



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE
Showbiz



THE EPITOME OF HARMONY

Let's take a ride into the sixties,
"Sound of Silence" and beyond

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JFK ASSASSINATION

Memory and myth refuse to die
even after 50 years

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Country to
stop on polls
schedule

Fakhrul threatens
at 18-party rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party alliance yesterday threatened to paralyse the country from the moment the Election Commission announces the polls schedule without a non-party caretaker government in place.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir issued the threat on behalf of the alliance from a protest rally in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan.

On the other hand, Election Commissioner M Shah Newaz yesterday said the EC might declare the polls schedule by Monday, and that the 10th parliamentary election would be held in the first week of January.

Addressing the Suhrawardy Udyan rally, organised to protest the formation of polls-time cabinet, Fakhrul warned no "one-sided election" would be allowed to take place.

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BNP threat lacks power

Agitation fails to pick up desired
pace for internal conflicts;
Khaleda warns seniors

RASHIDUL HASAN and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Though the BNP has threatened to cripple the country if the election schedule is announced, its own leaders are in doubt about how far it can go with its present organisational strength.

The party would find it very difficult to enforce a nonstop hartal or blockade due to conflicts among leaders from the top to bottom, a top BNP policymaker told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, the government is conspiring with the help of foreign countries to split the BNP or keep the party away from the next parliamentary election, the leader added. So, it is not possible to say anything about the success of the movement.

These days, grassroots activists are demoralised as most senior leaders stay away from the streets to avoid "police action", said party sources.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has lately expressed annoyance at her senior party colleagues' indifference to the anti-government agitations in the capital.

She has warned Dhaka city BNP Convener Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Member Secretary Abdus Salam and BNP Standing Committee Member Mirza Abbas.

Khoka and Abbas, both former mayors of Dhaka, have been locked in feuds over several issues, including the

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The appalling condition of the Beribandh road near Mitford Hospital in the capital choke travellers and envelope the neighbourhood in a cloud of dust. Unable to tolerate the dust, a local mosque pumps water on to the road, inset, hoping to improve the situation.

GARMENT SAFETY ILO-backed inspection on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has ramped up inspection of building and fire safety at garment factories in efforts to ensure safer workplaces for apparel workers and avoid preventable disasters.

Five teams of experts from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) yesterday inspected about 10 garment factories in the capital, said Mehedi Ahmed Ansari, who led the team.

The top engineering university will do the work on behalf of the government, which has agreed to inspect 2,000 garment factories under an arrangement with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Although the inspection officially began yesterday, the pilot inspection started on November 15. So far, experts have inspected 30 factories for building safety and 15 for fire safety.

The full-fledged inspection comes seven months after the Rana Plaza building collapse claimed at least 1,132 lives, mostly garment workers, in the worst-ever industrial disaster in the country.

Initially, 13 Buet teams will assess structural integrity and fire and electrical safety in Dhaka factories.

In total, 30 teams will work under Buet's supervision,

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Hopes in the hills left unfulfilled

JS coming to an end without passing
CHT land commission bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rights of the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) yet again remained ignored as the Awami League-led grand alliance government did not pass the CHT land disputes resolution commission bill, a key constituent of the 1997 Peace Accord.

Though a total of 37 bills were passed during the 19th session of the ninth parliament, the much talked about bill did not see any headway.

Since the 19th session, most likely the last of the current parliament, according to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ended on Wednesday, the indigenous people of the CHT will have to wait till the next parliament, provided that the next government shows its intent to settle the issue.

Without this amendment, the land rights of the indigenous people would not be established which threatens the full imple-

mentation of the CHT Peace Accord, a promise Awami League made in the section 18 (ii) of its election manifesto in 2008.

AL's pledge made the indigenous people hopeful of establishing rights on their lands occupied by others upon the realisation of the treaty that ended two decades long bush war in the hill tracts. The BNP-Jamaat alliance directly opposed the accord when it was signed in 1997 and did not implement it while in power from 2001 to 2006.

Currently, the land dispute is the main reason behind the unrest in the CHT and a number of violent incidents including killing and arson attacks have taken place in the region recently.

The land disputes turned severe when a few thousand indigenous refugees returned home after the signing of the peace accord but did not get back their lands which were already allocated to others by the government. Besides, a vast area of land remains

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Bangladesh's interest first

European Parliament urges govt,
opposition for a compromise

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Parliament has urged the government and the opposition to put the best interests of Bangladesh first and find a compromise which would give a chance to the people to express their democratic will.

It also regretted that the Bangladesh Parliament did not manage to achieve an all-party consensus for exercising the power by the government in the pre-election period, considering that most democracies manage this phase without a caretaker government.

The European Parliament (EP), which passed three separate resolutions on Thursday, urged calm in the run-up to elections in Bangladesh.

It called on all parties not to boycott the elections as this would deprive citizens of a political choice and undermine Bangladesh's social and economic stability and its impressive development progress.

In its 15-point resolution, members of the EP also urged all groups and individuals to exercise tolerance and restraint, especially in the lead-up to, during and after the elections.

The Bangladesh Election Commission should organise

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TRANSPORT STRIKE Heyday for robbers on bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Taking advantage of the 24-hour transport strike, a gang took commuters on a bus from different points in the capital and robbed them on Thursday night.

Jahid, a private service holder, was one of the victims.

He was waiting for a bus home along with many others on the Airport Road at Khilkhet around 11:00pm with no public transport in sight, thanks to the strike.

"Around 11:30pm, a bus came and stopped for us. We all breathed a sigh of relief as our long wait finally ended," Jahid said, narrating the story to The Daily Star.

He and his fellow passengers could hardly sense

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A real estate company litters a low-lying arable land with billboards for their housing project in Munshiganj on the Dhaka-Mawa highway. Several such companies first install the hoardings, pump in sand to fill the land, and then force farmers to sell their land to them using muscle power. The photo was taken a couple of weeks ago.

PHOTO:
STAR

DHAKA-MAWA HIGHWAY Developers now own most of wetlands

Poor farmers forced to sell lands
as law not enforced

PINAKI ROY

Land developers are illegally filling up vast areas of wetland and converting huge areas of seasonal cropland to launch housing projects along the Dhaka-Mawa Highway.

All the laws and policies formulated over the years to protect the environment have simply become a farce as the authorities concerned are turning a blind eye to the misdeed.

During several recent visits to Shikarpur beel, Kuichhamara beel, Abdullahpur, Alampur, Rajendrapur in Sirajdikhan, Srinagar and Lauhajong in Munshiganj, it was seen that influential land developers were filling up thousands of acres of land.

The land developers have also erected hundreds of colourful billboards in the water, bearing advertisements like "green model town" or "modern town" to lure prospective buyers. Even in September this year, locals caught fish and sailed boats

around those billboards posted by different housing projects like "green city", "silver city", "Padma city", "modern city", "Asian town" or "shanti nibas".

The roadside views are the same for a stretch of a few kilometres on both sides of the highway.

The vast areas of low land remain four to five months under water where locals catch fish during monsoon and cultivate rice and vegetables in winter.

That had been in practice for generations, said Khaleque Morol of Baro Shikarpur in Srinagar while talking to this correspondent.

Khaleque was allegedly forced to sell his land to Amin Mohammad Foundation.

"I was compelled to sell my 140 decimals of land as they were threatening to fill it up. If they filled up my land with sand, I could not grow anything there. Rather they would have asked me to pay for the sand,

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