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16 PAGES : Tk 15.00



P11
A reluctant acceptance of World Cup failure



P10
The night of unspeakable horror



P7
Ukraine hits Russian shipyard



P6
Ranabi: Artist, Activist, Legend

Govt plans harsher clampdown on BNP

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

As the BNP and its like-minded parties intensify their street agitation, the government prepares to go for a stricter crackdown on the opposition activists to quash the anti-government movement.

The police are making lists of BNP activists and leaders down to grassroots for arrest, said police sources.

Md Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general (operations) at the police headquarters, told The Daily Star, "We held a special meeting with all the metropolitan commissioners, and the range DIGs and instructed them to arrest the accused in FIRs and those with outstanding warrants."

"We have already taken steps to make a list of troublemakers, and lawful actions will be taken ..."

At least 89 cases were filed with 32 police stations under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police after the October 28 BNP rally and

the violence that ensued, according to the DMP.

In those cases, 2,172 people, including BNP leaders and activists, and the party's top brass, have been arrested.

DIG Anwar told this paper that 1,600 to 1,700 people have been detained every day over the last eight days in connection with different crimes, including arson, drugs, mugging, theft, etc.

While law enforcers clamp down on opposition activists, the Awami League plans to have a firm grip on the streets. It is working to step up its vigilance on the streets and continue its "peace and development" rallies until the national polls.

About the party's strategy to deal with the movement, AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star, "Election will be held in due time and no one would be allowed to foil it. If anyone tries to resist the election, we will do whatever is required."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Garment workers returning to work in Ashulia yesterday after their 12-day demonstrations for a hike in minimum pay kept factories in the area closed. The government has said an "acceptable minimum wage" will be announced tomorrow.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Nat'l election likely between January 6, 9

EC preparing to announce polls schedule by Nov 14, say sources; experts raise questions about environment

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission may hold the national election any day between January 6 and 9 with many experts pointing out that the atmosphere is not yet conducive to free and fair polls.

The EC is considering several possible dates, but there is a strong possibility that the 12th national election will be held in the first week of January, an official said, adding that the final decision will depend on the political situation.

In late September, Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman also said the next national election might be held in the first week of January.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan told The Daily Star that the EC is preparing to announce the polls schedule by the first half of this month.

EC representatives will make a courtesy call on President Mohammed Shahabuddin on November 9 and announce the schedule either on November 13 or 14, said an official.

It is customary for the commissioners to finalise election schedules after they meet the president.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal met Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan earlier this month. The commissioners also held meetings with top officers of law enforcement

agencies, different ministries, and leaders of 27 political parties.

The election commissioners want 65 days between the announcement of the schedule and the election, officials said.

During the period, officials will scrutinise the nomination papers and dispose of appeals filed by candidates whose nomination papers are scrapped.

The candidates will get around three weeks to run election campaigns.

The EC may appoint returning officers and assistant returning officers a few days before the schedule is announced, said officials, adding that as per the current plan, ballot papers will reach the polling centres on the morning of election day.

As per its preparation, the EC has redrawn 10 constituencies, registered two new political parties, updated the voters' list, made a primary list of 42,350 polling centres, shipped most of the election material to the districts, amended the law, approved 67 local polls observers, and invited applications from international observers and journalists.

As per the voters' list, there are 11,96,91,633 voters.

On Saturday, more than a third of the registered political parties, including the BNP, boycotted the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

NATIONWIDE BLOCKADE Arson, arrests, clash in second phase too

10 vehicles torched; BNP leaders Altaf Hossain, Shahjahan Omar among arrestees

STAR REPORT

The first day of the BNP Jamaat's two-day blockade was marked by clashes with police, arson and vandalism of vehicles, and detention of opposition leaders across the country.

The parties called the second phase of the countrywide blockade of roads, railways, and waterways, protesting police action on their events and arrests of activists.

The BNP claimed that its 261 leaders and activists were picked up while nine cases were filed against 1,060 identified and many unidentified party activists in 24 hours until yesterday evening.

The arrestees include party vice chairmen air vice-marshal (retd) Altaf Hossain Choudhury and Shahjahan Omar.

Arsonists torched four buses in the capital's Meradia, Banglamotor, Mirpur, and Kalyanpur. A car was set alight in Nilkhet. Five vehicles were also set on fire in Gazipur, Khagrachhari, Noakhali, and Chattogram. With those vehicles, at least 20 vehicles have been torched since Saturday evening.

In Meradia, a bus passenger suffered 28 percent burns and the bus helper minor burns. The bus lost control and hit a roadside tree following the arson attack, said police.

In Bogura, at least four activists of the BNP and its front organisations were wounded and five vehicles were vandalised during a clash with police at Telipukur.

The clash broke out when BNP activists vandalised several vehicles while a police van was escorting around 20 goods-laden vehicles to Dhaka.

As police fired teargas to disperse the troublemakers, they blasted several crude bombs, said witnesses and police.

MORE ON PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

RMG WORKERS' PROTESTS Normalcy returns, at least for now

New wage structure expected tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Striking garment workers yesterday returned to their workstations after more than 12 days of unrest following an assurance from the government of an acceptable minimum wage tomorrow.

No incident of unrest took place in the garment sector yesterday, said the labour leaders and factory owners.

The minimum wage board has called its sixth round of meeting on November 7 to fix the salary structure for the country's 4 million garment workers.

The leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association have authorised their representative on the wage board to agree to the amount suggested by the board in tomorrow's meeting.

"We also want the board to announce the salary at the November 7 meeting," said BGMEA President Faruque Hassan.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Delhi pollution looms over BD-SL fixture

MAZHAR UDDIN from New Delhi

Ahead of the ICC World Cup game between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Arun Jaitley Stadium



today, the focus was more on the inclement weather condition in Delhi - a huge concern over the past few days due to the severe air pollution at the national capital.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it is monitoring the situation and that the fate

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Virat Kohli raises his bat after reaching his century against South Africa during their World Cup fixture at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. On his 35th birthday, Kohli equalled Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries in the ODI format, helping India to a 243-run victory.

PHOTO: REUTERS



King Kohli equals Tendulkar's record India crush SA by 243 runs

REUTERS, Kolkata

Virat Kohli marked his 35th birthday with his second century of the World Cup and Ravindra Jadeja claimed five wickets as India thumped South Africa by 243 runs in a contest featuring the top two teams in the tournament at the Eden Gardens on Sunday.

South Africa's chase of 327 began shakily as they lost half their side cheaply for 40 runs inside 14 overs as Jadeja (5-33) and Mohammed Shami (2-18) wreaked havoc before the Proteas fell to only their second defeat, dismissed for 83 in 27.1 overs.

Jadeja was the pick of the bowlers, shattering the stumps of three batsmen, while Mohammed Siraj (1-11) and Kuldeep Yadav (2-7) also played their part in the big win.

Kohli's unbeaten 101 contained 10 fours and left him level with Indian great Sachin Tendulkar on 49 one-day international hundreds as he continued his superb form by taking his tally past 500 runs in the tournament.

He dropped anchor in a solid third-wicket stand of 134 with Shreyas Iyer, who hit 77 with seven fours and two sixes, before making his ton in the 49th over as India finished with 326-5 on a slow Kolkata wicket with late hitting by Jadeja (29 not out).

Both teams have qualified for the semi-finals and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

