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Six vehicles torched, 30 vandalised after polls schedule

STAR REPORT

At least six vehicles were torched and 30 others were vandalised across the country after the Election Commission announced the polls schedule yesterday evening.

In Gazipur, Narayanganj, Tangail, Sylhet, Barishal, Rajshahi, Panchagarh, and other districts, the BNP and like-minded parties took out processions, rejecting the polls schedule, while AL men brought out processions welcoming it. No clashes were reported.

In Sylhet, a human hauler was set on fire at 8:43pm in Shah Poran's Daspara area. Two fire engines doused the blaze.

In Bogura, a lorry was set alight at 8:55pm in front of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) office on Dhaka-Rangpur highway.

Locals and police helped bring the fire under control. Later, a fire engine doused the fire completely, said Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shahjahanpur Police Station.

In Dhaka, a truck was torched in Dohar Bazar area around 10:00pm.

Two fire engines put out the blaze, said Talha Bin Zassim, an official of the Fire Service Media Cell.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Garment workers entering a factory in Ashulia yesterday morning as normalcy is returning to the sector after thousands of workers demonstrated for more than two weeks demanding better pay. The labour unrest compelled many factories to suspend production.

Attach lands of Basic Bank's Bacchu, family

Court directs ACC

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to attach 138 kathas of land owned by former chairman of Basic Bank Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu and his four family members in connection with a corruption case.

The four others are Bacchu's wife Shirin Akter, brother Sheikh Shahriar Panna, son Sheikh Sabid Hye Aneek, and daughter Sheikh Rafa Hye.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Mohammad Nurul Huda, also the head of an investigation team, pleaded for his properties to be attached, said ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir.

The judge also ordered

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'Safeguard civil rights, freedom of expression'

EU urges govt to do more, hopes for free, fair polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to put in more effort to comply with the core Everything But Arms (EBA) conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and safeguard the freedom of association, freedom of expression and assembly, the EU said.

Under the EU's EBA arrangement, least-developed countries that respect the core conventions on human and labour rights can gain duty-free and quota-free entry to the 27-nation economic union.

Bangladesh is the largest beneficiary of the EBA, with exports to the EU hitting 24 billion euros in 2022.

The EU also stressed on creating an enabling environment for civil society to carry out its activities and hoped that the next government of Bangladesh would be formed through a free and fair election.

The recommendations come as an EU mission is visiting Bangladesh to assess the compliance of Bangladesh with its commitments under the EBA trade arrangement.

The mission led by Paola Pampaloni, deputy managing director of the European External Action Service, met with government officials, civil society representatives, trade unions, garments brands and the BGMEA during its five-day visit that started on November 12.

The EU officials welcomed progress made on safety standards in the garment sector and noted some positive steps towards improving economic and social rights, according to the statement yesterday.

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Israeli troops raid Gaza's main hospital

Several Hamas members killed in clash outside gates; newborns among 2,300 stuck inside the complex: UN

AGENCIES

Israeli soldiers yesterday raided and combed through Gaza's main hospital in an offensive against Hamas, raising fears for thousands of patients and other civilians trapped inside.

The operation at Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital set off a wave of international condemnation. The White House renewed its concerns for the safety of civilians shortly after the raid began.

The United Nations humanitarian chief demanded immediate action to "rein in the carnage". The International Committee of the Red Cross said it was "extremely concerned about the impact on sick and wounded people, medical staff, and civilians".

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "We're extremely worried for their and their patients' safety."

Israel said its troops killed several Hamas fighters in a clash outside the gates before entering.

Israeli soldiers, some wearing face masks and shooting in the air, ordered young men to surrender, a journalist in contact with AFP reported.

About 1,000 male Palestinians, their hands above their heads, were in the vast hospital courtyard, some of them stripped naked by

Israeli soldiers checking them for weapons or explosives, the journalist said.

Israel said the raid was being executed based on "an operational necessity" but the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority denounced it as a "flagrant violation of international law".

The United Nations said it estimates that at least 2,300 people -- patients, including infants, staff and displaced civilians -- are inside and may be unable to escape because of fierce fighting.

