

## AL men ‘on guard’ for Dec 10 BNP rally

Ruling party men take position in different areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League have started to take position in different areas of the capital, in the name of “vigilant guard”, ahead of the BNP’s December 10 rally.

AL men were seen in many places, including Gulistan Bangabandhu Avenue, Dhanmondi-32, Kathalbagan, Russel Square, Dholaikhal, Rothkhola intersection, Sadarghat, Muktangon [Paltan intersection], and Motijheel.

They were chanting slogans against the BNP.

Jatrabari AL brought out a procession in the evening in Paltan and Bijoynagar areas, protesting the “BNP’s anarchy”

Activists of the ruling party and its different associate bodies also brought out rallies in Kalyanpur, Paikpara, Mirpur-14, and Dhamrai.

According to party sources, AL men of Dhaka Metropolitan south and north units, and Dhaka district were instructed to guard the entry points and prevent the BNP workers from coming into Dhaka.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Riaz Uddin, office secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan South AL, said, “We have already instructed all the leaders and activists of all the 75 units in the capital to remain alert and take position on the streets and in alleys. Our leaders have already done so in the Jatrabari, Dholaikhal, and Sadarghat areas and will be on guard till December 10 night.

“If they [BNP] hold their rally without disrupting public life, then we will remain silent. But, if they vandalise vehicles or cause damage to public property, we will not spare them.”

Sources said the Dhaka Metropolitan South AL is scheduled to hold a rally on Friday near the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Supporters of the ruling Awami League pack Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox’s Bazar for the party President Sheikh Hasina’s address yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## US did not ‘enable’ Ukraine strikes inside Russia

Says Blinken; Zelensky named Time ‘Person of the Year’

AGENCIES

The United States has said it hadn’t “enabled” Ukraine to carry out strikes inside Russia, after a spate of drone attacks on military-linked facilities deep within Russian territory.

As Russian President Vladimir Putin convened his security council in the wake of the apparent drone strikes, Kyiv did not directly claim responsibility but neither did it criticize the action, which killed three people and damaged long range bombers and a fuel depot, according to reports from Russia.

“We have neither encouraged nor enabled the Ukrainians to strike inside of Russia,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters on Tuesday.

Washington has held back from supplying Ukraine forces with long range ATACMS missiles that could strike inside Russia out of fears it could lead to a direct confrontation between Russian forces and those of the US and Nato.

But experts believe Ukraine was able to modify old long-distance Soviet-era reconnaissance drones on its own to target them at the bases in the Kursk, Ryazan and Saratov on Monday.

But Blinken did not criticize the strikes. Instead, he said, the United States is determined “to make sure that they (Ukraine) have in their hands -- along with many other partners around the world -- the equipment that they need to defend themselves, to defend their territory, to defend their freedom.”

Meanwhile, Time magazine named President Volodymyr Zelensky as well as “the spirit of Ukraine” as its 2022 person of the year yesterday, for the resistance the country has shown in the face of Russia’s invasion, reports AFP.

“Whether the battle for Ukraine fills one with hope or with fear, Volodymyr Zelensky galvanized the world in a way we haven’t seen in decades,” Time editor in chief Edward Felsenthal wrote.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin said there was no need to conduct an additional call up of Russian reservists to fight in Ukraine at the moment.

Putin said of the more than 300,000 Russian reservists who were drafted in what Moscow called a “partial mobilisation” in September and October, 150,000 were deployed in the zone of what Moscow calls its “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Of those, 77,000 were in combat units and the remainder performing defensive functions, he said.

In Washington, lawmakers agreed to provide Ukraine at least \$800 million in additional security aid next year.

The Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, authorises the additional spending for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, an increase of \$500 million over President Joe Biden’s request earlier this year, reports Reuters.

As winter’s grip tightens, Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday that Russia was looking to stall the fighting in Ukraine over the winter in order to build up its forces for a renewed assault next year.

Ukrainian forces have been pushing a counter offensive in which they have made significant gains in the east and south, including Kyiv’s retaking of the city of Kherson.

