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Whole day peaceful

3 vehicles torched at night

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three vehicles were torched at night after the country experienced a peaceful daytime yesterday, the 61st day of the BNP-led 20-party alliance's nonstop blockade.

Although yesterday was a weekly holiday, people came out of home in numbers to get their jobs done. Long-route bus operators resumed their services, while train and launch services were also normal.

The nationwide blockade that began on January 6 coupled with frequent shut-downs affected every aspect of public life in addition to killing at least 83 people. Besides, another 41 people got killed in "shootouts" with law-enforcement agencies since then.

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations were held peacefully yesterday amidst tight security. The exams began at 9:00am throughout the country.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



POTATO GROWERS IN TROUBLE

Tonnes of potatoes are left in the fields in Munshiganj as hartals and blockade prevent farmers to ship them to other districts or even to the cold-storages. The authorities had set an aim to grow potatoes on 35,500 hectares of land in the district but farmers grew potatoes on 37,600 hectares. About 13 lakh tonnes of potatoes are expected to be produced this season in the district despite inclement weather. The cold-storages of Munshiganj have capacity for only 4.5 lakh tonnes. Farmers fear they would have to dump the potatoes or sell them at throw-away prices. And the prices of potatoes have already plummeted. The photos were taken at Sirajdikhan in Munshiganj.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

AVIJIT MURDER PROBE

FBI team visits killing spot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The four-member team of US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which is helping the Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies to investigate the murder of writer-blogger Avijit Roy, visited the crime scene on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

The FBI team, accompanied by officials of Detective Branch of Police who are investigating the murder, reached the spot near the TSC of the university around 1:20pm. They also visited Bangla Academy premises where the Amar Ekushey Bô Mela was arranged, and Suhrawardy Udyan.

They took photographs of the killing spot and nearby areas, and were seen taking notes. They, however, did not talk to anyone or the media.

Briefing reporters at the murder site, Deputy Commissioner Krishna Pada Roy of DB (South), said the FBI team would provide technical support for the investigation. "We expect that the motive behind the killing will be unearthed through mutual cooperation."

Replying to a query whether the FBI team was investigating independently, the DC said, "We are working together."

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Businessman shot dead in Ctg

Angry locals torch houses, workshops of alleged perpetrators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Criminals shot dead a businessman in front of his house at Shabujbagh Residential Area in Chittagong city on Thursday night.

The deceased, Nur Mohammad, 35, was the son of Sekandar Miah and a resident of Halishahar area in the city.

Family members alleged that Nur might have been killed following land-related disputes with Shafi and Khokon in the area. Aggrieved at Nur's death, locals torched seven tin-shed houses and two motor workshops owned by the two.

Shahjahan Kabir, officer-in-charge of Halishahar Police Station, said, Nur came out of his home after getting a phone call around 10:00pm.

As soon as he stepped outside the gate of

his house, three criminals fired shots at him, hacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured and fled the spot, he said.

Nur was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared him dead around 11:00pm, the OC said.

Nur was involved in land business. There had been a dispute between Nur and the duo over land-related issues, family members said.

"His [Nur] family held Shafi and Khokon responsible for the murder," the OC said, quoting the family members.

The two are on the run, he added.

Nur's body was sent to the CMCH morgue for an autopsy, the OC said, adding that a case was filed in connection with the murder.

Remembered forever

107 Pak schools renamed after Peshawar victims

BBC ONLINE

Pakistani authorities have renamed 107 schools after the victims of last year's massacre at a Peshawar school.

More than 60 schools in Peshawar are among the institutions now bearing the names of victims of the attack.

Most relatives approved of the gesture, but one parent told the BBC he had not been contacted.

Taliban gunmen killed more than 150 pupils and teachers at the school on 16 December. Since then authorities have promised to crack down on militants.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Mars had more water than earth

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

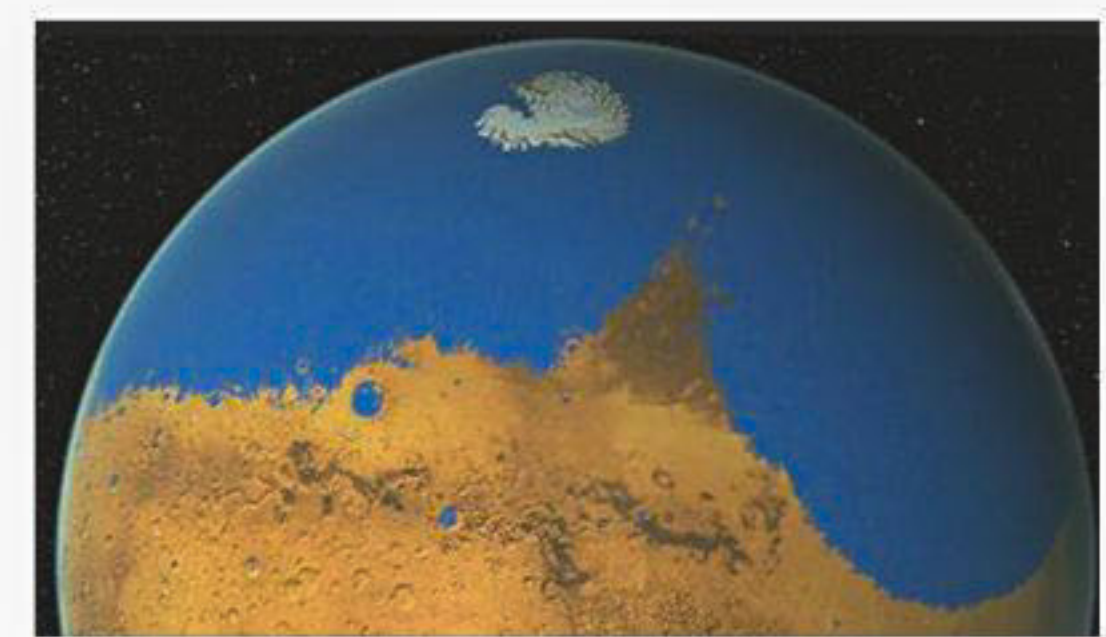
Mars used to be covered in water and so could have been ideal for supporting life, according to Nasa scientists.

