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Highest dengue deaths recorded; fatality crosses 1,500



China, US pledge climate cooperation



RMG Protests: A tale of the Green versus the Red



Booters hoping for a fight against Socceroos

Polls on Jan 7

EC announces national election timetable with no sign of dialogues, consensus among major parties

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The 12th general election will be on January 7, the Election Commission announced yesterday amid escalating tension between the major political parties over the poll-time government.

The BNP and its like-minded parties rejected the schedule and warned that they would not let the election take place. The BNP attempted to do the same in 2014 polls in which 153 Awami League lawmakers got elected with no competition whatsoever.

The Awami League hailed the announcement and took out processions at places in the capital and other parts of the country.

Political analysts and observers fear uncertainty and escalation of violence as the AL and the BNP have been sticking to their guns. The AL wants the election to be held with this government in power while the BNP wants the resignation of the

Deadline for nomination submission
Nov 30
Nomination papers scrutiny
Dec 1 to 4
Time for appeals
Dec 6 to 15
Deadline for withdrawal
Dec 17
Time for campaigning
Dec 18 to Jan 5

government and election under a non-partisan administration.

"As the political parties have not reached a consensus yet, a fearsome and confrontational situation is prevailing. It is surely not helpful in ensuring a level-playing field for all parties," former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hossain told The Daily Star.

Sakawat doubts the EC would be able to hold the polls properly amid this situation.

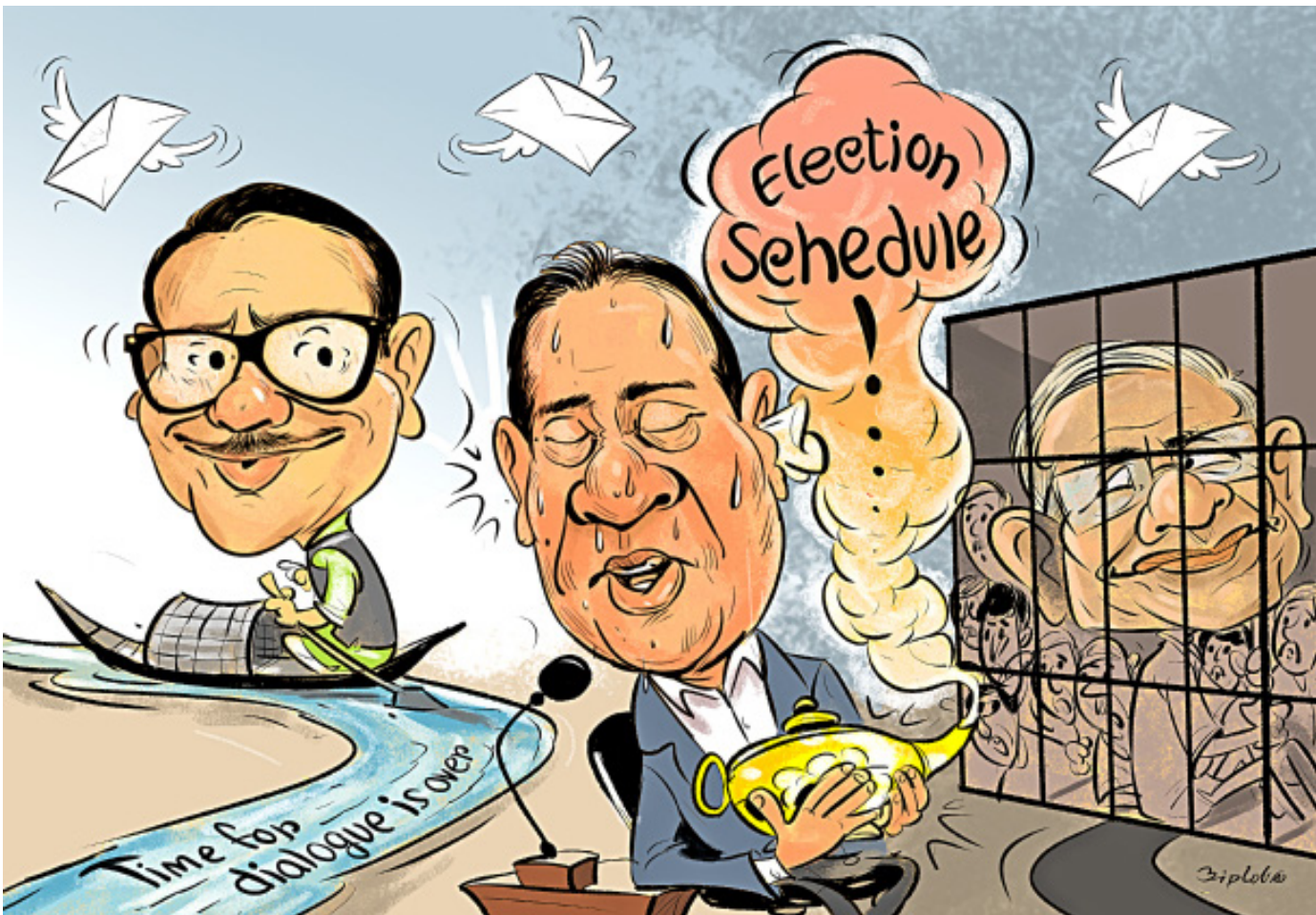
The EC Secretariat had to be guarded like a fort yesterday, he pointed out.

