

# The Daily Star

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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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**IN AID OF BUSINESS**

Banks' loan classification rules may be eased due to the unrest

PAGE B1

**EENY, MEENY, MINY, MOE**

The first Bangladeshi Idol will be decided tomorrow

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## They talk twice, agree to nothing

### UN chief phones PM after fruitless AL-BNP discussion

SHAKHAWAT LITON, RASHIDUL HASAN and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The United Nations' hectic efforts brought the Awami League and the BNP leaders to the discussion table twice in the last two days, but could not make any breakthrough in the stalemate over the polls-time government as the rival camps stuck to their guns.



However, leaders of both the parties told the BBC Bangla service last night that they might sit again tomorrow and expected to reach an agreement through dialogue.

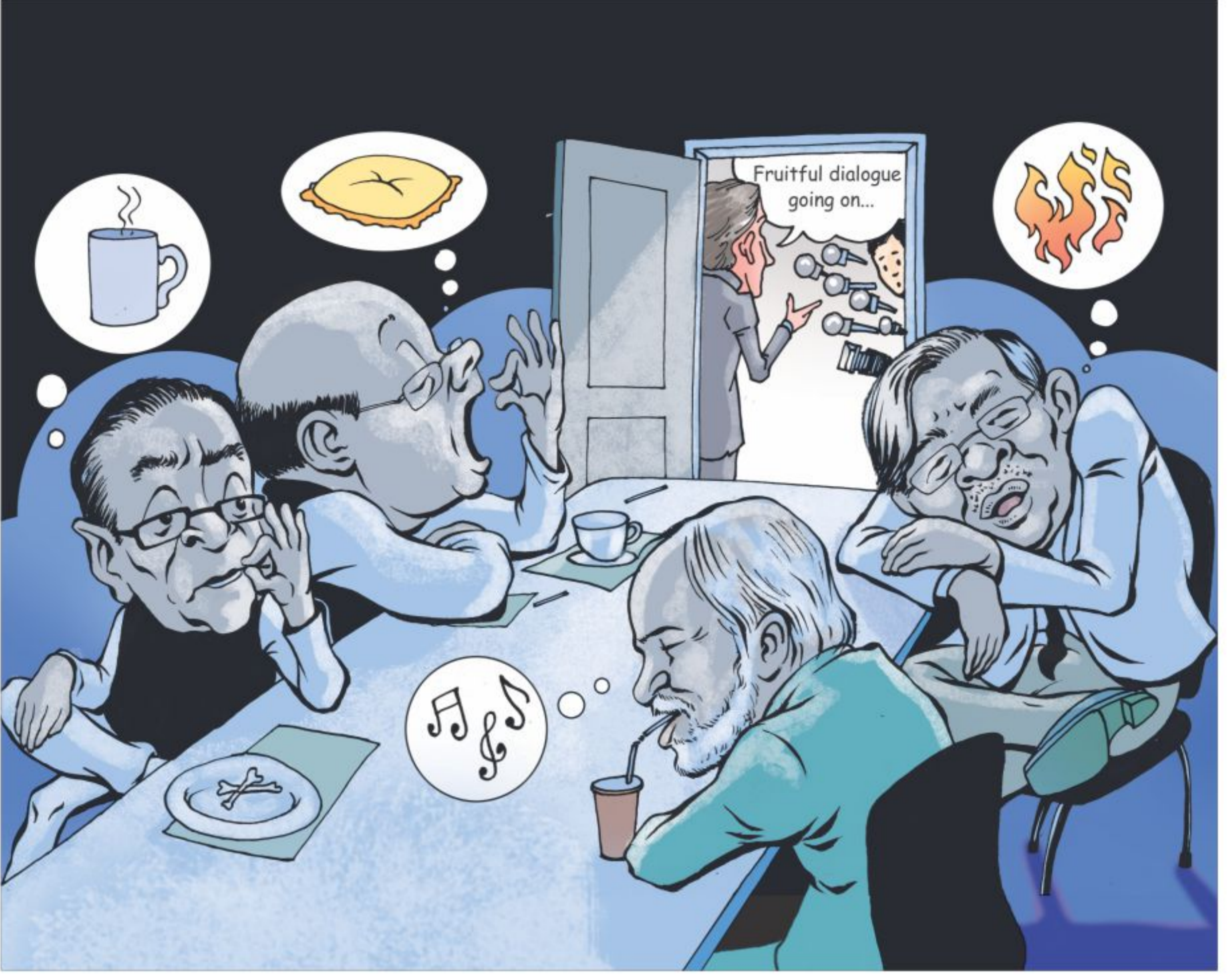
Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who has been urging the ruling AL and the opposition BNP since August to sit for talks to resolve the crisis, called Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

"Ban Ki-moon told the prime minister that he wants a peaceful election in line with the constitutional provisions," prime minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told The Daily Star.

Ban also expressed his hope that the dialogue would continue and be fruitful. The UN chief made the phone call at noon, an hour after the second round of talks between the two sides ended without any consensus over the

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## Solution possible

### Says Taranco before departure; meeting with PM cancelled

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN special envoy Oscar Fernandez-Taranco yesterday urged the ruling and opposition parties to continue dialogue in the spirit of goodwill and with an attitude of compromise and reducing tension.

He, however, remained tight-lipped about the details of the meetings between the Awami League and BNP.

"I firmly believe there is ground for an agreement. Bangladeshi leaders must continue to come together," he said prior to warping up his five-day visit to help the parties agree on a formula for holding free, fair, inclusive and non-violent elections.

## Paralysed by fear

### Bogra businesses, big or small, bear brunt of violent politics

SOHEL PARVEZ

A bustling town up north, Bogra has been brought to its knees in recent weeks by the violent activism that the opposition alliance has unleashed.

