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3 exams over, rest uncertain

Brief relief for students on rare hartal-free day

STAR REPORT

Frequent hartals by the 20-party alliance have left many SSC examinees worried as they could take only three exams in last 11 days. There is no hint of the situation improving and the students can hardly concentrate on their studies.

Rubana-e-Noor of Agrani Girls High School said, "Instead of focusing on my studies, I've to keep a close eye on the television to see whether my exams have been put off."

"I wasn't sure until Wednesday noon whether my Thursday's exam was on. I was preparing for both Thursday and Friday's exams," she told this newspaper yesterday after taking the English 1st paper exam which was earlier slated for February 8.

Students will take English 2nd paper exam today, four days behind its original schedule. The education ministry has so far deferred five day's exams.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance has been enforcing a country-wide indefinite blockade since January 6 demanding a midterm election under a non-party administration.

Besides, it has called a series of hartals since February 1, excluding weekends, forcing the education ministry to put

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A policeman taking away a rickshaw van carrying food and water for leaders and staff at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office. No food from outside was allowed in the office by law enforcers for the third consecutive day yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP PHOTO

All-out hartal if demos today barred: 20-party

STAR REPORT

The BNP-led alliance will go for "all-out shutdowns" from tomorrow if the government does not allow it to stage country-wide demonstrations today.

The demonstrations have been planned at all cities, districts and upazilas, to protest "killing of opposition leaders and activists in the name of crossfire, repression, and filing of false cases against alliance leaders", and demanding the release of all political prisoners.

"If we face any obstruction in carrying out tomorrow's [today's] programmes, we will go for all-out nonstop hartals from Sunday," a senior BNP leader, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Medical misery mounts

Patients cancel trips to India

SOHEL PARVEZ

Shamima Begum and her husband waited nearly a month for the ongoing political turmoil to end so that they can take their ailing daughter to Kolkata for treatment.

With no sign of let-up in violence, they finally left for India early this month.

But this time, they avoided their usual means of transport. They preferred train to bus to minimise the risk of arson attacks that have become frequent since the BNP-led alliance's nonstop blockade began on January 6.

"Our visas would expire in February. We had no alternative but to go to Kolkata," said Shamima, 50.

She along with her husband and daughter returned home by bus on a Friday, a weekly holiday, wanting to avoid getting stranded in a foreign country because of shutdowns.

Shamima is only one of the thousands of Bangladeshis who go to India for treatment.

Among the neighbouring nations, Bangladesh has been the main source of tourists for India over the last few years, according to Bernama, the Malaysian state-run news agency.

The number of visitors from Bangladesh rose to 524,923 in 2013 from 463,543 in 2011, it said.

Of the total Bangladeshis visiting India, about 35 per cent go there for medical purposes, said Kazi Wahidul Alam,

editor of The Bangladesh Monitor, an aviation and tourism fortnightly.

However, many low and middle income families now find it difficult to visit the neighbouring country for treatment and return home sooner than planned due to disruption in bus services.

Those with urgency are either taking buses or trains, while others have shelved their travel plans for now. This has resulted in a significant drop in the flow of bus passengers to and from Bangladesh and India, according to operators.

Farhadul Islam, who sells electrical items at Nababpur market in Old Dhaka, had planned to go to India for

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Barguna trawler capsizes kills 7

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least seven people including a child drowned and three others went missing after a trawler capsized in the Paira river of Barguna's Taltali upazila yesterday.

The dead are Zainal Abedin, 60; Nayeem, 9; Amir Ali, 50; Eusuf Majhi, 52; Safi Uddin, 55; Harun, 40; and Ali Hossain, 45. All of them were from Kuakata of Patuakhali, said Saiful Islam, superintendent of police in Barguna.

The trawler was going to Bamna upazila in Barguna from Mohipur of Kuakata. It was carrying around 200 people bound for a religious programme at Chalabhangra Darbar Sharif, according to police.

Babul Akhter, officer-in-charge of Taltali Police Station, said the overcrowded vessel sank near Tetulbaria around 1:00pm suddenly after its engine had gone out of order.

Most of the passengers swam ashore, he said.

