

Hartal puts edn in terrible state

Says Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday urged the political parties not to hold any programme that hinders students' education, saying the education process is being hampered due to the hartal.

"The students are our sons and daughters, our future generation. So there should not be any such programme that may harm them," he told reporters at his secretariat office.

The non-stop hartal has put the education in a terrible state as many exams including that of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) were deferred, he said, adding "We will face mounting pressure to overcome the loss."

Around 9.26 lakh examinees are appearing in the HSC and equivalent examinations that began on April 1. The government has already rescheduled the exams of several subjects due to the non-stop hartal called by the opposition BNP.

BNP observed its countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal for the third consecutive day yesterday in protest against the alleged "disappearance" of former lawmaker and BNP Organising Secretary for Sylhet Division M Ilias Ali.

The minister said Ilias Ali is a political leader and they are sympathetic to him, and earnestly expect that he will return to his family.

But observing non-stop hartal centring the incident will be harmful for the students, he said.

Nahid said they have tried to bring discipline in the education system during the last three years. But hartal has already created a session jam in the academic calendar.

Dhaka Education Board officials said it would turn out to be a system loss as they would not be able to finish the exam in due time and distribute the answer sheets as per the schedule.

"We have been able to publish results of the public exams like HSC and SSC within 60 days of completion of exams. But this time, it will be tough to maintain the timeframe," said a senior official of the board preferring not to be named.

The education minister, however, said they would try their best to publish results on time.

The ongoing first term examinations at different schools also hampered due to the hartal, with the authorities rescheduling the exams for the last three days over and over again.



(Clockwise from top left) Picketers set fire to a bus parked in the capital's Agargaon and vandalise CNG-run auto-rickshaws in Mahakhali during yesterday's hartal. Police pick up some female leaders of BNP after they had a round of exchange with the law enforcers at Barik Building intersection in Chittagong city. BNP leaders and workers, fenced by police, stay put in the party's Naya Paltan office in the capital. Krishak Sramik Janata League President Banga Bir Kader Siddiqui lies on the street in front of BNP's Naya Paltan office after police detained some of his party leaders and activists while they were marching towards the BNP office.

PHOTO: STAR



Newspaper holiday

UNB, Dhaka

Newspapers and news agencies will remain closed on May 1 on the occasion of the May Day.

Members of Newspapers Owners Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) will observe Tuesday (May 1) as a holiday on account of May Day, said a press release.

Therefore, no newspaper will be published on May 2, the release said.

Refrain from damaging vehicles

Transport owners urge BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of transport owners yesterday urged the main opposition BNP to refrain from vandalising and setting fire to vehicles during hartal hours.

They made the call while addressing a press conference at Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Samity (DPS) office in the capital.

"We request the opposi-

tion party to refrain from such destructive activities in the name of observing democratic programme," said Khandaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of DPS.

He also warned of resisting such destructive activities, if the pro-hartal activists try to commit such incident again in future.

Transport owners incur losses around Tk 250 crores a day due to hartal, claimed

Enayet, adding that at least 11 buses were torched and 20 buses were vandalised during the last three-day dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by the party.

DSPS Executive President Abdul Baten Babu, Organising Secretary Abul Mansur Bulbul, Office Secretary Samdani Khandaker were, among others, present on the occasion

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia comforts the family members of missing Ilias Ali after she addressed a press conference at the party's Gulshan office yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



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Violence, vandalism mark third day of hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP-enforced third day countrywide hartal demanding whereabouts of its missing leader Ilias Ali and his driver was observed in the capital yesterday with sporadic violence and vandalism.

Former lawmaker M Ilias Ali and his driver Ansar went missing on April 17. Police found abandoned car of Ilias near his Banani residence around 1:30am on the day. Main opposition BNP has claimed that law enforcers picked up Ilias Ali while the government refuted the allegation saying it is trying to find out the BNP leader.

During the hartal hours yesterday, the opposition activists could not rule over the city streets due to police obstruction while ruling Awami League men brought out anti-hartal processions with protection of the law enforcers.

However, normalcy returned to the capital in the afternoon as vehicles started plying on the streets. Heavy contingents of law enforcers were deployed at all key points during the dawn-to-dusk hartal hours.

BNP leaders and workers who gathered in front of its Nayapaltan central office since the morning could not bring out any procession or hold rally due to police obstruction. The law enforcers cordoned off the BNP office since 6:00am.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam there said the government was turning the country into a chaotic situation by not returning party's organising secretary (Sylhet division) Ilias Ali to his family.

"The government's men have picked up Ilias Ali and it's their duty to return him to his family," said Fakhru to journalists.

According to police and witnesses, violence took place at different parts of the capital, including Rajarbagh, Agargaon, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Malibagh, Bangla Motor intersection, Karwan Bazar, Dhanmondi and Jatrabari during the hartal hours.

Three cocktails went off at Rajarbagh, leaving two police personnel wounded. Two more cocktails exploded at Maghbazar while another at Gulshan

crossing.

Pro-hartal activists vandalised five vehicles at Mohakhali and a human hauler at Malibagh Railgate while JCD men from Dhaka University unit damaged at least four buses at Bangla Motor.

Protesters also damaged a vehicle of television channel, Independent TV, on Gulshan link road in the morning.

They also torched a private car at Karwan Bazar while one minibus near Mahila Polytechnic Institute at Agargaon.

Police dispersed several pro-hartal rallies in different parts of the capital, including Dhanmondi, Motijheel, Fakirerpool and Kalabagan.

On Dhanmondi road no 1, police dispersed a BNP rally led by former state minister Abdul Mannan Khan around 1:30pm and picked up two activists while they clashed with the law enforcers.

Four pickets were held at Mirpur Section-10 while attempting to set fire to a bus around 11:30am.

In South Jatrabari, pickets threw brickbats at law enforcers, forcing them to fire two blank shots.

Constable Anwar Hossain was injured during the clash.

Before Dhakeshwari temple around 3:45pm, picketers set fire to a human hauler and beat up its driver.

Injured driver Md Bulbul who was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital told The Daily Star that 20-25 BNP men hurled brickbats at his vehicle and dragged him out of it, beat him up and set fire to it.

Meanwhile, Kader Siddiqui visited the BNP central office at 12:20pm and urged Mirza Fakhru Islam to find out alternative to hartal considering people's sufferings.

"You can stage sit-in at the Prime Minister's Office premises. I would be with you," the Krishak Sramik Janata League president told Fakhru at a meeting there.

At one stage, Siddiqui laid down on the street for 45 minutes before the BNP office demanding release of his ten party men who were picked up by police from there. He left the area with a procession when police released them.

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