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DHAKA BECOMES A BATTLEFIELD

The fear of violence came true as Awami League, BNP and police clashed in and around BNP's Nayapaltan headquarters area centring its grand rally (top left). Rubber bullets were fired, teargas canisters lobbed and batons charged as police cleared Nayapaltan area of BNP supporters. Scores of BNP men as well as law enforcers were injured during the clash. Meanwhile, several police boxes and vehicles were torched throughout the day. AL held its "peace rally" (middle) at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque while Jamaat supporters gathered at Arambagh intersection (top right).

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, PALASH KHAN, ANISUR RAHMAN, RASHED SHUMON

People suffer as Dhaka streets turn violent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka dwellers suffered much yesterday as two major political parties – BNP and Awami League – held separate political programmes in the city.

Availability of public transports was scarce in the morning, with the number dwindling further in the afternoon, leaving commuters stranded on streets.

On the other hand, activists from both parties occupied many areas including Paltan, Kakrail, Bangabandhu Avenue and Motijheel, halting traffic movement.

The situation turned worse after BNP activists and police clashed in different areas, leaving people from Segunbagicha, Paltan, Nayapaltan and surrounding areas in panic, particularly after police lobbed teargas canisters during the clash.

During visits to Farmgate, Mohakhali, Ghulshan and Rampura areas, two correspondents of this newspaper found that there were very few buses available and people were struggling to get from one area to another.

Transport owners said they had no directive to keep buses out of service, but many operators avoided plying buses in fear of violence. Adding to the woes, many ruling leaders hired buses for their rally, creating a vacuum in public transport.

Meanwhile, 11 platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh have been deployed in the capital to ensure security and maintain law and order last night. They will be on duty today as well along with police to maintain law and order situation, Md Shariful Islam, public relations officer of BGB, told The Daily Star yesterday.

'That's my father in the van'

People continue to crowd CMM court to see their detained loved ones

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Every time a van stopped in front of her, seven-year-old Jannat started clapping. "Father, that's my father in the van," she cheered.

Jannat was standing in front of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka with her mother Mukta and grandmother Baby Begum yesterday.

While the little one knew that her father was in one of the vehicles, she did not know that the vehicles were prison vans and her father, Shipan Mia, was detained by police.

The 28-year-old was arrested from Gendaria's Dayaganj area on Friday night.

Mukta, holding her other one-year-old baby, told The Daily Star, "My husband works at a brass factory. He has no links with politics."

"He was arrested as a suspect," she said.

Hundreds of people, like Mukta, gathered at the CMM court premises yesterday, on a weekend, to see their family members and relatives who got arrested from different parts of the capital on Friday.

In usual times, there is a sparse presence of people at the court premises



Jannat (in red dress), along with her family members, waits in front of the CMM court yesterday to catch a glimpse of her father Shipan Mia who was arrested in the capital's Dayaganj area on Friday night.

PHOTO: STAR

on a Saturday morning. A 19-year-old Hafsa – holding her nine-month-old baby – was seen waiting for her husband, Kayum.

Kayum, 28, was arrested from the Azimpur Bus Stand area in Lalbagh early yesterday.

"Police said BNP-related photos were found in my husband's mobile, so he was

arrested," said Hafsa.

"My husband works at a plastic factory in Islambagh. He is not involved in any kind of politics," she claimed.

"We can't even manage to eat properly. How can we have the luxury of engaging in politics?" Hafsa added.

Elderly Hena Begum reached the court premises around 9:00pm yesterday

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Arrests throughout the day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cops arrested people with free rein in and around the city yesterday amid the rallies of BNP and Awami League.

At Dhaka Medical College Hospital, police were seen arresting those who came to receive treatment following clashes on Dhaka streets.

DMCH Director Brig Nazmul Haque said as many as 133 people were treated for injuries yesterday, and 38 had to be admitted.

But upon inspection, only three people (injured during clashes) could be found admitted to the hospital – a policeman, a follower of Jamaat, and a third, whose identity could not be known immediately.

The rest had fled, presumably fearing arrest.

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"I didn't beat anyone; I am just a bystander. Why are you taking me to prison?" cried a man while being loaded onto a police van from the hospital premises.

Another person with a bandaged head was also put into the van.

A hawker from Narayanganj, Rafiqul Islam, kept saying

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1