



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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style**SHILPACHARYA FOREVER**

Painting competition and exhibition on Zainul's 100th birth anniversary

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**SCHUMI IN COMA!**

The German racing legend fell into coma after a skiing accident

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## New Year starts with NONSTOP BLOCKADE

**British envoy meets Khaleda at her house; Mobin picked up before briefing press**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP last night called an indefinite blockade of rail, roads and waterways from New Year's Day to resist what it called the one-sided January 5 election.

The announcement came hot on the heels of the government's use of excessive force to foil the opposition's Dhaka march for the last two days.

Calling the fresh agitation programme at his Bashundhara residence in the capital, BNP chairperson's adviser Khandaker Mahbub Hossain said the countrywide blockade would continue until the next announcement.

Today, the opposition will stage demonstrations across the country to protest the government action against the opposition men over the last two days, said Mahbub, who is also vice-chairman of Bangladesh

Bar Council.

Since November 26, the BNP-led 18-party alliance has enforced a nationwide blockade of roads, rail and waterways for 22 days in phases, demanding the cancellation of the January 5 polls. Violent clashes, arson blasts and killings happened almost daily, claiming at least 122 lives during the period.

Meanwhile, the government kept the capital cut off from the rest of the country to foil the opposition's march yesterday through using excessive force.

As on the previous day, BNP chief Khaleda Zia was confined to her Gulshan residence, which was cordoned off by police throughout the day. Police also sealed off the party headquarters at Nayapaltan and adjoining areas, strictly restricting people's movement.

Police did not also allow BNP leaders to meet Khaleda.

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**PM'S VISIT TODAY**  
BNP calls hartal in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to visit her Pirojganj constituency in Rangpur today as part of her electioneering for the January 5 national elections.

Meanwhile, the main

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**AS WE SEE IT**

If ever there was an example of the saying "cutting off the head to get rid of the headache", Sheikh Hasina's government showed it by paralysing the country to prevent BNP from holding its planned march.

The Daily Star

## Stuck, helpless in delinked city

HELEMUL ALAM and AKRAM HOSEN

Shamsul Alam came from Cox's Bazar on Friday and got admitted to the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital in Mirpur with lung disease.

Nothing else could have made him happier than being released from hospital. But stepping out of NIDCH yesterday morning, the 55-year-old landed himself in real trouble.

"I am now faced with dual problems," he told your correspondents at Kamalapur railway station around 3:00pm. "I can neither stay nor leave. I have spent almost all my money on treatment."

Exhausted after running from one bus terminal to another, he came to the station in the vain hope of finding a train.

Amanullah, a relative who came with Alam, said, "We do not have any relative in Dhaka. We do not have money to stay at a hotel."

Alam added, "Even if we anyhow manage a hotel, police may arrest us."

Some 47 staff of a private company were supposed to attend the wedding party of a colleague in Rajshahi yesterday.

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## No cheers next year

  
*Restive politics pushes economy downhill*

INAM AHMED

Instead of cheers and hopeful expectations, the New Year can promise only economic hardship and uncertainty. And the fear is that if the turmoil continues, which looks like a reality after the one-sided election of January 5, the GDP may dip to a low never seen before.

The unprecedented political violence and blockades have already badly jolted all the sectors. Take the service sector, for one.

With 54 percent contribution to the economy, the service sector is on the verge of ruination. Unfortunately, this is not a sector of which full capture of data is possible. But transport is one definable area with 11 percent contribution which has collapsed.

At this moment, agriculture may give a deceptive picture. This is because we have just passed through the aman season when crops need little of inputs and the weather was good.

But Boro season is coming and it is

heavily dependent on fertilizer and irrigation. Movement of fertilizer is disrupted and so is diesel.

The dent in Boro paddy, the major crop, will see agriculture in the red.

Poultry and fisheries, two major subsectors, are reeling from lack of feed and market.

Retail and distribution that occupies a big 14 percent of GDP is today in a shambles. With transport system gone haywire, companies cannot move goods. Buyers are shy. Latest data are not available, but many fear it is already in the red.

The banking sector is hit below the belt. Banks see no demand for credit, the basic lifeline for the financial system. Previous loans are turning bad.

After many years of booming business, many top banks already gaze at the bottom line dipping sharply.

Banks may have an insignificant share of 2 percent of GDP, but they virtually support

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**NEWS ANALYSIS**

## Are we a democracy?

SYED BADRUL AHSEN

The sight of a woman lawyer, with loyalties to the BNP, being pounced upon by stick-wielding youths, clearly with allegiance to the Awami League, on the premises of the Supreme Court on Sunday is more than an unedifying sight. It shames us before the world outside our frontiers. If the sanctity of the highest tier of the nation's judiciary can be trampled upon, nothing remains sacrosanct any more in our collective national life.

The spectacle of pro-BNP lawyers and journalists screaming obscenities against the prime minister and hurling brickbats at the police, both on the Supreme Court and the Jatiya Press Club premises, embarrasses us to no end.

Equally embarrassing is the scene of the lawyers being forced to stay behind the gates of the SC compound by the police, who felt not at all disturbed at spraying coloured, hot water on them. The police would not let the lawyers step out of the SC compound and yet thought it was all right to

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**নতুন বছরে বিশেষ ডিস্কাউন্ট নিয়ে রেডি আমরা**

**উপভোগ করুন ৫%-৫০% ডিস্কাউন্ট মুবিধা**

**রবি'র সম্মানিত গ্রাহকরা এখন থেকে রবি'র পার্টনার স্টেরিশুলো থেকে পণ কিনলেই ৫% থেকে ৫০% পর্যন্ত ডিস্কাউন্ট মুবিধা ভোগ করতে পারবেন।**

**ডিস্কাউন্ট উপভোগ করুন:**

- আমাদের যেকোনো পার্টনার স্টেরিশুলো থেকে কেনাকাটা করুন • আপনার ফোনের মেসেজিং অপশন ব্যবহার করে পার্টনার কোডটি লিখুন
- কোডটি ১২১৩ নম্বরে এসএমএস করুন • কাষ কাউন্টার-এ ফিরতি এসএমএসটি দেখান • ডিস্কাউন্ট মুবিধা উপভোগ করুন
- এসএমএস চার্জ ১২ (ভাট প্রযোজ্য)

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