

# BNP's Hartal

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wide hartal though most of its senior level leaders and major allies including Jamaat-e-Islami did not take to the street.

Law enforcers cordoned off the BNP central office at Naya Paltan since morning.

About 15 BNP activists were injured when police charged truncheons on them at the entrance and ground floor of the office after pickets set a Mishuk (three-wheeler auto-rickshaw) afire around 12:40pm.

Police used water cannon to disperse the BNP men and picked up eight from the spot.

Cops also obstructed activists while they tried to bring out processions around 9:30am and 11:30am and detained two.

Awami League activists allegedly attacked the Dhandmondi house of BNP's Dhaka district unit President and chairperson's Adviser Abdul Mannan.

Stray incidents marked the hartal in several districts including Rajshahi, Barisal, Khulna and Narsingdi, report our correspondents.

At least 35 people were injured in Rajshahi, nine in Khulna and 20 in Jyppurhat during clashes between police and picketers.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain at a press briefing at the party's central office yesterday afternoon declared two-day programme protesting attack and arrest during hartal hours.

He claimed law enforcers detained at least 50 and injured 800 party activists.

The party will stage demonstration at city's Muktangan today and across the country tomorrow.

BNP leaders Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Khandaker Mohsharraf Hossain, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Rizvi Ahmed and lawmakers Zainul Abidin Faroque, Rehana Akhter Ranu, Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, Syeda Asifa Ashrafi Papia and Shammi Akhter, among others, were present in front of the party office.

AL, however, said BNP had called the hartal and resorted to violence to hamper preparations for the forthcoming World Cup Cricket and to tarnish the image of the country.

"Next time government won't tolerate such activities in the name of hartal and check those strictly," said AL Joint Secretary General Mahbubul Alam Hanif adding, since there was no logic for enforcing hartal, there was no spontaneity in observing it.

Most of the shops, schools and business establishments remained closed in the capital. Rickshaws and some passenger buses were found plying on city streets while rail and air communication were normal.

Trial proceedings at Dhaka District and Metropolitan Session Judge's courts continued as usual, noted our court correspondent.

Chittagong Port operated normally but the delivery of cargos was hampered, said port authority Secretary Farhad Uddin Ahmed.

BNP leader Abdul Mannan, his wife and two others were injured when some unruly youths, riding on at least 25 motorcycles, attacked his residence around 10:00am, Nasiruddin Ahmed Ashim, son-in-law of Mannan, told The Daily Star.

Some of them entered the house premises and vandalised a microbus parked there when Mannan, with his fellow leader Emran Saleh Prince, was taking preparations to bring out a procession.

The four received minor injuries as the youths threw

## 5 robbers

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an announcement about the robbery from a nearby mosque around 3:00am.

Sensing danger, the gang exploded hand bombs to make their way to neighbouring Kathalia village, added locals.

Villagers of Kathalia managed to catch five of the gang and beat them dead on the spot.

A case was filed in this connection.

brick chips from outside the house and broke the window glasses.

Police rushed to the spot but did not restrict the youths, complained Nasiruddin adding, they were chanting 'Joy Bangla' slogan.

Police dispersed a number of gatherings at Mohakhali, Shantinagar and Science Laboratory intersections, court premises of Old Dhaka and several other places in the capital.

Pickets set a bus ablaze at Suritola around 1:50pm, which was doused by two units of Gulistan Fire Brigade Station.

BNP leader Mirza Abbas led a procession in Shantinagar area around 10:15am before police used batons to disperse them. Incensed, activists vandalised a CNG-run auto-rickshaw there.

Pickers set fire to a bus and a three-wheeler auto-rickshaw and also damaged a passenger bus in the area around 10:30am.

Law enforcers also foiled a procession of Jagannath University unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal near court area, leaving four injured. They also picked up two from the spot.

Unidentified persons hurled two molotov cocktails from the rooftop of a building at Shahjahanpur around 9:40am, said Lt Col Rafiqul Islam, commanding officer of Rapid Action Battalion-3.

BNP enforced the hartal citing a number of issues including protesting filing of a case against party chairperson following recent clash at Ariel Beel in Munshiganj, crash in share market and price hike of essentials.

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## PM stymies

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Minister Sheikh Hasina suddenly took the floor and spoke on the issue in an apparent effort to rein in the attack. While doing so, she also criticised a section of newspapers for, what she claimed, publishing "fake" reports to "malign" dignitaries.

She said she had never seen MPs criticising the press for such reporting. "You should also look for the remedy to this practice," she said.

Deputy Speaker Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, who was presiding over the sitting, contributed to the premier's effort by preventing lawmakers from speaking on the content of the letter which annoyed many MPs.

