

## By-polls to B’baria-2, Laxmipur-3 today

Elected MPs unlikely to be able to join 11th JS session

STAR REPORT

The by-elections to Brahmanbaria-2 and Laxmipur-3 constituencies will be held today to fill the seats left vacant by the deaths of Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan and AKM Shahjahan Kamal.

Different quarters have raised questions about the rationale for holding the by-elections as the elected MPs will not get to attend a single session as the 11th parliament has shut up shop on November 2.

The five-member election commission was also divided on the issue: two were against the by-polls as the next general election is due in January, while the three others argued that the current parliament still has more than 90 days in office.

The EC has completed all preparations for the by-polls. Voting equipment including ballot boxes, ballot papers and seals have been sent to the polling centres, reports our correspondents.

All preparations have been taken to make the by-elections free and fair, said the returning officers of both the constituencies.

A total of five candidates are contesting for the vacant Brahmanbaria-2 seat: one from the Awami League, one from the Jatiya Party and three independents. The constituency has 4.1 lakh eligible voters.

Four candidates are contesting for the Laxmipur-3 seats: one from the AL, one from the JP and two independents.

## Sudan shelling kills 15

AFP, Wad Madani

At least 15 civilians in Khartoum were killed yesterday “when shells fell on their homes”, a medical source said, as paramilitary fighters battling Sudan’s army claimed gains in Darfur.

The victims’ bodies were taken to Al-Nau hospital in Omdurman, a district of greater Khartoum, the medical source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Fighting since April between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has raged in heavily populated areas.



Palestinian climb on the rubble of a collapsed building looking for survivors and victims following a strike by the Israeli military on Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on November yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 15 killed in strike on UN-run school in Gaza

Blinken opposes total ceasefire; 9,480 Palestinians dead so far

AGENCIES

Palestinians reported a deadly Israeli air strike on a UN-run school in northern Gaza serving as a shelter yesterday as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met regional Arab leaders to discuss how to contain the conflict.

Blinken reaffirmed US support for “humanitarian pauses” in the fighting in Gaza to ensure desperate civilians get help a day after Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave the idea short shrift. However opposed total ceasefire.

Speaking at a news conference in Amman about sparing civilians and speeding up aid deliveries, the US top diplomat said: “The United States believes that all of these efforts will be facilitated by humanitarian pauses.”

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi called for all sides to work together to “stop a catastrophe that will haunt the region for generations”.

The Israeli army said its troops had launched an operation in southern Gaza overnight, after deadly strikes hit an ambulance convoy and a school-turned-

refugee shelter in the besieged Palestinian enclave, according to AFP.

The Israeli military said it had come under attack several times from Hamas “tunnel shafts and military compounds” in northern Gaza and had killed

**Juliette Touma, director of communication for the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), confirmed to Reuters that the UN-run school, which is in the Gaza City area, had been hit.**

many “terrorists” and destroyed three observation posts.

Hamas said it had hit an Israeli convoy with mortar fire.

The health ministry in Gaza, which is run by Hamas, says more than 9,480 Gazans, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israeli strikes and the intensifying ground campaign.

Palestinian witnesses said Israel hit

Al-Fakhoura school in Jabalia, where thousands of evacuees were living in the morning. At least 15 people died and dozens more were wounded, said Gaza health ministry official Mohammad Abu Selmeyah.

Footage of the aftermath showed broken furniture and other belongings lying on the ground, patches of blood spilled on the ground and over food and people crying.

One man asked angrily: “Since when has it become normal to strike shelters? This is so unfair.”

Juliette Touma, director of communication for the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), confirmed to Reuters that the UN-run school, which is in the Gaza City area, had been hit.

She said there were children among the casualties, but that UNRWA had not yet been able to verify the exact death toll.

“At least one strike hit the schoolyard where there were tents for displaced families. Another strike hit inside the school where women were baking bread,” Touma said by phone.