The number of political parties not likely to join the race is getting larger than that of 2014 polls, he said.

Unveiling the polls fixture yesterday, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal called upon all political parties to join the election.

"We believe the upcoming polls will be free and fair, impartial, participatory, and peaceful

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Find way to end political deadlock

CEC calls upon all parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday urged all political parties to find a solution to end the political impasse.

"On behalf of the Election Commission, I humbly request all political parties to find a solution, avoiding conflict and violence," he said while announcing the schedule for the next general election.

He also urged all candidates, who will contest the upcoming election, to appoint the required number of honest, courageous, and skilled polling agents to protect their rights.

The CEC made the

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AL welcomes schedule; BNP, allies reject

STAR REPORT

The Awami League and its allies cheered as the election schedule was announced while the BNP, its like-minded parties, and the Left Democratic Alliance denounced the Election Commission for starting the process of what they said would be a sham of an election.

The Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament, however, said the EC was bound by the constitution to come up with the schedule.

The LDA called an eight-hour hartal from 6:00am to 2:00pm today in protest.

Gonotontro Moncho, an alliance of seven political parties, marched in the capital and called a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal for today.

AWAMI LEAGUE

Welcoming the polls schedule, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said his party would start selling nomination forms to prospective candidates on November 17.

The AL president will inaugurate the sale after a meeting of the party's National Election Steering Committee, he told a press conference in Dhanmondi.

After the polls schedule was announced around 7:00pm, AL leaders and activists marched in different parts of Dhaka and other districts in celebration.

THE BNP

"The chief election commissioner has deceived the entire nation. We do not believe a fair election will be held with Sheikh Hasina in power. He has announced the schedule for another sham election ignoring the people's hopes and the international community's

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'Will this help EC hold fair polls?'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the Election Commission cannot ensure free and fair elections, it could have at the very least prevented the process of "a potentially fraudulent polls", said Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik.

In his reaction to the announcement of the election schedule, he said the EC needed to ensure that the atmosphere for free and fair elections existed.



Badiul Alam Majumdar

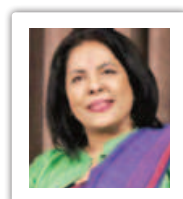
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'EC has to answer many questions'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sharmeen S Murshid, an election analyst and the chief executive officer of election observation group Brotee, told The Daily Star that she had never seen such an atmosphere before an election in her 20-year career as an election observer.

