidul Islam, Anwarul Islam, Mokhlesur Rahman, suspected militant leader Forman Ali and Islami Chhatra Shibir worker Saiful Islam.

Saarc summit

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He noted that the summit was first postponed due to tsunami. "That was an act of nature. We have nothing to say against that. But the irrational excuse given by India now is unacceptable. We are deeply hurt," Saifur pointed out.

"For the last few months we worked tirelessly for the summit. We spent a lot of money – which in particular was a big burden for my ministry," the finance minister said a day after the summit was postponed for the second time.

"India first talked about Nepal. But we have instances where in the past the summit took place with an undemocratic military government," he quips.

Asked whether the latest developments would affect the Indo-Bangladesh relationship, Saifur said, "The Bangladesh-India relationship will continue despite all these difficulties."

"We share several thousand kilometres of common border. They are our neighbour. Following such incidents, the neighbourly relationship typically suffers. May be this will happen, but we will have to continue our relationship. We shall try to make sure that this kind of attitude is not reflected in our future activities and relationship," he said.

"India is a big country... if a big country does not co-operate with an open heart, no regional co-operation will take place," Saifur added.

Replying to a question whether it will affect the ongoing talks on a regional gas pipeline project between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, the finance minister replied: "It will discourage, frustrate and affect our relationship. But it should not stand as a roadblock at all. We shall continue the effort to better our relationship."

Expressing frustration at the postponement of the seven-nation summit, the finance minister also criticised the opposition political parties for their negative attitude. "Within our country, our opposition parties also did not show any helpful attitude."

Referring to former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria's killing, Saifur said, "This has also grieved us. We may also hold public meetings and we may also face a similar situation. We want a smooth investigation."

"But such a personal issue cannot be used to oppose a conference like the Saarc Summit. This is not justified," said the finance minister.

Ctg port

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internal feud among port workers' organisations.

The BJS leaders alleged miscreants of the pro-government CBA (Chittagong Port Authority) group made an attack on Ahmed at the same spot about six months ago.

He filed a case against Zakir Hossain, a guard of the engineering department of the port, and several others, they added.

Different port workers organisation yesterday condemned the attack, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the culprits. Otherwise, they would stop the port activities, they warned.

Palestinian state

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profile since Mahmud Abbas was elected Palestinian president to replace the late Yasser Arafat.

Eleven killed

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Our correspondent adds: Two people were killed in road accidents in Sutrapur and Demra in the capital yesterday.

Amirul Islam, 35, a rickshaw-puller, was killed as a speedy truck ran over him in front of the Rajdhani Super Market in Sutrapur at around 5-30am. Police sent the body to the Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Amirul, a resident of Sutrapur area, hailed from Fulbari in Sirajganj district.

A speeding truck killed an unidentified youth, aged about 30, when he was crossing a road in Demra area.

Demra police recovered the body and sent to the Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

UNB adds from Brahmanbaria: Two people were killed and 30 others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and truck at Satbarga in Sadar upazila on Dhaka-Sylhet highway early yesterday.

The dead are identified as Hafiz Mia, 30, of village Kalikrapasad in Kishoreganj district and Ershad Mia, 20, of village Kasail in Nagarkanda Upazila of Faridpur district.

Police and local people said a Sylhet-bound passenger bus collided with a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction, killing the two people on the spot and injuring others.

The injured were admitted to Madhabpur Hospital.

The drivers and helpers of the bus and truck fled, leaving their vehicles.

Interpol team

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They will submit a review report on their visit, based on which another team will arrive shortly.

The next team will probe mainly the August 21 and January 27 carnage on Awami League rallies in Dhaka and Habiganj and grenade attack on the British envoy in Bangladesh, said a CID official asking not to be named.

The team will continue investigation until coming to a successful end, while the government will bear all expenses, the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) official added.

Tough cops foil

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continuation of the antigovernment movement.

Most shops and business establishments, schools and private offices remained closed during yesterday's hartal that also hampered cargo handling at Chittagong Port. Long route vehicles did not ply but train services were normal.

Apart from rickshaws, a good number of vehicles including city service minibuses and human-hauliers were seen plying in the capital.

Two police constables and one rickshawpuller were injured when unknown people threw hand bombs at Bangabazar and Shurtila in Old Dhaka.

