

Anti-autocracy movement 10 Oct to 6 Dec 1990 : A chronology

Events leading to the fall of the Ershad

TENTH October, a watershed in the eight-year anti-Ershad movement. Peaceful sit-in around the government Secretariat turned violent in few hours as police

gunned down five pro-democracy activists. Firing in Dhaka sparked off anger and agitation across the country. A series of protests, hartals and blockade virtually rocked the nearly nine-year-old government of President Ershad. 19 October, another milestone in the oust-Ershad agitation, when three frontline opposition alliances simultaneously announce the modality of the neutral caretaker government along with a joint declaration rejecting all national election under the Ershad administration. The country, after abortive "Dhaka Siege" programme in 1987, witnessed violent anti-government agitations in October-December. The country's politics began changing fast with the declaration of state of emergency on 27 November. And finally Ershad succumbed and announced his unconditional resignation in the night of 4 December. The FRIDAY publishes for its esteemed readers a chronology of events from 10 October to 6 December.

10 October: Sit-in around the Secretariat called by the Eight-Party, Seven-Party and Five-Party Alliances. At least five demonstrators were

killed in police firing in Motijheel and Gulistan areas. Of them, four were identified as Zehad, Zahir, Monwar and Altaf.

Seven-Party Alliance leader Begum Khaleda Zia announced a half-day hartal in the capital for the next day (11 October) to protest the killings. Leader of the Eight-Party Alliance Sheikh Hasina at a press conference at Bangabandhu Bhaban

dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city next day.

11 October: Abdul Awal was reportedly killed by police firing. Some 12 student leaders, including DUCSU VP Amanullah and GS Khairul Kabir Khokon, Chhatra League (H-A) President Habibur Rahman Habib, Chhatra League (N-S) President Nazmul Haq Pradhan, Mosharraf and Altaf Hossain were

injured in police baton charges while leading a procession at Shabagh:

Gayebana

Janaza was held at Baitul Mukarram Mosque premises after Zohr prayer for yesterday's (10 October) killing. Sheikh Hasina and Begum Zia visited Dhaka Medical College Hospital to see the injured student leaders.

12 October: Three opposition alliances staged demonstration to protest the killing of 10 October. APSU held a rally outside Jatiya Press Club.

13 October: Mohammad Moniruzzaman, a student of Tejaon polytechnic Institute, was killed in police firing at Tejaon. Sheikh Hasina came to Dhaka University campus and led an oath to students at Aparajeya where body of Moniruzzaman was kept. *Joi Bangla* and *Joi Bangabandhu* slogans pronounced by Hasina at the end of the oath raised controversy.

Students brought out a procession with the body of Moniruzzaman. Police obstructed



The catalysts - Aman - Habib



also called for a half-day hartal on the day. Both Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina visited the campus where Zehad's body was kept at the foot of Aparajeya Bangla. Sheikh Hasina led oath of students at the Aparajeya Bangla. Begum Zia held a press conference at BNP office in the evening and claimed six persons were killed in police firing.

Student organisations met at the DUCSU office, formed All-Party Student Unity (APSU) and called for a

them near the High Court. Student-police clash. Fire at Atomic Energy Commission. Nine vehicles of the Commission were burnt.

Belal Hossain, injured on 10 October, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The government declared Dhaka University closed for an indefinite period and students were asked to leave their halls by 7 am next day. Students staged demonstration in front of the VC's residence against the closure order.

14 October: All educational institutions in the city, including Dhaka University, were closed. Students strike across the country was called by the APSU to protest the killing. Clashes between police and students at Jahangirnagar and Rajshahi Universities.

15 October: Half-day hartal observed in the capital city. The three alliances issued a simultaneous statement calling for maintaining unity at any cost following controversy over *Joi Bangla* slogan. Police firing during a clash with students of Jahangirnagar University.

16 October: Countrywide 8-hour hartal called by the opposition to protest increase in the fares of bus, train and motor launch.

17 October: Rajshahi University and Mymensingh Agriculture University were declared closed. Chhatra League (H—A) held a rally at the DU campus demanding resignation of the Vice Chancellor Prof Moniruzzaman Mia.

