

## EC talks structured to fall through?

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission's move to sit with all registered political parties over preparations for the upcoming polls appears to be designed for failure as two major parties are still at odds over the polls-time government, say political analysts.

They believe the talks, scheduled for tomorrow, with 44 political parties in a single day is nothing but an "eyewash" as the participants will get only a few minutes to discuss the electoral and political issues and to make their recommendations.

The EC is set to hold the talks with political parties' top brass or their nominated leaders, and political analysts said the EC is holding a dialogue when it actually seems to have no time for it.

Inviting the BNP when the party's top leaders are either in jail or in hiding fuels the notion that the EC is insincere, they said.

The BNP and its allies would not be sending anyone to the talks, sources said, adding that Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB), a major Islamist party, too, would not join.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi from an undisclosed location told The Daily Star, "Who will join? All are either in jail or on the run ... If your hands and legs are tied and good food

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## Minimum wage for RMG workers likely to be fixed Nov 7

Says state minister after talks with union leaders amid protests for better wage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The garment factory workers' minimum wage might be settled on November 7 when the stakeholders will sit for a meeting, said Begum Monnujan Sufian, state minister for labour and employment.

A monthly salary of Tk 10,400, as proposed by the owners, is illogical, she said yesterday.

The government is working to negotiate a salary that will be acceptable to all, and the labour ministry will soon make a proposal to the wage board, she told reporters after a meeting with leaders from 18 unions 64 federations in the capital's Srama Bhavan.

The workers' proposal for a monthly salary of Tk 20,393 has been rejected by the owners.

In another development, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday asked owners to reopen the near-300 factories that have been shuttered amid workers' unrest in Mirpur, Gazipur, Savar and Ashulia.

At yesterday's briefing, Monnujan said the workers demanded ration cards for some daily essentials, adding that the matter is in government's consideration.

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Garment workers stage demonstrations blocking a road in the capital's Mirpur-11 yesterday demanding their minimum monthly wages be fixed at Tk 23,000 and punishment of those who attacked their recent demos. Police fired tear gas and sound grenades to break up the protesters.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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BNP goes for fresh 2-day blockade from Nov 5

Vehicles torched, 100 BNP activists held

STAR REPORT

The BNP yesterday announced a fresh two-day nationwide blockade of rail, road and waterways from November 5 demanding general election under a non-party caretaker government.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, announced the fresh programme at a virtual press briefing, hours before its 72-hour blockade ended at 6:00am today.

Torching and vandalising of vehicles were reported in the capital and elsewhere in the country yesterday, the last day of the three-day blockade.

Also, over 100 BNP leaders and activists, including some arson suspects, have been detained across the country over the last two days, police said.

More vehicles plied the streets of the capital yesterday compared to the previous two days. The number of long-haul buses also increased on roads. Train

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## JS passes labour law, concerns still there

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Bill-2023" was passed in parliament yesterday without the changes demanded by labour rights leaders.

It was done at a time when the readymade garments sector in the country is already in a volatile state.

An amendment to the law in accordance with international labour standards was one of the prerequisites for getting trade benefits for developing countries offered by trading blocs like the European Union.

The rights leaders alleged their consent was not taken before the bill was placed in parliament, even though discussions among all stakeholders have been going on since 2021.

A Tripartite Labour Law Review Committee, comprised of worker representatives, manufacturers and the government, has been working on this as per a roadmap set out by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Union leaders had demanded the

removal of the obstacles needed for forming and registering trade unions, but it went unheeded, they said.

"The amendments don't allow the workers in export processing zones [EPZs] to unionise. This was one of our demands," said Kalpona Akter, founder and executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity.

The labour leaders have also been asking for the removal of a provision that mandates that at least 20 percent workers from a factory's whole workforce must consent to the formation of a trade union.

They further asked for the removal of another provision that allows the auto-dismissal of any worker who is absent for 10 consecutive days.

Another demand was bringing the maternity leave in line with the international standard for six months. However, the new amendment increased the leave of 112 days by only eight days, making the entire leave only 120 days – around four months.

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### BUSINESS

#### Export falls 14%

Exports earnings fell to \$3.76 billion in October, the lowest in 27 months, as shipment of apparel items became the last major victim to the falling global demand.

The receipts were 13.64 percent lower year-on-year, the first decline since April, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

Readymade garments, which

make up more than 80 percent of total earnings, slumped around 14 percent to \$3.17 billion last month.

STORY ON BI

## A World Cup of top-order domination

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The biggest facet, and also a noticeable one, of this World Cup has been top-order carnage that has not only allowed teams to put on huge scores batting first but also made it more



Mohammed Shami of India celebrates after dismissing Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews in their seventh ICC World Cup match at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium yesterday. Courtesy of a five-wicket haul, Shami is now India's all-time leading wicket-taker in the tournament, with 45 scalps.

PHOTO: REUTERS



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## India overwhelm SL on way to semis

REUTERS, Mumbai

Some fiery fast bowling from India's Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj lit up their World Cup encounter with Sri Lanka and helped the unbeaten hosts secure a thumping 302-run victory yesterday, becoming the first side to book a semi-final spot.

It was India's seventh win from as many matches in this year's 50-over tournament, and arguably their most dominant, with Sri Lanka's batters lasting under 20 overs while chasing a 358-run target.

The defeat all but ended Sri Lanka's remaining hopes of making the knockout stages with Kusal Mendis' side suffering their fifth defeat from seven matches.

Sri Lanka's chase got off to an awful start. Jasprit Bumrah struck with the first delivery before Siraj picked up the next three wickets to reduce them to four for three runs.

Coming into the attack next, Shami bagged a five-wicket haul to ensure that India's juggernaut rolled on. Sri Lanka were bundled out for 55, their lowest total in a 50-over World Cup.

Earlier, Dilshan Madushanka, who eventually picked up his first five-wicket haul in the format, gave Sri Lanka a dream start by dismissing in-form India captain Rohit Sharma with the second ball of the innings after the island nation won the toss and decided to bowl on a hot

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