

# Jamaat plots

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A top official of the intelligence wing of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) also apprehends Jamaat-Shibir may unleash massive violence in the city cashing in on BNP's hartal today.

Speaking anonymously, the Rab official said Jamaat's main target would be Projonno Chhattar at Shahbagh intersection where the youth have been demonstrating for capital punishment to war criminals and banning of Jamaat.

"We will beef up our security and our top level officials will be on the field to ward off any such subversive activities," he added. The Rab official said Jamaat-e-Islami men remained almost silent in the capital for last few days which is not a good sign.

Against this backdrop, BNP would enforce its countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal in an already tensed situation when Jamaat-e-Islami unleashed a wave of terror during its 48-hour shutdown that ended this morning.

The main opposition, which is considering a hard-line stance, said it would form countrywide "committees for public safety" to, what it said, counter the ruling Awami League's threat to resist opposition movement.

"We will build resistance through these committees," said BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed at a press conference yesterday without elaborating on the matter.

People, especially the city dwellers, fear an increase in violence following a number of incidents yesterday.

The situation in the capital was almost peaceful in last few days when huge violence rocked some districts leaving more than 60 people including six policemen dead.

Before BNP, its main ally Jamaat enforced the 48-hour countrywide shutdown since Sunday morning on the same grounds to protest against Thursday's violence over capital punishment to its leader Sayeede.

Jamaat-Shibir men have been carrying out violent attacks on police and damaging public property since Thursday.

"We will not leave streets. Many BNP workers supported our programmes. Many of our workers will also join BNP men to enforce tomorrow's [today's] hartal," Abu Taleb

# Pranab honoured

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president recalled the tumultuous days of 1971, saying, "I feel humble as I receive this prestigious award and I feel that my contribution was modest."

"As I stand here tonight I am filled with memories of the events of 1971. I was 36 years old and an MP when the people of Bangladesh engaged themselves in their liberation struggle," he added.

Pranab, 77, recalled that on June 15, 1971 he had the privilege to initiate a discussion at Rajya Sabha when he suggested that India should accord recognition to the Bangladesh government in exile, reports BSS.

"Your support towards our Liberation War in 1971 was for the cause of humanity and justice...your support gave us courage and motivation," President Zillur Rahman said after handing over a crest of the award to his Indian counterpart.

Terming the occasion as historic, Zillur said Pranab's support for the Liberation War is written in golden letters in history and the nation always recalls the contribution with due gratitude.

"It's a symbol of modest gratitude to you [Pranab] on behalf of the entire nation," he added.

Addressing the occasion, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina described Pranab Mukherjee as a real friend of Bangladesh who played a big role in mobilising support of the international community for the independence.

"As a nation, it's an immense pride for us to have

# Shahbagh defies hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred people yesterday joined a procession led by the Shahbagh youths denouncing the Jamaat-sponsored hartal.

They added if the law-enforcement agencies try to harass and oppress the opposition, BNP might declare hartal for Wednesday.

A Jamaat leader also hinted that they might declare hartal for tomorrow.

Party insiders say Jamaat policymakers want to observe the situation during the BNP-called hartal.

Jamaat acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan in a press statement said they would declare their next programmes today.

MK Anwar, member of the national standing committee of BNP, told The Daily Star, "We are likely to enforce hartal for another day if the government uses police to foil our tomorrow's [today's] programme."

He added the BNP would gradually go for all-out movement against the government by enforcing tougher agitations like siege, blockade and shutdowns.

Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, another member of the national standing committee of BNP, echoed the same.

He said BNP did not have any alternative to gearing up street agitations to press home its demand for the election-time government.

Referring to cancellation of party chief Khaleda Zia's meeting with visiting Indian President Pranab Mukherjee, a BNP policymaker said it meant they had opted for a hard-line stance. "It would also send a signal to Jamaat that BNP is with them," the policymaker said asking not to be identified.

Meanwhile on the eve of today's hartal, miscreants torched buses and vehicles in Agargaon, Khamarbari of Farmgate, Ghatoli, Mirpur, Hatirpool and several other areas in the capital.

A good number of homemade bombs had also been blasted in Khilkhet, near Mohakhali Police Box, in front of BNP central office in Nayapaltan and other places in Dhaka.

Ministers, lawmakers and a large number of dignitaries, including some foreign guests, were present at the ceremony, which was followed by a state banquet hosted by Zillur Rahman in honour of Pranab.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of rights body Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK), read out the statement of the conference with Prof Anisuzzaman in the chair.

Sultana Kamal said the anti-liberation force had been creating anarchy across the country in the name of rejecting the tribunal's verdict against Delawar Hossain Sayeede. Such violence was similar to the crimes against humanity.

