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## Blockade begins amid fear of confrontation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and a host of other opposition political parties enforce a nationwide three-day rail, road, and waterways blockade from today, the ruling Awami League, police and pro-government transport leaders have devised their own plans to counter it.

Fear runs high among the public as BNP insists on making the blockade impactful, while the AL and police have vowed to challenge any violent acts.

Various transport associations, led mostly by pro-AL businesspersons, said they will defy the blockade and operate vehicles.

Police have already alerted all its units across the country to increase vigilance and beef up security. They have also set up checkpoints at the entry points to the capital and all major points of Dhaka. Rab will deploy 300 patrol teams to ensure public safety and protect public properties.

BNP and Jamaat announced the three-day blockade separately on Sunday in protest of the killings of the opposition activists during Saturday's grand rally and the arrests of opposition party leaders and activists, as well as demanding resignation of the government.

Yesterday, eight other opposition parties essentially joined hands with BNP and Jamaat, saying they will also enforce the blockade separately. They are Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Gonoforum, People's Party, Gonotantrik Bam Oikya, Gono Odhikar Parishad, Labour Party and National Democratic Movement.

Emergency services including ambulance, newspaper- and oxygen-carrying vehicles will remain out of the purview of the blockade, a top

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With three days of blockade to come, city dwellers got out in large numbers yesterday to get things done clogging up many streets. The photo was taken at Kakrail intersection in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## RECENT VIOLENCE BNP writes to diplomats

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP yesterday sent a seven-page letter to the embassies and high commissions in Dhaka disentangling itself from the violence that took place surrounding its grand rally on Saturday.

The letter -- signed by Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, chairman of BNP's foreign relations committee -- was dispatched around mid-day, hours before Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen was scheduled to brief the diplomats stationed in Dhaka on the current political situation at the State Guest House Jamuna.

BNP wrote to the diplomats so that the ruling Awami League cannot present it as "an arsonist party", The Daily Star has learnt from BNP leaders who wished not to be named.

Rather, the BNP wanted to categorically state that the ruling party men were

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## Top cops for sending ballots day before polls

### Cite manpower shortage to counter EC's plan to send those on election day

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Top officials of the law enforcement agencies are in favour of sending ballot papers to the polling stations the day before national elections.

In a meeting with the Election Commission yesterday, the officials pointed out that it would be difficult for them to send ballots in the morning of the voting day due to a lack of manpower.

The officials made the remarks in response to recent statements by two election commissioners that they were mulling over sending ballots on voting day, barring polling centres in remote areas.

Three officials who attended yesterday's meeting said more than one law enforcer said it would be a challenging task for them to send ballots on polling day as additional law enforcers will be needed for this.

Usually, police are deployed at the polling stations the day before the voting.

An EC commissioner told the law enforcement officials that they have sent ballots in the morning of the polling day in several parliamentary by-polls and local government elections.

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## RMG WORKERS' DEMO

## Two killed as violence erupts

### 'Cops' shoot worker dead in Gazipur; 1 found dead after factory fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker was killed after Gazipur Industrial Police personnel allegedly shot him from close range as RMG workers and law enforcers clashed in Gazipur and Ashulia yesterday.

During the clashes, fire broke out in ABM Fashion Ltd and Echotex Ltd in Gazipur and firemen recovered the charred body of an unidentified man from ABM Fashion factory yesterday evening.

Another worker suffered critical injuries after being shot in the head allegedly by Ashulia Industrial Police personnel.

It was the seven consecutive days of demonstrations by readymade garment workers demanding a minimum salary of Tk 23,000.

Rasel Hawlader, 26, of Jhalakathi was an electrician at Design Express Ltd in Gazipur and lived in a dorm in Bason area.

Abu Sufian, Rasel's colleague and roommate, said they were returning to



their dorm after the factory was closed due to the demonstrations.

He said around 11:30am when they were in Maleker Bari area, they saw police firing at protesters. Police shot Rasel there, he said.

Rasel was rushed to a local hospital in Gazipur and later moved to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 3:30pm, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost.

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## ECNEC MEETING TODAY

## 2 projects worth Tk 19,353cr may get go-ahead

### Once implemented, they'll help improve communication between Ctg and Cox's Bazar

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

With less than three months remaining of its tenure, the government has decided to take up two large projects worth Tk 19,353 crore to connect the country's tourist town Cox's Bazar and Matarbari seaport with Chattogram.

The two projects are expected to be placed at today's meeting of the Executive Committee on the National Economic Council to be chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The phase-1 of the Chattogram Cox's Bazar highway improvement project will cost Tk 8,556 crore while converting the Chattogram Dohazari metre gauge railway into dual-gauge will cost Tk 10,797 crore.

The total project cost for the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar

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## Afghanistan ease past Sri Lanka

REUTERS, Pune

A spirited Afghanistan upset another former champion on Monday when Hashmatullah Shahidi's men defeated 1996 winners Sri Lanka by



seven wickets to continue their memorable campaign at the 50-overs World Cup.

Their bowlers had laid the foundation of their third win in six matches when they bowled out Sri Lanka for a below par 241 in 49.3 overs.

Three of their top five

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Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai (L) embraces captain Hashmatullah Shahidi on way to a seven-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in their World Cup fixture at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Tigers look to arrest further slide

MAZHAR UDDIN from Kolkata

Bangladesh and Pakistan are almost in a similar situation in the World Cup as both teams lock horns with each other at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata today in hopes of keeping their slim semifinal hopes alive.

The day-night match is scheduled to begin at 2.30pm (BST).

Despite winning just two out of six matches, with all four of the defeats coming on the trot, Pakistan still have a slightly better chance of making it to the last four than Bangladesh. Babar Azam and his troops will have to win all their remaining matches and also hope the outcomes of the other matches go their way.

On the other hand, Bangladesh, with just one win in five matches, are worse off when it comes to the chances of making it into the semifinal. Infact, the Tigers, who were thumped by 87 runs by the Netherlands -- an associate nation -- in their last game in Kolkata, will be the first team to be knocked out of the tournament if they lose today.

Bangladesh will be desperate to finish in the top seven in the World Cup standings in order to qualify for the 2025 Champions Trophy, and to do so, the Tigers must beat Pakistan today. Needless to say, Bangladesh will have to win the rest of their three matches in order to end up in a favourable position in the 10-team table.

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