Rashed Khan Menon, chief of Workers Party, a component of AL-led ruling alliance, raised the letter issue and launched a blistering criticism against Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain accusing him of breaching MPs' constitutional privileges and immunities by sending the complaint to the premier.

The communications ministry had sent the letter to the premier in response to AL lawmaker Tofail Ahmed's speech in the House last Thursday on the sorry state of roads across the country and delay in some major projects. Lawmakers appreciated Tofail's speech on that day by thumping desks.

The communications minister later sent the letter to the prime minister highlighting the activities of the ministry and also criticised Tofail for his remarks.

Citing the content of the letter, Menon said it maligned Tofail saying that he (Tofail) made the remarks on the performance of the ministry out of rage and jealousy.

"The communications minister is responsible for sending the letter as it cannot be forwarded without his consent. He sent the letter to the prime minister failing to reply to lawmakers in the parliament," Menon said.

"By sending the letter to the executive chief, the communications minister challenged the sovereignty of the parliament and breached MPs' privileges," he alleged.

Citing Article 78 of the constitution, Menon demanded the chair gave a ruling whether the letter violated the constitution.

Referring to the ministry's rejoinder to Bangla daily Prothom Alo regarding the news on the sorry state of the roads and the minister's cartoon, Menon also said the language of the rejoinder was also tantamount to the freedom of the press.

Several AL lawmaker including Tofail and Suranjit Sengupta, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal's Hasanul Haq Inu sought floor to speak on the issue following Menon.

Sheikh Hasina, also the leader of the House, then took floor and made a brief statement defending the communications minister.

She said the minister, not the secretary, had sent her the letter. In the minister gave a synopsis of the ministry's activities.

"Now the question is how the letter had reached the press before it reached me?" she asked.

After the premier, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Matin Khasru, Hasanul Haq Inu, Mayenuddin Khan Badal, Fazle Rabbi Mia, Abdul Mannan took floor and tried to speak on the issue raised by Menon.

But the deputy speaker did not allow them to do so saying, "The matter has been disposed of after the premier's speech and I also gave a ruling on it. Please don't speak further on it."

He did not even allow Tofail Ahmed to give his personal clarification on the issue.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) MP Badal demanded upgrading MPs status in the warrant of precedence. A number of AL lawmakers including Khasru, Rabbi, Mannan, Inu and independent MP Fazlul Azim supported Badal's demand.

# Lowest bidder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
tender committee, the consortium has now become the lowest bidder and Shanghai Electric the second lowest. Now, the PDB is seeking the power ministry's clearance for awarding the job to the consortium, well placed sources in the PDB said.

Other sources said as per the bidding criteria, instead of selecting CNTIC-CMC's bid-- the PDB should have disqualified it because the consortium's bid offer lacked vital information about its proposed power plant's net heat rate. A plant's heat rate directly affects the cost of power, they mentioned.

Apparently to save CNTIC-CMC's bid and allow it to modify its tender document, the PDB tender body during evaluation of bids unduly sought the consortium's clarification, asking it in a January 9 letter to provide the net heat rate.

This gave the consortium an opportunity to modify its bid in a way that its price offer would become cheaper than that of the lowest bidder Shanghai Electric. The consortium on January 16 gave a net heat rate and grossly changed two vital technical specifications stating that its previous specification had typing errors.

Accordingly, the consortium's bid offer became lower than that of Shanghai Electric, which had submitted a flawless offer.

Before the tender evaluation began, the read out price of Shanghai Electric for this power project totalled \$191.4 million and CNTIC-CMC's \$192.9 million.

This power plant will operate using both natural gas and furnace oil.

During the initial evaluation process, it was found that Shanghai Electric's per kilowatt gas-fired power generation cost stands at \$656 and furnace oil-fired cost at \$650. The CNTIC-CMC's gas-fired cost comes to \$665 and \$653 respectively.

After the consortium modified its bid documents, its per kilowatt gas-fired power cost came down to \$657 and furnace oil-based cost to \$644.

"The consortium was allowed to reduce a total cost of Tk 20 crore, and this helped it to become the lowest bidder by a narrow margin," said a PDB source.

After the evaluation pro-

cess, the consortium's total bid offer stood at \$192.8 million while Shanghai Electric's total increased to \$193 million.

It is alleged that the tender evaluation has been tampered with under the influence of the communications minister; but the minister brushes aside the allegation saying, "I have no links with Sahco now. I am not involved."

Syed Abul Hossain said if a company (represented by Sahco) gets a contract as the lowest responsive bidder, what was the problem? It was pointed out to him that the consortium was not really the lowest responsive bidder and that it was given an unfair chance to modify the bid to become the number one. He commented, "You are free to write whatever you want. It is the PDB that should clarify this matter."

