



An activist calls for regrouping BNP men dispersed during a clash with law enforcers on Nur Ahmed Road near BNP's Chittagong city office at Nasiman Bhaban yesterday. Inset, police charge batons on an injured BNP man left behind during the clash. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

People suffer

FROM PAGE 1 anniversary of January 5 parliamentary election. The situation was somewhat the same elsewhere in the country. The controversial election, also the bloodiest in the country's history, in 2014 saw the AL forming government for the second time in a row. The BNP, having boycotted the polls, ended up without a representation in parliament for the first time in 22 years. Dhaka was practically cut off from the rest of the country as road and waterway transport services remained suspended since Sunday, causing indescribable sufferings for people. Many city-dwellers found it hard to come to terms with the disturbing stillness of the otherwise chaotic city. Most of the thoroughfares were marked by a thin presence of traffic. Worried that violence might erupt due to the AL-BNP face-off, most of the people stayed indoors, having their eyes on TV sets for updates on the political developments. Office-goers and those who had pressing needs were out on the streets amid the simmering political situation. But it was extremely difficult for them to board the few crowded buses plying the streets. Many were seen waiting for buses for hours at different bus stops in the city. Some rode rickshaw-vans and some walked miles to reach their destinations. Nasim Reza started from his Mirpur-11 residence on a rickshaw to Mirpur-10 and then took another rickshaw to get to Sainik Club in Banani. "Then I crossed the road and took another rickshaw but could not go up to the bridge before Gulshan-2 intersection. I walked the rest of the way to office ... Yet, I was late," said Nasim, who works at a private bank in Gulshan. At Shyamoli bus stand, private service holder Nazrul Islam expressed his helplessness. "I have an important meeting at my office in Paltan in an hour."

"I have been waiting here for half an hour for a bus. But the few buses that came were too crowded. The CNG-run auto rickshaws too are either refusing to go or charging high fares," he added. Shimul, a garment merchandiser, said he had to wait for an hour before he managed to elbow his way into a bus. "It cannot be the way of doing politics. The politicians are making our lives difficult by their anti-people programmes, turning us into hostages. As citizens, all we want is security of our lives," he said, venting his disappointment. Elsewhere, bus and launch services in Barisal, Jhalakathi, Khulna, Jessore, Sherpur, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Natore, Narayanganj and Munshiganj were suspended, putting people in immense trouble. "I have come a long way to take my sick mother to Dhaka. She has an appointment with a doctor there. But I reached here only to find the launches grounded," said Raju Ahmed at Jhalakathi Launch Ghat before he returned home in Rajapur. The same happened with Abdul Jalil. "I had an urgent piece of business in Dhaka. We are in a big problem now as we were not informed of this beforehand," he said at the launch ghat. While most owners of the long-route buses and launches said the services were cut off for fear of violence, many believe it was done by the government to prevent anti-government people from coming to the capital to join the BNP rally scheduled for yesterday. "The administration told us not to reply the launch," said Shafique, supervisor of a launch, Farhan-5. The Daily Star correspondents in several districts found the bus counters closed and travellers returning home in frustration. "Whatever our political parties do, it is people like us who suffer the most. Do they really care about us?" said an aggrieved Solaiman at Khulna Bus Stand.

What PM said

FROM PAGE 1 It was the first anniversary of January 5 parliamentary polls that the BNP and its allies boycotted. Just a day ago, Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, at a Gono Bhaban meeting with Chhatra League leaders, said Khaleda had appealed for security a few days back and police were acting accordingly. The BNP chairperson can go home whenever she wanted, but she is "staging a drama" saying she was confined, the PM added. Yesterday, Khaleda came out of her office room around 3:30pm and got into her car parked on the office compound. She waited for an hour inside the vehicle with some of her party leaders banging on the main gate, locked from outside. Law enforcers used pepper spray to disperse the leaders and activists. "What kind of security is this?" Khaleda said, getting off the car. If the government really wanted to give her security, it could do it wherever she would go, she added. Earlier on Saturday, the BNP chief went to the Gulshan office around 8:30pm. Law enforcers barred her when she tried to leave the office around 11:30pm. With additional forces deployed, a few police vans, an armoured car and a water cannon were placed on the road in front of the office that night. On Sunday night, at least 12 trucks, some laden with sand and bricks, were parked at two ends of the road, blocking the entries from both sides. Asked why they deployed trucks there, a police officer of Gulshan Police Station just smiled and said, "It was done following orders from the high-

