



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

LIFE

style

**THE TALIBAN TRADEMARK**

Afghans consider bringing back public stoning for adulterers

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MURTAJA BASEER HOSPITALISED

The veteran artist is suffering heart and lung complications

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JS polls on Jan 5

BNP rejects schedule, hits back with 48-hour 'blockade' from 6:00am today; Hannan Shah held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 10th general election will be held on January 5, the Election Commission announced yesterday amid fear of further violence and uncertainty over the BNP-led opposition alliance's participation in the polls.

Unveiling the polls fixture, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad urged all political parties to join the election. In a televised address to the nation, he also assured them of taking all necessary measures, including deployment of the armed forces, to ensure a free and fair election.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance right away rejected the schedule and announced a 48-hour countrywide blockade of roads, rail and waterways beginning 6:00am today. As

part of the agitation, the opposition men will halt traffic movement across the country.

"We demand that the polls schedule be held back until the crisis over an election-time government is resolved," BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office, where he announced the agitation programme.

The fresh spell of agitation will add to the sufferings of the people, who are already gripped by panic following the opposition's threat to cripple the country to foil the election.

More than 29 lakh class-V students who are taking the primary terminal examinations and those appearing for the final examination in schools will pay dearly.

Many guardians called The Daily

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Reach consensus

CEC asks political parties again, assures of army deployment during polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief election commissioner has once again urged all political parties to reach a consensus over polls-time government for the sake of democracy, peace and progress of the country.



Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad

Giving an outline of the roadmap to the 10th parliamentary election, Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday said army would be deployed alongside law enforcers to ensure that the January 5 polls are held peacefully.

The CEC said the Election Commission would strictly enforce the electoral code of conduct, and warned of stern action against violators of the code.

"I hope all political parties will come

forward to fulfil people's expectations. And people will be able to see the reflection of their verdict in a peaceful, free and credible election with the participation of all through a political consensus," he said.

"I requested all political parties time and again to come to a consensus by giving priority to people's aspirations."

The commission waited for reconciliation between the political parties over polls-time government, but it could wait no longer because of the constitutional obligation to hold the election by January 24 next year, said Rakibuddin.

He said army would be deployed along

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Pre-blockade violence sweeps country

Two killed; 200 vehicles vandalised, 30 more torched; highways blocked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In violent reaction to last night's announcement of parliamentary polls schedule, opposition men vandalised at least 200 vehicles and torched 30 others and blasted numerous bombs across the country.

In the capital, Mohammad Ujjal, a 35-year-old rickshaw puller, was crushed to death by a bus while speeding away in panic following several blasts in Badda area yesterday evening.

Delwar Hossain, a human hauler driver, was killed being hit by splinters as opposition activists hurled crude bombs during a clash with police in

Comilla, police say.

At least 125 persons, including additional superintendent of police in Bogra, were injured as violence swept the country last night soon after the Election Commission announced the January 5 polls date.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance called a 48-hour blockade of road, rail and waterways from this morning.

But activists already blocked roads and highways last night at Lalmonirhat, Bogra, Noakhali, Rajshahi, Jhenidah, Madaripur, Pabna, Laxmipur, Gazipur, Savar, Joypurhat, Chandpur, Comilla, Feni,

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US, India for talks, credible JS election

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Ahead of the announcement of the election schedule yesterday, the US stressed the need for holding a dialogue between the major parties, while India said democratic institutions and process in Bangladesh will be strengthened in the run up to the national election.

"I don't know whether the chief election commissioner will be doing that or not [announce the election schedule]. Regardless of that, I think these developments make it even more urgent that the major parties engage in a constructive dialogue to find a way forward to hold a free, fair and credible election," said US

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A vendor on a street at Manda in the capital bakes a steaming hot bhapa pitha, a traditional rice cake, in the cold morning of an early winter's day yesterday.

PHOTO:
SK ENAMUL HAQ

Seven advisers asked to quit
4 new advisers to stay; cabinet meets without advisers for the first time

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked seven of her 11 advisers to resign.

The seven, appointed when the Awami League-led grand alliance took office five years back, will step down in a day or two.

She gave the orders at a meeting with five of them at the Gono Bhaban last night, an adviser told The Daily Star.

"The prime minister called us to the Gono Bhaban tonight and asked us to resign," he said.

The newly appointed four advisers will stay.

Sources said Hasina took the decision in response to growing criticism over the number of the advisers in her polls-time administration.

Those asked to resign are public administration affairs adviser HT Imam; energy adviser Tawfiq-E-Elahi Chowdhury; economic affairs adviser Mashur Rahman; health and family welfare and social welfare affairs adviser Syed Modasser Ali; education and political affairs adviser Alauddin Ahmed; international affairs adviser

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Ticfa with US signed at last

Questions arise over legality of signing such deal by polls-time govt; first target is to restore trade privileges

REZAUL KARIM and REFAVET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government, after more than a decade of talks, yesterday inked the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa) with the US, ushering in a new era of communication between the two countries.

Commerce Secretary Mahbub Ahmed and Acting Deputy of US Trade Representative Wendy Cutler signed the deal in Washington on behalf of Bangladesh and the US respectively.

The version of the agreement signed was the one approved by the Hasina cabinet on June 17, Akramul Qader, Bangladesh's ambassador to the US, told The Daily Star over telephone.

"Our first target is to recover our trade privileges to the US, as Ticfa is a platform for resolving trade disputes between us," said Commerce Minister GM Quader, adding that the issue would be raised in the first meeting of the forum.

Around 95 percent of the country's

Tazreen fire and Rana Plaza collapse, the US on June 27 suspended Bangladesh's Generalised System of Preferences status, which provided duty-free access to 97 percent of the country's export items.

In the second forum, to be held in Dhaka in three months' time, Quader said the country would seek for withdrawal of duties for the remaining 3 percent of the products, which include readymade garment (RMG).

Around 95 percent of the country's

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Make final efforts to reach consensus

Civil society members react to announcement of polls schedule

PANKAJ KARMAKAR and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Although the election schedule has been announced, eminent civil society members and political analysts stress the need for a final effort to reach a political consensus for holding an inclusive general election.

Talking to The Daily Star they said the schedule announcement would not help ease the crisis when the political situation remains volatile.

Noted rights activist Sultana Kamal said the people of the country want to see a political understanding immediately so that all parties contest the elections.

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Duties on newsprint import cut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday cut import duties on newsprint consumed by the country's newspaper industry to 5 percent from 10 percent.

The NBR issued a statutory regulatory order bringing down the import duties, which came into effect yesterday.

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