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Crude, petrol bombs seized in city, dists

Gazipur mayor held in arson case; today's SSC exams postponed for hartal, date to be fixed later

STAR REPORT

Law enforcers yesterday detained six people with 15 petrol bombs in the capital and recovered several dozen petrol and crudes bombs from different districts, while arson attacks on vehicles continued across the country on the 37th day of the indefinite blockade enforced by the BNP-led alliance.

At least 9 people, including four policemen, were injured in crude bomb attacks while criminals set fire to six vehicles, including two buses, in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country yesterday, said police and fire service officials.

Petrol bombs have been frequently used to set vehicles on fire during the ongoing blockade. Forty-four people were killed so far in these attacks.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday postponed the SSC and equivalent examinations scheduled for today as the 20-party alliance extended its hartal until Friday morning.

The next date for holding the examinations is yet to be

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A worried Salam Mia waits for customers on a road in Jamal Khan of Chittagong yesterday. On a regular day he used to sell 15-29 floor mats but since the blockade had been enforced early last month, he has seen a drastic decline in sales. Now, selling 3-4 mats a day has become difficult.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

UK envoy for confidence building to defuse tension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Robert W Gibson has urged all parties to consider confidence building measures that can defuse the current tension in Bangladesh and allow normal life to resume.

Gibson made the call after meeting Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office yesterday afternoon.

It was the first ever meeting of any foreign envoy stationed in Dhaka with the BNP chief since January 3.

Besides, the meeting took place at a time when law enforcers were not allowing any leaders and activists of the BNP-led 20-party alliance to meet Khaleda since February 1.

Gibson said his country was committed to the future

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PHOTO ON PAGE 5



ICC CRICKET
WORLD CUP 2015
2 DAYS TO GO

Tigers' Irish test today

SPORTS REPORTER

In a must-win encounter for Bangladesh, in terms of the gaining confidence ahead of the World Cup, the Tigers take on Ireland in their final warm-up match at the Blacktown Olympic Park in Sydney

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

KILLING JHALAKATHI PROSECUTOR

Five JMB men get death penalty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

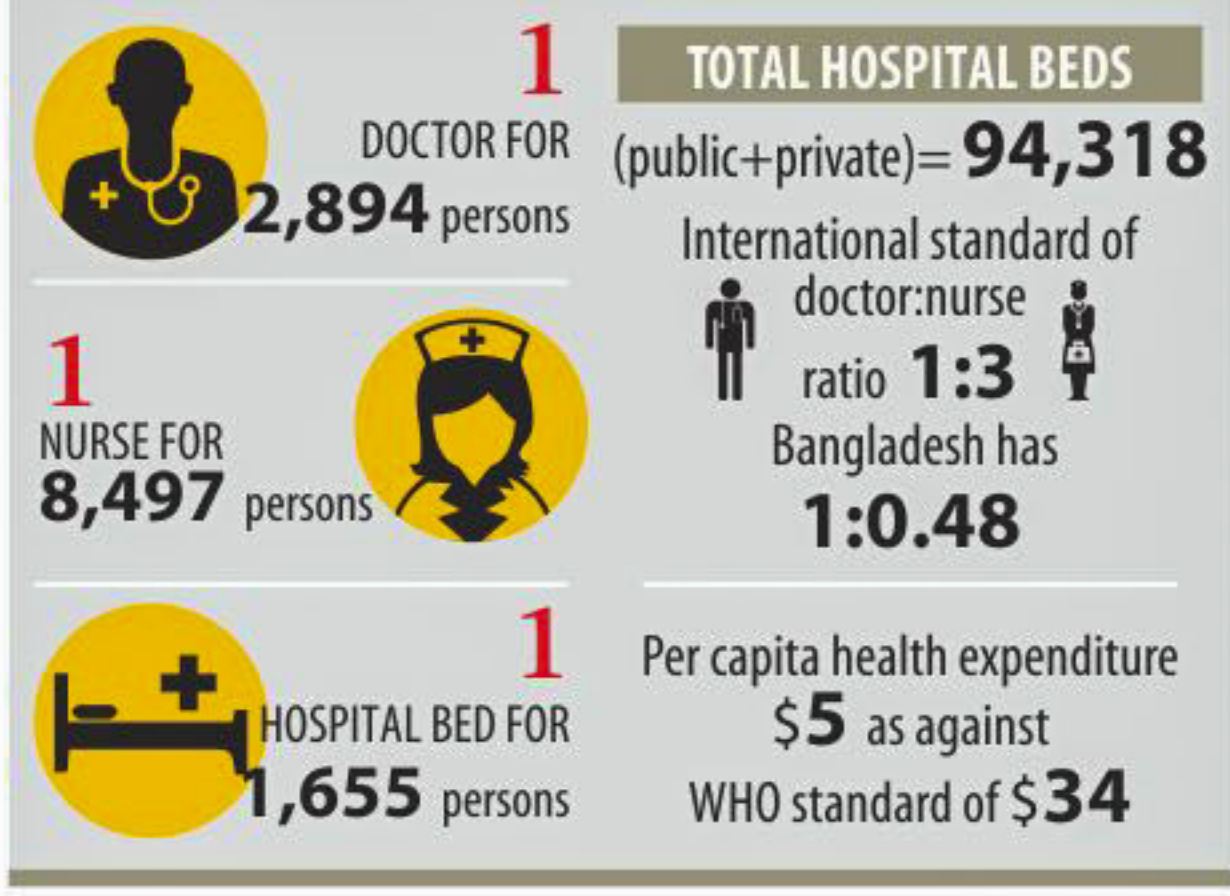
A Jhalakathi court yesterday gave capital punishment to five Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) operatives for killing public prosecutor advocate Haider Hossain in 2007.