ups." However, after more than 19 hours all the trucks were moved away. But the water canon and two police vans were still there last night. State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told journalists at his office yesterday that police would provide "security" to the BNP Chairperson as long as "she needed it". Talking to this correspondent, Abdul Majid, helper of one of the trucks, said they were going to Kalachandpur in Gulshan from Gabtoli carrying sand for an under-construction building but police intercepted the vehicle at Banani around 10:30pm on Sunday. "An officer at first wanted to check papers. Though we have required documents, police ordered us to follow them and later brought the truck hear." Helper of another truck, Mamun Sheikh, said he has been staying inside the truck since Sunday night without food. "In the morning [yesterday] when we wanted to go to a nearby hotel for food, a police constable told us that we will not be allowed to enter the area once we leave. We are passing over 15 hours without food," he said. "Throughout the night we starved and mosquito bites added to our sufferings." Following the December 24 attacks by pro-AL activists on BNP men when Khaleda went to a court, she on December 31 applied for her security. Her lawyer Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan, who submitted the application to Chawkbazar Police Station, said he requested police to give the BNP chief 24-hour security wherever she goes.

Runaway N Korean soldier kills four Chinese

AFP, Seoul A North Korean believed to be a runaway soldier killed four Chinese during a robbery after he crossed the border into China in search of food, media reports said yesterday. The young North Korean crossed the border in late December and stole money and food at a house before killing four residents in China's northeastern city of Helong, South Korea's Yonhap news agency and Dong-A Ilbo newspapers said. Both cited sources in the border areas between China and the North. The victims were either shot dead or

beaten to death, Dong-A said, adding he was later shot and captured by Chinese authorities. "Killing several Chinese nationals... is a major crime, so there are good possibilities that China, unlike other runaway North Korean soldiers captured before, will not hand him over to the North," said an unnamed Seoul official quoted by Yonhap. In Beijing, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China "has already lodged representations with North Korea", when asked about the report at a regular press briefing. She refused to give any further details.

Shun path of anarchy

FROM PAGE 1 now for that party's mistake then. "For your [Khaleda's] wrong political decision, both you and your party are not in parliament today. Whom will you [Khaleda] blame for this? You will have to shoulder the responsibility of your own mistakes," the premier said. She alleged that when the nation was advancing fast, efforts were being made to create instability and chaos in the country. Hasina urged the BNP chief to end "subversive acts", killings, bomb and grenade attacks, and destruction of public properties. She also asked Khaleda to inform people about her plans for socioeconomic development of the country and build her party so that it has a possibility to assume power in future. Hasina further said, "The path you [Khaleda] have chosen won't bring you any good. Rather you will lose public trust and confidence." The premier said those who wanted to foil the war crimes trial, protect the war criminals, and did not want Bangladesh to exist as a country were trying to indulge in conspiracy again. Mentioning that the trials of war criminals were moving forward and verdicts in war-crimes cases were being

executed, the premier reaffirmed her commitment to try every war criminal in the country. She also said the BNP-led alliance had created a reign of terror ahead of the January 5 elections by killing hundreds of people, including 20 law enforcers, vandalising and setting fire to public properties and chopping down thousands of trees. Hasina said her government was ready to make every sacrifice for the sake of an all-inclusive election, but the BNP-Jamaat alliance wanted to create chaos and assume power through the backdoor. Highlighting the successes of her government in the last five years, the premier said Bangladesh stood seventh among the top 10 nations in terms of women's development. She said her government had made the House the centre of all activities, strengthened the Anti-Corruption Commission that resulted in a downward trend in the graft index and had given full freedom to the media. Bangladesh had made history by being elected as chiefs of two top global democratic institutions, IPU and CPA, Hasina said, adding that as a result, the country's relations with democratic nations had further strengthened.

Queen to make fifth state visit to Germany in June

AFP, London Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip will pay their fifth state visit to Germany in June, Buckingham Palace announced yesterday. The 88-year-old monarch and her 93-year-old husband will visit between June 24 and June 26, at the invitation of German president Joachim Gauck. They have made numerous previous trips to Germany, including four other state visits, in 1965, 1978, 1992 and 2004, while the queen also went to Berlin in 1987 and 2000. News of the state visit comes just two days before German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits London for talks with Prime Minister David Cameron. The queen and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, have scaled back their overseas trips in recent years, allowing their eldest son Prince Charles and other royals to represent them.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 16 vans, armoured personnel carriers and water cannons been brought up here? "The government did not provide any security when needed. But whenever we want to hold any rally, they block it on the pretext of providing security. What type of security is this? If the government really wants to provide security, it should ensure my free movement first," said Khaleda. Khaleda later announced an indefinite countrywide blockade, protesting "the government's repressive acts" and her confinement. "We will set the next course of action after the situation calms down." Yesterday's rally was scheduled to mark the anniversary of January 5 election last year. The BNP-led alliance boycotted the polls and ended up having no membership in parliament for the first time in 22 years.