Researchers found that the planet was once covered in more water than Earth is now, by working out the amount of water that has since been lost to space.

About 4.3 billion years ago, half of the northern hemisphere of Mars was covered in water, with the ocean more than a mile deep in some places.

The new data changes the idea of Mars as an

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



FBI agents, helping Bangladesh authorities to probe the Avijit Roy killing case, visit the murder scene and its nearby areas on Dhaka University campus yesterday. The photo was taken at Suhrawardy Udyan.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Hartal, blockade hit business in Tangail

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The ongoing blockade and frequent shut-downs enforced by the by the BNP-led alliance have badly hit almost all businesses in Tangail, pushing many medium and small traders to the brink of closing their businesses.

Traders have expressed grave concern over the current political situation as they are finding it very difficult to earn their living.

Factory owners and weavers of the famous sari industry and traders of Porobarir chamcham in the district are bearing the brunt of the ongoing political turmoil as their daily sales have sharply dropped.

"Local weavers have been passing hard days as the sale of sari has reduced a lot, forcing the poor weavers to stop production," said weaver Raghunath Basak, former president of Tangail Sari Traders Association. The sector lost business worth around Tk 50 crore in the last two months, he claimed.

The weekly Karatia wholesale market, where saris produced in different places in

the district are sold, has been witnessing thin presence of buyers since the blockade began on January 6. The sale at the market has dropped drastically, market authorities said.

The ongoing blockade has dealt a heavy blow on the sweetmeat traders as customer turnout has plummeted since the turmoil began.

"I used to sell around 100kg to 120kg of chamcham a day, but the sale has now dropped to 20kg to 25kg," said Mona Islam, a chamcham trader at Old Bus Stand in the town.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to pay rent for our shops and wages to the workers with this poor sale, let alone making profit," he added.

The sale of chamcham has gone down by 80 percent. Sweetmeat traders cannot ship their produce to the capital and other districts in the country due to the blockade, said Mirza Masud Rubel, general secretary of restaurants and sweet traders' association in the district.

Workers in this sector are in dire straits as

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Indian mob kills 2 'sex offenders'

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police were yesterday investigating two separate incidents of lynching in which men were beaten to death by frenzied crowds in anger over alleged assaults on young women.

In the northeastern state of Nagaland, a curfew was imposed on Dimapur city after a mob dragged a rape suspect out of jail on Thursday, killing him and stringing him up from a clock tower. Another man was killed in the subsequent police firing.

Meanwhile, another man was killed in a mob attack in the northern city of Varanasi after a group of girls alleged they were molested while celebrating the Hindu festival of Holi yesterday, police said.

"The irate crowd assembled following a complaint by some young women to their families that they were molested... by a few men from that area," Anil Kumar, in charge at the local police station, told AFP.

"We are investigating into the mob violence and also ascertaining whether the deceased was one of the alleged molesters. The dead man is in his fifties and was beaten with sticks. So far, three people have been arrested."

In the Nagaland incident, the mob's victim had been arrested and jailed in late February, accused of raping a woman multiple times.

Meren Jamir, superintendent of police in

Dimapur, told AFP that a 25-year-old youth suspected to be part of the mob was injured in police firing, and later succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.

He said police were "trying to bring the situation under control".

Tensions had been rising in the area since February 24 when police arrested the alleged rapist over the assault of a 19-year-old tribal woman.

Nagaland Chief Minister T R Zeliang said the suspect was a Bangladeshi immigrant, and Jamir said his killing had been followed by attacks on Bangladeshi-owned businesses.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with some foreign envoys that democratic space for the opposition is shrinking in Bangladesh?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT www.thedailystar.net

Yes (84%)

No (16%)

TOTAL VOTES: 312

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with international rating agency Fitch Ratings that political tension and violence might negatively affect foreign investors' confidence in Bangladesh and would raise risks to economic growth?

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PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 7

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AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30

JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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