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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE
Showbiz



SCREAMS, NIGHTMARES

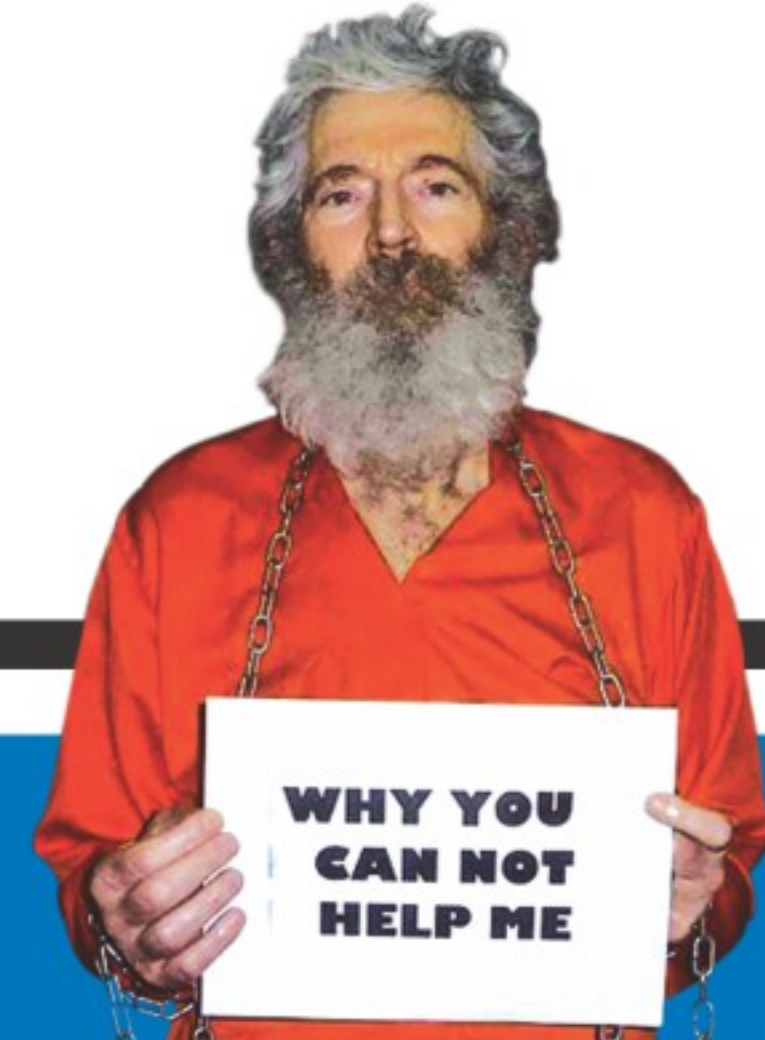
Star reprints a report by Anthony Mascarenhas on Bangladesh genocide

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'MISSING IN IRAN'

The American who "vanished" years ago was working for CIA

PAGE 11



Cars in flames near AGB Colony in the capital after Jamaat-Shibir men, aggrieved by the execution of war criminal Quader Mollah, went wild yesterday and torched several vehicles and roadside shops. More photos on page 2, 5 and 16.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Jamaat, Shibir strike terror

At least 8 killed in violence; more than 100 vehicles torched; bomb, arson attacks on factory, railway station, houses, shops; AL men, Hindus targeted

STAR REPORT

In a spree of countrywide violence, Jamaat-Shibir men yesterday rampaged through the capital and 23 other districts, protesting Thursday's execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, a top Jamaat leader.

The frenzied protests left at least eight people dead and more than 100 vehicles as well as offices, factories and houses

burnt across the country.

Two deaths were reported from Satkhira and Noakhali each and one each from Khulna, Pirojpur, Jessore and Joypurhat.

Protesters blocked a 15km stretch on the Dhaka-Bogra highway, 10km on the Dhaka-Pabna and Jessore-Bagharpara highways by felling trees and digging roads. They also uprooted several plates of a steel bridge on the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway, halting traffic for several

hours, report our district correspondents.

Rail communications between Khulna and the rest of the country remained suspended for 17 hours as Jamaat-Shibir men put up barricades at Shingia Railway Station in Jessore.

Unruly activists hurled petrol bombs at the control room of Joydevpur Railway Junction, gutting computers, eight telephone sets and signal equipment. Nine passengers were injured in

the incident.

In the capital, traffic was thin though it was not a hartal day. Many people remained indoors in fear of attacks by Jamaat-Shibir men over the hanging of Mollah.

