

Acquitted of 3 cases, Ershad gets another verdict today

COURT CORRESPONDENT
A Dhaka court will deliver today the verdict on the graft case against Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad involving allotment of plots to 49 people when he was president.
Judge SM Mojibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will pronounce the judgement at 10:30am, court sources said.
The delivery of the verdict was adjourned on its earlier scheduled date of August 27, as the court could not complete preparing the judgment. The court then fixed today as the next date for delivering the verdict.

ELECTORAL REFORMS Mixed reactions from govt bigwigs

SHAKHAWAT LITON
The government high-ups have been contradicting their stance and statements on the opposition proposals for reforms in the caretaker government system, Election Commission (EC) and electoral laws since the issues were raised last year.
On the one hand, the prime minister and senior ministers have been blasting the Awami League-led opposition combine for raising the reform proposals labelling it illegal and aimed at creating anarchy, and on the other hand, they have been urging the opposition to sit for dialogue to discuss the issues.
On Wednesday, Prime Minister and BNP chief Khaleda Zia at a public rally alleged that the opposition is destroying public property by enforcing hartals and creating anarchy over the illegal demands for reforms while LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing called upon the opposition to come along for dialogue on the reform proposals.
The ruling BNP however has remained silent for the last four months without responding to the Awami League-led opposition combine's letter in May that demanded dropping of two leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IO) from the PM's proposed committee to deal with the reform agenda.
The BNP is unlikely to respond to the letter since it does not want to drop the two leaders due to pressure from the two component parties in the ruling coalition. And

EC admits chance of fake voting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Election Commission yesterday admitted that there is possibility of fake voting as the updated electoral roll contains more names than the actual number of voters.
"There is possibility of fake voting due to duplication of names as some people registered their names in more than one place while many names that should have been dropped are still there," said Abdur Rashid Sarker, secretary to Election Commission (EC) Secretariat.
"But people will resist fake voting," he told reporters yesterday.
The EC secretary said, "If any irregularity in the election observation

OPPOSITION'S SIEGE PROGRAMME Crack down on Proshika

Over 100 staff arrested; gathering around PMO banned
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
According to Proshika sources, law enforcers arrested more than 100 officials of the organisation in different parts of the country between Saturday midnight and yesterday evening. Police also raided many Proshika offices across the country.
Sources said most of the arrestees are area coordinators and staff of Proshika's different development areas.
Many police officials across the country said the Proshika staff were arrested for their 'anti-government activities'.
A superintendent of police told The Daily Star that they had received a written order on Thursday from the government high ups for identifying and arresting persons engaged in 'anti-state activities', which was later verbally redefined as 'anti-government activities' by the same authorities.
Sirajul Islam, a deputy director of Proshika (field operation), was arrested yesterday morning from

Huji commander Hannan shown held in Ramna blasts, remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT
Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of banned Harkatul Jihad's (Huji) Bangladesh chapter, was shown arrested in the Ramna Batamul carnage and placed on an eight-day remand yesterday.
The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced Hannan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka, at around 1:30pm in tight security and submitted a petition for showing him arrested in the case.
The CID also submitted another petition for placing him on a 10-day remand for interrogation in connection with the blasts that left 10 people dead and several others



Police charge truncheon on Awami League lawmaker Mohammad Nasim and other opposition activists, left, near Russell Square on Mirpur Road in the capital during hartal hours yesterday; A taxi, right, was set afire in the city's Fakirerpool area.

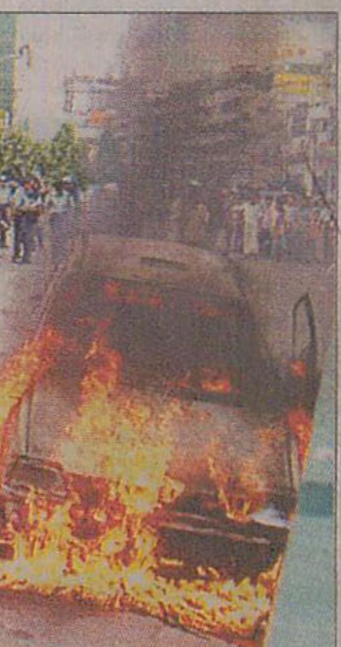


PHOTO: STAR

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE AL demand for JS talks on wide issues ignored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
In absence of the Awami League (AL) lawmakers, Business Advisory Committee (Bac) dominated by ruling BNP deputies yesterday side-stepped the opposition's demand for parliamentary discussions on issues ranging from electoral reforms to Phulbari carnage during the current session.
Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, chairman of the Bac, told reporters that the AL lawmakers' notices for raising discussions were not placed at the meeting.
He was coming out of the Bac meeting that preceded the opening of the last session of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday.
"The opposition was not present at the meeting and the issue of parliamentary discussions was not raised," the speaker said adding that the opposition lawmakers however will be allowed to speak on point of order if they want.
But documents regarding the meeting show that the parliament secretariat had informed the Bac of the notices that the AL lawmakers had submitted for discussion on different issues.
Meeting sources said the agenda read out by Abu Nakib