## 4 injured in explosion at Mirpur restaurant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four people were injured in an explosion at a restaurant in Mirpur’s Kafrul area in the capital yesterday afternoon.

The accident took place when some workers were building a walk-in freezer unit at the restaurant around 3:30pm, said police.

The injured are Jaminur Rahman, 40, marketing manager of Generating and Engineering, a refrigeration service located at Kuril Chowrasta, and technicians Firoz Hawlader, 32, Md Ali Ratan Mridha, 28, and Rasel Miji, 45.

They have been admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the DMCH police outpost.

“The injured are being treated at the emergency department of the hospital.”

Speaking to The Daily Star, the injured said for the last two days they had been building a walk-in freezer unit for a restaurant located on the ground floor of Opex Group’s garment factory at Kafrul.

At around 3:30pm yesterday, there was an explosion in the gas pipeline that left four people injured.

## Doctor arrested for ‘Jamaat-Shibir links’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A gynaecologist in Rajshahi was shown arrested yesterday in a case filed earlier this year after she was detained Friday night for allegedly patronising violent activities of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Fatima Siddika, the owner of Motherland Hospital, was detained from her house in Nawdapara area of the city, confirmed Ismail Hossain, officer-in-charge of Shah Makdum Police Station.

“Police detained her based on intelligence about her patronisation of criminals,” the OC added.

During interrogation, police found evidence of her links with criminals belonging to Jamaat-Shibir and the accused in the case filed on May 23.

On May 23, police raided a secret meeting of Jamaat-Shibir activists at Chhoto Bongam Chalkpara area, according to the case statement.

The activists fled after clashing with police, throwing brick chunks and blasting a crude bomb.

Police seized several crude bombs from the site, the case statement said.

When contacted, Fatima’s lawyer Abu Md Selim said the doctor has been facing harassment since she brought an allegation of bribery against an income tax officer in April this year.

Selim, also nayebe-amir of Rajshahi Jamaat-e-Islami, confirmed that Fatima is “a big patron” of the party.

## Woman dies under train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A speech-impaired woman was killed under a train in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat yesterday, said police.

Moni Khatun, 30, of Gonipur village, fell under the Titumere Express as she was crossing the Bila Rail Bridge a kilometre from Akkelpur railway station, said Moktar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Santahar GRP station.

The train blew whistle several times to warn the woman, but she did not move, said the OC, quoting witnesses.

## Boycotts mar EC talks with parties

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The talks were held amid a deepening political crisis, as BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami enforce another bout of nationwide blockade from today, demanding resignation of the government and elections under a nonparty administration.

Twenty-seven of the 44 registered political parties took part in the dialogue yesterday. Most of them are either ruling Awami League allies or like-minded parties. Some of them told the EC that the election should be participatory.

However, a number of small pro-government political parties said a potential boycott by BNP will not raise any question about the legitimacy of the election. They also demanded installations of CCTV cameras at polling centers during the polls, deployment of army and appointment of EC’s own officials as retuning officers.

Most political parties sent their representatives, instead of their top leaders.

The EC invited 43 of the 44 registered political parties to the talks to share its election preparedness, as well as to listen to the recommendations of the parties.

Ganotantr Party was not invited,

although one of its representatives turned up anyway and was allowed to join the dialogue.

Seventeen political parties, including BNP, boycotted the talks, held in two phases from around 10:45am to 1:30pm and, after a lunch break, from 3:00pm to 5:30pm.

The other parties are Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Revolutionary Workers Party, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Krishak Sramik Janata League, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), Liberal Democratic Party, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Muslim League (BML), Bangladesh Muslim League, Jomiyote Ulamaye Islam Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlish and Bangladesh Jasod, EC sources said.

Of them, Krishak Sramik Janata League and Bangladesh Jasod are considered pro-government parties.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal defended the EC’s move to hold the talks, which was also joined by all four Election Commissioners and top EC officials.

