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36-hr hartal starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The countrywide 36-hour shutdown called by the main opposition Awami League (AL) begins at 6:00am today to protest the killing of its leader and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others in the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj.

The AL, 11-party combine and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) enforced a 60-hour hartal from Saturday last and 12-hour hartal on Thursday for the same reason. But this time the AL and JSD will enforce the 36-hour hartal.

The pro-hartal pickets yesterday set fire to two minibuses—one on the Bangabandhu Avenue at about 2:00pm and the other near Court Building in Old Dhaka at about 7:50pm. Another vehicle was also set ablaze in front of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at the same time.

Ambulances, newspaper vehicles, drug stores, garbage carrying vehicles and other emergency vehicles will remain out of the purview of hartal.

UNB adds: In a bid to identify the 'miscarants' during hartal, police will use a number of cameras.

"We took some steps, including SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Hundreds line up in spontaneous protest

Agitation to continue, says Asma Kibria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People of all walks of life took to streets yesterday protesting the killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and demanded punishment of the killers.

The unprecedented 30-minute protest from 3:00pm to 3:30pm drew spontaneous participation of people across the country at the call of the family of Kibria.

Led by Asma Kibria, widow of the slain Awami League lawmaker, people lined up in hundreds holding one another's hands on the road in front of Kibria's Dhanmondi residence in the capital.

Leading intellectuals, political, cultural and human rights activists, teachers, students, professionals, housewives and the commoners joined the silent protest at the heinous killing.

Kibria, his nephew and three Awami League (AL) activists were killed in a grenade attack on an AL rally at Baidderbazar in Habiganj on January 27.

"The spontaneous participation of all of you has given the confidence that we are not alone and we will be able to do something," Asma Kibria, also an eminent artist, said.

"We will continue our protests until the arrest of the criminals," she said in an emotion-charged voice while talking to reporters at the end of the programme.

People in other cities and towns also joined the protests to express their hatred for the killers and solidarity with Kibria's family in the next course of action.

Overwhelmed by the mass response to the programme, Asma Kibria declared that she would not back home until killers of her husband are punished.

She announced a similar programme to be observed on February 12.

In Dhaka, the participants that also included senior citizens, women and children, formed a human chain from Jigatola to Dhanmondi Road No 27 through Sat Masjid Road.

Asma Kibria and other family members, carrying black placards and portraits of the slain leader, stood in silence behind a black banner that read "We are resentful, we are shocked".

Kibria's son Dr Reza Kibria, daughter Dr Nazli Kibria, sisters Ashraf Siddiqui and Sharifa Musabbir, daughter-in-law Rina Kibria and grandson Subhas Intiaz joined the protests.

"No false excuse is acceptable in SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