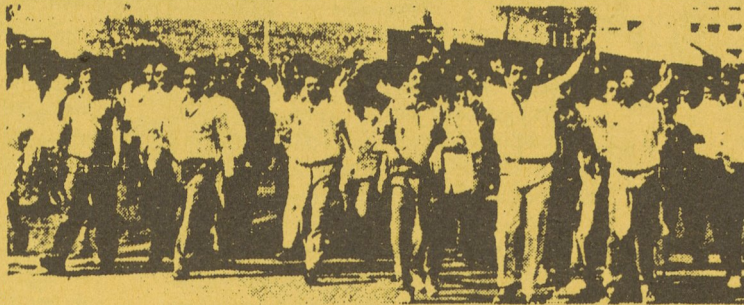
18 October: Dhaka University closure order was challenged at the High Court. APSU held a rally outside Jatiya Press Club demanding reopening of the university.

19 October: Mourning Day called by the three alliances across the country. Sheikh Hasina and Begum Zia led the processions of their respective alliances.

20 October: APSU held rally at the DU campus against the killing of Zahidul Islam Ukil in Rajshahi. He was seriously beaten in police custody and later died in Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

21 October: Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) took out a silent procession in the capital demanding reopening of the university. The three alliances observed demonstration day against killing, repression and demanding resignation of President Ershad.

22 October: APSU held rally of teachers, students, guardians, lawyers, doctors, journalists and cultural activists at the Central Shahid Minar. It took fresh pledge to continue anti-autocracy movement unitedly.



Secretariat officers join people's movement

23 October: Rally sponsored by APSU at Sadarghat came under police action that left several students injured. Police baton-charged a student procession in Chittagong. SKOP leaders met Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia and expressed their solidarity with the movement. 92 intellectuals issued a statement urging the opposition leaders to launch a united movement.

25 October: APSU demonstr-

ation in front of the Education Ministry demanding reopening of the university. Students damaged at least 25 cars at different points in the city.

26 October: President Ershad declared that only schools in the city will reopen on 1 November. Hasnat became president of the city unit of the Jatiya Party. Bomb explosion at Hare Road near the Prime Minister's house in the evening.

27 October: Road and rail blockade across the country. Ganaswasthya and BEXIMCO were ransacked and damaged by fire. The alliances announced their next anti-government plans, including *gherao* of Radio and Television centres on 5 November and public meetings at Panthapath, Bangla Motor and Maghbazar on 6 November.

28 October: NAP leader Pankaj Bhattacharya was arrested under the Special Powers Act. Weekly Holiday Press was attacked and damaged by fire.

29 October: Rally at TSC by 7 teachers' organisation from primary to university level. The rally urged the opposition to go ahead with the movement against all conspiracies.

30 October: Peasants' rally at the Bangabandhu Avenue addressed by Sheikh Hasina.

31 October: Attempt for communal disturbances in Dhaka and Chittagong. Curfew in old Dhaka and Chittagong.

01 November: Curfew clamped on entire Dhaka city due to fear of escalating communal disturbances in different parts of the city. Army was called out. Peace processions by opposition alliances and parties. Sheikh Hasina and Begum Zia respectively led the peace procession of Eight-Party and Seven-Party.

02 November: Anti-communalism rallies and processions in the city. Opposition leaders blamed the government for staging communal disturbances to divert the movement. Section 144 was imposed banning rally and processions.

03 November: Awami League observes Jail-killing Day.

04 November: President



Lawyers march defying curfew

Ershad renewed his offer for dialogue with opposition.

05 November: Opposition gheraoed Radio and Television centres demanding objective coverage of opposition's news in state-run mass media.

06 November: Anti-Ershad rallies at Pantha Path, Bangla Motor crossing and Maghbazar coinciding with the review meeting of the donor agencies. Sheikh Hasina spelt out the constitutional provisions of a caretaker government.

07 November: Sepahl-Janata Revolution Day observed country-wide.

10 November: A dawn-to-dusk nationwide hartal called by the three opposition alliances was observed. At least 100 arrested in the city.

The alliances announced fresh programmes, including 48-hour non-stop countrywide hartal 20-21 November. Other programmes include rallies and demonstrations 12-19 November.

15 November: Dhaka University officially reopened after an unscheduled 32-day closure ordered by the government.

16 November: Strategists of the Eight-Party, Seven-Party and Five-Party Alliances agreed on election to sovereign parliament under a neutral caretaker government.

18 November: Opposition alliances agreed to withdraw hartal on 21 November in view of the Defence Ministry's request.

Dhaka University teachers boycotted class for 2 hours demanding repeal of the Educational Institutions Ordinance.

