



'TICFA HARMLESS'

GM Quader says it will only create a platform to resolve trade disputes

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SOUNDSCAPE OF COLOURS

Musical group Shohojia launches their maiden album at Charukala

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'A NEW TYRANNY'

Pope slams unfettered capitalism in his first major publication

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BGB MAN AMONG 7 KILLED

Districts delinked

BNP-led opposition activists torch, derail trains; burn election office on the first day of 48-hour blockade

STAR REPORT

At least seven people, including a BGB man, were killed and over 250 injured as violence flared up across the country yesterday with communications crumbling on the first day of the opposition's 48-hour blockade of roads, rail and waterways.

Two of the dead were leaders of Jubo League and Swachhasebak League in Satkhira while the rest were a Jubo Dal man in Bogra, a pedestrian in Sirajganj, a rickshaw-puller in Comilla and an auto-rickshaw driver in Feni.

Train services were severely affected across the country yesterday as the opposition men blocked and damaged rail tracks.

The BNP-Jamaat activists put up barricades at different points of Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet, Dhaka-Aricha, Dhaka-Rangpur, Barisal-Dhaka,



Satkhira-Khulna, Kishoreganj-Bhairab, Panchagarh-Dinajpur highways with logs and burning tyres.

Ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route and to and from Chandpur terminal were suspended. Very few launches operated on Mawa-Kaorakandi route and to and from Sadarghat terminal amid a thin presence of passengers.

Trading through Burimari land port at Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat stopped with over a hundred trucks stuck up.

Though the BNP-led 18-party alliance had announced enforcing the blockade from yesterday morning to protest the declaration of the January 5 polls date, its activists started barricading roads and highways on Monday night.

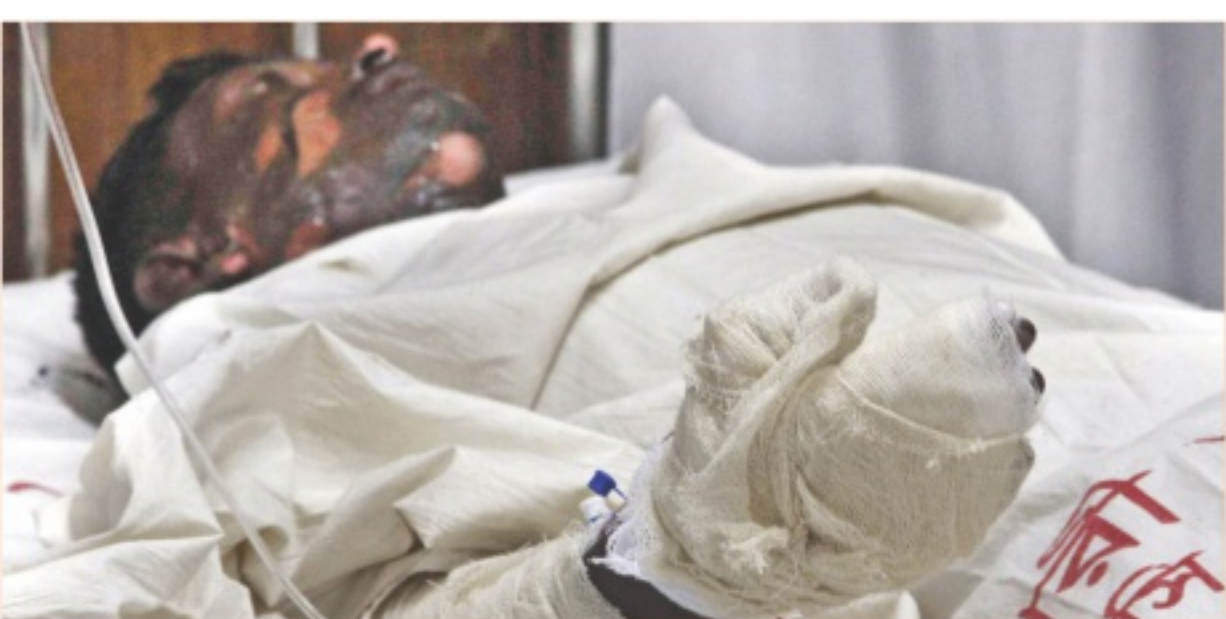
The pro-blockade activists yesterday went on the rampage in several districts, vandalising and



Opposition activists torch the Sirajganj Express at Ishwardi Railway Station at 3:00am yesterday, three hours before their nationwide blockade began. They also removed the sleeper clips from a rail line in Mymensingh causing a train to derail.



People the victims again



RAFIUL ISLAM and ZYMA ISLAM

When Aleya entered the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital to see her husband yesterday, her first glance of the burnt, peeling face sent her crashing to the floor with a piercing scream.

Her three-year-old son Arif, who accompanied her, wailed and ran out of the room. He could not be persuaded to come near his father for hours. His father Sabed Ali, burnt by arsonists inside the CNG-run auto-rickshaw he was

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Restrict PM's powers

A group of leading citizens urges president to act, create room for BNP in polls

SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

A delegation of eminent citizens yesterday met President Abdul Hamid, and proposed limiting the prime minister's powers to overrule ministers' decisions in order to have the BNP join the polls-time government and contest the next general election.

This could be done by amending the

government's rules of business, which would be effective only for the interim cabinet. And it would still be in conformity with the constitution, said meeting sources citing the proposal.

The rules of business now give the PM unlimited powers to override any decisions of the cabinet members.

PHOTO ON PAGE 2

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BNP's lethal vagueness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party alliance did not bother to explain or define the scope of its 48-hour blockade, creating confusion and anxiety among people.

Due to vagueness of the blockade's purview, school-goers and their guardians yesterday struggled to

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Arif, 3, the son of auto rickshaw driver Sabed Ali, top, cries his heart out after seeing his father burnt and bandaged at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Alleged opposition activists hurled a petrol bomb at Sabed's vehicle in front of Eastern Plaza during the opposition enforced nationwide blockade yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Change in polls schedule if parties reach consensus

Says CEC
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The scope for changing the polls schedule is there, if all parties could agree on the type of the interim government, said the Election Commission yesterday while it mulls keeping the army on the ground longer during the polls.

Speaking to the press at

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CPB's no to polls without all parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Without the participation of all political parties, the Communist Party of Bangladesh will not join the forthcoming 10th parliamentary election scheduled for January 5.

CPB President

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Business grinds to a halt

Prices of essentials to soar as blockade cuts supply chain; exporters count huge losses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economy has started to bleed as the ongoing countrywide blockade enforced by the opposition has begun to hit the country's businesses from all fronts.

Imported goods have piled up at Chittagong port. Essential commodities cannot be sent from depots to faraway locations. Transport of goods has become riskier; the cost has also gone through the roof.

The disrupted supply of rice, vegetables and other key commodities to the capital

and other parts of the country means their prices will soar.

Exports have taken a hit as transport of garment products, the lifeline of the economy, and other exportable goods from factories to Chittagong port have come to a standstill.

Business leaders said they are helpless due to the political parties' continuous disregard to their demand for a solution to the current crisis.

"The nationwide blockade is ruining our export prospects and business growth," said Abdus Salam Murshedy, president of Exporters Association of Bangladesh.

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