“What we see now is that Russia is actually attempting to try to have some kind of freeze of this war, at least for a short period of time, so they can regroup, repair, recover and then try to launch a bigger offensive next spring,” Stoltenberg told a public event hosted by the Financial Times.

## One killed as cops, BNP men clash

FROM PAGE 1

After the clash, a police team entered the party office and came out within a few minutes. The BNP men were setting fire to tyres on the road at the time.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir arrived at that point and police didn’t allow him to enter the office. An officer reportedly told him that there were explosives inside the building.

Fakhrul later told reporters that the clash was a conspiracy to foil the scheduled rally on December 10.

“This incident happened to foil the rally. This is a conspiracy,” he said and demanded the authorities withdraw the policemen deployed in Nayapaltan and allow the BNP to hold the rally peacefully.

On the other hand, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader told a rally in Cox’s Bazar that BNP activists attacked police in

Nayapaltan.

The BNP men are trying to take positions at their party office three days before their rally, he added.

Around 5:00pm, a group of people wearing helmets and holding sticks marched in Nayapaltan and chanted anti BNP slogans amid the presence of a large number of policemen.

Police later picked up BNP leaders Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annie, Amanullah Aman and Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas from near the BNP office.

Hours later, DMP Commissioner Khandaker Golam Faruk at a press conference said policemen entered the BNP office on information that crude bombs were stored there.

The BNP activists attacked police without provocation and injured several police members, he said.

“The BNP can hold rallies in

any open field. But they will not be allowed to hold a rally on the roads,” he said, adding that, “We will ensure full security if they agree to hold their rally in Suhrawardy Udyan.”

Briefing reporters in front of the BNP office, DMP Joint Commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarkar said, “We arrested many criminals as well as those who instigated the violence.

“We were here to deal with the overall situation with great patience. We were repeatedly provoked. When we are attacked, when people’s lives are threatened, when common people are attacked, we are forced to launch operations. They threw bombs at the police from the first floor of their office.

“Many bombs were kept here for sabotage. We recovered them. We believe that this attack was carried out to damage property, kill and attack law enforcers.”

In response to BNP Secretary General Fakhrul’s allegation that police brought the bombs in bags, he said the operation was conducted in front of everyone. “We recovered bombs and sticks in front of everyone. They were inside when we were bombed in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, transport associations in Barishal, Khulna, Sylhet, Dinajpur told this newspaper that they were telling the travellers that bus services between Dhaka and those districts may get suspended today and tomorrow.

Shibli Biswas, executive president of Khulna Motor Bus Owners Association, said, “Bus operation may come to a halt following the clash. But we have not made any such decision yet.”

Transport associations enforced strikes ahead of most of the recent BNP rallies.

## RHD to hire firms with poor record

FROM PAGE 1

A joint venture of Turkey’s ENEZ and Bangladesh’s TCCL will expand a 14.10km stretch from the Sherpur Bridge Toll Plaza to Khashikapan Bazar in Sylhet, along with other related work.

On the other hand, Sinohydro will expand a 11.10km stretch from Khashikapan Bazar to the 7th Armed Police Battalion Headquarters, along with other related work.

Both contractors will get four years to complete the civil work. There will be a one-year defect liability period and then they will provide performance-based maintenance service for six more years.

SINOHYDRO

Sinohydro Corporation had won the contract to expand around 140km of the 192km Dhaka-Chattogram highway into a four-lane highway in January 2010.

They were supposed to complete the work within January 2013. But the firm was reluctant from the beginning after it got the contract at a lower rate. It also demanded additional money to finish the job.

Irked by the firm’s delay, Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister (then communication minister), spoke to the then Chinese ambassador in Dhaka twice, urging him to mount pressure on the firm.

It, however, yielded no results, according to report published in The Daily Star on February 5, 2014.

Things changed only after the company won the contract for river training in the Padma Bridge project in September 2014 and intensified its efforts to complete the highway expansion work.

It took up to June 2016 to finish the highway project work and the total cost escalated. It was finally completed in June 2017, with the cost having risen to Tk 3,439.21 crore from Tk 2,164.38 crore.

