



Hartal on June 27

Declares Khaleda at Paltan rally; speaks of new election to get an effective parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal for June 27, during a massive rally in the capital yesterday.

The general strike was announced protesting tender-grabbing and extortions by government cronies; and demanding resolution of the ongoing water, gas, and electricity crises; resignation of the Election Commission; and cancellation of the recently signed treaties with India.

Urging the rally to make the hartal successful, Khaleda said, "You wanted a programme for a movement, so here it is. I know movements bring sufferings for the people. But to get rid of the horrible pain this government is inflicting, you must make some sacrifices. We don't have any other option than a hartal, to protest in a peaceful legal way."

She alleged that the opposition is not being allowed to speak in the parliament, and their notices are not being heeded, adding, "The people will get an effective parliament if a new election is held after dissolving the present parliament."

In an immediate reaction to the hartal announcement, ruling Awami League urged the opposition leader to withdraw it for the sake of the country's economic development.

"We request her to withdraw the announcement of hartal and other destructive programmes, as people want continuation of the current economic development. If not withdrawn, the

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BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, inset, delivers her speech at the grand rally on Paltan Maidan yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

BNP'S 20 REASONS FOR HARTAL, SIT-IN

REASONS FOR DAWN-TO-DUSK HARTAL ON JUNE 27

- Poor supply of water, gas and power
- Ruling party's extortion, tender manipulation
- Female students' harassments at different educational institutions including Eden College
- Politicisation of judiciary and administration
- Job dismissals and harassment of employees and officials
- Treaty signed with India that goes against the national interest

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PHOTO: STAR

BNP called Sheikh Hasina a fraud for not following up on her election pledges. On Paltan Maidan yesterday they replayed on a big screen her ninth parliamentary election rally speeches.

KL to consider legalising all Bangladeshis

Malaysian PM assures Hasina

UNB, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia will consider with sincerity the issue of legalising all Bangladeshis working in the country.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Abdul Razak gave the assurance when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on him at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday.

The Malaysian premier said he would place the matter of legalisation of Bangladeshi workers before the committee on appointment of labours.

He praised the skill and hard labour of Bangladeshi workers and said that these labours are contributing significantly to the economy of his country for a long time.

Press Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad briefed the reporters after the meeting.

Hasina requested her Malaysian counterpart to encourage his country's entrepreneurs to invest in power, telecommunication, gas and tourism sectors in Bangladesh.

Hasina said her government provides training to the workers before sending them abroad and also brief them about the laws and language of the respective country.

She said, "I would like to invite your experts to visit our educational and training institutes to further assess our capability in providing skilled workforce as per your requirement."

In this connection, Hasina mentioned that her government has now introduced machine readable passport.

During the meeting, the two leaders discussed various international issues of common concern.

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Bangkok burns after crackdown kills 6

Protesters surrender to troops; curfew in Thai capital, 23 provinces; key buildings malls set on fire

AFP, Bangkok

Enraged protesters went on a rampage of arson and looting yesterday in Bangkok, where fire engulfed major buildings including the stock exchange after a deadly army assault on an anti-government rally.

Plumes of black smoke billowed across the skyline in the aftermath of the military crackdown on the "Red Shirt" camp which left at least six people dead, including an Italian journalist, and forced their leaders to surrender.

While most demonstrators dispersed, some militant protesters set fires at 27 locations in Bangkok in an upsurge of violence that

prompted authorities to declare a night-time curfew across about a third of the country.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who has been under enormous pressure to end the crippling standoff, said he intended to "get through" the crisis and return peace to the country.

"The end of the rally has dissatisfied some protesters, especially those who are armed," he said. "So they created trouble, particularly arson in some areas."

Major blazes swept through Central World, one of Southeast Asia's largest shopping centres, the Stock Exchange of Thailand, a downtown cinema, many banks and a television

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Strike not wanted

Say businesses, civil society

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over people's suffering, some civil society members and business leaders yesterday criticised the announcement of hartal by the opposition BNP.

They urged the opposition to refrain from observing hartal while Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, former chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said hartal is a part of democratic process but it has to be observed peacefully.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, told The Daily Star, "We are very much anxious. We are moving back to the politics of confrontation once again. Confrontational politics is suicidal both for country's democracy and economy."

"I hope these two parties will take initiative to establish peace in the country through consensus," he added.

TIB Chairman M Hafizuddin Khan said, "We do not support hartal at all. No such situation prevails in the country that hartal should be enforced."

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Laila spreads panic in coast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On hearing the news of the approaching cyclone Laila, panic has gripped the inhabitants living on the coastal belt who are still traumatised by the daunting memories of Aila and Sidr.

Though Laila is hovering more than 1,000km away, people who are still haunted by the memories. Thousands of people from Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts have been living on flood protection embankments for one whole year since cyclone Aila destroyed their homes.

Authorities said they have taken all possible measures to save the Aila victims from the effects of Laila, if it strikes.

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CITY OVERPASSES

One out of 6 gets priority

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government is to start in July the construction of an overpass at Staff Road Level Crossing, the least congestion prone of the six level crossings to have overpasses, communication ministry sources said.

The armed forces division in two years will construct the Staff Road Level Crossing overpass in Dhaka Cantonment along with the flyover between Airport Road (Zia Colony) and Matikata spending Tk 46.96 crore. However, the Zia Colony road itself remains incomplete for more than two years.

The ministry has made little headway in going for construction of the remaining five overpasses. They are supposed to be over level crossings at Moghbazar, FDC, Malibagh, Jurain, and Syedabad to ease traffic movement and improve safety.

The Syedabad overpass has been tagged with Jatrabari flyover project and Malibagh overpass with the Malibagh flyover project. Tagging these with flyover project would ultimately delay their construction, officials say.

Initially, Bangladesh Railway tried to build the overpasses but

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