A top PDB official, requesting not to be named, said, "It was unfair for the tender evaluation body to ask for information from any company during the evaluation process because it affects the power tariff. The evaluation body should have sought permission from the board (PDB), which it did not."

But it is not clear if the PDB will now review its recommendation to award the job to the consortium at this stage.

The tender for Ghorashal project is one of the poor examples of power projects under the present government, which has so far awarded dozens of power generation contracts for a total of nearly 3,000 MW.

This is actually the third tendering for the same project. The first one, floated in 2009, had to be cancelled due to lack of participation by bidders. The second tender was cancelled due to resistance from Syed Abul Hossain, who argued the PDB picked a bidder that had submitted fabricated documents.

Back then, the communications minister claimed to The Daily Star that he had resigned from Sahco when he became a minister and that he was not influencing any bid. "I am no longer in that company. Can't this company do business just because I was in it before? All I asked of Sahco is that it should not participate in any job with the communications ministry," he said.

# Mother

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secretary of Shariatpur unit of rights body Sujana, told The Daily Star it is a mockery that the civil surgeon, who conducted the autopsy, found no injury in her body.

Aklima broke down in tears leaning on a rickety wooden cupboard, the only furniture in her house, when this correspondent told her about the reports.

"You say they have not found any injury marks on Hena's body. But those who had come to see her could not go close to her due to stench from injuries all over her body," said the mother.

Earlier, she did not utter a single word about it to save her daughter from disgrace.

"She was vomiting blood; saliva was coming out of her mouth," she continued.

"There were bruises and swollen flesh all over her body including on her private parts."

"I do not understand how they conducted the tests."

Aklima said the wounds Hena suffered had not resulted only from the lashing but also from the beating by Mahub's wife Shilpi on January 23.

On that day, Shilpi discovered Hena and Mahub behind the latter's house around 10:00pm after Mahub raped her, villagers said.

Shilpi, who was the under impression that Hena had an affair with her husband, locked Hena inside their house and beat her mercilessly, they added.

Hena and Mahub are cousins who were living in

the same compound, but in separate houses. Among the three brothers sharing the land, Hena's father Darbesh Kha, a day-labourer, is the poorest.

"Four people including Shilpi beat the girl and kicked her in the chest and abdomen. They also trampled her several times," said advocate Rowshan Ara, member of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission in Shariatpur.

An X-ray might have detected her ribs broken, she added.

Gias Uddin Bari, chairman of Chamta union parishad, said: "Something is wrong somewhere. Witnesses saw injury marks all over her body. If the police inquest and autopsy are not done properly, the family will not get justice."

They all welcomed the High Court order to exhume Hena's body for a fresh post-mortem.

Meanwhile, following The Daily Star report published yesterday, Deputy Commissioner Sanowar Hossain held a series of closed-door meetings with Civil Surgeon Golam Sarwar, who conducted the autopsy.

The committee formed on February 2 to find out negligence of the authorities in saving Hena visited her house for the first time yesterday.

"Where do we live? In which part of the world? How did the girl die without any injury? It cannot simply be accepted," said Abul Hashin, headmaster of Pancha Palli Gururam High School where Hena studied up to class VII before she quit.



# Booklovers defy hartal disruptions



Crowds gather at Amar Ekushey Bhai Mela on Bangla Academy premises yesterday, the seventh day of the book fair.

PHOTO: COURTESY

**RAKIB AHAMMED**

While the roads and offices of Dhaka were almost empty during yesterday's hartal, business ran as usual at Bangla Academy where thousands of bookworms thronged the stalls of Amar Ekushey Bhai Mela.

Enthusiastic readers were seen waiting in long queues while many were browsing through the books in front of the stalls.

The fair did not face any unforeseen or unpleasant incidents though three crude bombs went off at the TSC intersection on the evening prior to the hartal.

With his one-year-old daughter in a perambulator, Kazi Khorshed Alam of Dhandmondi visited the fair in the afternoon with his family.

"We were supposed to come to the fair next Friday but since finished work a bit earlier than usual, we decided to come

here," said Khorshed.

Visitors said they did not expect any unpleasantness to break out at the book fair during the hartal.

"The opposition should have avoided announcing hartal in February as the month carries the essence of national solidarity through holding one of the largest book fairs of the country," said Abu Talha, a student of Dhaka University.

Kawser Ahmed, a publisher said, "The huge turn out of visitors even during hartal, proved how much people loved this fair."

His stall sold more books than usual, he added.

A total of 551 books have arrived at the fair in the first week of the month-long festival. Novels topped the list of new books with 106 titles followed by 99 titles of poems and 66 of short stories.