NDI meets BNP, wants talks to settle dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A delegation of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) at a meeting with the ruling BNP leaders yesterday said the current political dispute stemming from the proposed electoral reforms should be settled through discussion.
Briefing the journalists on the closed-door talks, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar said the visiting NDI team has called on the political parties to resolve disagreement over the reforms in caretaker government and electoral systems at the negotiating table.
BNP leaders Aminul Islam, Nazrul Islam, Mofazzel Karim, and Ziaur Rahman among others were present at that meeting held at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in the city.
The agriculture minister told the press, "We are ready to sit in a dialogue with the opposition parties at any level in order to ensure the upcoming election is free and fair. We'll accept any logical advice in this regard."
On the staggering increase in the number of voters, he said, "A 24% increase is not unusual but we admit that the updated voter list is not free of flaws."
They (Awami League) did not feel embarrassed when they sat

GM Quader to follow suits if AL-led alliance quits elections

UNB, Dhaka
Jatiya Party lawmaker GM Quader yesterday said he will follow if the Awami League-led 14-party alliance decides to boycott the forthcoming election.
"I will not take part in the election if the 14-party decides to boycott. I will stay out even if the Jatiya Party contests in all the 300 seats," he told the news agency over telephone.
Terminating an election without 14-party "a planned game," the JP presidium member said, "I'll not be interested in that election."
Quader also said he has started groundwork to form a party if Ershad, his elder brother, finally decides to join the BNP-led 4-party alliance.
"Already I have formed committees in my constituency and asked my followers to continue campaign," said Quader, lawmaker from Rangpur-3 constituency.
He said he is thinking of contesting from more than one constituency if he finally decides to take part.
Quader is cornered in his Jatiya Party for opposing party Chairman Ershad's move to join the 4-party alliance.

AL men, cops fight on hartal day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Yesterday's dawn-to-dusk country-wide hartal enforced by the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine was marked by sporadic incidents of violence in the capital and elsewhere in the country leaving around 50 people, mostly opposition activists, injured.
Police picked up around 100 opposition men from different parts of the capital.
Several home-made bombs were blasted at different parts of the capital including Jhigatola, Gulistan, and Chankharpool during the hartal hours.
In the morning, hartal supporters attacked a Panchagarh-bound local train in Dinajpur, leaving train driver Rabiur Hossain and railway lineman Jahangir Alam critically injured.
The opposition alliance enforced the hartal to protest police atrocities on them during Election Commission (EC) Secretariat siege programme on September 6 that left around 100 people including the AL chief's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury injured.
Police arrested 275 people in last 24 hours, a press release of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said.
RUSSELL SQUARE
An opposition procession led by former home minister Mohammad Nasim came under police action on Mirpur road at about 10:30am. Police intercepted the procession near Metro Shopping Mall while it was proceeding towards Russell Square from Nasim's residence.
Intercepted by the police, the opposition men engaged in exchanging hot words with the police and pelted them with bricks. Police responded with a mild charge of baton on them including AL leader Mohammad Nasim and chased them away. At least eight opposition activists were injured. Police also picked up seven activists from the spot.
The opposition men regrouped and held a rally at Russell Square where the opposition leaders said