Indian

FROM PAGE 16 call threatening that its flight would be hijacked. "Security around all the airports has been strengthened and we have taken all the measures that are required in the wake of the alert from intelligence agencies," officials told news agencies on Sunday. Passengers will now be subjected to extra screening before they board an aircraft while armed sky marshals will be deployed on certain flights, reports say. An Air India official told the Hindustan Times newspaper that the airline was "conducting a second security check of passengers before they enter the aircraft". "Once the passengers are seated in the plane, our crew has been instructed to get the cabin baggage verified with the passengers again." In November India's navy withdrew two warships from the eastern port of Calcutta after intelligence agencies warned of a terror attack plot. The move came two days after a suicide attack close to Pakistan's only border crossing with India killed 50 people.

Two children

FROM PAGE 16 that time, a rally of ruling Awami League was going on at Shaheed Minar Chattar on Trunk Road. A cocktail was hurled at them when they reached Khejur Chattar on that road. Locals rescued them and sent Anik to Feni Sadar Hospital and Ridoy to Feni Eye Hospital. However, none could say from where the cocktail was thrown. Later, Anik was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated, said Golam Mawla, doctor of Feni Sadar Hospital.

Small screens

FROM PAGE 16 a group of 2,000 middle school kids. Overall, those with access to smartphones and tablets got nearly 21 fewer minutes of sleep per night than children whose rooms were free of such technology, and they were more likely to say they felt sleep deprived. Those with a TV in the bedroom got 18 minutes fewer of slumber than kids without televisions in their rooms. "Presence of a small screen, but not a TV, in the sleep environment, and screen time were associated with perceived insufficient rest or sleep," said the study led by Jennifer Falbe of the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health. "These findings caution against unrestricted screen access in children's bedrooms." Participants in the study included 2,048 fourth- and seventh-graders enrolled in the Massachusetts Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Study from 2012 to 2013.

How Khaleda spent

FROM PAGE 1 board her SUV (sport utility vehicle) on the office compound, she found a police van parked right in front of the gate. Khaleda got into her SUV and waited inside it for about 10 minutes. But she couldn't go out, as police kept the main entrance closed leaving only the pocket gate open. At one stage, Khaleda's staffs told police that she would return to her residence, but the law enforcers didn't say whether they would allow her to leave. In the meantime, police parked two more pick-up vans on both ends of the road in front of the office. Khaleda's staffs protested the police action and chanted slogans on the office compound. The BNP chief got out of her SUV and went back to her office room on the first floor. Around 12:30am on Sunday, 10 to 12 female BNP leaders, including five former lawmakers, made their way to the office after jostling with law enforcers. Around 1:00am, BNP chief's Special Assistant Shimul Biswas told reporters that she had been confined to her office. Three hours later, he conveyed to the media Khaleda's message that she denounced the government's repressive actions and was determined to join the January 5 gathering at Nayapaltan. Earlier, Khaleda's aides and some office staffs brought to the office a small bed for Khaleda around 1:30am. Police initially barred them from taking it inside. But they changed their mind when Khaleda's aides told them that doctors had advised the BNP chief not to sleep on the floor. They also allowed one of Khaleda's female aides to enter the office with clothes and medicine. "The leader was sleepless almost the whole night," Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, a former BNP lawmaker, who was with the party chief, told The Daily Star on Sunday night. Protesting Khaleda's confinement, a group of female BNP activists staged demonstrations in front of the office and chanted slogans between 11:45am and 12:15pm on Sunday. Some of them even lay on the road. Police charged baton and dispersed them, leaving at least 10 injured. Law enforcers also picked up four activists. About 10 minutes later, police allowed a group of pro-BNP lawyers and journalists to enter the office. Law enforcers also let different groups of pro-BNP teachers, retired bureaucrats and cultural activists meet Khaleda till 3:30pm on Sunday. Through the pro-BNP professionals, Khaleda sent a message that she would go ahead with the planned programme and would defy the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's ban on rallies and processions in the capital. She called upon people to continue the agitation until the government steps down. Police, however, didn't allow ex-president and Bicolpodhara Bangladesh Chief AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and several other leaders to enter the office on Sunday. Law enforcers imposed tougher restrictions on entry to the office from 6:00pm on Sunday. Even journalists were not allowed to go inside. About half-an-hour later, police drove away Khaleda's security personnel from the office gate.