The convicts are Murad Hossain of Khulna, Tanvir Hasan alias Mehedi Hasan and Belal Hossain of Barguna, and Amir Hossen and Sagir Hossen of Dhaka, said M Alam Khan Kamal, additional PP of Jhalakathi court.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Abdul Halim passed the

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BANGLADESH HEALTH SECTOR FACES ACUTE RESOURCE SHORTAGE



UNUSUAL NUMBER OF DEATHS

Probe body visits Sylhet hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry yesterday started investigating the deaths of 32 patients, including 10 children, in a single day at the Osmani Medical College Hospital in Sylhet.

As a probe committee formed by it visited the hospital, a number of patients' attendants told it that there were no doctors at the children's ward on Monday night.

The deaths happened between Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning.

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IGP again talks politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"If any quarter thinks it will assume power by hurling petrol bombs, then by no means we will let this happen."

This was no politician speaking, but the inspector general of police, a public servant.

"You [Khaleda Zia] were requested to take part in the January 5, 2014, election but you didn't...now you are demanding election...you can demand it but you will have to demand it systematically."

Again, it was Shahidul Haque, the IGP.

The top cop was speaking at a meeting with people of different professions in Chittagong yesterday.

The programme was organised by Chittagong Rage Police and Chittagong Metropolitan Police at the city's Dampara Police Lines.

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Under police protection, a procession of pro-ruling party workers, employees and professionals led by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan march the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday protesting the ongoing blockade and hartals. The procession left a huge tailback that lasted for hours to clear.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

KHALEDA'S OFFICE

Police bar food supply for staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers deployed in front of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office last night did not allow a rickshaw-van carrying food and mineral water bottles for party leaders and other officials to enter the office.

The three-wheeler, which was carrying dinner boxes and water bottles for around 70 people including some senior BNP leaders, reached the office gate around 8:00pm.

Officials at the BNP office told The Daily Star that the leaders and all office staff ate dry food.


However, the rickshaw-van carrying the BNP chief's dinner was not barred from entering the office, an office staff said.

About 120 packets of food and water are brought twice a day from local hotels since January 5 for the office staff, he added.

The BNP chairperson has been staying inside the office since the beginning of the ongoing blockade programme with her officials.

Later law enforcers reportedly took the van to

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ONLINE POLL
Do you agree with International Crisis Group that the political crisis in Bangladesh is fast approaching to the point of no return and could gravely destabilise the country?

Yes (86%)
No (14%)

TOTAL VOTES: 511

TODAY'S POLL
Do agree with Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed that the civil society members' proposal for dialogue is "unrealistic and unacceptable"?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net

BOAT TRAGEDY IN MEDITERRANEAN SEA

300 fortune seekers feared drowned

AFP, Rome

More than 300 migrants were feared drowned yesterday after their overcrowded dinghies sank in the Mediterranean, the latest boat disaster on the perilous crossing from Africa to Europe.

The victims were among migrants mainly from sub-Saharan Africa who had left the coast of Libya at the weekend in four small boats, the UN refugee agency said.

"This is a tragedy on an enormous scale and a stark reminder that more lives could be lost if those seeking safety are left at the mercy of the sea," UNHCR Europe director Vincent Cochetel said in a statement.

Details of the new disaster emerged after nine survivors out of a group of more than 200 packed into two dinghies were rescued by the coastguard and taken to the Italian island of Lampedusa -- just days after 29 perished in the same area.

"Nine were saved after four days at sea. The other 203 were swallowed by the waves," UNHCR spokeswoman in Italy, Carlotta Sami, said on Twitter.

The agency later said that reports gathered by UNHCR from the Italian coast-guard and the survivors in Lampedusa now suggest some 300 people are confirmed missing.

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BSF kills two Bangladeshis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Indian Border Security Force shot dead two Bangladeshi cattle traders and injured another one on Jadobpur border in Moheshpur upazila early yesterday.

They are Aminur Rahman, 35, son of Miaraj Ali of Labutala village and Khoyjul Hossain, 40, son of Shahdat Mondol of Jaluli village in the upazila.

Injured Abul Kashem, 32, is being treated at Jessore Medical College Hospital.

Moheshpur police said 10-12 Bangladeshis

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Driverless cars on trial in UK

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Driverless cars are being officially trialled on UK roads for the first time as the government considers changes to the Highway Code to allow them to be used by the public.

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PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 12

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

JAMAZ 5-35 12-45 4-15 5-46 7-15

JAMAAT 6-10 1-15 4-30 5-50 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION