

"Journalists around the world face threats and attacks, often instigated by government officials, organised crime, or terrorist groups. Political leaders incite hostility by framing reporters as enemies of the people or 'terrorists'."
A STATEMENT OF UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS (PAGE 20)



"These [licences for new banks] are given on political grounds ..."
FINANCE MINISTER AMA MUHITH AT HIS SECRETARIAT OFFICE



"It is exhausting. This time around I have to do more work than the first time I became prime minister... the whole government machinery has been destroyed almost."
MALAYSIA PRIME MINISTER MAHATHIR MOHAMAD (PAGE 8)



14-PARTY-OIKYAFRONT TALKS

Not much resolved

Dr Kamal sees no specific solution in PM's speech; Hasina's door open, says Quader

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Dr Kamal Hossain found no specific solution in prime minister's speech. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said his party was not satisfied with how the talks went. JSD President ASM Abdur Rab said their movement would continue to realise their seven-point demand. And Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said they would not go beyond the constitution.

This is how the AL and the Jatiya Oikyafront leaders reacted after the three and a half hours of talks at the Gono Bhaban last night.

After the talks that began at 7:00pm, AL leaders assured the opposition alliance of holding further talks to find a solution to the political crisis over the upcoming national election. But Oikyafront leaders said chances of more talks were slim.

Kamal Hossain, also president of Gono Forum, gave an introductory speech at the beginning.

Later, Fakhru presented their seven-point demand including, formation of a neutral election-time government, dissolution of parliament before the polls schedule is announced, reconstitution of the Election Commission and deployment of army with magistracy power during the election.

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Leaders of the 14-party alliance, right, and the Jatiya Oikyafront, left, in talks at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

"The prime minister delivered a long speech. But we didn't find any specific solution in it."
DR KAMAL HOSSAIN
GONO FORUM PRESIDENT

"We cannot go beyond the constitution."
OBAIDUL QUADER
AWAMI LEAGUE
GENERAL SECRETARY

"I, on behalf of my party, can say we are not satisfied with today's discussion."
MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM
ALAMGIR
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL

"Our movement to realise the demands will continue."
ASM ABDUR RAB
JATIYA SAMAJTANTRIK
DAL PRESIDENT

FROM INSIDE

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Led by Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, the Jatiya Oikyafront delegation stepped inside the Gono Bhaban around 6:45pm. They exchanged greetings with the 14-party team, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They all took their seats. After that, Hasina, in her speech, informed the Oikyafront leaders about the success of her government in various fields. At the end of her speech, Dr Kamal initiated the talks, thanking the PM for her role in this

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Meeting on Nov 4 to fix polls schedule

CEC says after meeting the president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission would hold a meeting on November 4 to fix the schedule for the upcoming national election, said Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday after meeting the president.

Led by the CEC, the four election commissioners had the meeting with President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban to inform him about the preparations for the 11th parliamentary polls and the election schedule.

Asked about the outcome of the meeting, the CEC, while briefing reporters in front of the Bangabhaban, said, "It was not an emergency meeting. It's a formal one. An election will be held at the national level. The honourable president has been informed about its preparations ... what we are doing, voter list, polling

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The 'feats' of 'best' jailer

Drug trade, bribes from suppliers, food business, undue privilege to prisoners made him crores

SHARIFUL ISLAM, SHAHEEN MOLLAH and FM MIZANUR RAHMAN



Soheli Rana Biswas

Every month a mindboggling Tk 2.47 crore used to be gathered inside Chattogram Central Jail and the lion's share came from drug dealing, its arrested jailer Soheli Rana Biswas told investigators while in remand.

The drugs, mainly Phensidyl, yaba, and cannabis, used to be smuggled into the prison under piles of vegetables meant for the kitchen and prisoners Soheli trusted used to sell the drugs to inmates, said a police official who interrogated him.

Prison officials used to get a slice of the cake, the interrogator said wishing not to be named.

Soheli was awarded best jailer this year by the prisons authorities.

Money makes everything possible" was the answer of Soheli in response to a question about how he bagged the award despite having numerous allegations levelled against him. He refused to say whom he paid to get the award, the investigator said.