TOMA CONSTRUCTION

TCCL is currently involved in two railway projects -- the Chattogram-Cox’s Bazar Rail Link and the Akhaura-Laksam rail line expansion project.

Toma, along with a Chinese firm, was assigned for part-I of the Chattogram-Cox’s Bazar project, while Max Infrastructure Ltd of Bangladesh, along with another Chinese firm, was assigned the other part-2.

TCCL’s work progress is 15 to 16 percent behind than that of Max’s, Project Director Mofizur Rahman told this correspondent on December 1.

Both the contracts were signed at the same time in September 2017 and the works were supposed to be completed within three years.

On November 11, BR’s Director

General Dharendra Nath Mazumder told The Daily Star that contractors of part-I were facing a “financial crisis” and thus, delaying project implementation.

They got the contract for around 20 percent less than the estimated cost, a BR official said wishing not to be named.

TCCL is one of the contractors involved in the Akhaura-Laksam rail line expansion project and the portion being implemented by it is lagging behind the others, the official said.

The project, taken up in 2014, was supposed to be completed within June 2020, but the deadline has now been extended to June 2023.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, in connection with a project, investigated several projects carried out by TCCL and found most were delayed and suffered cost escalation, a BIWTA official said.

PROJECT AUTHORITIES’, CONTRACTORS’ SAY?

Contacted, Project Director AKM Fazlur Karim said the tendering process is being conducted following the guideline of the Asian Development Bank.

“They [Sinohydro and Toma] are neither blacklisted nor declared ineligible by the ADB. As they were found technically and financially responsive in the bidding process, we

have nothing to do here but award them the contracts,” he told The Daily Star on December 6.

About their poor track record, he said, “We have nothing to do if they are selected as per the rules.”

In this regard, Mukitir Rahman, deputy managing director of TCCL, who is overseeing the RHD contract, told The Daily Star, “Every project is different. There is no link between this project and other projects [implemented by TCCL].”

Asked about the reported financial crisis and whether it would hinder the RHD project implementation, he said, “It’s not possible to say now whether the project will face problems or delays.”

Contacted, a representative of Sinohydro Engineering Bureau 8 Corporation Ltd claimed that although they are a concern of Sinohydro, they are not the exact company that was involved in the Dhaka-Chattogram highway expansion project.

“There were some issues that caused delays in the expansion project and the contractor was not liable for it,” the representative told this correspondent preferring anonymity.

Two RHD officials, however, said there may be a difference in names but both contractors belong to Sinohydro.

## Upset oasis stays fertile

FROM PAGE 1

parkour-esque fashion. The frequency with which upsets kept materialising must have forced writers to consider tilting the narrative towards teams on the rise rather than on upsets when describing the outstanding feats of so-called smaller nations.

“Well, there are no more small teams and no more big teams. The level is very, very equal,” Infantino reiterated.

Not that a string of upsets was uncommon to the previous editions, but improbability had become the norm in the first ever November edition when we look back and see that, barring South Korea, three teams -- Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Costa Rica -- exited the World Cup despite beating the eventual group champions.

Moreover, only five teams -- Netherlands, England, USA, Morocco and Croatia -- avoided a defeat in group stages.

Furthermore, while seven of the top nine ranked teams qualified for the Round of 16, six teams ranked below 16 in the world also progressed beyond the group stages. Only two teams confirmed progress after the first two rounds of group games, leaving a majority of participants with a taste of the knockout round before it actually began.

“For the first time as well, national teams from all continents going to the knock-out phase, for the first time in history. This shows that football is really becoming truly global,” said the FIFA president, who would be delighted that the Greatest Show on Earth has captivated all, but by now has done so purely on football terms, paving the way for the controversies surrounding the Qatar edition to be somewhat shrugged under the carpet.

The Round of 16 was always going to be tough nut to crack for the teams outside Europe and South America, with the sudden weight of expectations overwhelming the underdogs.

