



AL national council likely in December Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the party's next national council might be held in December.

"The national election will be held in 2023 or 2024. So, the party will have to be built as a more well-organised and smarter one ahead of the next parliamentary polls," he said.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, was speaking to journalists at a programme at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue central office marking the distribution of member collection books of its organisational units.

He said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had dreamt of building "Sonar Bangla".

The AL would be made more disciplined and well-organised under the leadership of Bangabandhu's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to materialise the dream, he added.

The ruling party general secretary said party leaders concerned have been given directives to make strides towards removing all sorts of internal wrangling in all organisational units across the country.

Mentioning the distribution of member collection books among SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Bangladesh opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy pulls one during the third day of the first Test against South Africa in Durban yesterday. The 21-year-old carried the Bangladesh innings – 298 all out for a 69-run first-innings deficit – with a 137 off 326 deliveries, in the process becoming the first Bangladeshi battler to score a Test century against the Proteas. Later, the hosts reached six for no loss at stumps.

BEATING BUS DRIVER TO DEATH

Who were those plainclothes men?

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

On the night of April 22, 2019, a group of 14 to 15 men in plainclothes intercepted a bus in Chattogram city's Shikalbaha area and beat up the driver in front of the supervisor, helper and all the passengers.

After they left, critically injured Jalal Uddin, 50, the driver of Shyamoli Paribahan, was rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Two days later, Jalal's brother Jewel Hossain filed a case with Karnaphuli Police Station over the incident.

According to the case statement, those men came in a microbus, an SUV and a car and introduced themselves as members of the Detective Branch of police. Some of them were carrying handcuffs, walkietalkies and pistols.

They searched the bus for yaba pills but

found nothing, it added.

Several witnesses said the same to police investigators.

The death sparked widespread protests at that time with Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation (east) and Chattogram Zilla Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation enforcing a 24-hour transport strike.

They demanded arrest and punishment SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

36hr curfew declared

Move comes after president invokes state of emergency in face of violent protests

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday declared a 36-hour nationwide curfew and deployed troops backed with sweeping new powers under a state of emergency to quell protests against the president, his relatives and even his most trusted shaman.

The lockdown will be lifted on Monday morning, police said — a period that covers planned mass anti-government protests against worsening shortages of fuel, food and medicines.

The order came a day after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa invoked a state of emergency following a violent attempt to storm his house, saying it was for the "protection of public order".

The ire of a mob in the near-bankrupt country was directed at a woman identified as a soothsayer frequently consulted by Rajapaksa in the northern town of Anuradhapura.

Rights activist and former opposition legislator Hirunika Premachandra led dozens of women to storm seer Gnana Akka's shrine and residence, but armed police stopped them.

"Why are police protecting a shaman?" she asked a senior officer who physically blocked her march, as seen on a Facebook live video, verified by AFP as authentic.

"Thief, thief, Gota thief," the crowds chanted after armed security personnel stopped them.
"Think of the country and let us pass," another woman activist pleaded.

"#GoHomeRajapaksas" and "#GotaGoHome" have been trending for days on Twitter and Facebook in the country, which is battling severe shortages of essentials, sharp price rises and crippling power cuts in its most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948

The coronavirus pandemic has torpedoed tourism and remittances, both vital to the economy, and authorities have imposed a broad import ban in an attempt to save foreign currency.

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Russia retreats in northern Ukraine

Confirms Kyiv; Red Cross heads for Mariupol for more evacuations

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday said Russian forces were making a "rapid retreat" from northern areas around the capital Kyiv and the city of Chernigiv as the Red Cross prepared for a fresh evacuation effort from the besieged southern port of Mariupol.

Russian forces now appear to be focusing attacks in the east and south, a day after thousands of people from Mariupol and surrounding Russian-held areas escaped in a convoy of buses and private cars.

"Puggia is prioritising a different tactic falling back on the east

"Russia is prioritising a different tactic: falling back on the east and south," Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhaylo Podolyak said on social media.

He said that, while Russian forces appeared to be pulling back from Kyiv and Chernigiv, their aim was to "control a vast stretch of occupied territory and set up there in a powerful way". "Without heavy weapons we won't be able to drive (Russia) out," he

said.
President Vladimir Putin ordered Russian tanks into Russia's pro-Western neighbour on February 24 and Ukraine estimates 20,000

people have been killed in the war so far.

More than 10 million have had to flee their homes. In Kyiv, the government confirmed that the body of a well-known

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Govt's greed, syndicate behind price hike: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that the government failed to arrest the price hike of daily essentials and provide relief to the people.

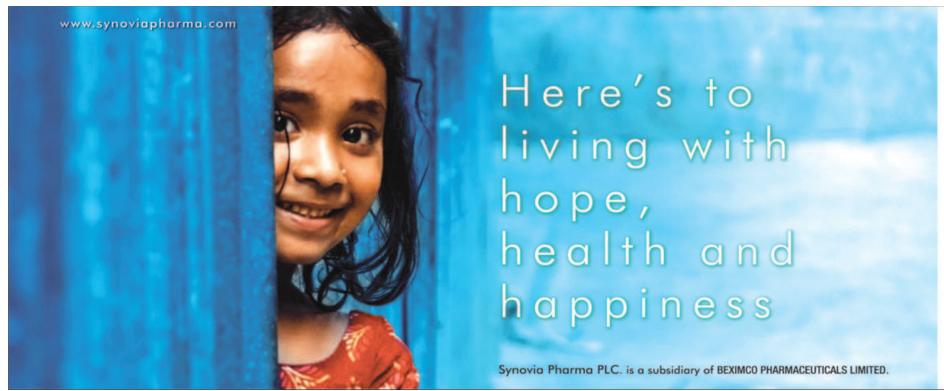
It also complained that the prices of daily commodities have spiked due to the government's greed.

The party made the allegations at a "token hunger strike" in front of Jatiya Press Club, organised by Dhaka North and South city BNP units, protesting the rising prices of daily essentials and allencompassing corruption.

"Prices of daily commodities have skyrocketed due to the government's greed and syndication," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said at the programme.

He said the "unelected" Awami League government has created a SEE PAGE 7 COL 7





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