

Violence, blockades mark hartal in capital

Hefajat activists clash with police, ruling party men

STAR REPORT

Sporadic clashes between hartal supporters and law enforcement agencies in Narayanganj and Hefajat-e-Islam and ruling party men in different parts of the capital marked yesterday's dawn-to-dusk hartal.

Hartal supporters carried out vandalism and torching, and blockaded different roads which caused immense suffering to commuters.

In the capital's Paltan area, ruling party activists and Hefajat-e-Islam men engaged in chase and counter-chase, where an AL activist was beaten up.

After Zohr prayers, Hefajat supporters again brought out a procession with sticks in their hands and chased a group of ruling party men again at Paltan intersection and drove them away. They blockaded the road for around 30 minutes while police kept the area cordoned off.

Hefajat supporters brought out multiple processions in the area over the next several hours, creating a tense situation. Around 5pm, Hefajat activists left the area.

Elsewhere, around 300 hartal supporters blocked the road at Mohammadpur bus

stand by setting fire to tyres for an hour since 7am. At least three people were injured during clashes between madrasa students and ruling party activists in the area around 11am. The clash ensued when students of a local madrasa tried to block a road in the area and ruling party men chased and beat them up with rods. The students also pelted brick chips at the ruling party activists.

Picketers also blocked a road in Basila area of Mohammadpur in the morning, causing traffic gridlock in the surrounding areas for an hour.

When students of Satmasjid madrasa in Mohammadpur tried to blockade the Satmasjid area, they clashed with police and Bangladesh Chhatra League leaders and activists around 11am. Law enforcers charged batonsto disperse the Hefajat supporters.

Earlier in the day, Awami League and its affiliates were also seen patrolling on motorcycles at Malibagh Rail Crossing and Rampura areas since morning. Some of them had sticks and hockey sticks in their hands.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2 The capital saw sparse traffic throughout the day yesterday, particularly in areas where clashes broke out. The photo was taken near Paltan area.

A legacy at risk of fading away

Photographer Naib Uddin Ahmed's contributions need preservation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Even though Naib Uddin Ahmed was an internationally renowned photographer, memories of his work are slowly fading in the minds of his own people in Mymensingh.

His camera has preserved some of the most striking scenes from the Liberation War -- scenes of torture, aggression, and grave injustice. Yet, only a few of his colleagues, well-wishers, and family members remember the veteran behind the lenses today.

Some of his photographs are widely used on different occasions, but his name is never seen on the credits. "It's quite painful for us," said Mahmuda Nasrin Kajol, Naib's daughter-in-law.

One of his most popular works, the historic photograph "Three Freedom Fighters", is displayed at the main corridor of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, but it does not bear Naib's name, lamented Kajol.

"We contacted Tobarak Hossain Ludu, then commander of Mukti Bahini in Singair, and the ministry concerned on various occasions, but

no one took steps to recognise Naib as a freedom fighter. We want nothing but his recognition," she said.

Born at Paril Nauda village in Manikganj's Singair upazila in 1927, Naib, also known as Manik Mia, was the elder brother of eminent photographer late Dr Noazesh Ahmed. In 1961, he joined the Public Relations and Publications Department of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) as its chief photographer, and served there for 30 years.

After retiring in 1990, he left Mymensingh for Dhaka in 1998. He died on December 14, 2009.

Soon after the war started, Naib and his family took shelter at Munshibari of Char Horipur and Parulitola village in Mymensingh for around four months. He spent those difficult months taking snaps of the war. He later returned to his BAU residence when normalcy returned.

With great risk, he captured images of intense brutality unleashed by the Pakistan army, said colleague Md Nowab Ali, who joined the department as Naib's deputy in 1968.

"His photographs helped publicise the war to the world, and they now survive as documents of the Liberation War," said Nowab, now 78-year-old.

Before the war, Naib used to visit adjacent villages on the other side of the Brahmaputra to capture images of rural life as a hobby. His lively and impressive photographs highlighted the diverse beauty of Bangladesh and its natural environment, recalled Nowab, who would accompany him sometimes.

It was his immense courage that led Naib to turn his camera towards the war. His photography captured the atmosphere of the war, like his photos of vultures circling carcasses on the bank of Brahmaputra, said Nowab.

A true patriot at heart, Naib would risk his safety to bring stories from the war to light. Daughter-in-law Kajol recalled a particular incident. "One day, my father-in-law told me, a Pakistan army officer asked him to take a look at his camera as it was not working properly."

