

TONU MURDER

Students block roads during half-day hartal

STAR REPORT

Students blocked roads, brought out processions and held rallies as a half-day hartal was enforced yesterday across the country, protesting the government's "failure" to arrest the killers of Sohagi Jahan Tonu.

Progressive Students' Alliance and Anti-Imperialist Students' Union, two major alliances of 11 left-leaning student bodies, who called the countrywide strike from 6:00am to 12:00 noon, blocked Dhaka's key intersection Shahbagh yesterday.

Demanding trial of all murders, forced disappearances and rapes, including the killing of Tonu, around 200 protesters brought out a procession and held a rally at Shahbagh.

Pro-hartal activists blockaded Dhaka-Aricha highway in front of

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Students block roads

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Jahangirnagar University at Savar for around two hours. Ashulia police charged truncheons on the demonstrators and detained at least 13 students.

Mohsinul Quadir, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Model Police Station, told The Daily Star that they detained the demonstrators to clear the highway.

Masuk Helal Anik, vice-president of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front of JU unit, was among the detainees, who were all JU students.

In an immediate reaction to the detention, the demonstrators brought out a protest procession on campus and laid siege to the registrar building, demanding the resignation of JU proctor, reports, our JU correspondent.

Police later released the detainees.

Traffic in Dhaka city was lighter than usual when the strike began in the morning.

Pro-hartal activists were also seen in

Mohammadpur, Malibagh, Paltan, Jagannath University and old Dhaka in the capital. Separate processions were brought out at Paltan and Shahbagh.

Faisal Mahmud, coordinator of Anti-Imperialist Students' Union, told The Daily Star that the hartal programme gained support from people of all walks of life.

"We got news that 15 pro-hartal activists have been detained in Jahangirnagar University. Hartal supporters have been attacked in Bogra, Joypurhat, Gazipur, Rangpur and Barisal. Some of our activists have been detained there," said Naima Khaled Monika, president of a faction of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front.

Commuters were stuck at different points on the roads linked to Shahbagh intersection, which was blocked by the pro-hartal supporters.

Movement of vehicles was very slow on key thoroughfares, including Bijoy

Sarani, Jahangirgate and Mohakali, an official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police traffic control room told The Daily Star.

Leaders and activists of Progressive Students' Alliance of Rajshahi University unit blocked Dhaka-Rajshahi highway in front of the main entrance of the university for one and a half hours to press home their demands. They then joined a protest rally in front of the university central library, our RU correspondent reports.

When pro-hartal activists were picketing at Sadar Road in Barisal city, police stopped them and charged truncheons to disperse them, our Barisal correspondent reports.

At least 10 students were injured, and four of them were admitted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal.

Shakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said they drove the demonstrators

away from the roads to maintain law and order and traffic flow during the busy office hours.

Comilla's Victoria College student Tonu's body was found inside Comilla cantonment on March 20. Though a month has passed, there has been no headway in identifying the killers.