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In Cumilla, the canals run black



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## AL shifts to polls gear

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Two days after the Election Commission announced the election schedule, the Awami League's election preparation goes full-throttle.

At the first meeting of the Election Steering Committee for the upcoming polls, AL President Sheikh Hasina said her party leaders who aspire to be members of parliament must support whoever gets the party ticket eventually.

The AL chief, at the meeting held at the party's Dhaka district office in Tejgaon, also asked her colleagues to do whatever it takes to improve voter turnout, said sources at the meeting.

Hasina, also the chairman of the steering committee, asked AL leaders to unite and maintain discipline.

The AL formed 15 sub-committees for election preparation and made Kazi Zafar Ullah, a presidium member, the co-chairman of the steering committee.

During the last three general elections, HT Imam, a former bureaucrat, was the co-chairman of the steering committee.

Hasina will collect her nomination form from the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue this morning and officially launch the sale of nomination papers.

- AL starts selling nomination forms today
- Kazi Zafarullah made co-chair of AL election steering body
- Talks with 14-party alliance partners over seat sharing in days
- AL chief asked all-out efforts to improve voter turnout



According to party sources, AL's election manifesto is almost finalised.

The AL will sit with its partners in the 14-party alliance to discuss how many parliament seats the AL allies will get, sources said.

AL's partners may settle for 18 seats, but they will demand a lot more in the beginning, they added. Currently, AL allies have eight representatives in parliament.

Leaders of AL's key alliance Workers Party met AL leaders yesterday and urged the AL to settle the seat-sharing issue as soon as possible.

In her introductory speech, Hasina urged the BNP and other parties to participate in the election.

"The BNP Jamaat has committed crimes by killing and injuring people, damaging properties through arson attacks and setting vehicles on fire. We want them to apologise to the nation for their crimes, and then take part in the 12th national election," she said.

"Everyone should come and participate. The door is open for all."

She thanked the Election Commission for announcing the polls schedule defying the arson attacks.

Voting is a constitutional right of the people, she said, adding, "Those who have the courage, will run [for office]. If they have public support, they will get votes. The party elected by the people will form the government."

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Fishing boats dealing with heavy swells near the coast in Chattogram yesterday afternoon after cyclone Midhili made landfall. The photo was taken from Akmal Ali Road area in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Political crisis nearing its climax Says Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday said the country's long-standing political crisis is now approaching its climax as people are taking to the streets risking their lives to resist a one-sided election.

"The chief election commissioner surrendered to Sheikh Hasina instead of protecting the interests of the people and taking proper steps to ensure a free, fair, and participatory election," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the party, said in a virtual press conference.

The BNP leader alleged that the EC announced the schedule for the next election ignoring the continuous movement for free and fair elections.

Rizvi also alleged that the commission announced the election schedule on the instruction of the government, ignoring the appeals of the

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## Five killed as Cyclone Midhili crosses coast

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed as cyclone Midhili crossed the country yesterday, inundating low-lying areas in many parts of several southern districts.

The cyclone that caused heavy rains disrupted normal life, halted cargo handling in Chattogram port and river transport services across the country.

A special bulletin from the Met office said the cyclonic storm completed crossing the coast at 3:00pm and weakened into a deep depression.

The highest wind speed was recorded in Patuakhali, at 102km per hour, the Met office said. In Cox's Bazar, four of a family died when a mud wall of a house collapsed amid heavy rains early yesterday.

The incident took place around 3:00am in Panirchhara area of Hnila union under Teknaf upazila, said Rashed Mahmud Ali, the local chairman.

The dead are Anwara Begum, 50, her son Shahidul Mostafa, 20, and daughters Nilufa Yasmin, 15, and Sadia Begum, 11, he added.

Locals said incessant rain hit the area since Thursday morning due to a depression in the Bay of Bengal.

The rain weakened the wall and then it collapsed on the victims, they said.

An elderly man was killed as a tree branch fell on him in front of his house at Moghdhara

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## US will hold anti-labour rights people accountable Says Blinken

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has said they will work to hold accountable those who threaten, intimidate, and attack union leaders, labour rights defenders, and labour organisations.

Tolls like sanctions, trade penalties, and visa restrictions will be used against them, the US said.

"We want to be there for people like Kalpona Atker, a Bangladeshi garment worker and activist, who says that she is alive today because the US embassy advocated on her behalf," said US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken at the rollout of the Presidential Memorandum on "Advancing Worker Empowerment, Rights, and High Labour Standards

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## Thaw coming to BNP-Jamaat ties Say top Jamaat leaders; the two parties in talks about all out anti-govt movement

RASHIDUL HASAN

After a five-year "freeze" in relations, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami are patching things up in efforts to launch a more vigorous movement to oust the government, multiple Jamaat leaders have claimed.

The development comes as politics heats up further centring on the announcement of the polls schedule.

BNP declined to confirm or deny the development, but one top leader said his party will support anyone willing to join their movement.

However, Rezaul Karim, who is in charge of Jamaat's central publicity team, has categorically told The Daily Star that the highest levels of the two parties have been in talks for the last two weeks about the ongoing movement for elections under a neutral interim administration.

"The movement programmes are being fixed through discussions between BNP and Jamaat leaders," said Rezaul.

"We have also been asked to remain in touch with the grassroots leaders of BNP, as the government continues clamping down on opposition," he added.

BNP and Jamaat, the largest Islamist party in Bangladesh, first teamed up in 1999 to form a four-party alliance ahead of the 2001 national election, which the alliance won.

The two other members in the alliance were Bangladesh Jatiya Party and Islami Oikya Jote.

The four-party alliance later expanded as several other parties joined forces, eventually becoming a 20-party alliance in 2012.

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## POLLS CODE EC to police violations in every constituency

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has decided to have an electoral enquiry committee in every constituency to ensure proper enforcement of the electoral code and prevent irregularities.

During the last national polls held on December 30, 2018, the then Election Commission formed 122 committees. The polls were marred by alleged irregularities.

In 2018, the EC engaged 244 judicial officers, two for each committee, while this year, it will engage 300 judicial officers, one for each committee, said EC sources.

"The Election Commission has finalised its decision to have 300 enquiry committees and informed the authorities concerned regarding the matter," EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar

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The rickety building, which appears to be abandoned, may collapse anytime. But people still work inside it as it is the post office in the Chandana area of Gazipur city. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Resurgent Australia stand between India and 3rd title

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

India and Australia have faced off in some of the most engaging contests in recent times and a new chapter to their rivalry will be added when they contest 50-over cricket's ultimate glory in Sunday's World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

The familiar foes will conclude their campaign like they started it, against each other, and none of the 130,000-odd seats at the Narendra Modi Stadium will be empty.

Favourites India comprehensively beat number two-ranked Australia in their tournament opener and then strung together 10 wins in a row to storm into the final of their home World Cup with an unblemished record.

Australia, by contrast, began with two defeats before going on an eight-match winning streak.

Captain Rohit Sharma and his team's semifinal victory against New Zealand, considered their bogey side, has answered questions about India's fragility in knockouts.

Rohit has led by example, with unbridled aggression at the top allowing others to play with more freedom.

Virat Kohli, the tournament's leading scorer, has been the trusted anchor, while others have batted around the senior duo in India's familiar template.

Their bowling, aided by the knowledge of home conditions, has been equally impressive.

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