Soheli, now on a two-day remand, was arrested with Tk 44 lakh in cash and fixed deposit receipts (FDRs) worth Tk 2.50 crore on October 26 when he was travelling in a train in Bhairab.

Prisons authorities later suspended him and formed a three-member committee to investigate the incident.

Three to four people, including one Nasir of Bahaddarhat, used to supply the drugs to Soheli, a drug addict himself, police and prison officials said.

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I am very unhappy

Muhith on BB move to approve new banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday expressed unhappiness over Bangladesh Bank's move to approve new banks saying it was being taken on political grounds.

"I am very unhappy about it, because I visualise that very soon these banks will start merging," he told reporters at his secretariat office.

A bank merges with another to survive following poor performance for long. Asked about it, he said the government would have to amend the relevant laws for merging banks.

Muhith said the approvals were being given although there was no need for new banks now. "These

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'No fresh chance'

KL snubs Dhaka's call for legalising undocumented Bangladeshi workers

PORIMOL PALMA

Kuala Lumpur has opposed Dhaka's proposal for giving the undocumented Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia a fresh chance to legalise themselves, say officials at the expatriates' welfare ministry.

The undocumented Bangladeshis will have to return home, a Malaysian delegation told a Bangladesh team at a meeting at the expatriates' welfare ministry in Dhaka on Wednesday.

"Initially, Malaysian officials said they could not start fresh recruitment if the undocumented Bangladeshis don't return home," Aminul Islam, additional secretary at the expatriates' welfare ministry, told this correspondent.

However, the Malaysian team said they would place Dhaka's proposal before their high-ups, Aminul said.

Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Rownaq Jahan led the Bangladesh side while under-secretary of Malaysian human resources ministry's policy division Betty Hasan headed the Malaysian team.

Out of one million Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia, five lakh remain undocumented. The majority of them had applied months before the Malaysia-set deadline for getting legalised ended on August 31 this year.

But they could not get regularised due to fraud by brokers, agents or employers.

Since September 1 this year, a large number of Bangladeshi migrants were reported to have been detained and jailed, while many others have been living in fear of arrest and uncertainty.

Asked, Mohammad Harun Al Rashid, a Bangladeshi labour migration expert working in Malaysia, said too many Bangladeshis would be in

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Murder case filed over baby's death during strike

STAR REPORT

At least 160 alleged transport workers have been accused in a case filed in connection with obstructing an ambulance carrying a child during the recent transport strike that led to the child's death in Moulvibazar.

Akbar Ali, uncle of the seven-day-old girl, filed a murder case with Baralekha Police Station against 160-170 unidentified people Wednesday night, hours after the High Court asked the inspector general of police to take action.

The baby died in Chandgram of Moulvibazar on Sunday after transport workers held the ambulance on its way to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for an hour and a half.

The parents started for the hospital from Baralekha Upazila Health Complex around 10:00am that day but the vehicle was

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A student taking last-minute preparation while heading for her exam hall in a rickshaw before Junior School Certificate (JSC) tests began yesterday morning. The photo was taken in the capital's Rajarbagh area. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Polls in mind

Govt rushing to pass projects

STAR REPORT

With the national election possibly next month, the government continues to approve, inaugurate, and lay foundation stones of development projects, an apparent move to woo voters.

At least 82 projects involving Tk 88,782 crore were approved last month. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) will sit in a special meeting on Sunday where 40 more projects could be approved, sources said.

The planning ministry is working hard to prepare project proposals ahead of the special meeting. The Ecneec secretariat will be open on Saturday, the weekend, they said. Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal will also go to the office on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated and laid foundation stones of 321 development projects across the country, reports BSS.

She goes to Mymensingh today to open and lay foundation stones of 195 more development projects in four districts of the division, the agency adds.

Usually, once the election schedule is announced, no projects are approved. So, the officials of ministries and divisions are rushing to the planning ministry to get the green light for their projects.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday said the decision regarding the election schedule would be made at the Election Commission on November 4.

The 90-day countdown to the national election began on Wednesday. According to the constitution, the polls must be held by January 28 when the five-year tenure of the 10th parliament expires.

Yesterday, the PM opened and laid foundation stones of the 321 development schemes in 56 districts under

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