“If some political parties failed to join the talks because of the short notice, we will try to listen to them in line with the Commission’s decision,

if they want. It is because we want to interact with everyone,” he told the political parties during the dialogue.

During the talks, at least five political parties said the current political situation is unfavourable for holding the parliamentary polls, slated for January.

They said the polls schedule should be announced only after such an environment has been created, multiple meeting sources said.

“The country does not have a conducive environment to holding a free and fair election,” Gono Forum General Secretary Mizanur Rahman said.

Mominul Alam, acting secretary general of the Nationalist Democratic Movement, said the CEC wants the political parties to shoulder responsibility for fair elections.

“But no one other than angels will be able to do that facing Awami League goons,” he said.

He also requested the EC not to announce the polls schedule unless there is a political consensus and an environment conducive to free and fair polls.

Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua said fears prevail among the public due to the political unrest.

“We should try to dispel that fear

first,” he said.

However, Awami League Presidium Member Faruk Khan said the current state of affairs was favourable for the election.

“The constitution does not say that national election should be held ensuring BNP’s participation,” he said.

Talking to the reporters after the dialogue, the CEC urged all political parties, including BNP, to join the election.

“But the Commission has nothing to do if BNP and some like-minded parties do not participate in the polls,” he said.

He also said while some people think the EC alone can conduct a free and fair election, in truth the Commission’s ability is very limited in this regard.

The CEC reiterated that the EC does not have the ability nor the mandate to solve political crises.

Contacted, Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman said BNP and other like-minded parties did not join the talks as they have nothing to gain from it.

“There are no compromises between the two major parties on how the election will happen. And there are no signs that it will happen after the talks,” said Prof Masud, who teaches governance and politics at Jahangirnagar University.

## Blockade begins as crackdown on BNP continues

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from the district.

Earlier, the opposition parties observed a day-long hartal on October 29 and a three-day blockade from October 31 to November 2 to press home their one-point demand and protest the police action on its October 28 rally.

At least three people died in clashes and arson attacks during the day of the hartal. The three-day countrywide blockade was also marked by clashes that left four people dead.

Fear of violence among the public runs high, as there were reports of torching 31 vehicles in the capital and elsewhere in the country during last week’s blockade.

Last night, six buses were torched in Dhaka’s New Market, Elephant Road, Sayedabad, and Gulistan; Narayanganj’s

Siddhirganj; and Bhola’s Charfesson.

Khandaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of the Dhaka Road Transport Owners’ Association, told this newspaper that buses would operate today.

ARRESTS CONTINUE

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said over 5,023 party leaders and activists were arrested in 113 cases across the country from October 24 till yesterday afternoon.

Some 176 were picked up, and 575 BNP men were sued in six cases in the 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, Rizvi told a virtual press briefing.

Plainclothes men allegedly detained BNP Organising Secretary Syed Emran Saleh Prince from his sister’s house in Badda yesterday evening, according to the BNP media cell.

Meanwhile, the DB yesterday said it

arrested three BNP leaders, including Al Masud, agriculture affairs secretary of Jubo Dal’s central committee.

While talking to reporters at his office, DB chief Harun Or Rashid claimed that the arrestees detonated bombs at different places on October 27.

Besides, they hurled bombs targeting police at different places on October 28, he added.

The Rab yesterday said it arrested 23 BNP men in several districts for violence, vandalism, and arson.

According to court sources, at least 78 BNP Jamaat men were produced before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka yesterday.

‘TARGET FOR WIPEOUT’

Rizvi alleged that law enforcers were targeting even grassroots leaders and activists across the country to eliminate

the party.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Alamgir, standing committee members Mirza Abbas and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Joint Secretary General Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal, party media cell Convenor Zahir Uddin Swapan, and Dhaka North City Unit Member Secretary Aminul Haque are among the party leaders arrested over the last week.

In a statement yesterday, Abdul Moyeen Khan, a standing committee member of the party, denounced “the ruling party’s oppression”.

