

# Shutdown snaps supply

FROM PAGE 16  
amaranth. A retailer at Palasy kitchen market demanded Rahim Tk 10 for each small bundle, much higher than he had imagined.  
After a little bargaining with the trader, Rahim bought four bundles of red amaranth at Tk 35.  
"The extra price I had to pay today is just because of scanty supply. I usually buy each bundle at Tk 5," said the 45-year-old man at midday yesterday.  
"Prices have soared abruptly due to the shutdown. We people have become hostages of politicians' whims although they say people are the source of all power," said M Abu Eusuf, professor at Department of Development Studies at Dhaka University.  
He had to buy daily vegetables like cauliflower, red amaranth, brinjal, onion, beans, lemon, potato and other items worth Tk 700 at Palasy kitchen market.  
"I could have bought the same items for Tk 550 at the most. We just want to get rid of hartals, but it depends on the politicians," added Eusuf.  
Supply was inadequate at wholesale markets, said Mohammad Ismail, a vegetable retailer at Wari.  
Retailers demand higher prices taking the advantage of lack of supply for hartal, said Wahab Khan, professor of chemistry at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).  
An official at Amin Mohammad Foundation, Tapas Kumar Mandal said he bought a cauliflower at Tk 25 at Hatirpool kitchen market two days ago. Yesterday, he had to buy a similar piece at 35.  
"We earn a fixed amount every month. Any increase in prices of essentials put pressure on us," he mentioned.  
Mostafa Kamal, a wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, said trucks carrying vegetables could not enter the capital yesterday due to the shutdown.  
He hoped prices of vegetables would ease with improvement of supply after the hartal.

# Lives at risk for a living

FROM PAGE 1  
He shuddered when he saw a procession of hartal supporters. Out of the blue, the pickets hurled two crude bombs towards them. One bomb hit his left eye; a bang followed and the world around him turned black.  
The other bomb hit a youth, an employee of a shop, causing injury to one of his hands.  
Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital say they cannot tell for sure if Abdur Rahman would ever see again with his left eye.  
Talking to The Daily Star, his brother Rafique, also a mason, said: "Staying home was not an option for him [Rahman] because he had no work for the last three-four days."  
Rafique does not know where he would get the money for his brother's treatment.  
Rahman is just one of the thousands of working class people in and around the capital, who have nothing to do with politics but are paying a heavy price for the shutdown.  
In panic, many have not come out of home since Saturday evening, the eve of the 60-hour hartal, and those who braved the risk have suffered one way or the other.  
While some could not go to work as they did not get any transport, some others came under attack by the pickets on their way to or from work.  
Garment worker Nasima Begum is one such victim. The 28-year-old is now fighting for her life at the burn unit of the DMCH. Doctors say 43 percent of her body was burnt.  
It so happened at Mohammadpur on Saturday evening when hartal supporters set fire to the bus she and her co-workers were on. They were going home after work.  
At least four of her fellow workers were also injured in the incident.  
Ayub Ali, a CNG driver, tried his best to escape a similar fate. He was sitting in his vehicle near Amtala mosque in the capital's Shahjahanpur around 8:30pm on Sunday. Suddenly, he saw three people coming towards him, holding something in their hands.  
He had a feeling that something bad was going to happen. So he opened the door and jumped out of it. But the three men had already hurled crude bombs at him. The CNG was on fire and the left side of his body was badly burnt.  
"I can manage to rent a CNG five days a week because the number of drivers is higher than the number of CNGs these days. So I had to go out risking my life," he said.  
The risk Abdur Rahman, Nasima Begum and Ayub Ali took is the risk facing thousands others.



**A medicine store vandalised and looted by pro-hartal activists at remote Shafinagar village in northern district of Lalmonirhat on Sunday night. Only the shops owned by Hindus were targeted.**  
PHOTO: COURTESY

# Hindus targeted, only

FROM PAGE 16  
"We never knew in our life what was hartal as it did not have any effect in our life. But this time, hartal has ravaged our means of income," said another villager.  
Sanjoy Dutta, general secretary of Bawra union Awami League, said it was pro-hartal BNP-Jamaat men who attacked and looted these shops.  
Bawra Union Parishad Chairman Habibur Rahman, also local Jatiya Party leader, said he informed the incident to police on Sunday night but they didn't come till yesterday afternoon.  
Patgram Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sohrab Hossain yesterday said he heard about the incident but failed to take action due to manpower shortage. "However, I will send police to save Hindus from Jamaat-Shibir men."  
Lalmonirhat Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman said he had ordered the OC to take stern action against the perpetrators of the crime. "I have reminded him [OC] that inadequate police force is no excuse for not taking immediate action against miscreants."  
A local leader of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council said he had informed the matter to their central leaders.  
Contacted, Council's General Secretary Rana Das Gupta said the attack was part of the BNP-Jamaat's plan to drive out minorities from this country.  
Bawra union BNP President Shamsul Alam denied the allegation that his party activists took part in the vandalism and looting. But he didn't make any comment on alleged involvement of Jamaat-Shibir activists.