Soon after Juma prayers, Jamaat-Shibir men in droves unleashed a reign of terror near Motijheel AGB Colony

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MOLLAH BURIED -- PAGE 2

128 elected uncontested

After withdrawal of candidatures, 10th JS polls see lowest number of contesting candidates

SHAKHAWAT LITON and PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Amid lowest-ever participation of candidates, at least 128 of them are set to be elected unopposed at the January 5 parliamentary election, breaking the record of the farcical polls on February 15, 1996.

Forty-nine candidates nominated by the then ruling BNP were elected uncontested in the February 15 election, boycotted by the Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and other parties.

The last day of filing nomination papers for the 10th general election was December 2. Till that point, eight candidates found no challengers in their respective constituencies, according to the Election Commission's list.

The number rose following the cancellation and

withdrawal of candidacies.

"The returning officers of the constituencies concerned will declare the candidates elected uncontested tomorrow [today]," a senior EC official told The Daily Star yesterday on condition of anonymity.

The deadline for nomination withdrawal was 5:00pm yesterday.

The EC Secretariat will publish gazettes to announce the official results on completion of the polls. The MPs-elect will take oath within three days of the gazette publication.

The number of unopposed candidates, based on information collected from returning officers in districts as of 11:00pm yesterday, also indicates that around one-third of the nine crore voters need not

POLITICAL VIOLENCE
UN chief also
'spoke to
president'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who called Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday, also spoke with President Abdul Hamid expressing his deep concern over widespread violence in Bangladesh.

During his phone conversation with the president, Ban also stressed the importance of resolving the ongoing political crisis in the country.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

Ershad not ill

Says he was 'confined' to hospital, not allowed to quit election race

RASHIDUL HASAN and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad was apparently not allowed to quit the January 5 electoral race as three returning officers yesterday rejected his applications for withdrawal of candidature.

Yesterday was the last day for withdrawing nominations for the 10th parliamentary polls.

JP sources said the refusal to accept Ershad's applications indicates that the government is desperate to keep the JP in the polls race to endorse the acceptability of the election.

Ershad, who was picked up on Thursday night from his Baridhara residence by law enforcers, however, reiterated that he will never contest the election if it is not contested by all political parties.

In a statement last night, the former president said, "I'm not ill. I've been confined here [Combined Military

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AL, BNP leaders sit for 3rd time

Exchange proposals

HASAN JAHD TUSHER and RASHIDUL HASAN

Leaders of ruling Awami League and main opposition BNP yesterday exchanged some proposals to end the ongoing political crisis over the 10th parliamentary polls.

BNP proposals include postponement of the January 5 election to keep the talks going and create level playing field, release of its leaders and withdrawal of cases against them, allowing the party to organise political activities at its central and unit offices and allowing it to hold rallies, said party sources present in the dialogue.

The BNP leaders said if the government took positive steps regarding the proposals, they would sit again to discuss

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18-party mulls fresh blockade from Tuesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance last night decided to enforce another bout of blockade or hartal from Tuesday to press home its demand for a non-party polls-time government.

The duration of the programme could initially be 72 hours which might later be extended depending on the situation, a BNP leader close to opposition leader Khaleda Zia told The Daily Star.

BNP chief Khaleda decided to enforce the fresh programme at a meeting with her party's senior leaders, including its acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, and standing committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Moyeen Khan, in her Gulshan office.

She later held another meeting with Fakhrul and Mosharraf to discuss the latest

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VIOLENCE IN CAPITAL

Boy critically hurt in firing

ZYMA ISLAM

Yet another child fell victim to the persisting political turmoil as violence escalated in the capital yesterday following the execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah.

Shanto Islam, 11, turned up at the Casualty Ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 4:00pm yesterday, with his head and back peppered with rubber bullets.

Shanto had 73 pellets in his body, claimed his father quoting doctors. He got shot during a clash between police and Jamaat activists in the capital's Motijheel area.

At least 10 others were admitted to the DMCH yesterday with rubber bullet wounds.

Third grader Shanto was in the city to visit his father, who runs a tea-stall at Fakirerpool.

"We live in Narayanganj. We came to Dhaka to be with his father as Shanto's exams were over," stated his mother Asma, whose tears would not stop.

Shanto was running back to his aunt's house in Fakirerpool to fetch lunch for his father.

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Shot from behind, Shanto, who went out to get lunch for his father, falls to the ground near Motijheel yesterday during the Jamaat-Shibir mayhem. A scan, inset, shows shotgun pellets in his head and neck.

PHOTO: STAR