Witnesses have described conditions inside the hospital as horrific, with medical procedures taking place without anaesthetic, families with scant food or water living in corridors and the stench of decomposing corpses filling the air.

The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza says Israel's ensuing aerial bombardment and ground offensive have killed 11,320 people, mostly civilians, including thousands of children.

The situation in Gaza's other hospitals is also dire, with the World Health Organization saying 22 of 36 are not functional due to a lack of generator fuel, damage or combat.

Patients, the wounded, their families, and the medical teams trapped in Al Quds hospital were evacuated Tuesday, said the Palestinian Red Crescent, adding the facility had been under "siege" for 10 days.



The situation in other hospitals also dire: WHO



Palestinian death toll in Gaza rises to 11,320

Curb social media rumors

NSC tells law enforcers, intelligence agencies

BAHRAM KHAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The National Security Council yesterday directed law enforcement and intelligence agencies to be on alert so that no one can spread any disinformation on social media centring the next national election.

The directive came during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the meeting, which was attended by several ministers, the cabinet division secretary, chiefs of the army, navy, and air force, heads of intelligence agencies, officers of the national security cell, and police chief.

Curbing "anti-state and anti-government" content in mainstream media and social media was on the agenda of the meeting.

Several ministers, secretaries, and law enforcement agency officials who attended the meeting later spoke to The Daily Star.

The meeting was held just before the announcement of the next national schedule. Issues like law and order, strategies for maintaining law and order, and prices of essentials were discussed.

An official of a law enforcement

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NATIONAL ELECTION

3 UN officials voice worry over rights situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three UN human rights special rapporteurs expressed deep concern over the human rights situation in Bangladesh just ahead of the national polls.

The rights experts are Irene Khan, the special rapporteur on freedom of expression; Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, special rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and Mary Lawlor, special rapporteur on human rights defenders.

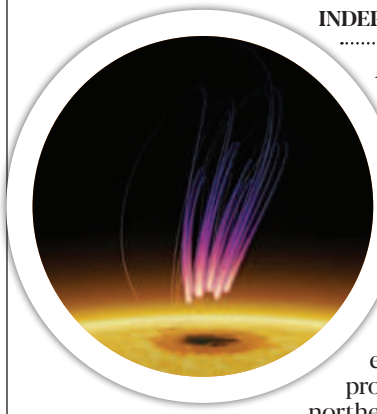
In a statement circulated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, they said, "As Bangladesh heads towards national elections in early 2024, we are deeply disturbed by the sharp rise in political violence, arrests of senior opposition leaders, mass arbitrary detention of thousands of political activists, use of excessive force by the authorities and internet shutdowns to disrupt protests, and allegations of harassment, intimidation and unlawful detention of family members as a retaliatory measure.

"The weaponisation of the judicial system to attack journalists, human rights defenders and civil society leaders

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Strange emissions similar to northern lights spotted on Sun

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Astronomers have spotted a stunning aurora-like display tens of thousands of miles above a dark and cold patch on the Sun.

The new type of radio emissions share properties with the northern lights spectrum commonly seen around Earth.

Fresh insights about the intense radiation bursts from the Sun have been described in a study published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

The discovery potentially opens new ways to understand similar phenomena in distant stars, said researchers, including those from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

"This is quite unlike the typical, transient solar radio bursts typically lasting minutes or hours," said study co-author Sijie Yu. "It's an exciting discovery that has the potential to alter our comprehension of stellar magnetic processes."



An injured Palestinian man consoles an injured child lying on a gurney at the hospital following the Israeli bombardment of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

DEMOS FOR BETTER WAGE

23,000 RMG workers sued over unrest

Say union leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 23,000 garment workers have been sued in various cases filed in connection with the recent unrest over the fixation of their minimum wage, union leaders claimed yesterday.

"So far, 62 cases have been filed against about 23,000 workers in the Gazipur, Mirpur, and Savar areas," said Kutubuddin Ahmed, secretary of the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council (IBC), which is affiliated with the IndustriALL Global Union.

More than 100 workers have already been arrested in connection with the cases, he said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

The Daily Star could not verify the number of cases,

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