

ARTISTE, MOVIE, POETRY

Syed Badrul Ahsan reads a few books, in languor

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TOM HARDY AS ELTON JOHN

"The Dark Knight Rises" star will play the singer in biopic "Rocketman"

PAGE 9

MONITORING MERKEL

The US has been "spying on the German chancellor's mobile phone since 2002"

PAGE 8



Clouds hover over hopes

AL, BNP leaders stay sceptic about talks; find bitterness between their chiefs runs deep

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The phone conversation between Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia has failed to kindle hope even in their own parties for a dialogue between the two leaders to resolve the ongoing political crisis.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, some leaders of the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP expressed frustration at the way the conversation between Hasina and Khaleda went on Saturday.

They said the conversation couldn't make them hopeful about a dialogue to break the political impasse over polls-time government. Some of them even said the possibility of a dialogue was faint.

The two leaders got into an argument on several issues, including an election-time government, celebration of Khaleda's birthday on August 15, alleged repression on opposition activists by the government and withdrawal of the 60-hour hartal.

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MATIA, FAKHRUL BRIEFINGS ON PAGE 3

Jamaat acts typically
Slits tendons of 2

STAR REPORT

Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir once again showed their brutality by hacking eight people and slitting the tendons of three of them during hartal yesterday.

Of the victims, Swapan Shil, 35, a barber of Pirojpur, succumbed to his injuries after Shibir men, backed by BNP activists, stormed his home in Baliapara Bazar area of Zianagar upazila yesterday afternoon and hacked him.

The attackers also hacked his wife Beauty and beat up the children severely.

Swapan's fault was that Bangladesh Chhatra League activists often hang out at his shop, sources claimed.

Swapan was rushed to Morrelganj Upazila Health Complex and later on moved to Khulna Medical College Hospital where breathed his last.

Jamaat-Shibir men also cut the tendons of Chhatra League activist Bappy Mollah near Baliapara Bazar, an area considered as the backyard of condemned war criminal and Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

BNP-Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised more than a dozen shops and houses of Awami League activist at Baliapara union

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Hartal violent on first day

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and scores injured as BNP-Jamaat activists went berserk in different districts on the first day of the opposition-sponsored 60-hour hartal yesterday.

The killings have been reported from Jessore, Faridpur, Pabna, Pirojpur and Bogra.

The dead included three members of Jubo League, Jubo Dal and Jamaat-e-Islami.

BNP-Jamaat men hacked Swapan Shil, a barber by profession in Pirojpur. He succumbed to his injuries at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

A BNP man was killed and five others were injured as two rival groups of the main opposition party clashed in Bogra yesterday.

The BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance is enforcing the shutdown demanding a non-party polls-time government.

In Dhaka, pro-hartal activists set fire to at least 23 vehicles, including six BRTC buses at Gabtoli, and Awami League offices in Jatrabari, Uttara and Motijheel.

Three, including a 16-year-old boy, were injured in violence.

The BNP-Jamaat men blasted crude bombs at more than a hundred places in the capital, including in front of the offices of CPB, Desh TV, Bhorer Kagoj and Election Commission and Dhaka District and Sessions

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BLAST NEAR TUREEN'S HOUSE, OTHER STORIES -- PAGE 3, 13

5
dead yesterday
250
deaths so far
POLITICAL VIOLENCE
2013

Businesses in tatters

SOHEL PARVEZ

On Saturday evening, two entities of Square Group loaded 30 covered vans, ready to deliver products to distributors the next day.

The vans, containing processed foods and toiletries, were forced to stay stranded at the factory in Pabna due to the hartal.

Similarly, distributors of the group could fulfil nearly half their orders worth Tk 6 crore placed by retailers earlier.

Nasir Group of Industries that sells a wide range of products from cigarettes to melamine products, and footwear to energy saving bulbs, witnessed a drop in sales of Tk 2 crore -Tk 3 crore a day because of the hartal.

"We could not deliver our products today because of the hartal. It will not be

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TODAY'S O & A-LEVEL EXAMS POSTPONED
Hartal exemption comes late

But BNP to blame govt if students get hurt while commuting

WASIM BIN HABIB and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

After putting the O-level and A-level examinees in utter distress since Friday, the BNP-led 18-party alliance yesterday said all examinations, including the O- and A-level ones, will remain out of the purview of its 60-hour hartal.

The authorities, however, have already postponed today's O- and A-level tests on six subjects scheduled to be held in two shifts. Two examinations are scheduled for tomorrow and the decision on whether they will be held will come today.

The 18-party's announcement came following widespread criticism from different quarters.

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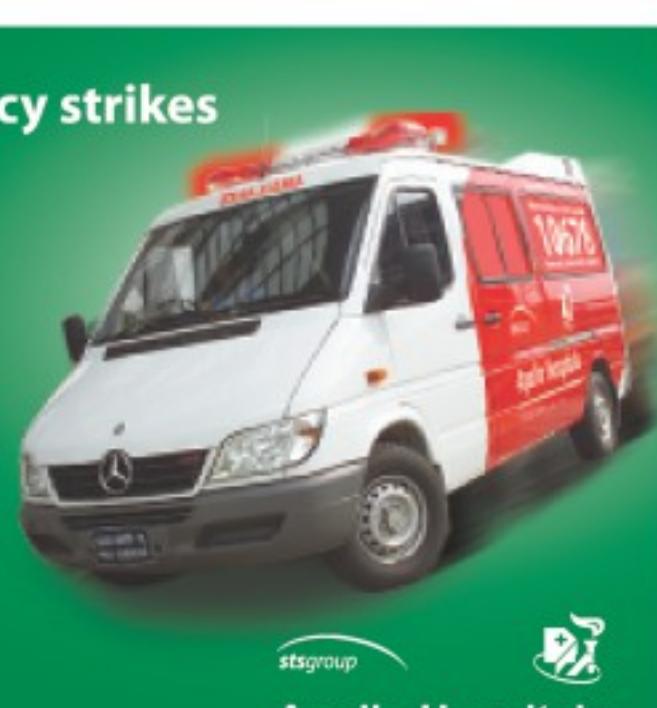
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