



PHOTO: STAR, FOCUS BANGLA



FIRST DAY OF 18-PARTY HARTAL

1) A picket hurls a cocktail, circled in red, at an auto-rickshaw in Kamalapur of the capital yesterday, the first day of the BNP-led 18-party alliance's 36-hour countrywide hartal. 2) Inter-district buses stay put at Sayedabad bus terminal. 3) A three-wheeler burnt by pro-hartal activists at Dampara in Chittagong city. 4) Rickshaw vans sit idle in the capital's Paribagh. 5) People use water to put out the flames on a private car set ablaze by hartal supporters in front of BNP's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital.

ZIA TRUST GRAFT CASE Hearing deffered again till May 22

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday for the third time deferred the hearing till May 22 on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and three others in Zia Charitable Trust graft case. The order was passed after Taherul Islam Towhid, Khaleda's counsel, submitted a petition seeking an adjournment of the hearing. In the petition, Towhid said Khaleda could not appear before the court due to security reasons as BNP-led 18-party alliance enforced hartal yesterday. The court extended the bail term of other accused-Ziaul Islam Munna, assistant private secretary (APS) of another accused Harris Chowdhury; and Monirul Islam Khan, APS of Sadeque Hossain Khoka;--till May 22. Harris, Khaleda's former political secretary, is absconding.

HEFAJAT'S ATTACK ON FEMALE JOURNALISTS Journos demand punishment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist leaders yesterday protested the attacks on female journalists by activists of Hefajat-e Islam in a long march rally in the capital on April 6. They demanded that the government ensure punishment to the culprits, and ensure journalists' security and freedom of the press. They also urged journalists to take strong position against the religious bigots. The leaders made the remarks when addressing a rally before Jatiya Press Club in the capital. Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) jointly organised the event to protest the attacks on the female journalists. On April 6, activists of the radical Islamist group assaulted four journalists, including Ekushey Television reporter Nadia Sharmeen, and passed lewd comments to them when they were doing their duties at Hefajat's rally. BFUJ President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said although attacks on the journalists and media vehicles were common during the political parties' programmes, the attacks on the female journalists have introduced a new dimension in the country. Any attack on the journalists and media is a bad omen for democracy, he said. BFUJ Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuyian criticised Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir for thanking Hefajat and for not taking necessary steps over the attacks on the female journalists. DUJ President Omar Faruque said they would hold rallies before offices of the political parties, if any more journalists and media vehicles come under attack.

British High Commission opens condolence book for Thatcher

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The British High Commission in Dhaka yesterday opened a condolence book in memory of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, for diplomats, politicians and public to sign. Robert Gibson, the British High Commissioner in Dhaka, opened the condolence book by signing first at 2:00pm yesterday. "Most politicians want to change the world but a few managed to do this. Baroness Thatcher was one of the few that did. She helped pioneer a new form of dynamic free-market conservatism; one that has since taken root around the world," Gibson told the media. The high commission's office at Baridhara will be open from 10:00am to 2:00pm Wednesday and Thursday for diplomats,



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