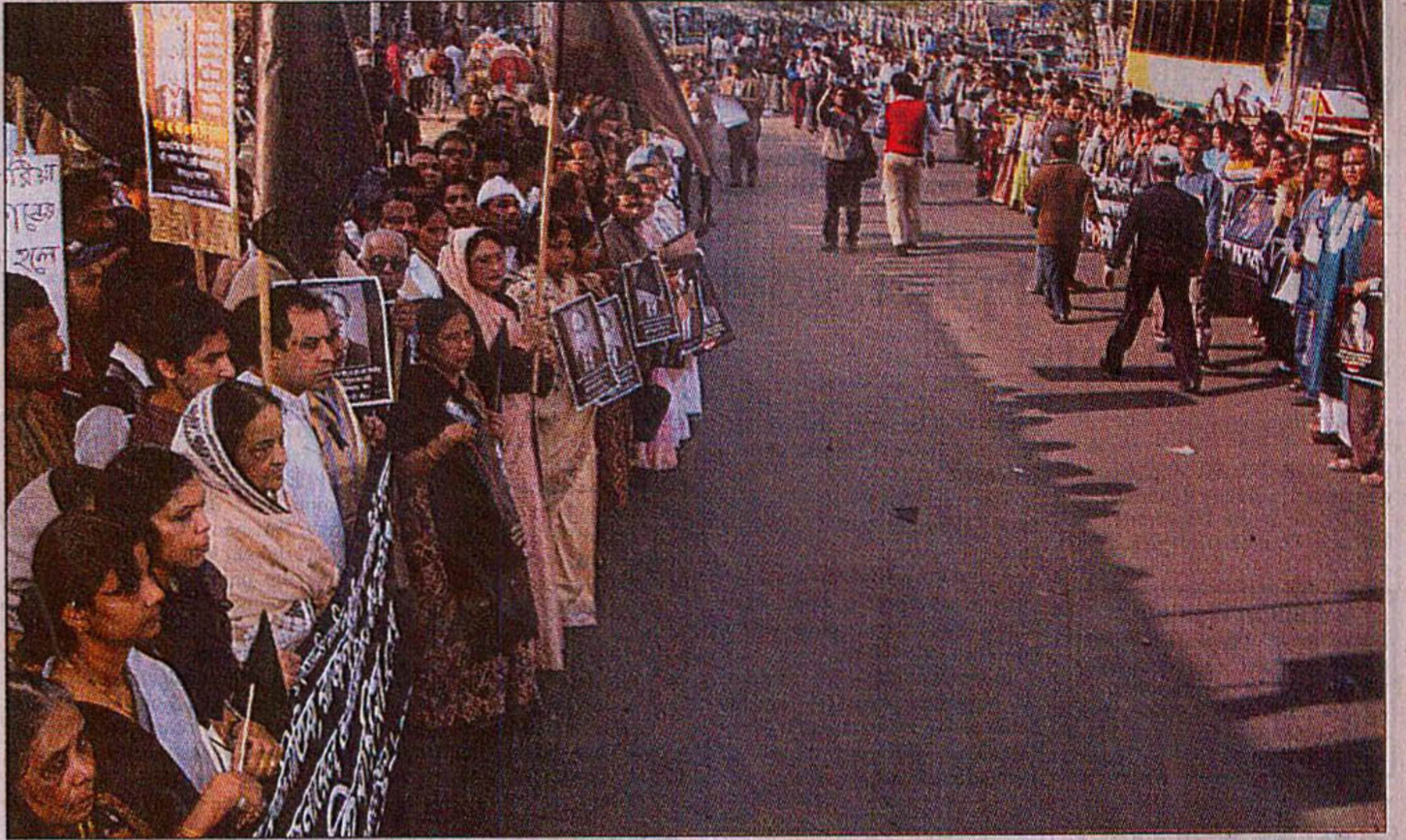


PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of people line up on the streets in the capital yesterday afternoon staging a peaceful protest against the killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others in the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj.

AL MOURNING PROCESSION 'Oust this govt to ensure trial of killers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people yesterday took to the city streets to join a mourning procession organised by the main opposition Awami League (AL) protesting the killing of former finance minister SAMS Kibria in the January 27 grenade attack in Habiganj.

Earlier, the AL held a rally at Muktagong which was attended by people from all walks of life.

Left-leaning 11-party combine and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) also brought out separate mourning processions on the day.

Speaking at the Muktagong rally, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil called upon people to dislodge the BNP-led coalition government to ensure punishment of Kibria's killers. "As long as the coalition is in SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

ALLEGED FOILING OF SAARC SUMMIT

Govt trying to shift blame, says AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday accused the government of maligning the main opposition party through falsehood about the postponement of the 13th Saarc Summit, placing the blame on the AL.

"The ruling alliance is utilising the postponement of the summit for political gain and trying to put the blame on the Awami League," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said at a press conference at party's Dhanmondi office.

"We want to make it clear that Awami League's movement is not to hamper the Saarc Summit, but against this killer government to force it to quit," Jalil said. "We are not against the Saarc and its spirit. We want to make the regional forum stronger."

On Thursday, a meeting of the top leaders of the BNP-led ruling alliance blamed AL for foiling the Saarc Summit and said the main opposition had launched a campaign against holding the summit in Dhaka and called hartal coinciding with it.

Refuting the allegation, the AL general secretary said, "It is unfortunate that the high-ups of the ruling coalition gave such statements involving Awami League to create confusion in public mind."

He said the summit was postponed as India declined to attend citing Nepalese political turmoil and deterioration of law and order in Dhaka.

"The government's dealings with the opposition and ridiculous statement do not only manifest their foolishness but will also tarnish the image of the country," Jalil said.

The AL general secretary said if the government is sincere to hold the Saarc Summit, it should create a congenial atmosphere for it.

"It should ensure rule of law in the country through allowing international investigations of the grenade attacks, holding trials of the killings during the last three years SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

JMJB attacked jatra, arrested activist says

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Operatives of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) carried out bomb attacks on jatra (folk theatre) shows in Jamalpur last month, police said yesterday quoting an activist of the militant Islamist outfit arrested in Bogra recently.

Followers of JMJB chief Abdur Rahman Shah and members of the JMJB bomb squad carried out the attacks, said the arrestee, Shafigullah.

The bomb attacks were planned at a meeting at a madrasa in Jamalpur Sadar upzila, said Shafigullah, arrested with explosives from JMJB operative Joyal's house at Chaksadu village of Gabtali upzila on January 16. He however claimed he was not involved in any bomb attacks.

"A jatra show at Chhantia village of Dikpita union in Sadar upzila was attacked to frighten people to SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

SABOTAGE THREATS BY OUTLAWS Security blanket around 10 dists of Khulna divn

STAR REPORT

Police threw a security blanket around the key installations in ten districts of Khulna division in the wake of 'threats' of sabotage by outlaws.