## HC picks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
for hearing and disposal while nine others are ready to be heard, says the report.

At least 9,141 cases remained pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court till December 31, said an official at the apex court preferring anonymity.

The chief justice's close monitoring and supervision of case management has helped hasten the disposal rate of cases, said the official.

The chief justice also assigned two HC benches for prompt disposal of the cases filed in 2010.

Eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik told The Daily Star that disposal of over 50,000 cases in four months is a significant achievement of the HC. It clearly justifies the chief justice's initiative that was criticised by a section of lawyers.

"If this trend continues, I think the backlog of cases will be reduced to a very tolerable level by the end of this year, and the litigants won't have to wait for years to get their cases disposed," he said.

## Proposals

**FROM PAGE 20**  
constitution and place a report recommending necessary amendments.

The same month the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court declared illegal the fifth amendment to the constitution.

The special committee on October 12 consented to printing of the constitution by restoring the articles either amended or repealed during the first martial law regime and ratified by the Fifth Amendment Act.

On receipt of the printed copy, it was supposed to examine the charter thoroughly for bringing further changes, if necessary.

Since then, nearly three months have passed, but the law ministry has yet to complete reprinting the constitution.

Suranjit said the committee is concerned over the delay and will ask the law minister at its next meeting about the status of the printing task.

On October 12 last year, Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed told The Daily Star that his ministry had already started preparations for the reprint in line with the apex court verdict. It might need maximum two weeks to complete the job, he added.

A source, who was present at yesterday's meeting, said a number of committee members asked if the articles, which were either amended or repealed during the first martial law regime, will be automatically reinstated after the Supreme Court's scrapping of the fifth amendment.

# Mubarak faces

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only the three cities.

Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama said yesterday he believed there was progress in Egypt a day after Egyptian Vice President Omar Suleiman met with opposition groups to appease an anti-government revolt.

"Obviously, Egypt has to negotiate a path and they're making progress," he told journalists after addressing the US Chamber of Commerce.

The United States "will be a partner" to a new Egypt but its future leadership will need to "uphold" existing treaties, the White House said in apparent reference to that country's peace agreement with Israel.

On Sunday night, thousands of demonstrators spent under blankets and tarpaulins in central Cairo's Tahrir Square, or Liberation Square, which over two weeks has begun to resemble a tented camp.

Protesters sat under the tracks of army tanks deployed around the square, fearful that any military pullout could be designed to drive out the protesters or abandon them to the mercy of pro-regime thugs.

Activists barred access to the hulking Mugamma building, the heart of Egypt's bureaucracy, which dominates the square, despite dozens of people seeking to have documents such as passports or birth certificates processed.

Protesters captured a man with a petrol can they said was trying to set the building ablaze, an act of arson that would be blamed on protesters, and handed him over to troops.

Mubarak's key lieutenant and possible heir, Vice President Omar Suleiman, attempted on Sunday to appease the revolt by inviting some opposition groups to join him on a panel to pilot democratic reform.

But the demonstrators, in their 14th straight day of protest yesterday, were unimpressed.

Opposition parties, including the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, repeated their demand that Mubarak himself must stand down or immediately delegate his powers to his deputy.

Government spokesman Magdi Radi said the

parties had agreed to form a committee of jurists and politicians "to study and propose constitutional amendments and required legislative amendments by the first week of March."

Negotiators also agreed to open an office for complaints about the treatment of political prisoners, to loosen media curbs, lift emergency rule "depending on the security situation," and reject foreign interference.

But Suleiman refused another key demand of the opposition, saying he would not assume Mubarak's powers and rule in his place during the transition.

Not all of the opposition movements involved in the revolt against Mubarak's rule were present at the talks. Former UN nuclear watchdog head and leading dissident Mohamed ElBaradei was not invited, and has criticised the talks.

The Muslim Brotherhood, still officially banned, said it had agreed to take part in the talks because it wanted to determine if the government was serious about reform, but warned that the initial concessions were insufficient.

Washington has denied contact with the outfit.

Asked whether he believed Mubarak would step down, the powerful Islamist movement's number two leader Mahmud Ezzat told AFP: "That hinges on popular pressure, and we support the popular pressure. It must continue."

## PM blames

**FROM PAGE 20**  
However, the cabinet approved Tree Protection Act 2011 and Wildlife Protection Act 2010 to protect the forest trees and wildlife, the press secretary said.

The cabinet also approved trade treaty between Bangladesh and Kuwait to enhance bilateral economic ties.

Besides, a presentation on introduction of digital signature and certificate in the government activities was made before the cabinet. With these applications, e-commerce including online trading, bidding, tax paying, increasing the number of taxpayers and communications with different divisional headquarters would be easier, Azad added.