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This iconic photograph, "Three Freedom Fighters", hangs at the main corridor of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs. It's one of many famous photos taken by Naib Uddin Ahmed, but few know of his role behind the camera, because almost none of his work credits him or bears his name.



PHOTO COURTESY: NAIB UDDIN AHMED'S FAMILY

(Mist) cannons to fight pollution!

DNCC brings two vehicles to keep city streets dust-free

MATHEWS CHIRAN

To control dust pollution in the capital and maintain air quality, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) have begun operating two truck-mounted mist cannons. Officials say it is an improvement from current mechanisms of dust management and can prove to be an important part of plans for a cleaner Dhaka.

DNCC bought the Dutch-manufactured cannon in February at a cost of Tk 13 crore, said officials. It has a 15,000-litre water reservoir and a 360-degree spray bar that can disperse mist at a range of at least 30 metres.

Sohel Engineering & Construction Ltd, a private company that supplied the machine, has been charged with maintaining and spraying water around Airport Road, Agargaon and in front of the Prime Minister's Office.

"It is currently being operated on a pilot basis, particularly around metro rail areas. If it works well, we might buy more," said DNCC Waste Management



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A mist cannon blows water particles at high speed into the air to clear dust near Dhaka Residential Model College. This photo was taken recently.

Department Executive Engineer Anwarul Karim.

"We bought the trucks to keep the air free from dust. Keeping the pandemic in mind, we might also add sanitisers

to help contain spread of coronavirus," the official said.

"Currently, it is being operated from 8am to noon every day," he added.

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Primary school closure extended till May 22

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Primary and Mass Education Ministry yesterday extended the closure of primary schools and kindergartens to May 22.

The students should stay at home to prevent the spread of Covid 19, the ministry said in a statement.

Earlier on March 25, the education ministry said in-person classes at secondary schools and colleges would resume after Eid on May 23.

Prior to these announcements, all schools and colleges were supposed to reopen on March 30.

The latest announcements introduce renewed uncertainty among students and parents across the country.

On February 22, the government announced that in-person classes at public and private universities would resume on May 24, after the dormitories reopen on May 17.

Educational institutions have been closed since March 17 last year. The closure led to cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

Educational activities of around four crore students have been affected due to the closure and school students were promoted to the next grade this year without an examination.

The government started TV education for primary and secondary school students. Many schools, colleges and universities have also been taking online classes. But many students got left out because of the digital divide.

Rab arrests Nipun Roy Chowdhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nipun Roy Chowdhury, a member of BNP's central executive committee, was arrested yesterday on the charge of conspiracy of sabotage during Hefajat-e-Islam's hartal.

A Rab team first arrested Nipun's associate Arman from Keraniganj. Later, based on his information, they arrested her from Rayerbazar area in the afternoon, said Lt Col Ashique Billah, Rab's legal and media wing director.

Nipun, also member secretary of Women and Child Rights Forum, has conspired to carry out subversive activities by setting buses on fire, he said.

She was picked up from her Rayerbazar home around 3:30pm, Emran Saleh Prince, the party's organising secretary and in-charge of its central office, quoted Nipun's family as saying.

Daughter of BNP vice-chairman Nitai Roy Chowdhury, Nipun is daughter-in-law of BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy.

GRAFT SUSPECTS LEAVING COUNTRY

SC refuses to stay HC verdict calling for law on embargo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A chamber judge of the Appellate Division of Supreme Court yesterday refused to stay a High Court verdict over formulating a law or rule regarding imposition of embargo on corruption suspects or accused from leaving the country.

"What is the issue with the High Court judgement that asked the Anti-Corruption Commission to take permission from the special judge's court for imposing embargo on any corruption suspect or accused leaving the country?" Justice Obaidul Hassan, chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC, asked.

The apex court judge put the question while hearing a petition filed by the ACC seeking stay on the HC.

He also sent the ACC's stay petition to the full bench of the Appellate Division for a hearing on April 5.

ACC's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told the apex court the commission faces difficulty if it has to take permission from the special judge's court for imposing embargo on any corruption suspect or accused leaving the country.

The inquiry or investigation against the corruption suspect or accused becomes "frustrated" if the ACC has to take permission from the court to impose embargo on the suspect leaving the country, he said.

Delivering verdict on a writ petition, the HC on March 16 observed that a specific law or rule is needed soon regarding imposition of embargo on corruption suspects or accused leaving the country.

There is no specific law or rule to ban people, against whom inquiries or investigations are underway in connection with corruption allegations or cases, from leaving the country. They have a right to free movement

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