

"The [UN] report that was issued on 31 August is a very important one and has highlighted very serious human rights concerns."

UN human rights chief Volker Turk on China's treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang region



ZIGZAG TO VENUE

NOV 15

A BNP delegation meets DMP commissioner, seeking permission for the Dec 10 rally in Nayapaltan. Police ask them to pick from Purbachal trade fair ground and Tongi Bishwa Jtama ground.

NOV 24

The home boss announces the BNP will be given permission on some conditions if they hold the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

NOV 29

The DMP gives permission for Suhrawardy Udyan on 26 conditions.

DEC 1

BNP leaders meet IGP, seeks permission to hold rally in Nayapaltan. But IGP requests the party to go for Suhrawardy Udyan.

DEC 3

The BNP reiterates it will hold the rally at Nayapaltan. The home minister says action will be taken if BNP men gather there.

DEC 4

BNP holds meeting with DMP officials to discuss an alternative of Suhrawardy Udyan.

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

Crowds of BNP activists and supports already filled the Golapbagh field on the eve of their rally today.

All eyes glued to Golapbagh

Uneasy calm reigns over BNP rally today; ground already overflowing at night; Fakhrul, Abbas sent to jail

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and WASIM BIN HABIB

After protracted negotiations, the BNP finally got permission for its rally today at a ground which was not its first choice by any means.

The permission came at the cost of a life, injuries to around 100 people, and arrest of dozens of party stalwarts.

The rally will start at 11:00am with BNP standing committee member Khandakar Mosharrat Hossain as the chief guest since Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, standing committee member Mirza Abbas and other top leaders were sent to jail yesterday in a case filed over Wednesday's clash between the BNP men and police in Nayapaltan.

The BNP rank and file, however, fear even Mosharrat could get arrested, and in that case, convener of Dhaka North City BNP Amanullah Aman, will be the chief guest.

"We want to say that we will hold the rally peacefully and in a systematic manner. If you want to protest against the autocratic regime, please join our rally," Mosharrat urged city dwellers.

Soon after Dhaka Metropolitan Police issued the permission around 3:00pm, BNP activists and supporters started gathering at the Golapbagh ground, which is about 2.8 acres. By the evening, there was a large crowd there and more people were joining in processions chanting slogans.

The ground was already overflowing with people last night and the

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Watchful AL takes to streets



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League has suddenly taken a combative stance after saying for days that it would help the BNP to peacefully hold today's rally in the capital.

Meanwhile, police have taken a flurry of cautionary measures centring today's rally.

AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting with the Dhaka City unit leaders on Thursday categorically ordered them to be vigilant everywhere and strike back if anyone tried to attack them.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader earlier asked the ruling party activists not to engage in confrontations with the BNP men. But after Hasina's remarks, the AL and its associated bodies started marching the streets yesterday afternoon with slogans against the BNP.

Dhaka City South AL yesterday held a rally at Mohanagar Natya Mancha with around 10,000 thousand activists.

The AL will hold a rally today in Savar, an entry to the capital, in which many central leaders will be present. Savar, Dhamrai and

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What the BNP may unveil at today's rally

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP is likely to announce the outline of a simultaneous movement with like-minded parties to press home its demand for an election-time caretaker government at today's rally.

It may also announce fresh protest programmes, including a mass procession on December 24 across the country, party sources said.

The BNP and the like-minded parties discussed the issues at a meeting at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

Meeting sources, however, said the programme schedule might change as the situation is complicated and unpredictable.

A senior BNP leader, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star that a simultaneous movement will be announced at the rally. The other parties too will come up with an announcement to that end later.

The BNP and its allies have already held two meetings on this and agreed in principle to wage a greater movement.

Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star last night they were trying to forge a national unity and an announcement could come today.

Khandakar Mosharrat Hossain, another standing committee member, said the party will announce a 10-point demand at the rally.

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Argentina advance; Brazil exit

La Albiceleste to take on Croatia in semifinal

AFP, Doha

Argentina will face Croatia in the World Cup semi-finals after beating the Netherlands 4-3 on penalties following a thrilling 2-2 extra-time draw on a night of high World Cup drama.

Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was the hero in the shootout after the South Americans let a two-goal lead slip in the final minutes of normal time after Lionel Messi had put them on the brink of the last four.