At least 30 people were injured in police actions in the capital while another 30 wounded in clashes in Pabna, Barguna, Comilla and Pirojpur, UNB says.

BID TO BRING OUT PROCESSION FOILED

The AL and other parties tried to bring out processions in different parts of the capital which was heavily guarded by paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police.

The law-enforcers used batons to foil opposition processions at Muktangan, Bangabazar, Science Laboratory crossing, Green Road, Arambagh and Gulshan.

They picked up Segufta Yasmin Emily, Shaheen Monwara Haque and Meher Afroz Chumki, three former lawmakers of the AL, from Paltan crossing as they were going to Muktangan at about 10:30am.

AL Presidium Member Matia Chowdhury in an instant protest tried to get into the police van with the three party colleagues but fell to the ground when the policewomen pushed her. The three ex-lawmakers were released in the evening.

Frontline AL leaders including Tofail Ahmed and Asaduzzaman Noor MP were forced to stay at Muktangan for more than two hours until 1:20pm as the police prevented them from leading any procession.

"We are deprived of democratic and fundamental rights to protest," Tofail told the newsmen at the spot. He said the police without any provocation attacked the opposition activists to foil their peaceful demonstrations.

The police assaulted two journalists – Sheikh Munun of the Amar Dosh and Abul Bashar Nuru of the Amader Samay – when they tried to enter Muktangan at about 11:15am. The police misbehaved with them even after seeing their identity cards.

Protesting the incident, journalists covering the hartal instantly brought out a procession and demanded punishment of the cops responsible for the excesses.

Mahbub Murshed, a reporter of daily Naya Diganta, sustained head injury from the iron shed of a shop near Paltan crossing during the protests.

The police cordoned off the AL central office by putting barbed-wire fencing and did not allow anyone

Police arrest 3

FROM PAGE 1
On Saturday at 2:00am, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) raided village Shughar in Lashkarpur union to arrest Shah Alam (32). Sine he was not at his house, Rab members first took his father Salamat Ali to Alam's sister's house at Chunarughat and then to his father-in-law's house in Matail village in Nabiganj. As Alam was not found also at these houses, Rab released his father on condition that he will hand him (Alam) over to Rab if when he finds him.

Alam's sister Jahannara Begum and Jesmin Ara Jui told The Daily Star that following the grenade attack, Alam slept at home, participated in the funeral prayer for the bomb victims of Bargaon village. Their father took him to Habiganj Circuit House Saturday afternoon and handed him over to Rab. Since then they do not know anything about him.

They said Alam is a BNP leader in Lashkarpur union but they do not know his rank. "No-one can say our brother Alam is a bad person," said Jahannara. "His only bad habit is wasting father's money."

They however said Jainal Abedin Momin is "pugnacious" and lives in Baiderbazar close to the grenade attack spot.

Momin's house is located only about 150 yards off the grenade attack spot. Residents of his house said Momin is the secretary of second ward committee of Lashkarpur union. He is also involved with the Zia Gabeshana Parishad.

"Our whole family supports Awami League but Momin supports BNP," said his brother, school teacher Jashimuddin Ahmed.

Momin, 27, is also a peon at Baiderbazar Post Office.

His mother, uncle and other family members said that Rab and intelligence men picked him up from in front of a shop in Baiderbazar Saturday afternoon. They suspect that since Alam was arrested earlier, may be Alam gave his name to Rab.

Alam is a "criminal" and he had enmity with Momin, they alleged.

Like Alam's family, they are also in the dark about Momin's whereabouts.

"If Momin is involved in such a heinous act, we will not try to save him. But if he is not involved in it, Allah will save him. That is why we did not try to get information about him," his brother said.

Jainul Abedin Jalal, 29, used to live in the nearby Abdabkali village. His family members told The Daily Star that detectives picked him up Monday evening from a pharmaceutical shop he owns.

except some senior leaders into Bangabandhu Avenue area.

About 7,000 police and BDR members were deployed at the city's vulnerable spots. The police were seen asking people through loud-speakers not to gather on streets and footpaths.

Several AL lawmakers led a procession from the Jatiya Sangsad area at about 11:00am marching on the Mirpur Road and held a rally at Russell Square. A large number of policemen cordoned off the area during the demonstration.