



AAP IN INDIAN POLITICS

Congress, BJP consider it a bubble waiting to burst before Lok Sabha polls

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'NOT GOING TO CHANGE'

Obama says the US will continue to spy on foreign governments

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CRITICS' CHOICE

"Gravity" wins a record seven prizes including best actress in action movie

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No EU plan to scrap GSP

Envoy makes it clear the duty-free facility has nothing to do with politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union has no plan to cancel the GSP facility for Bangladesh at the moment.

Currently, Bangladesh benefits from the most favourable trade condition under the Generalised System of Preferences, as no tariff is imposed on the country's products entering the 28-nation bloc, EU Ambassador in Dhaka William Hanna said yesterday.

"That continues to be the case, and we are not considering any trade measure at this stage," he told reporters at his office in the capital.

His comment comes amid news reports that the EU might reconsider the GSP benefit for Bangladesh following the January 5 election boycotted by the BNP.

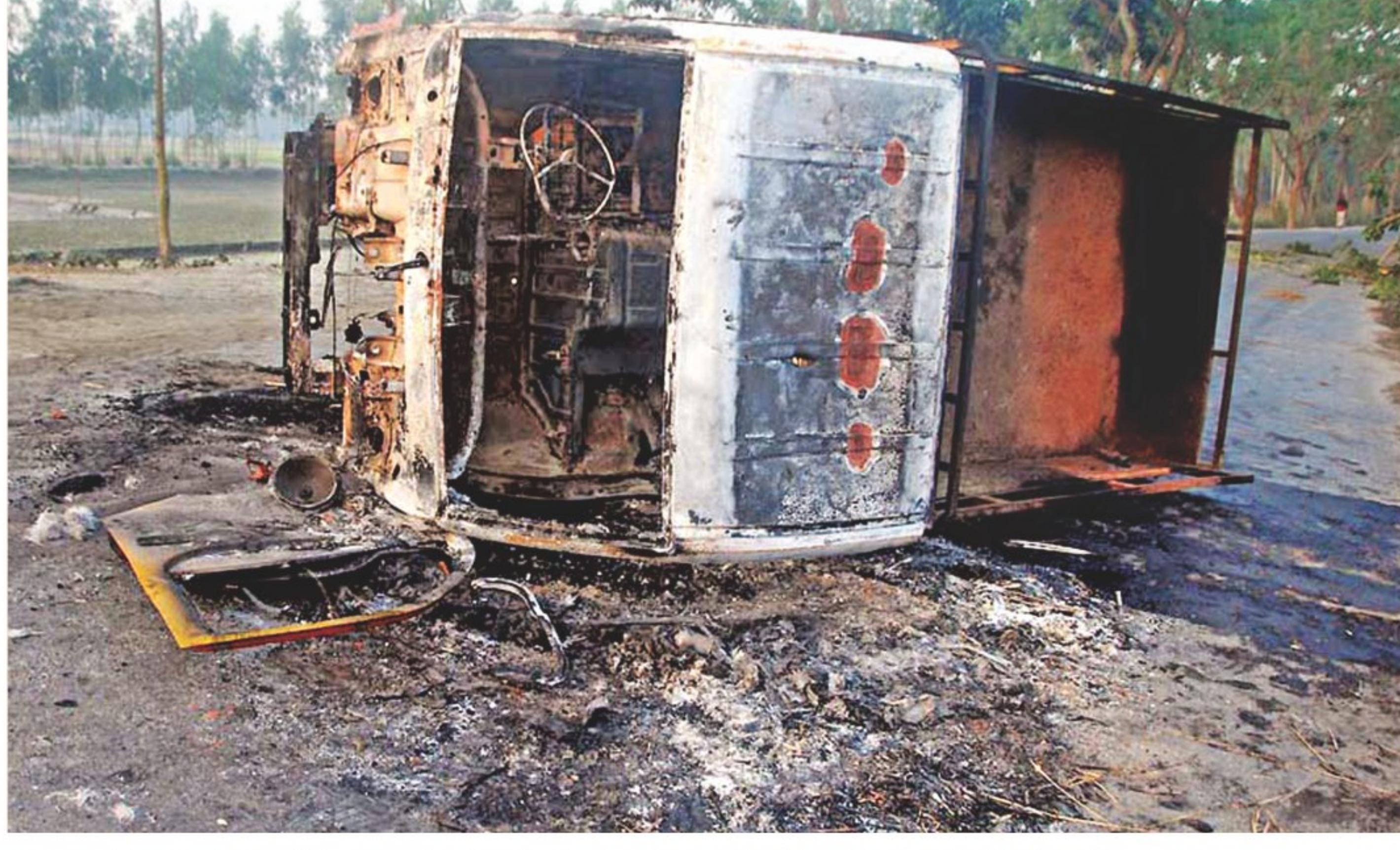
The EU is Bangladesh's biggest export market, and about half the country's more than \$27 billion exports went to Europe in the last fiscal year despite the downturn in the continent.