With this offence, the anti-liberation forces were trying to desecrate the glory of martyrs, she said.

She hoped that every political party would play a more responsible role in controlling the current situation.

Sultana Kamal also urged the law enforcement agencies to ensure security of all people including the minority communities.

Urging all not to fall in the trap of the anti-liberation forces, Prof Anisuzzaman said people should build resistance against their activities.

The state accolades, titled "Bangladesh Liberation War Honour" and "Friends of Liberation War Honour" went to over 200 individuals and organisations from different countries across the world.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Prof MM Akash, Khushi Kabir, among others, were present at the press conference.

According to another

# Tobacco industry

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Sources said tobacco companies have been very active in lobbying the ministries to delay the entire process.

The Daily Star talked to the health, finance and agricultural ministers to know how the provisions were dropped.

The ministers said the provisions should have been kept in the final draft considering the steady growth of tobacco cultivation and consumption, and its deadly impact on health.

"I was against keeping any smoking zone in smoke-free public places, especially in airports. But many cabinet members found it necessary," said Health Minister AFM Ruhal Haque.

On loan and subsidy to farmers for tobacco cultivation, he said many farmers take loan and cultivate tobacco for profit. "We must give them alternatives and encourage them to cultivate other crops."

The minister said tobacco companies might have lobbied different ministries to bring changes to the draft. "They are active in every sphere."

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury recently told The Daily Star, "My ministry wanted to keep the provision for not giving soft loan or subsidy for producing tobacco that absorbs a great amount of nutrient from soil and reduces its fertility."

She said her ministry decided in principle not to give any loan or subsidy for tobacco cultivation. "We give subsidy for alternative crops."

It also contains provisions for having pictorial warnings on tobacco packs, increasing the number of smoke-free

public places, tightening control of the provision, Matia said other ministries were also involved in the process.

Anti-tobacco campaigners and officials in the health and agriculture ministries pointed their fingers at the finance ministry for making the changes in the draft under the influence of tobacco companies.

However, Finance Minister AMA Muhith claimed he had no idea how the provision for not providing soft loan or subsidy for tobacco cultivation got dropped from the final draft.

"The provision might have been dropped following inter-ministerial meetings." And the reason could be that tobacco companies now provide credit and subsidy for tobacco cultivation, he said.

Muhith said the draft could be changed in the parliament with the inclusion of necessary provisions.

The minister said he was against the idea of having smoking zone in smoke-free public places. "If smoking zones are kept, the entire area will ultimately be affected."

As the Anti-Tobacco Law, 2005 was deemed insufficient to control tobacco use, the government in 2010 decided to amend the law. The cabinet in December last year approved the draft that included all chewing tobacco in the list of tobacco products.

It also contains provisions for having pictorial warnings on tobacco packs, increasing the number of smoke-free

# Another train

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This raised the death toll in clashes between fanatics and law enforcers to 71 since Thursday, when Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayeede was awarded death penalty by International Crimes Tribunal-1.

In the capital, miscreants yesterday set fire to three compartments of Upakul Express at Kamalapur Railway Station around 4:00pm, minutes after it had reached there from Noakhali.

The compartments got totally burnt before firefighters had reached the spot. They however separated the burning coaches from main train to contain the blaze, said witnesses.

Railways Minister Mazibul Hoque blamed Jamaat and Shibir for the arson.

Miscreants also exploded a homemade bomb near Sonargaon Hotel in the capital where visiting Indian President Pranab Mukherjee is staying.

No injury had been reported in the blast, said law enforcers. Mukherjee, who is here on a three-day state visit, was in the hotel when the bomb was blasted, said officials of Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

Press Secretary to the Indian president Venu Rajamony said, "Indian security officials have expressed the view that this was a minor explosion. Bursting of such cocktails [homemade bombs] is common in Bangladesh during hartals and those cannot be described as bombs."

Meanwhile, a boy was injured when police trying to disperse marauding Jamaat-Shibir men opened fire in the capital's South Kamalapur.

The protesters had first hurled two homemade bombs at the law enforcers.

Injured Junaidul Islam Tommoy, student of class-VIII, was at the balcony of their house when a stray bullet fired by police hit him.

Jamaat-Shibir activists also brought out processions and exploded several homemade bombs in West Shewrapara, Banasri, Babubazar and Shyambazar areas of the capital. Police dispersed the protesters and arrested 19 activists.

**SATKHIRA**  
Local administration has imposed Section 144 for an indefinite period since 12:30pm yesterday in Kalaroa municipality after three people had been killed in a gunfight between Jamaat-Shibir men and members of Border Guard Bangladesh.