“Those who think that the BNP will be leaderless and wiped out by a reign of terror created by the government’s administrative machinery and misinformation in the media must remember that the BNP’s foundation is at the grassroots.”

## Australia Knock England out

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despite a valiant 64 from Ben Stokes to slump to their sixth defeat in seven matches and stay bottom of the 10-team table.

Five-time champions Australia edged closer to securing a semi-final berth alongside India and South Africa – both already qualified for the last four – with their fifth straight win.

Zampa returned figures of 3-21 with his leg-spin to puncture England’s hopes that were raised by a couple of partnerships including a 63-run fifth-wicket stand between Stokes and Moeen Ali, who hit 42.

Zampa, who had earlier hit 29 with the bat, broke the stand when Stokes mistimed a paddle to be caught at short fine-leg and departed with a shake of his head.

Wickets kept tumbling with Liam Livingstone and Moeen falling in quick succession for a familiar England tale in this tournament where they have also lost to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

Zampa, who leads the World Cup bowling chart with 19 wickets, also took a superb outfield catch to help dismiss David Willey.

Left-arm Mitchell Starc struck with two early wickets including Jonny Bairstow on the first ball of the chase and then Joe Root for 13.

David Malan made 50 before skipper Pat Cummins took him out.

England, in their remaining two matches, are left to fight for a place in the 2025 Champions Trophy with the top seven teams from this World Cup gaining entry into the tournament where hosts Pakistan will have automatic qualification.

Batsmen set up victory for Australia with Marnus Labuschagne top-scoring with 71 and useful contributions from Steve Smith (44), Cameron Green (47), Marcus Stoinis (35) and Zampa (29 off 19 balls).

Chris Woakes returned figures of 4-54 and was supported by fellow quick Mark Wood and leg-spinner Adil Rashid, with two each, to help bowl out Australia for 286.

Woakes struck early to remove the openers including previous-match centurion Travis Head, for 11, and David Warner, for 15.

Steve Smith and Labuschagne put on 75 runs to steady the innings but Rashid broke through.

Rashid dismissed Smith and then had Josh Inglis (three) caught at backward point after the batsman attempted a reverse sweep.

Labuschagne reached his 50 and put on a partnership of 61 with Green before falling to Wood. He made 71.

Green and Stoinis, the two players coming into the team in place of Glenn Maxwell and Mitchell Marsh, put on 45 for the sixth wicket.

## Fabulous Fakhar keeps Pakistan alive

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points from as many matches - level on points with fourth-placed New Zealand.

Earlier, Rachin Ravindra smashed his third ton of the World Cup while a fit-again Kane Williamson made up for lost time with a 95 as New Zealand posted a commanding 401-6 from 50 overs.

Ravindra, who was born in Wellington to Indian parents from Bengaluru, delighted the local fans with measured strokeplay and provided moments of magic to go past 500 runs in the World Cup with a 94-ball 108 that included 15 fours and a six.

The 23-year-old stitched together a 180-run partnership with captain Williamson while Daryl Mitchell (29), Mark Chapman (39), Glenn Phillips (41) and Mitchell Santner (26 not out) fired to swell the New Zealand total to 401-6 in 50 overs.

Babar’s decision to bowl first after winning the toss had raised some

eyebrows as New Zealand made a fiery start at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, with opening batsmen Devon Conway and Ravindra dominating the powerplay.

Hasan Ali, who replaced Usama Mir to give the 1992 champions an extra pace option, had Conway caught behind for 35 to end the pair’s 68-run stand and bring Williamson to the wicket.

Playing his first match since sustaining a fractured thumb against Bangladesh last month, Williamson toyed with the bowlers and provided the perfect foil to Ravindra before cutting loose, having made his second half-century of the tournament.

Williamson fell to Iftikhar Ahmed while going for his third six, before Ravindra was dismissed by Mohammad Wasim (3-60), but 2019 runners-up New Zealand would heap more misery on Pakistan, only to suffer disappointment later.