Following the general election, where the EU did not send any observers, its high representative for foreign affairs Catherine Ashton released a statement on the one-sided polls. Last week, the European Parliament passed a resolution on the political developments in Bangladesh.

"Neither document mentioned the question of trade. So we are not considering any change to the GSP at the moment," said Hanna.

Before reconsidering the GSP, he added, the EU would probably review the progresses Bangladesh made in meeting its commitments to improve

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Jamaat-Shibir men torched this pickup by which the law enforcers got to Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha yesterday to arrest people accused of violence right after the sentencing of Delawar Hossain Sayeedee in early 2013.

PHOTO: STAR

MONEY-LAUNDERING CASE Tarique asked to surrender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered BNP Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman to surrender before a trial court in a money laundering case involving Tk 20.41 crore.

The court passed the order after a hearing on the acceptance of an appeal filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission. The ACC challenged the trial court verdict that acquitted Tarique of the charges of the case.

The HC, however, asked the trial court to grant bail to Tarique, the eldest son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia,



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HC ON 5 BNP LEADERS Stop showing them arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government not to harass or show five top BNP leaders arrested in any other cases "without due process of law".

The leaders are BNP standing committee members MK Anwar, Moudud Ahmed and Rafiqul Islam Mia, Khaleda's special assistant Shimul Biswas and former BNP lawmaker Sarder Sakhawat Hossain Bakul.

As many as 20 central leaders of BNP and five top leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Jatiyatabadi Svechhasebok Dal are now behind bars in different cases.

All of them were arrested over the past two and a half months. BNP has been saying that the government had arrested its central leaders on political grounds to foil the anti-government movement.

Of the 20 central leaders, four are members of the standing committee, two vice-chairmen, two joint secretary generals, two organising secretaries, three advisers to BNP

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Jamaat pounces on cops

22 cops among 55 hurt in 5-hour mayhem in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Jamaat-Shibir men early yesterday ambushed a police team in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha and clashed with the joint forces sent to relieve the police team, leaving 55 people, including 22 cops, injured.

The activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir also torched a police pickup, vandalised 12 homes and surrounded the policemen during the nearly five-hour-long clash. Five Jamaat-Shibir activists were arrested.

Mofazzal Hossain, superintendent of police of Gaibandha, told The Daily Star that the police were conducting a raid in Kadamtala and Khanabari villages of Sarbanda union in the upazila around 1:00am yesterday.

The villages are known to be Jamaat-Shibir strongholds.

Mofazzal said the law enforcers had cordoned off the villages to capture people

wanted in cases filed in connection with the violence that rocked the district in February 2013.

As policemen were conducting their raid inside the villages, Jamaat-Shibir activists put up barricades on all the exit points of the villages and torched the vehicle the law enforcers went there in. They then swooped on the policemen with sticks and sharp weapons, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate with a few gunshots, he said.