# Patients in trouble

FROM PAGE 16  
Journalist Afzal Hossain, who works at a TV station and lives in Narayanganj, had to cancel his pregnant wife's monthly doctor's appointment in the capital because of the hartal.  
"Our appointment was on Sunday. Because of the hartal we could neither see the doctor nor have tests done ... I could not take the risk of taking her to Dhaka on a rickshaw," he said, adding, "Getting the car out on a hartal day was out of the question considering the current situation in the country."  
Visiting different public hospitals in the capital, The Daily Star correspondents found that the number of patients at the outdoor sections were almost half of the usual number.  
DMCH officials told The Daily Star that on Sunday, the first day of the hartal, only 769 tickets for outdoor patients were sold whilst the section often sees around 1,800 patients on a regular day.  
At Dhaka Shishu Hospital, 335 children took treatment or got admitted on Sunday. The number was 628 on Thursday.



**The ransacked house of Mahbubul Alam, complainant and first witness in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee. It was attacked by Jamaat-Shibir men yesterday morning.**  
PHOTO: STAR

# A revenge for Sayedee?

FROM PAGE 1  
In 1971, he had fled to nearby woods of the embattled country to save his life. The irony is he felt the same shiver in the spine yesterday in the independent country he had fought for.  
The ill-fated citizen is freedom fighter Mahabubul Alam Howlader of Pirojpur. His fault was that he had filed a case against convicted war criminal and Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayedee and testified against him.  
A resident of Tengrahal village in Zianagar upazila of Pirojpur, septuagenarian Mahabubul is a former commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad of Zianagar, an area considered as the backyard of Sayedee.  
Yesterday's attack on Mahabubul's family once again proved how important the security factor is for the prosecution witnesses of the war crimes tribunals.  
Different quarters have long been demanding enactment of the witness protection law, but to no avail.  
Talking to The Daily Star, Mahabubul said around 200 to 250 activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir with sharp weapons had attacked his house around 9:30am. He was then watching television with his family.  
He said sensing the attack he had shut the door and windows of his tin-roofed house. But the attackers entered the house anyway by breaking a window.  
"I was hiding in the attic at that time while the other family members managed to flee the house before the attackers could get in," said Mahabubul.  
"They [attackers] actually came to kill me, as I had filed a case against Sayedee and testified against him. Had they found me, I would now be dead," he added.  
He said that from the attic, he had called the Parerhat Police Outpost, about one-and-a-half kilometres from the house, over the mobile phone. Within 20 to 25 minutes police came to the spot but by then the Jamaat-Shibir activists had left.  
It had been a 45-minute mayhem by the attackers that left not a single thing, even the tube-well or the lavatory, in the house in one piece, he added.  
Nasiruddin Malik, officer-in-charge of Indurkani Police Station under Zianagar upazila, told The Daily Star that supporters of Sayedee had attacked the house of Mahabubul and vandalised it.  
No case has been filed in connection with the attack as of last night.  
Top officials of police and the administration yesterday visited the house and deployed six to seven policemen at Mahabubul's house.  
In 2009, Mahabubul had filed a case against Sayedee and others with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court of Pirojpur in connection with the atrocities committed by them during the Liberation War.

When the case proceedings against Sayedee began at the International Crimes Tribunal in 2010, documents of the Pirojpur case were used as reference.  
On December 7, 2011, Mahabubul testified against Sayedee on several charges, including that for killing Bisha Bali of Umedpur village. On February this year, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 sentenced Sayedee to death on two charges, including the Bali killing charge.  
Yesterday, Mahabubul said after testifying at the court he had received death threat several times and filed general diaries at police stations in Zianagar and Dhaka.  
"I am now living in utter fear," he said.  
Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that the attack would definitely affect the cases pending with the International Crimes Tribunals, as witnesses would be afraid to testify.  
"It is the responsibility of the home ministry to ensure security for witnesses," he said, adding that the government must take effective measures to ensure that.  
Meanwhile, tribunal prosecutor Tureen Afroz demanded quick enactment of the witness protection law to ensure foolproof security for prosecution witnesses and the others involved in the war crimes trials.

