

Stray incidents mark hartal

Presence of pickets on streets thin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Except for a few stray incidents of violence, yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal called by the Jamaat-e-Islami was observed peacefully across the country.

The presence of pickets was thin and movement of people and vehicles was considerable reflecting poor public response to the shutdown.

The Jamaat on Tuesday announced dawn-to-dusk hartals for yesterday and today in protest at the International Crimes Tribunal's verdict sentencing its leader ATM Azharul Islam to death for committing crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

Hartal supporters vandalised and torched a covered van of Shah Cement in the capital's Mir Hazirbagh in the early hours, witnesses said. No one, however, was injured in the attack.

In Barisal city, an activist of Jamaat's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir bit into a hand of a constable of the Special Branch of police, Joyal Abedin, when the policeman caught hold of him among pickets staging a demonstration, in order to break free of the cop.

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DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed places chest- and head-mounted cameras on traffic sergeants at Shahbagh in the capital yesterday. Under a test project, traffic and pedestrian movement would be monitored with these cameras.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Khaleda fears attack, seeks security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fearing she might come under attacks by the activists of ruling Awami League and its associate bodies, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has sought security from police.

Khaleda's lawyer Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan yesterday submitted an application to Chawkbazar Police Station on behalf of her for lodging a general diary so that she is provided with adequate security.

The police received the application, but did not record the general diary.

Zakir in the application said "criminals" of AL, Chhatra League and Jubo League attacked Khaleda and her followers on December 24 while she was going to Bakshibazar to appear before a court in connection with two corruption cases.

Personal security of the BNP chief protected her by building a security cordon and cleared her way to the court, he wrote in the application, adding reports on the incidents were also published by the media.

The lawyer said Azizul Haque, officer-in-charge of Chawkbazar Police Station, received the application and told him that the police would take necessary steps after consultation with

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Third border haat opens on Jan 13

REZAUL KARIM

Bangladesh and India are expected to open another border haat on January 13 in a bid to boost trade.

This will be the third border haat between the two countries and first in Tripura, set up on the Indo-Bangla boundary at Srinagar in South district of the Indian state, about 140 kilometres each from its capital Agartala and Feni of Bangladesh.

Among the two previous haats, one is situated at Balamari of Kurigram and Kalaichar in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills district.

The other haat is at Lauwaghar (Dalora) in Sunamganj and India's Balat in East Khasi Hills district.

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No admission test for universities

Enrolment on the basis on SSC, HSC results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has directed all the public and private universities to enrol students on the basis of their SSC and HSC results, instead of through the existing admission tests.

In a circular last night, the education ministry said the step was taken as the admission seekers spend a huge amount of money and face hassles due to the entry test system.

"If the admission procedure is completed on the basis of the results of the SSC and the HSC examinations, it will help expedite the commencement of the academic session and help lessen the troubles faced by parents," said the circular.

Under the existing system, all the public and private universities of the country arrange separate admission tests to enrol undergraduate students. The candidates have to pay for each test they take, and travel extensively during the admission test season.

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AIRASIA DISASTER Recovery delayed for bad weather

AGENCIES

Bad weather hindered efforts to recover victims of AirAsia Flight 8501 yesterday and sent wreckage drifting far from the crash site, as grieving relatives prayed for strength to endure their losses.

"Help us, God, to move forward, even though we are surrounded by darkness," the Rev. Philip Mantofa, whose church lost about 40 members in the disaster, told families gathered in a waiting room at the Surabaya airport.

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Textbook festival begins today

Govt to hand 4.44cr students free books amid nationwide hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to distribute more than 32 crore textbooks among around 4.44 crore primary and secondary level students amid a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman will inaugurate the distribution of books at Motijheel Govt Boys School in the capital around 10:00am in celebration of "Textbook Festival".

"I am taking updates from the districts and the results are positive. Almost cent percent books have reached the destinations," Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

He alleged that the anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir had called the hartal with

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Muggers push man off train Victim loses leg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers threw a passenger out of a speedy train after robbing him of Tk 6,000 in the capital's Banani area yesterday.

The victim is Nazmul Hasan, 30. His right leg was severed under the wheels of the very train.

Nazmul, owner of New Fashion Tailors at Arambagh in Motijheel, boarded the Rajshahi-bound Silk City Express from Kamalapur Railway Station to return home in Tongi in the evening. He took the money to pay the dues at a grocery shop in his neighbourhood.

"The train was overcrowded and I was standing near a door. Two youths

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Enforced disappearances	88
Crossfires, gunfights	128
Custodial deaths	60
Death in political clashes	147
Border killings	33
Rape incidents	707
Journalist harassments	239
Incidents of arson, vandalism on Hindu community	1,201

State of human rights alarming

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka Reporters Unity.

"How many people with hands on their chest can say that they are living a peaceful life?" ASK Executive Director Sultana Kamal said while presenting the report to the media.

Alongside enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, deaths in police custody, communal and gender-based violence, and harassment and killing of journalists continued last year, the report notes.

Throughout 2014, law enforcement agencies allegedly abducted 88 people; 42 of them never returned while bodies of 23 were found later.

The report demonstrates that instances of enforced disappearance were higher last year than the previous two years, the numbers being 53 in 2013 and 56 in 2012.

According to the report, families of the victims mostly pointed fingers at Rab and detectives for these crimes. Serious allega-

tions against Rab had been raised after bodies of seven people were found in Narayanganj in April.

Answering to a query about whether Rab should be disbanded for its alleged criminal activities, Sultana Kamal said ASK never wanted Rab to be disbanded.

"We've never demanded Rab be disbanded. There are instances of creating elite forces in other countries amid deteriorating law and order situation. Rab was formed within a policy. We've raised questions about this force whenever it crossed the limit," she said.

Whenever a political party assumes power, it uses law enforcement agencies for their own purposes, turning state agencies into "government agencies", she said.

Like in previous years, people fell victim to "crossfire", another crime frequently committed by law enforcers that violates people's right to justice.

In 2014, as many as 128 people died in "crossfire" and "gunfight" between law

enforcers and alleged "criminals", while the number was 72 in 2013. Custodial torture claimed the lives of at least 60 people, according to the report.

ASK also singled out a new trend of rights violation by law enforcers last year, which was shooting in the leg of an "accused". Instances of this trend were evident especially in Jessore, Satkhira and Dhaka.

The ASK report says 147 people were killed in 664 political clashes while 34 died and 2,206 got injured in 171 infightings within the ruling Awami League last year.

The report also draws attention to persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, women and journalists.

As many as 761 houses of Hindu communities were vandalised and torched. Criminals also vandalised and set fire to 193 of their business places and 247 idols and temples.

In 2014, 707 women were raped. Of

them, 68 were killed later and 13 committed suicide. Besides, 146 women fell victim to sexual harassment. Of them, 14 committed suicide and seven were killed for demanding the perpetrators' trial.

ASK also received numerous complaints of attack on indigenous communities in the hilly region. Most of these attacks were carried out by Bangalee settlers in a bid to grab lands owned by these communities. Allegations of torture on indigenous women by Bangalees were also rife.

Journalists were harassed across the country in at least 239 incidents, which included the murder of two journalists, last year.

33 Bangladeshis were killed by the Indian Border Security Force along the border, claims the report.

The report, however, has welcomed the six verdicts which were delivered in war crimes cases by the two International Crimes Tribunals last year despite slow progress of the trials.

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