Locals said members of the joint forces rushed to the area to help the police team and fired a large number of teargas shells and rubber bullets. The Jamaat-Shibir men hurled brick chunks at the law enforcers during the clash and vandalised 12 homes, police said.

The joint forces managed to get the police team free around 6:00am and arrest Mafizul Islam, 56, Shahjahan Bhutto, 45, Al-Amin, 20, Ashiqur Rahman, 22, and Dulu Mia, 25.

Twenty-two policemen, including sub-

inspectors Mahiuddin and Abdul Matin, were injured during the clash, SP Mofazzal said, adding that six cops were sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for treatment.

General secretary of Sundarganj upazila unit of Jamaat Shahidul Islam Manju claimed that 25 of its leaders and activists were injured in the clash and he blamed police for vandalising the 12 homes.

In the morning, the villages of Kadamtala, Khanabari, and Ramvadra, where the clashes had spread to, had no men. The men had fled fearing arrest, said Shahjahan Mandol, chairman of Sarbananda union parishad.

On February 28, 2013, immediately after Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayeedee was sentenced to death for war crimes, Jamaat-Shibir activists had attacked Banodanga police outpost. They vandalised and torched the outpost and killed four policemen.

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Chips of paint are falling off and rust has set in. This globe-shaped fountain in front of Shahjalal International Airport, the country's prime airport, is in this state due to sheer negligence.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Dhaka to preen for T20

Tk 115cr allocated for beautification; PM spurs ministries on ADP implementation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the T20 World Cup Cricket less than two months away, the government has decided to give the capital a facelift and approved a Tk 115 crore project in this regard.

The approval came at the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the National

Economic Council (ECNEC) of the new government yesterday.

The fund will be spent for improvement of road infrastructure and beautification work around the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, the home of Bangladesh cricket in Mirpur, and major roads of Dhaka city for the mega event set to kick off

from March 16.

This is the first time Bangladesh is hosting a sporting event of such a magnitude alone. It will accommodate a total of 26 teams, for both the men's and women's events to be played at three different venues in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. The tickets for the extravaganza were

effectively sold out within the first four days of sale and a huge influx of tourists is expected during the three-week carnival.

And for smooth traffic movement in the city during the event, measures will also be taken under the project.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

UPAZILA POLLS

Govt wakes up after 5 years

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Upazila Parishads, a crucial tier of local government, have been kept sidelined for their entire five year-term. They have been denied their due mandate to function properly as local bodies.

This exposes the Awami League-led government's sheer indifference to the decentralisation of state power through a strengthening of local government.

A more appalling fact is that the setting up of none of the around 480 upazila parishads was completed during their tenure as elections to some 1,600 posts reserved for women in the parishads were not held in time. And that has been possible thanks to the government's lack of interest in making the parishads functional.

In such a situation, the Election Commission has moved to hold polls to more than 480 upazila parishads in phases from February 19.

But the future as well as success of the crucial local government bodies still hangs in the balance as it is not clear whether the newly formed AL-led government will allow them to exercise their mandate.

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102 upazilas go to polls Feb 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced that polls to 102 upazila parishads would be held on February 19 as per its plan to hold the local government elections in 487 upazilas in phases.

This might finally trigger a battle of ballots between archrivals ruling Awami League and BNP after the January 5 parliamentary election was boycotted by the latter, leaders of both sides forecast.

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18-party rally today in capital

Khaleda to address

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will address an 18-party rally at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyana today.

Khaleda is scheduled to reach the venue at 3:00pm, an hour after the rally starts.

This will be her second public address since October 25 last year, when she issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to realise

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Law minister calls for boycotting Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq has called upon the countrymen to boycott Jamaat-e-Islami, its wings and institutions in order to "uproot" the party from Bangladesh forever.

"I agree that Jamaat should be banned. But, what if the party returns with a different name? Rather, they should be despised and boycotted socially. Otherwise, they cannot be uprooted," he observed.

The law minister was speaking at a discussion titled "Jahanara Imam's

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