



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

SHOUT

**HINDU HOUSES TORCHED**

Altercation over a game leads to killing of a youth; burning of Hindu houses, temples in Barisal

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NASHEED'S SHOCK DEFEAT

Abdulla Yameen Gayoom wins presidential run-off in Maldives

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Yes, India in talks with US, others

Pankaj Saran on Bangladesh's peace, stability

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India is consulting Bangladesh's ongoing political situation with the United States and other countries that have interest in peace and stability in the country, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pankaj Saran said yesterday. "We are discussing the situation in Bangladesh with different countries ... so, we have discussed the issue also with the American government ... But I do not want to go into with what level and whom," Pankaj told reporters while inaugurating a new building at the Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery at Sabujbagh in the capital.

The dining hall - cum-library building was constructed with financial assistance from the Indian government.

He declined to make any comment when asked about a recent report of the Indian official news agency PTI that US President

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Diplomacy in rescue act?

Govt, opposition take US official Biswal's visit seriously

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the ongoing political crisis may gain momentum during the Dhaka visit of US Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Desai Biswal.

The visit comes against the backdrop of growing political violence with the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP sticking to their stances on polls-time government.

Biswal, who flew in yesterday from Japan on a three-day official visit, is expected to meet the country's two top leaders to broker talks between the two rival camps.

The US official responsible for South and Central Asian Affairs is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 4:00pm and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at 8:15pm today.

She will also hold a series of parleys with government officials, labour leaders and civil society members, according to a US media note.

At the talks with the US official, the government's policymakers would clarify its position on holding the next parliamentary election in line with the constitution and Hasina's ongoing efforts to form an all-party polls-time government, said sources.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said many countries were making efforts to see a consensus between the ruling and the opposition parties.

"May be Nisha Desai Biswal will take initiatives to see a consensus between the two parties, and we have nothing against it," said Matia, also AL presidium member.

Matia also said the government wanted to hold the election according to the constitution and it wouldn't go beyond the charter.

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Nisha Desai Biswal

BURNT BY HARTAL PICKETS

2 more victims die

Shattered family realises it's easy to kill people in the name of politics

ZYMA ISLAM and MIRZA SHAKIL

Within just six days, all is lost for Sanchita, whose life would never be the same again.

Minus the thick vermilion used to redden the parting of her hair, she seemed to have aged beyond the 25 years of her life.

Her husband Mantu Chandra Paul, 32, was one of the two more arson victims, who succumbed to their wounds at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the last two days.

Goldsmith Mantu, with 90 percent burns, and CNG-run three-wheeler driver Asad Gazi, 40, with 35 percent burn injury, died on Friday and Saturday.

With the two, the number of deaths from arson attacks before and during recent hartals has crept up to six in about 14 days.

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Sanchita wipes off her sindoor and breaks down in tears near DMCH morgue on Friday after her husband died of his burn injuries.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Malaysian PM arrives today
Hospital opening main tour agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak arrives in Dhaka today on a three-day official visit at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina to inaugurate a hospital with her.

Foreign ministry sources say the Malaysian premier, who is scheduled to land at 7:30pm today from Colombo after attending

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Hasina lashes out at Khaleda

BSS, Dhaka

Accusing the opposition leader of killing innocent people in the name of hartal, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked how much blood the BNP chief needed to quench her thirst.

"The opposition leader is not happy over the way she unleashes violence. She wants more destruction and anarchy. She needs more blood," Hasina said.

"I don't know how much blood would satisfy her thirst. I want to ask her how much blood of people she would take."

The prime minister made the comments while addressing a programme at the Gono Bhaban, where she handed over cheques to the victims of Jamaat-Hefajat mayhem at Fatikchhari in Chittagong on April 11.

She said the "vengeful opposition" is burning people to death; even kids are not spared. "They don't want development, they want dead bodies."

Urging the opposition to refrain from destructive acts in the name of hartal, Hasina said there is no public involvement in their movement.

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Tears roll down the cheeks of three and a half years old Asir at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday after he learnt his father Asad Gazi will never return home. Burnt by a petrol bomb during hartal on November 3, Asad left behind his wife, son Asir and daughter Tania, inset.



Why heaven?

Oblivious to father's death, boy wants him back in Barisal

ZYMA ISLAM

"My father died last night- what does it mean? Can I still lie down beside him on this bed?" - three and a half years old Asir was asking these questions pointing to the stretcher carrying his father's motionless body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

An eerie silence fell over the DMCH room packed with journalists, Asir's relatives and hospital staff as none could find a fitting answer to the innocent questions of Asir whose father Asad Gazi had passed away the previous night after his two weeks long battle with life in the burn unit of the DMCH.

Asad Gazi sustained critical burns after hartal pickets had hurled a petrol bomb at his CNG-run auto rickshaw in Savar on November 3.

When this reporter tried to assuage Asir's grief by saying that his father was in heaven, a place with beautiful flowers and

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Neither hartal nor repression to help

Worried leading citizens press govt, opposition for talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-four eminent citizens of the country yesterday expressed grave concern over the confrontational politics on formation of a polls-time government and its outcome.

The crisis can be solved through dialogues and understanding between the government and the opposition, they observed in a joint statement under the banner Bangladesh Rukhe Darao, a platform of progressive and pro-liberation forces.

All the 24 personalities are conveners of the platform. They include academicians Prof Anisuzzaman, rights activist Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan, cultural personalities Kamal Lohani and Ramendu Majumder, veteran politician Ajoy Roy and child-education activist Rasheda K Chowdhury.

They said because of the confrontational politics, people's lives were at risk and so was the country's economy. It impacted negatively on the education sector and on day labourers, while scores others were forced to join work risking their lives.

Many had sustained burn injuries and become disabled in the recent political violence across the country. The commoners had become

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