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FEEL THE ROAR ... Bangladesh Cricket Board organised the last of its three World Cup concerts at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in the capital's Mirpur yesterday. The concerts, which saw the likes of Warfaze, Bappa & Friends and Ayub Bachchu, were organised in a bid to create support for the Tigers in the World Cup down under.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt aims for smooth supply of power

BSS, Dhaka

The government is preparing for smooth supply of electricity across the country as 8,100 megawatt of power will be required during the irrigation season.

An official of power, energy and mineral resources ministry said the ministry had given

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 14

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN	5-20	12-45	4-30	6-03	7-30
JAMAAT	5-55	1-15	4-45	6-07	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Obama, the Oval Office clown

MAIL ONLINE

Winking, poking out his tongue and firing an imaginary gun in sunglasses, this is the leader of the free world clowning around in the Oval Office.

Although some might expect him to have more pressing matters on his plate such as the fighting in Syria, Iraq and Ukraine, Barack Obama found time to pose for a video released Thursday in a bid to reach out to young voters.

Filed in the White House, it aims to spread the word about his overhaul of the nation's health system to a tech-savvy generation.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

'Digital dark age' could erase history

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Technology could mean that our lives are lost to history, according to experts.

As the way that we store information about ourselves develops, memories stored in files that use older technology are becoming harder to access, Dr Vinton "Vint" Cerf, vice president of Google, has warned.

That could mean that historians of the future are unable to learn about our lives, Cerf said. He compared the potential loss to the dark ages — the time after the Romans, about

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Taliban storm Pak mosque, kill 19

REUTERS, Peshawar

At least 19 people were killed yesterday in the Pakistani city of Peshawar in a gun and bomb attack on a Shia mosque, the latest sectarian violence to hit the South Asian nation.

The Pakistani Taliban, who are fighting against the state to set up a hardline Sunni theocracy, claimed responsibility and said the attack was revenge for Pakistan's crackdown on militants following a December school massacre.

Police said armed men broke into the mosque, where people were attending Friday prayers, and opened fire, following which three explosions were heard inside the building.

"Either Pakistan will become your graveyard, or God's law, sharia, will be imple-

mented," Taliban commander Khaleefa Omar Mansoor said in a video in which he was flanked by three young militants clutching AK-47 assault rifles.

"This is the first in a series of revenge attacks... Wait for the rest," Mansoor, who had earlier claimed responsibility for the December 16 school attack in which more than 150 people were killed, said in the video sent by email to reporters.

The style of the mosque attack was similar to that of the school attack, when gunmen arrived in a car, set it on fire, and broke into the building using a back entrance.

Peshawar's Hayatabad Medical Complex said at least 19 people had been killed in the latest attack.

A witness, Shahid Hussain, told Reuters the worshippers had just finished prayers

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The Daily Star

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ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with BNP chief Khaleda Zia that the only way to resolve the current political crisis is to hold an inclusive, competitive and meaningful election?

Yes (78%)

No (22%)

TOTAL VOTES: 467

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with a report by US-based daily The New York Times that without an immediate genuine dialogue between AL and BNP, the prevailing violence in Bangladesh may "spin out of control"?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net

3rd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In the Loving Memory of Al Hajj Lt. Col. Hesamuddin Ahmed psc (Retd).

Al Hajj Lt. Col. Hesamuddin Ahmed, psc (Retd), served as a Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh in various ministries. He served as the Administrator of the Dhaka Municipality, Chairman of RAJUK and other important corporations.

Being the Founder President of the National Shooting Federation Bangladesh, One of the Founder Member and Vice Chairman RAOWA, his contributions will always be remembered.

He was associated with UCEP Bangladesh, SAHIC and various sports and social welfare organizations. In recognition of his remarkable contributions in the field of Sports development and social welfare he was awarded the National Sports Award (2003), Atish Dipankar Gold Medal, Poet Sarojini Naidu Gold Medal, C R Das Gold Medal etc.

Dearly Missed & Always Cherished by
Wife, Son, Daughter, Son in Law, Daughter in Law & Granddaughter.

Even when we close our eyes, There's an image of your face And once again, We come to realise you're a loss, We can't replace