19 November: Three alliances formally announced the modality of a neutral, caretaker government and asked President Ershad to hand over power to such a caretaker government under articles 51 and 55 of the Constitution. They also declared the alliances would not only boycott all elections under the Ershad government but also resist such elections. They demanded polls under the proposed interim, caretaker government to elect a sovereign parliament.

20 November: The 24-hour hartal was observed. Scattered clashes in Dhaka, Rajshahi and other cities. The residence of Begum Khaleda Zia was attacked by a retired army colonel Abdur Rashid. Tarek Rahman, the eldest son of Begum Zia, was beaten by the colonel. All parties condemned the attack.

21 November: Khalada Zia for the first time named Ershad as the killer of Zia. Rallies by the three alliances were held at the Bangabandhu Avenue and

Gulistan Square. Opposition announced three-week action programme, including a 72-hour blockade across the country 10-12 December.

22 November: The three alliances began talks with different professional groups, including the SKOP and the APSU, on ways to implement the action programme.

23 November: Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal President Mirza Abbas was arrested after a BNP rally at Gulistan.

24 November: BNP Standing Committee expelled Chhatra Dal leader Sanaul Haq Niru and five other stalwarts of Chhatra Dal on charges of anti-organisational activities and staging armed violence at the instigation of the government.

25 November: Gunbattle between Niru-Ovee group and the supporters of the All-Party Students Unity (APSU).

26 November: Fresh gunbattle between the government backed Niru-Ovee and the APSU. Nimai, a tea boy was killed during shootout by Niru-Ovee group.

27 November: President Ershad addressed the nation over radio and television. He declared State of Emergency to quell violent anti-government protests. An indefinite curfew was clamped down on Dhaka from 9 pm, and from 12 midnight on Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna. The declaration of emergency was preceded by the killing of Dr Shams Alam Khan Milon, Joint-Secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association. He was shot dead by Niru-Ovee group near TSC of Dhaka University at about 10:30 am. Violent protests gripped the city. Doctors of Dhaka Medical College resigned *en masse* protesting the killing of Milon. Sheikh Hasina was put under house arrest at her Dhanmandi residence. Begum Khaleda Zia went into hiding. Journalists decided to abstain from work protesting the emergency and the press censorship. Educational institutions including Dhaka University were shut down for one month. Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar and Mymensingh universities were also closed.

28 November: Several thousand students including girl students of Dhaka University came out on the streets in a huge procession violating curfew and emergency laws. Protestors clashed with security forces at different places including at Malibagh, Maghbazar, Jigatala, Zatrabari. At least 8 to 15 protestors were killed in Dhaka, three in Rajshahi and two in Mymensingh.

29 November: At least eight

persons were killed in a clash between security forces and protestors at Mirpur. Four hours curfew break from 6 am to 10 am. Students of Dhaka University vacated the halls. Vice Chancellor Prof Moniruzzaman Mia and teachers of Dhaka

University also decided to resign. Most of the Radio and TV artist's boycotted their radio and TV programmes.

03 December: In a nationwide broadcast, President Ershad announced a package election formula which included presidential and parliamentary elections the same day. The President according to the announcement was to resign 15 days before the date for filing of nomination papers. The President decided to contest the presidential elections. Three opposition alliances and other political groups rejected the President's formula and demanded his immediate resignation.

04 December: Scores of mass demonstrations in the capital. Civil Service (Admn) threatened to resign. The opposition alliances staged huge rallies at Bangabandhu Avenue and Gulistan Square in the afternoon demanding immediate resignation of Ershad. President Ershad called an emergency meeting of his Council of Ministers at the President's Secretariat and announced his unconditional resignation with immediate effect. Television announced the President's decision at about 10:20 pm at the end of its news bulletin. Victory processions throughout the night.

05 December: Eight-Party Alliance proposed the name of Air Vice Marshal (Rtd) A K Khondkar, a former minister, as head of the interim government. At last Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed was nominated by the three alliances as the Vice President to head the neutral caretaker government. Jubilant crowds celebrated the victory.

06 December: The President dissolved the parliament. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed was sworn-in at the President's Secretariat at 2:45 pm. The President signed his own resignation at 2:48 pm. Earlier, Vice-President Moudud Ahmed resigned and cabinet was dissolved. Justice Ahmed became the President of the country. The President met opposition leaders at the Bangabhaban at 4:25 pm. Sheikh Hasina, Begum Khaleda Zia, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, Abbas Ali Khan were present. Chiefs of the three services were also present at the meeting. [F]