"Usually, when a polls schedule is announced, a happy atmosphere is seen among the people. But this time, there is a completely different picture. Fear and scepticism have developed



Sharmeen S Murshid

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Politics is back to square one

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh's political climate appears to be in a perpetual stalemate considering how things stand in 2023 and how they were 10 years ago.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal announced the election schedule yesterday, and the two political rivals -- the Awami League and the BNP -- remain entrenched in their positions.

Ten years and ten days ago, then CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed announced the election schedule.

Today, things look almost the same as they were then.

In the run up to the controversial 2014 national election, there was an initiative from the international community to hold talks between the AL and the BNP to resolve the stalemate centring the election.

At the time, the then UN special envoy Oscar Fernandez-Taranco tried to mediate but that exercise was not fruitful.

Ten years later, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu sent letters to three major political parties urging them to hold "unconditional talks," but the ruling party says the time for dialogue is over.

The international community, especially the western nations, has long been calling on the government

to create an environment for a free and fair election.

Before the 2018 polls, the AL and the BNP held talks to resolve their differences, but many issues remained unresolved.

Ahead of the 2014 election, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called BNP chief Khaleda Zia to initiate a dialogue to resolve the political crisis, but Khaleda rejected the offer rather harshly.

Now, Khaleda is undergoing treatment for multiple health complications and is ineligible to run in the election because of her conviction in a corruption case.

Just like it did ahead of the 2014 election, the BNP last night rejected the polls schedule and announced fresh street programmes to resist it.

The 2014 polls schedule was announced amid the BNP's nationwide blockade. Yesterday was the first day of the BNP's 48-hour blockade.

The BNP and some other opposition parties want a nonparty administration to oversee the polls, but AL says the election will be held under the Sheikh Hasina-led government in line with the constitution.

The BNP is continuing with its series of blockades and strikes, like it had done 10 years ago, and it appears to be heading towards a boycott of polls.

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'Pitch switch' controversy at Wankhede

AFP, Mumbai

The World Cup semifinal between India and New Zealand in Mumbai on Wednesday was being played on a used pitch, sparking concerns the



tournament hosts had tried to manipulate conditions in their favour.

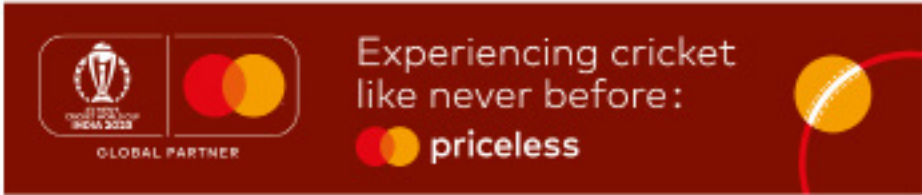
Both Britain's Daily Mail and the ESPNcricinfo website reported the match was initially supposed to be played on pitch seven, the central strip at the

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India batting stalwart Virat Kohli punches the air after scoring his record 50th ODI hundred during ICC World Cup semifinal against New Zealand in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Kohli, Shami guide India to cusp of glory

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's Virat Kohli struck a record 50th hundred and fast bowler Mohammed Shami's seven-wicket haul proved equally crucial as the unbeaten hosts overpowered New Zealand by 70 runs in a high-scoring match yesterday to march into the World Cup final.

Kohli's 117 and a blistering 105 from Shreyas Iyer helped India post 397 for four wickets after they won the toss at the Wankhede Stadium, where the hosts had lifted their second and last 50-over World Cup trophy in 2011.

In reply, New Zealand, who beat India at the same stage in the 2019 tournament, were bundled out for 327 in the 49th over with Daryl Mitchell's excellent innings of 134 proving to be in vain.

Australia and South Africa meet in the second semi-final at Kolkata's Eden Gardens on Thursday, with the final on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

Mitchell added 181 for the third wicket with Kane Williamson to keep the Black Caps firmly in the chase but Shami, who sent back both openers, returned to dismiss the New Zealand captain and Tom Latham in one over to put India on top.

The right-handed Mitchell suffered cramps after getting past his hundred but continued to plunder runs with Glenn Phillips during a 75-run stand before the latter fell for a 33-ball 41.

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