The threats came from a secret meeting of several outlawed outfits in Jhenidah, the birth place of Janajuddho leader Abdur Rashid Malitha Tapan, on Wednesday where they vowed to avenge the deaths of their partymen in 'crossfire', police sources said.

A top leader of an outlawed outfit in Jhenidah speaking anonymously yesterday confirmed holding of the meeting but declined to reveal decisions of the meeting.

According to sources, some suicide squads and bomb squads have been formed to carry out attacks on the installations. The bomb squad members are tasked with carrying bombs to other operatives who are to blast those at different installations.

After Wednesday's meeting of the outfits, top police officials held SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Afghan jet crashes with 104 on board

AFP, Kabul

The wreckage of an Afghan airliner that went missing with 104 people on board has been found east of Kabul yesterday, a western security source told AFP.

The Kam Air Boeing 737 travelling from Herat to Kabul vanished from radar screens on Thursday afternoon after requesting permission to divert because of heavy snow storms, officials said.

"The plane was found 35km east of Kabul. We don't know if there are any survivors," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

However another source close to the search operation gave a different distance, saying the crash site was 57km from the capital.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Book lovers crowd fair amid tight security

DU CORRESPONDENT

Book enthusiasts from across the city swarmed the Bangla Academy premises yesterday, the first weekend since the prime minister inaugurated the Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2005 on Tuesday.

The crowd turned huge by the evening with the bookworms, couples, and students struggling to walk freely the fair premises.

Security measurers were stepped up at the entrance to the fair. Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police personnel often in plainclothes patrolled the Bangla Academy area. A huge contingent of police were stationed at the Teacher Student Centre (TSC).

Police who were deployed at all the entrances to the Dhaka University (DU) campus prevented vehicles from plying the campus roads much to the sufferings of the visitors. One of the police officials seeking anonymity said that they SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors browse through books on display at the Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy yesterday. The fair drew a huge weekend crowd amid tight security.

UP chairman gunned down in Satkania

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Union Parishad (UP) chairman was gunned down by unidentified assailants in Satkania upazila of the district last night.

Witnesses said Engineer Aminul Islam, chairman of Khagaria Union Parishad, came under attack while he was coming out of an arbitration at Madarkhil at about 7:30pm.

The gunmen, lying in wait in adjoining Bijyapara jungle, opened fire on Aminul and left the scene. He died instantly.

Satkania police confirmed the incident, but could not give details till the filing of this report at 9:00pm.

Mentionable, locals blamed the Jamaat-Shibir cadres for the killing. They alleged that Jamaat-shibir cadres killed the UP chairman for joining the BNP.

Aminul Islam, who was a Jamaat-backed UP chairman, joined the BNP along with two other Jamaat-backed UP chairmen—Ahmedur Rahman Chowdhury alias Ahmudya and Abdus Satter—last year.

Ahmedur Rahman Chowdhury alias Ahmudya, also a listed top-notch criminal of the district, was killed in 'crossfire' a few months back.

34 more controversial recruitment at RU

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

Rajshahi University authorities approved the appointments of 24 teachers in five departments even though there is no need for such recruitment, and also took a director of accounts and nine section officers on 'political grounds', according to sources.

The decisions, which were taken during a January 31 Syndicate meeting, have drawn flak from teachers and concerned officials.

Four teachers were appointed in the Law and Justice department, including two Islamic Chhatra Shibir activists, Shahal Uddin and Zulfikar Ali. The latter was stripped in the mid-90s of his residential privileges at the RU Institute of Business Studies, Bhaban for 'un-social activities'.

Department sources said there is currently no need for any teachers, as at least 24 teachers are taking

three or four classes per week instead of ten as per law.

"The authority was recruiting voters, not teachers", commented the Law faculty Dean, Prof ANM Mohsin, adding that elections for the dean, syndicate and senate will be held on February 26.

The department chairman Prof Asma Siddika refuted the allegations and said the Planning Committee (PC) approved the recruitment.

In the Biochemistry and Chemical Technology departments, 13 teachers were taken against eight advertised posts, defying objections of two Planning Committee members.

The department Chairman Prof Rezaul Karim said the selection committee and VC have the power to appoint teachers without the decision of the PC.

Four teachers were appointed to the Material Science department, two to Folklore and one to the

Music and Dramatics department.

Zannatul Ferdous, a syndicate member, alleged that most of the newly recruited teachers are supporters of the ruling alliance.

Shahidullah Sarker was taken as the director of accounts after the authority sought applications from persons having a commerce background and at least 15 years' experience in RU accounts.

Sources said Sarker, with a Master of Arts in economics, has only 10 years' experience under the RU planning and development section.

Accounts officials expressed concern over the appointment. Shahidullah Sarker told The Daily Star that he served 16 years in commercial banks before joining RU.

The RU syndicate also approved nine section officers, most of who are former members of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and have been seen in BNP processions.

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