In broad daylight yesterday, only the odd roadside teashop was seen open for business in the town centre. And the typically buzzing roads: they were inhabited by a smattering of rickshaws, bicycles and motorcycles.

It seemed an eerie stillness has enveloped the town, often described as the 'nerve centre of northern Bangladesh'. But apparently, this has become a common sight over the past one month.

In other words, the northern town, which happens to be the trading hub for farm machineries, essential commodities and vegetables, suffers from intense picketing by BNP and its allies during shutdowns and blockades.

The haunting silence seemed to echo all the way to the outskirts of Bogra, where a Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) industrial park was located. The estate is home to farm machinery manufacturing units, flour and oil mills, chemical industries, paper-board and packaging factories and glass ceramic plants.



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## KERRY PHONES HASINA

### Mollah execution to derail polls?

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday said the execution of Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah might lead to events, which could derail the next parliamentary election in Bangladesh.



Talking to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina over the phone, he expressed concern over the violence during recent hartals and blockades, according to highly placed sources.

He welcomed the initiation of a dialogue between the major political parties on the national polls in Bangladesh.

The US secretary of state wanted to know about the trial process of the war criminals, prime minister's media adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury told journalists at the Gono Bhaban.

The PM told Kerry that some trials have been completed following due legal procedures and the government would

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

### War crimes, Kerry & history

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

US Secretary of State John Kerry called Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday to warn her that if convicted war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah goes to the gallows, Bangladesh's parliamentary elections might be derailed.

Decades ago, in 1977, one of Kerry's predecessors, Henry Kissinger, warned Pakistan's prime minister ZA Bhutto that if the latter went ahead with his nuclear plans, Washington would make a horrible example of him.

In 1974, as a fledgling Bangladesh sought to broaden its trade and diplomatic relations with nations around the world and from that perspective attempted to export jute to Cuba, the US administration made sure that Dhaka did not get the kind of food aid it sought to tide over a

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## MOLLAH'S PETITION

### Fate hangs in the balance

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The fate of Abdul Quader Mollah now hangs in the balance, as the Supreme Court may decide today whether to accept or reject the review petition against the death sentence of the convicted war criminal.

If the apex court fails to come up with a decision, the execution of the condemned Jamaat-e-Islami leader may be stayed for several weeks with the court going on a 19-day vacation from tomorrow.

The SC yesterday held a hearing on maintainability of the petition and adjourned the proceedings till 9:00am today.

Mollah's execution is halted until further SC order, as the court yesterday said the matter is now within its jurisdiction.

A five-member SC bench, headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain, made the observation at a crowded courtroom before adjourning the hearing at 1:00pm.

In a sudden move on late Tuesday night, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, chamber judge of the SC, stayed Mollah's execution just one and a half hours before the

JAMAAT STATEMENT - PAGE 10 SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



## Jamaat, Shibir on rampage

### Public property, police, AL men targeted

STAR REPORT

Jamaat-Shibir activists continued to unleash terror across the country during the Jamaat-e-Islami-enforced daylong hartal yesterday, protesting the move to execute convicted war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah.

Abdul Hamid, 48, an Awami League activist, died of his injuries early yesterday seven hours after he was abducted and beaten up allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men in Madhabkathi area of Satkhira.

Local traders alleged that Jamaat-Shibir men abducted Hamid as he had protested the decision of some opposition activists to shut down shops in the area soon after the news regarding Mollah spread.

Jamaat-Shibir activists set fire to a motorcycle and hurled petrol bombs at the branches of Mercantile Bank and Dutch Bangla Bank at Aloka intersection in Rajshahi city last night.

They also smashed the windowpanes of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry office hurling brick chunks around 8:30pm, said Ziaur Rahman,

Family members of Masuma Akter in tears inside the ambulance carrying her body at Anjuman Mofidul Islam in Kakrail. Senior officer of Rupali Bank Masuma, top, died of her burn injuries yesterday at a city hospital. She was in the bus pickets torched near Shishu Park on November 28.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1 JUSTICE SINHA'S HOME SET ON FIRE - PAGE 16

## Masuma loses battle for life

### Fourth victim of Shahbagh bus torching dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The motifs of henna in her hands had barely disappeared when she lost her life to mindless political violence.

Masuma Akter died around 11:00am at Dhaka Burn Clinic and Diagnostic Hospital yesterday, 13 days after suffering severe burns in an arson attack on a bus in Shahbagh.

the Shyambazar branch of Rupali Bank, had got married only five and a half months ago.

She was buried at her parental home in Narsingdi yesterday, said her family.

Masuma is the fourth victim to die from the arson attack. She had 40 percent of her body burnt. The other deceased are Robin, who worked at a sweater factory, his cousin Nahid Morol and Dhaka College student Ohidur Rahman Babu.

The three had died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Masuma's family said she was sitting near the driver when blockaders set fire to the Bihanga Paribahan bus near Shishu Park on November 28 during an opposition-called blockade.

At least 15 other passengers sustained burn injuries. Masuma was shifted to the clinic from DMCH on December 1.

With the respiratory organs damaged from the burns, she was on life-support for the last few days, her husband Mahbub-ur-Rahman, a private university teacher, told The Daily Star.

"We had so many dreams and so many plans," he said, choking with grief. "Yesterday morning, when I was at her bedside, she wanted to tell me something, but all she could do is mutter unintelligibly."

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## He saw them burn to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He could not see his daughter and wife for one last time yesterday, nor could he be beside them in their last journey. Offering prayers at their graveside was not possible for him either.

Such unfortunate Adam Ali is that he saw them burn to death before his eyes when blockaders set fire to a lorry carrying him and his family members on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Bhogra bypass of Gazipur around 10:00pm the day before.