Quite predictably, USA, Australia,

## Jubo Dal activist ‘shot’ by BCL leader in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Jubo Dal activist suffered bullet injuries as he was allegedly shot by a Chhatra League leader in Rajshahi Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The injured was identified as Ariful Alam, 45, of Rajarhat area near Rajshahi Govt City College.

The accused Rajib Hasan is a former general secretary of Rajshahi Metropolitan unit BCL.

Ariful locked into an altercation with some local boys while parking his motorbike in his residential area on Monday. Following the incident, Rajib and his men attacked and shot Ariful in the thigh around 10:00pm the next day, said Ariful’s uncle Aslam Sarker.

Rajib could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

Ariful was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, Majharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station, said they are yet to confirm if any shots were fired.

No case has been filed till the filing of this report at 8:45pm.

## UPDF leader shot dead in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A leader of the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) was shot dead by criminals in Rangamati’s Naniarchar upazila yesterday.

The slain UPDF leader, Subah Chakma, 65, had been staying in the upazila’s Rangipara area for a long time for organisational work, UPDF spokesperson Angya Marma told this newspaper.

According to police and locals, he went to a shop to have tea around 9:30am. After a while, a group of five to six criminals stormed the shop, shot him at point-blank and left.

Contacted, Suján Howlader, officer-in-charge of Naniarchar Police Station, said a police team was sent to the spot and that the OC would be able to share further details later.

## Iran’s Raisi praises students for shunning ‘riots’

AFP, Tehran

Iran’s ultra-conservative President Ebrahim Raisi yesterday paid a visit to a university and praised students for their welcome despite the “atmosphere of riots” after nearly three months of protests.

The Islamic republic has been rocked by protests -- referred to by officials as “riots” -- since the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini after her arrest for an alleged breach of the country’s dress code for women.

Senegal, Japan and South Korea bowed out, thus the onus to keep the flame of upsets, or uprisings, alive fell to Morocco as they faced off against former 2010 champions Spain on Tuesday.

Ultimately, Morocco not only hoisted the African flag and prevented a Europe-South America hegemony, but the Atlas Lions stifled Spanish tactics, rendering them toothless, while executing their own plans to near pragmatic perfection before deservingly prevailing in the tiebreakers.

Africa has bestowed the world with the likes of Roger Milla, George Weah, Didier Drogba, Yaya Toure, Nwankwo Kanu, Samuel Eto’o and many more. Now they are one step away from the continent’s maiden semifinal berth.

Fair to say, Morocco will have the backing of more than their own continent as their fairy-tale run rolls on.

## Miraz magic

FROM PAGE 1

successfully defended 20 runs off the final over after bowling a maiden in the 48th over of the innings.

However, Rohit fought till the end. He struck two fours and a six, leaving India with six to win off the last ball.

But the ‘cutter master’ kept his calm with a brilliant delivery that saw the visitors reach 266 for nine.

Earlier, Bangladesh made a great start by picking up early wickets courtesy of Ebadot Hossain, who removed the dangerous Virat Kohli. At one stage, India were struggling on 65 for four.

Shreyas Iyer and Axar Patel steadied the ship and added 107 for the fifth wicket to bring the visitors back into the game.

Miraz played his part with the ball as well, removing the dangerous Iyer on 82 to break the partnership. Ebadot then dismissed Axar after he had made 56. The right-arm seamer ended up picking three wickets while Mustafizur and Miraz bagged two each for Bangladesh.

## Polls in first week

FROM PAGE 1

“And her son Tarique Rahman, known for syphoning off the country’s money, had been convicted for seven years and fined Tk 20 crore.”

Sheikh Hasina also mentioned that Tarique was involved in arms smuggling on 10 trucks.

“I do not know for what purpose he brought those arms.”

The AL chief said that on August 21, 2004, Khaleda and Tarique and their

companions had hurled grenades, which are used in wars, on an AL rally, leaving 22 AL members dead.

“But I narrowly escaped with the grace of Almighty Allah.”

“Can a human being kill another human with fire?”

“This movement of the BNP, Tarique Zia and Khaleda Zia is aimed at killing people through arson attacks. They do not know anything but destruction.”