

**CHILE GETS NEW LEADER**

Michelle Bachelet wins runoff polls after promising changes in society

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THE ESSENCE OF BIJOY '13

There are reasons to celebrate after a war criminal's execution

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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE**LIFE**
style

V-Day with a difference

People form world's largest human flag in celebration

STAR REPORT

With high hopes for healing the wounds inflicted on the nation 42 years ago, people in their thousands flooded the city streets to celebrate the Victory Day yesterday, four days after convicted war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah walked the gallows.

Overcoming the fear of political violence, people from all walks of life carrying the national flag came out of their homes, calling for the execution of all verdicts against the 1971 war criminals.

The day came as a welcome relief from non-stop blockades and hartals that have caused immense sufferings to people over the last two months.

On this day in 1971, Bangladesh defeated the Pakistan occupation forces in a nine-month war and emerged as a free, independent and sovereign country.

Bangladesh yesterday made attempts to set two world records by forming the largest human national flag and organising the biggest gathering of people singing the national anthem in chorus.

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During the Victory Day celebrations at the National Parade Ground yesterday, 27,117 volunteers holding red and green cards over their heads form the national flag in just six minutes and 16 seconds, which could become a world record. The event was sponsored by carrier Robi.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Pakistan slates Mollah execution

Nat'l Assembly adopts resolution

STAR REPORT

Pakistan National Assembly yesterday adopted a resolution expressing concern over the capital punishment of Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah.

The resolution, moved by Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan member Sher Akbar Khan, was adopted with a majority vote, reports the country's English-language daily Dawn.

"This House expresses deep concern on hanging of a veteran politician of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh for supporting Pakistan in 1971," said the resolution.

The Assembly expressed grief and sorrow for the bereaved family, and demanded Bangladesh avoid reviving the wounds of 1971 and amicably resolve cases against the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Earlier, speaking on a point of order in the Assembly, Pakistan Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said Mollah was hanged "through a judicial murder for supporting a united Pakistan in 1971".

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Why is our foreign office silent?

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Pakistan's national assembly, through a reassertion of the myopia which has historically kept Pakistan captive to its prejudices and inhibitions, has passed a resolution condemning the execution of Abdul Quader Mollah, a notorious war criminal in occupied Bangladesh in 1971. The country's interior minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, has glibly called the hanging a 'judicial murder'. The assembly unsurprisingly and carefully ignored the fact that Mollah and others like him had helped the Pakistan army in the murder of three

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RELATED PHOTOS ON PAGE 8

Raids in Satkhira Jamaat dens kill 5

Another 2 killed in Laxmipur

STAR REPORT

Five Jamaat-Shibir activists were killed in clashes with joint forces in Satkhira, a southern district that virtually turned into a valley of terror during recent hartals and blockades of the opposition.

Of them, three died in sadar upazila while two in Debhata upazila in separate battles that ensued when the party supporters attacked the law enforcers who went to make arrests in connection with the latest spate of violence.

In protest, the party called a hartal in the district for today.

Enraged by nonstop Jamaat rampage over the last few weeks, locals yesterday vandalised and torched some 15 houses of

the party men, including its Satkhira Ameer Abdul Khaleque.

At least 13 persons, including nine from AL and its associate organisations, have been killed in the district since November 21.

To bring Satkhira under control, law enforcers started a drive against Jamaat-e-Islami and its student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir by arresting 16 activists Saturday night.

Four of the arrested were involved in killing an Awami League man last week while the rest in attacking police and blocking roads, police said.

Additional Home Secretary Kamal Uddin Ahmed said, "We have formed forces com

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Fresh 72-hr blockade from today

Talks hope fading away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party alliance enforces yet another spell of countrywide blockade of rail, roads and waterways beginning this morning, triggering fresh fear of violence and loss of lives.

The 72-hour blockade will also deal a heavy blow to education, business and public life in general that are already hit hard due to the crippling opposition programmes over the past two months.

The blockade will end at 6:00am on Friday, but BNP insiders said they might call a weeklong blockade from Saturday, which would be the "endgame" of their

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This photo taken last month shows a locomotive and a few carriages go off the lines after opposition activists uprooted the tracks between Tusbandhar and Kakina stations in Lalmonirhat. Following frequent sabotage in the railway, the authorities have identified 78 insecure points in the western zone.

STOP THIS POLITICS

78 risky points in the west

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Railway police have identified at least 78 risky points on 1,550 kilometre rail network under its west zone to deal with the act of sabotage on trains and railway tracks by blockaders.

Abdur Rakib, additional superintendent of police

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Near collapse for railway

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Repeated attacks on railway infrastructures during the recent anti-government movement have pushed rail communications to the verge of collapse as the number of passengers and the revenue earnings of the service have drastically dropped.

Official records show nine trains were derailed killing at least three

passengers and injuring a few hundred more in at least 288 attacks during the 16 days of blockades and hartals enforced by the BNP-led opposition alliance between November 26 and December 16.

"The damage railway has suffered is estimated to be no less than Tk 10 crore," Abu Taher, director general of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star. On a normal day, 28 intercity and

35 mail trains leave from Kamalapur railway station but 10 to 12 trains had to be cancelled every day during the three spells of blockades prior to the one beginning this morning.

On an average, around 1.8 lakh passengers travel on trains daily from which railway earns about Tk 1.6 crore. The figures, however, slumped almost to half during the blockades, railway

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HARTAL-BLOCKADE

Patients afraid to go to hospital

SOHEL PARVEZ and MAMUN-UR-RASHID

The nonstop countrywide shutdowns and blockades complete with intense picketing are preventing patients in the north from visiting hospitals or clinics.

Take, for instance, Muni Begum, a housewife from a remote village in Bogra, a BNP-Jamaat stronghold. She is eight-months pregnant and has been suffering from acute stomach cramps and nausea for the past two weeks.

However, due to the ongoing violent protests that the local BNP-Jamaat men unleashed a month ago, she did not dare go out to seek medical attention. "How do I dare, when they are torching even ambulances carrying patients?"

At last on Saturday, which has been relatively terror-free, her sister-in-law took her to the 250-bed Mohammad Ali Hospital, one of the two main medical centres in Bogra.

Dulali Khanom, who lives in a village eight kilometres off the Bogra town, is in the same difficult situation. She has been struck with chronic fever, but was unable to find a

transport to take her to the town. "How do you come when there is no transport?" the frustrated 20-year old said.

Finally, on Saturday noon she was able to make the trip from her village Gabtoli to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZMCH), the other big medical centre in Bogra. "I would not have come today though if it was a hartal day," she added.

Authorities of the two hospitals and two other clinics in the northern town said the number of patients have progressively dropped since October 26, when this wave of political unrest started.

At Mohammad Ali Hospital, the oldest medical centre in Bogra, some 14,671 people came to seek treatment in November, the lowest in eight months. In the first 12 days of December, 4,023 people came for medical care.

As for inpatients, it stood at 1,000 in November, down from 1,342 in September and 1,022 in October.

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