Witnesses said Jamaat-Shibir activists had blocked the Kalaroa-Sarashikati road with logs since the morning. They attacked police when the law enforcers reached the spot from Sarashikati outpost and tried to clear the road around 10:30am.

Outnumbered, the law enforcers were forced pushed back but soon they returned with BGB personnel. The unruly protesters surrounded the team and started pelting the law enforcers with brick chips.

At this, the law enforcers opened fire in which two brothers, Arif Billah, 40, and Ruhul Amin, 35, died on the spot, while three others got injured. Of the injured, Shamsur Rahman, 42, died at Satkhira Sadar Hospital at 8:30pm.

Jamaat-Shibir activists also looted and torched the houses of an Awami League union leader and three Juba League workers in Kalaroa and Satkhira sadar upazilas.

**Khaleda**  
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Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised shops and houses in Phulbari upazila in Kurigram and clashed with police also in Barisal.

Now, four days after the atrocities against minorities, Khaleda demands the government identify and punish the perpetrators through neutral investigation and compensate the victims.

The statement urged the media not to publish anything with prejudice or get confused with propaganda from a certain quarter.

Saying attempts were being made to destroy the existing religious harmony, Khaleda called for restraint.

She also said attacks on minorities were taking place at a time when people were waging movement against the "government's fascism and indiscriminate killings across the country".

"I called upon the administration and law enforcers to prevent such attacks on minorities with an iron fist," said Khaleda, also the leader of the opposition in the House.

Police said the activists equipped with bamboo and sticks attacked and set fire to two houses of ruling Awami League adherents in Panchbibi upazila.

In the sadar upazila, they attacked and set the houses of two Hindu families on fire Sunday night.

**CHAPAINAWABGANJ**  
Miscreants set fire to a temple at Alidanga area of Shibganj municipality early yesterday, some time between 3:00am and 4:00am, said Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Shibganj AZM Sharil Hasan.

Milon Pal, president of the temple, said the Hindu community of the area feared further attacks.

**RAJSHAHI**

Miscreants late last night charged at least 30 homemade bombs on police when law enforcers tried to keep the crowd from setting fire to a covered van of Opsonin Pharmaceuticals Ltd at Bonodpur area under Motihar Police Station.

Motihar police claimed the miscreants to be adherents of Jamaat and Shibir. No casualty or injury has been reported so far.

**CHITTAGONG**

Criminals blasted at least five homemade bombs and set fire to an abandoned train engine at Chittagong Railway Station yesterday. Security officials of the station doused the fire and managed to catch one of the miscreants. They handed him to law enforcers.

**OTHER DISTRICTS**

A state of panic prevailed in Bogra and Joypurhat where 15 people were killed in Sunday's violence. Most of the shops and business establishments of the two districts remained closed yesterday.

The clash in Bogra injured 21 policemen. Three of them were admitted to Combined Military Hospital in Bogra, confirmed Bogra Superintendent of Police (SP) Moazzamul Haque.

Meanwhile, road communications of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban with rest of the country have remained suspended for the last four days, as Jamaat-Shibir activists blocked the highway by felling trees at Satkania upazila.

In Rangpur, Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised the Gonojagor Mancha site at Badarganj Central Shaheed Minar in Badarganj upazila. They also desecrated the Shaheed Minar by walking on it with shoes on.

In Pabna, Jamaat-Shibir engaged hundreds of women and teenagers to block the Dhaka-Pabna highway in Bangabaria area of the sadar upazila. The protesters were equipped with brooms and sticks.

Jamaat-Shibir men also looted and torched the houses of an Awami League union leader and three Juba League workers in Kalaroa and Satkhira sadar upazilas.

At least 15 people were also injured, two by bullets, during a clash at Delua village, said Sirajganj SP Humayun Kabir.

He said Jamaat-Shibir men had blocked the Bogra-Nagarbari Highway with logs at Delua point since the morning. They locked into a clash with police around 8:30am, when the law enforcers tried to free the highway.

Pro-hartal activists also removed several railway slippers of a Bailey bridge at Baraipara in sadar upazila.

**JOYPURHAT**

Jamaat-Shibir men have looted and set fire to houses of ruling party activists and the Hindu community, and to roadside shops in Kalaif village.

**CHAKA**

Interestingly, the page also says their followers should sign in the news site of Prothom Alo, the largest circulating Bangla daily, to spread their views.

Another Facebook page titled "Private University Chatradal" asks private university students to step up protest against the government.

A comment posted by one Aditya Sarowar says: "Shut everything down and chant slogans in the name of [Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain] Sayeede."

According to another

# Reeling from shock

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