MINIMUM WAGE RMG workers for implementation of accord by tomorrow

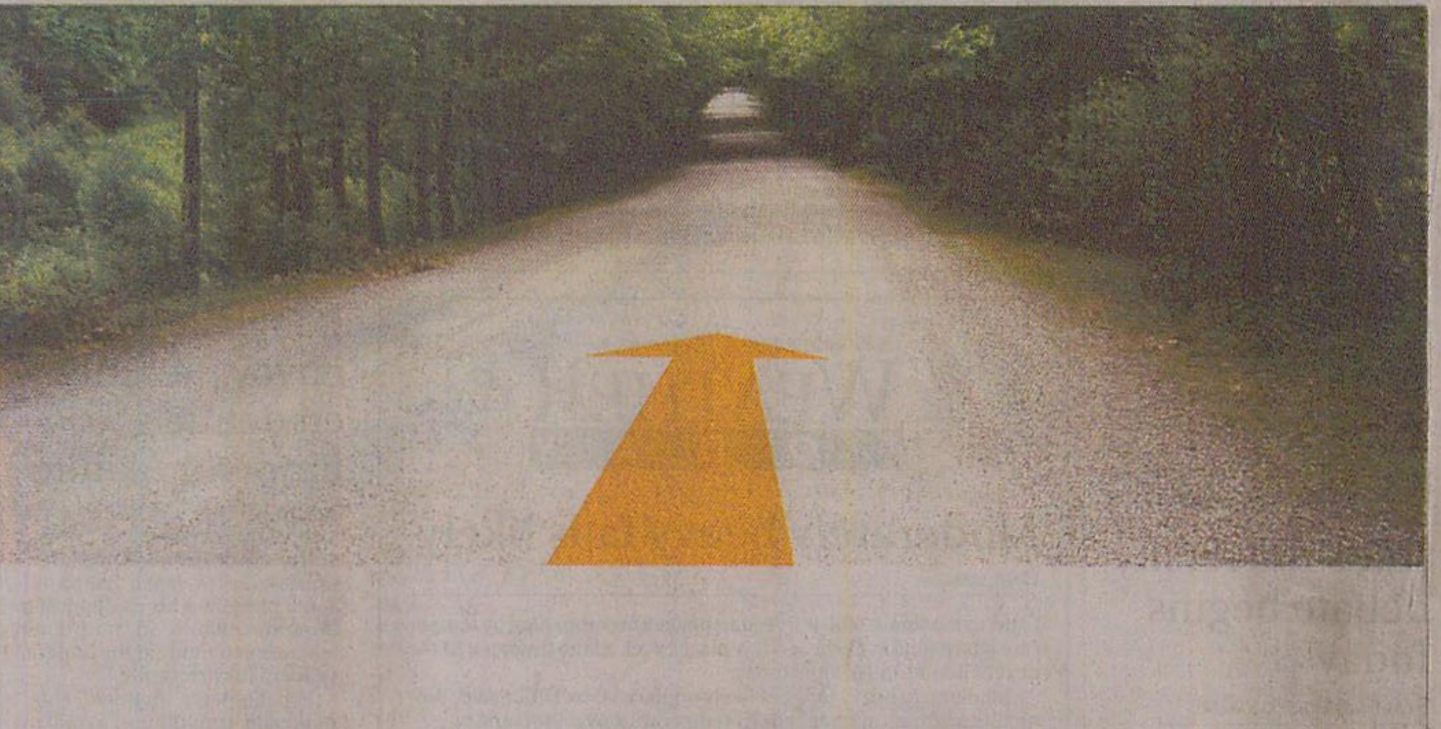
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Fifteen garment workers' organisations yesterday urged the government and the factory owners to implement the tripartite agreement and announce minimum wages for the employees by tomorrow.
In a joint statement, the leaders of the workers' organisations also warned that if the agreement is not fulfilled shortly, they would go for a tougher movement.
The agreement was signed after the government and the factory owners were forced to bow to the

Rice research shines light of hope against Monga

RAFIQUE SARKER, from Rangpur
In an effort to find out a way to alleviate *monga* in the northern region, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) has become successful in the research of producing hybrid rice in the shortest possible time from paddy ratoons, a process which also allows farmers to have two yields of rice from one batch of planted seeds.
The organisation with assistance from Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) carried out the research on the site of a proposed university campus for RDRS at Monthona under the Sadar upazila.
Ratoons are shoots that grow up from the bases of crop plants after the previous growths have been harvested. RDRS planted paddy ratoons in late June and harvested the crop on September 7.
The production rate of rice from ratoons is 3.5 tons or 1500kg per hectare of land. The yield is as much as any other hybrid rice, agriculturists of RDRS claim. RDRS wishes to introduce the new technique of cultivating hybrid rice among farmers of the region during the next rice season.
Hamid Mia, chief of IRRI, Bangladesh also former director general of BRRI said ratoon rice is not a new variety.
"Farmers can now produce hybrid rice at least twice after buying seeds only once. The second time they can get a yield from the ratoons. It is not a new variety," said Hamid Mia. "After Boro crop is harvested, farmers can again plant the ratoons in a field and the day labourers of northern region can stay employed during the monga season," Hamid Mia added.
Only hybrid rice can be cultivated from ratoons, according to agricultural experts. Agricultural Coordinator of RDRS MG Neogi told The Daily Star that cultivation



PHOTO: STAR
The hybrid paddy that shot up from ratoons is being grown by Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), a non-government organisation, in Rangpur.



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