Wout Weghorst scored two dramatic late goals, the second from a remarkably inventive free-kick in the 11th minute of stoppage time, as the Netherlands fought back with seven minutes of normal time remaining to force extra-time.

Argentina had looked well set to reach the last four after Messi conjured up a brilliant assist for Nahuel Molina and a clinical goal from the penalty spot.

Just hours after Brazil and Neymar crashed out of the tournament on penalties to the Croats, Argentina survived to keep South American interest in the competition.

The Lusail Stadium felt like home for Argentina with at least three quarters of the 88,235 crowd backing the South

American team and only a smattering of orange shirts in the crowd.

But all were treated to a thrilling late night drama that finally reached its conclusion just before 1 a.m. local time.

After a cagey start, Messi produced a moment of inspiration, ten minutes before the interval, to create the opener for his team.

Offering no clues of his intent, he split open the Dutch defence with a sublime reverse pass between Daley Blind and Virgil van Dijk into the path of Nahuel Molina who timed his run perfectly and slotted home with the

outside of his foot. Dutch coach Luis van Gaal responded at the break by making a double change, bringing Teun Koopmeiners and Steven Berghuis on into midfield in place of Bergwijn and Marten De Roen.

But while the Dutch saw plenty of the ball their play remained too predictable and guileless.

- Free kick genius -

The momentum was with the Argentines and it was no surprise when they extended their lead in the 73rd minute after Denzel Dumphries tripped Marcos Acuna in the box and Messi made no mistake from the spot, burying the ball in the corner.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

DESERT FEST With Ronaldo or without him?



ATIQUE ANAM from Doha

Despite leading Portugal to the quarterfinals of the World Cup for the first time since 2006, Fernando Santos finds himself in a difficult situation with his team up against Morocco tomorrow. On paper, Portugal are probably slight favourites for this match, given their pedigree as former European champions and the strength in depth of the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

A bit of WC spark in high octane politics

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

At the Golapbagh ground late last night, the passion for football blended beautifully with the political fervour of the BNP activists at times during the World Cup matches of Argentina and Brazil.

Political slogans gave way to cheers for Messi and Neymar as the two teams launched attacks and counter attacks against their rivals.

The matches were projected in two rather small screens while thousands of BNP activists were trying to get a glimpse of the screens. They were chanting political slogans but those often were replaced by "Argentina" or "Brazil".

But every time Brazilian and Argentine players stormed into their opponents' turf, thunderous cheers rose from the crowds.

Slogans for Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman faded away and there were roaring chants of "Messi Messi" and "Neymar Neymar".

Sanctions on Rab 'worked like a tonic'

Say rights activists as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances drop significantly in Bangladesh; rights abuses targeting opposition still a concern

MUNTAKIM SAAD

US sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion "worked like a tonic", rights activists said yesterday as the number of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances dropped significantly in the last year.

However, they said, rights abuses targeting the opposition political parties and curbs on freedom of speech remain a matter of concern.

The US on December 10, 2021, imposed sanctions on Rab and seven current and former top officials of the elite force, including former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and also the current IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, in connection with serious rights abuses.

It said Rab and other Bangladeshi law enforcement forces are responsible for more than 600 enforced disappearances

since 2009 and nearly 600 extrajudicial killings since 2018. They are also accused of torture.

According to rights groups, those incidents mainly targeted opposition party members, journalists, and human rights activists.

Rights activists say the US sanctions also helped to improve the overall human rights situation in Bangladesh.

"After the US sanctions, only four to five people were killed in so-called gunfights and a few people were the victims of disappearance. The disappeared were also later handed over to the court or released in subsequent weeks," said Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Executive Director Nur Khan.

"I think the sanction worked like a tonic," the noted rights activist told The Daily Star.

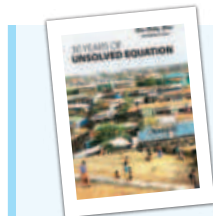
According to ASK, four people were

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Argentina players jet off in celebration after winning a penalty shootout against the Netherlands in their World Cup quarterfinal yesterday. Regulation time had ended 2-2 after a late Dutch comeback saw them strike twice to force extra time.

PHOTO: REUTERS



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