# All-party govt by mid-Nov

FROM PAGE 1  
with lawmakers from other parties. However, I still believe the BNP will take part in the dialogue and in the election," a minister quoted the premier as saying, requesting anonymity.  
At the meeting, ministers discussed the plan and extended their full support for it. Hasina told them that MPs of different political parties, except for the Jamaat-e-Islami, will be included in the interim cabinet, meeting sources said.  
If the BNP agrees to join the government, it would be a 10-member plus administration. Otherwise it would be smaller, according to the sources.  
Most of the MPs will be drawn from the AL and other political parties in the ruling grand alliance.  
On October 18, the prime minister in a televised address to the nation offered forming an all-party election-time government. Three days later, BNP chief Khaleda Zia came up with a proposal for forming a non-party interim administration.  
None of them has shown any sign to shift from the stance.  
At yesterday's meeting, the cabinet also decided to tackle the bomb attacks, vandalism, arson and violence by the BNP-led 18-party alliance with an iron hand to ensure security of the people.  
Hasina has already directed the law enforcement agencies to prevent such destructive activities. A visibly angry Hasina also ordered the ministers and their deputies to tackle such "anarchy" boldly, a minister said.  
Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, a senior minister said: "If the BNP does not come, lawmakers from other parties will be included in the polls-time cabinet."  
He added that they had nothing to do if the BNP did not join the interim administration.  
On the size of the government, he said it was yet to be finalised. "A few members will be added while many will be excluded from the existing 52-member cabinet. There will be a major reshuffle in the cabinet if the BNP does not join."  
He said the cabinet division is making preparation for an oath taking ceremony for those who will be in the polls-time government, which will take no major policy decision.

The cabinet thanked Hasina for calling Khaleda despite her ultimatum, when Hasina said her call was part of the initiative for dialogues with different political parties.  
**MEETING WITH OTHER PARTIES**  
Cabinet sources said the prime minister spoke to CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim and BSD chief Khalequzzaman about having dialogues with them at Gono Bhaban at 7:00pm today.  
Meanwhile, AL Presidium Member Mohammad Nasim spoke with Anwar Hossain Manju, chairman of Jatiya Party (Manju), about the talks with the prime minister.  
Hasina told the cabinet that she would also speak to leaders of Gono Forum, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Left Alliance and Krishak Sramik Janata league about the formation of the polls-time government.

# Non-stop Dhaka blockade

FROM PAGE 1  
Moreover, the way some ruling Awami League senior leaders and ministers have been blasting Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's phone call for talks is diminishing fast the prospect of an effective dialogue to resolve the ongoing political crisis, they said.  
Last night, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia sat with senior party leaders at her Gulshan office and assigned acting secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir to contact Awami League over possible talks, party sources said.  
Contacted, some BNP insiders claimed that Fakhrul already telephoned AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam on Sunday and yesterday on his mobile number but the latter did not receive the calls.  
Ashraf was not available for comments. But an AL leader, who had knowledge of the matter, said he [Ashraf] did not respond to Fakhrul's call as the BNP chairperson turned down the prime minister's invitation for a dialogue yesterday.  
Asked, an aide to Fakhrul said the BNP spokesperson would not be able to make any comment on this since he was busy.  
At yesterday's cabinet meeting, Hasina, also AL president, expressed her determination to go ahead with her proposal for an all-party polls-time government regardless of the BNP's joining it or not, meeting sources said.  
A BNP policymaker said, "It has become almost clear to us that the government will not change its position on an all-party government. So, we have no alternative but to go tough from next week."  
The Daily Star talked to five BNP national standing committee members and all of them spoke for enforcing the blockade next week, and hinted at starting it from Sunday. They said blockade is more effective than hartal.  
A BNP policymaker said the opposition alliance had earlier decided in principle to enforce a blockade to cut off the capital from the rest of the country. And party Chairperson Khaleda Zia was supposed to announce it at the October 25 rally at Suhrawardy Udyan. But she refrained from doing so and gave the government time to hold talks on a non-party polls-time government.  
"Our chairperson has already spoken of tougher agitation programmes from next week. We will decide our next course of action after observing if the government is sincere in resolving the present deadlock through talks," said Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a member of the BNP national standing committee.  
Two of his colleagues in the party's highest decision-making body MK Anwar and Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman echoed his view.

# Georgia PM ally seals presidency

AFP, Tbilisi  
An ally of Georgia's billionaire Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili yesterday savoured a crushing win in presidential polls that ended the decade-long dominance of pro-Western reformer Mikheil Saakashvili.  
Giorgi Margvelashvili, a little-known academic from Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition, won around 62 percent of the vote in the poll on Sunday, the election commission said after ballots from more than 97 percent of polling stations had been counted.  
His nearest challenger, ex-parliament speaker David Bakradze from Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) party, trailed behind on just under 22 percent, official results showed.  
Margvelashvili had already claimed victory before cheering supporters at a rally in Tbilisi on Sunday.  
"I thank you all so much. It is our shared victory," Margvelashvili said as balloons were released to chants from the crowd.  
Basking in the win, Georgia's richest man Ivanishvili -- who wrested power from Saakashvili's party in parliamentary polls last year in Georgia's first smooth transfer of power -- said that he had been certain of victory.  
"All together we will build a Georgia which we dream about," Ivanishvili said. "I congratulate you all."