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The first International Sufi Music Festival ends

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THE EVIL IS OUT
South African apartheid-era assassin, nicknamed "Prime Evil", is paroled

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Hartal coincides with SSC exams

Fate of 14 lakh students uncertain as 20-party calls fresh 72-hr shutdown from tomorrow

WASIM BIN HABIB

The BNP-led alliance has not just spurned the pleas of guardians and the education minister to withdraw the blockade for SSC examinations, it has made things worse by calling a countrywide 72-hour hartal from tomorrow.

The fresh spell of shutdown announced yesterday in protest at "threats from Awami League leaders to arrest Khaleda Zia" is likely to upset the schedule of Secondary School Certificate exams beginning on Monday, affecting 14.79 lakh examinees.

The alliance in a press release, signed by BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed, said the hartal to be enforced from 6:00am tomorrow is also meant to protest "attacks on the houses and offices of senior BNP leaders and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent statements asking police to do whatever needed to stop the violence".

There was no official announcement yet from the education ministry on the fate of the SSC exams, but sources said the tests

I don't think politicians really bother about children's education.

Waseq Rahman, father of an examinee

What type of politics is this that does not think of people's welfare, life and livelihood and the younger generations?

Rasheda K Choudhury, educationist

would possibly be postponed as in previous years.

An official told The Daily Star that the decision whether the exams would be deferred might come tomorrow as the ministry was waiting to see if the BNP changes its decision.

The ongoing blockade that passed its 25th day yesterday has led to arson attacks



Students of a Chittagong school leaving for home after classes yesterday though it was the weekend. A number of schools in the port city were open yesterday to make up for the time lost on weekdays due to the BNP-led 20-party's blockade and hartal. Nobody knows how many weekends the kids will have to sacrifice. The photo was taken at St Mary's School on Jamal Khan Road.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

BLOCKADE HARTAL January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- COUNTRYWIDE 4 DAYS
- RAJSHAHI DIV 7 DAYS
- DHAKA, KHULNA DIV 2 DAYS
- RANGPUR DIV 3 DAYS
- CHITTAGONG DIV 4 DAYS
- BARISAL DIV 2 DAYS
- SYLHET DIV 1 DAY
- DHAKA, 13 DIST 3 DAYS

HARTAL

CONTAINING VIOLENCE Amnesty Int'l against use of excessive force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International has condemned Bangladesh government's move to use "excessive police force" for tackling the violence from the ongoing blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

In a report published on its website on Thursday, the rights watchdog also called upon the BNP to "exhort their members and supporters to stop the politically-motivated criminal acts".

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Arson, bomb attacks on buses; driver killed

4 suffer burns as blockade passes 25th day

STAR REPORT

In another spate of attacks on buses, a bus driver was killed in Laxmipur and four people suffered burns at Khilgaon in the capital yesterday on the 25th day of the non-stop blockade.

The driver, Mohammad Sumon, 36, was critically injured after the Chittagong-bound bus of Ashik Paribahan lost control and fell into a roadside ditch near Somashpur of Laxmipur's Chandraganj upazila around 9:45pm, said police.

The accident took place after alleged blockade supporters hurled a crude bomb at the bus, blurring the road with thick palls of smoke, Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Chandraganj Police Station, told The Daily Star, quoting victims.

Sumon was taken to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital with severe head injury. He was transferred to Noakhali Medical College and Hospital as his condition worsened. He died there, said the OC.

The arson victims of Khilgaon were

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CAPSIZING OF MALAYSIA-BOUND BOAT 7 bodies found, about 25 still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazaar

At least two dozen overseas jobseekers are still missing as the fishing trawler that had sunk off Kutubdia coast in the Bay of Bengal on Thursday morning was salvaged yesterday with seven bodies trapped in the vessel's hull.

None of the recovered bodies could be identified and those still missing are feared dead, according to coast guard sources.

So far 43 passengers have been rescued in the operation which is still on, said Tarek Mostafa, in-charge of Bangladesh Coast Guard's Kutubdia camp. Of them, six were identified as traffickers by other passengers. The six

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Bomb attack kills 60 at Pak Shia mosque

Militant group claims responsibility

AFP, Shikarpur

A powerful bomb tore through a busy Shia mosque in southern Pakistan yesterday, killing more than 60 people in the country's deadliest sectarian attack in nearly two years.

The blast hit the mosque in Shikarpur in Sindh province, around 470 kilometres north of Karachi, as hundreds of worshippers attended Friday prayers.

A spokesman for the shadowy Jandullah militant

group, a splinter faction of the Pakistani Taliban, said they were behind the blast.

"We claim responsibility for attack on Shias in Shikarpur very happily," Ahmed Marwat told AFP.

Pakistan has suffered a rising tide of sectarian violence in recent years, most of it perpetrated by hardline Sunni Muslim groups against minority Shia Muslims, who make up around one in five of the population.

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No gas, power if blockade continues

Shajahan threatens to cut utility lines, food supply to Khaleda's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia does not call off the nationwide blockade, power and gas connections to her office would be severed and food supply would be halted, threatened Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan yesterday.

"If you do not withdraw the blockade and hartal by February 2, you will be confined in such a way...", he said.

He asked Khaleda to call off the hartals and blockades for the sake of over 14 lakh SSC examinees whose tests start on Monday.

"Workers and owners will gather in front of your office with burnt vehicles. You will be surrounded. Even the food provided to you by your party leaders will not reach your room. You will have to die there without food...", he said.

Khaleda is "confined" to her Gulshan office since January 3. At least 35 people were killed, nearly 350 people got burnt in arson attacks and thousands more got injured since she called the indefinite blockade from January 6.

Yesterday Shajahan was speaking at a rally organised by newly floated Bangladesh Sramik-Karmachari-Peshajibi-Muktijoddha Samannay Parishad at Suhrawardy Udyan.

At the rally, Shajahan, also convener of the parishad and executive president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, announced a series of programmes to resist the ongoing violence in the name of blockades and hartals.

The parishad would hold demonstration rallies at the Shaheed Minars of every district on February 3. Officials, employees and workers of all offices, business institutions, industries are to stand on streets for 15 minutes from

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No control over roadside sales of petrol

STAR REPORT

Unauthorised sale of petrol and octane continues, mostly in roadside shops, making it easier for arsonists to collect the highly inflammable liquids to make firebombs.

This is despite an alarming spree of arson attacks across the country in recent weeks. Torching of vehicles has claimed dozens of lives and left scores burnt since the BNP-led alliance began an indefinite blockade on January 6.

Against this backdrop, the government has moved to check so-far unfettered sales of petroleum and clamped restrictions on selling fuel oil in the country.

Police yesterday instructed pump owners not to sell petrol, octane and diesel in

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When petrol bombing has turned deadly in the ongoing blockade, burning vehicles and people, the flammable liquid goes on sale in bottles in Barguna. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