Around 11:00pm, at least 12 trucks loaded with sand, stone and brick were parked on the road in front of the office. Police also brought water cannons and armoured personnel carriers, and sealed off the whole area. Around 1:30pm yesterday, police locked the pocket gate of the office. Even the residents of the area were not allowed to walk on the road in front of the office from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Khaleda, flanked by several female party activists and her security personnel, came down to the office compound carrying a black flag. She got into her SUV to join yesterday's scheduled agitation at Nayapaltan. But the vehicle couldn't move forward, as law enforcers kept the main gate locked and took position there. At one point, female BNP activists shouted at police, and kicked the gate from inside. In response, police used pepper spray on them thrice. Khaleda sat inside the SUV from 3:30pm to 4:30pm. She then got down from the vehicle, and briefed journalists.

Fakhrul takes

FROM PAGE 1 the intervention of some senior journalist leaders but Fakhrul was allegedly not being allowed to leave. Yesterday morning, pro-government journalists held a meeting inside the club under the banner of Jagadbirodhi Sangbadik Samabesh (Anti-militancy Journalists' Rally). Activists of Prajanma League, a pro-government body, had taken position outside the club since the morning but could not get in as the main gate was locked. In the afternoon, anti-government journalists held another rally under the banner of Shammilito Peshajibi Parishad on the club premises, which Fakhrul attended. When Fakhrul was about to leave the club around 3:30pm, the situation deteriorated and both the groups started chanting slogans against each other. Activists of Prajanma League then entered the club scaling the gate and chased the anti-government activists with sticks. Fakhrul then ran into the club building. There were chases and counter chases between the two groups. Pro-government activists and a huge number of law enforcers had then positioned themselves outside the main gate. A staff of the BNP chairperson's media wing told The Daily Star last night that Fakhrul was fearing he could be attacked or harassed. "For this reason, he was not coming out from the club building." An official of Shahbagh Police Station told The Daily Star at 1:30am today that Fakhrul was still inside the club. "As of now, we have no orders to arrest him." Prime Minister's Media Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, who was present during the unrest, claimed that "outsiders led by some politicians" had attacked their "peaceful rally" inside the club. Iqbal claimed that a meeting of journalists was attacked by "outsiders" and that "some individuals" were trying to get political leverage out of a club "meant for journalists only". Iqbal had urged the club authorities to drive out the "outsiders" from the club.

Mamata due next month

FROM PAGE 16 Many consider the upcoming visit an "icebreaker" to smoothen Dhaka's stained relationship with Mamata after she backed out at the eleventh hour from the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh on September 6-7, 2011, opposing the Teesta water-sharing treaty. President Md Abdul Hamid has also met Mamata twice during his recent India visit. A few weeks prior to that, a delegation of Bangladeshi lawmakers, led by Syed Ashrafur Islam of Awami League, had met Mamata in Kolkata as well. Diplomatic sources said the initial spadework for Mamata's visit to Bangladesh was done during her interactions with President Hamid and the Bangladeshi lawmakers. Trinamool Congress chief in recent months reportedly appeared keen to make a positive start to her relations with the Hasina government. In the recent past, Mamata had tried to use the connections of a member of her culture clan, a former Left sympathiser, and a celebrity MP popular in Bangladesh to get an official invite from Hasina to visit Dhaka, but the efforts had drawn a blank, reported The Telegraph in Kolkata. According to a source, Mamata's interest is rooted in her political concerns at a time she is saddled with multiple problems such as the Saradha scandal and her government's failure to crack down on JMB modules in Bengal. She has recently said that she planned to institute a chair named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Calcutta University.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, to her at the state secretariat yesterday. "Mamata was very happy after receiving the invitation. We had a very cordial discussion that lasted for over an hour," Zokey told The Daily Star over the phone. This was Zokey's first courtesy call on the chief of Trinamool Congress after he was appointment in Kolkata nearly two months ago. Earlier, Mamata, who had opposed Teesta water sharing and land boundary agreements with Bangladesh, received a copy of the invitation letter through the diplomatic channel. During her stay in Bangladesh, Mamata is expected to attend programmes marking the Amar Ekushey on February 21, said a foreign ministry official. Recently, Mamata has dropped her opposition to the LBA, which means the deal would be signed anytime. "So, this is the right time to motivate her so that other pending bilateral issues can also be addressed," said officials. In August 2011, former foreign minister Dipu Moni had also officially invited Mamata to visit Bangladesh. Mamata last visited Bangladesh in 1998 as the head of Trinamool Congress, along with leaders of Communist Party of India (Marxist), to attend Awami League's 50th founding anniversary. This is going to be her first visit here after becoming the chief minister of West Bengal in May, 2011. During her visit, she is expected to meet President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other high-profile government leaders.