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BNP calls blockade for 48 more hours

To enforce it from tomorrow, says Rizvi; six buses, truck torched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday called for a fresh 48-hour countrywide blockade starting tomorrow morning.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the party's senior joint secretary general, made the announcement at a virtual press briefing yesterday evening after the party's 48-hour hartal ended amid arson attacks on public transport.

Six buses and a truck were set on fire across the country, while two people were caught in the act of torching a parked truck in Jashore Sadar early yesterday.

In front of the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judges Court, a crude bomb went off; however, no one was reported to have been hurt.

During the 48-hour hartal, 16 vehicles were torched across the country, with four reported in Dhaka city, according to Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The traffic movement across the country increased on the last day of the 48-hour hartal yesterday. However, few inter-district buses left the capital.

With the fresh blockade, it would be the party's sixth round of blockades since October 28.

The BNP claimed 14,200 party leaders and activists, including the 480 yesterday, were arrested since October 28.

During this period, 331 cases were filed against party leaders and workers, it added.

Rab said it arrested 562 people in connection with violence since October 28.

Alongside police, Rab deployed over 425 patrol teams

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Jahura Begum, over 70 years old, had been sitting and waiting on this field near the Khulna City Railway since early morning yesterday for a TCB truck to arrive. Many like her have to wait for hours on end to buy some kitchen essentials at subsidised prices. *Inset*, desperate for cheaper products amid soaring prices in markets, consumers often end up jostling near the truck.

PHOTOS: HABIBUR RAHMAN



HC stays suspension of telecom dept GM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for six months a decision by the Posts and Telecommunications Division to suspend Asaduzzaman Chowdhury, the former acting managing director of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited.

Asaduzzaman had been the managing director (current charge) of BTCL until October 18. On October 22, he was demoted to the post of general manager of the Department of Telecommunications. Then on November 7, he was suspended by the Posts and Telecommunications Division.

On November 8, departmental proceedings were initiated against him on charges of committing irregularities in cancelling

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Polls may be rescheduled if BNP joins Say election commissioners

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission will consider rescheduling the upcoming national polls if major opposition BNP decides to join it following political consensus.

Two election commissioners said they have time to push the election date by five to seven days, as the five-year term of parliament will end on January 29.

They, however, said election commissioners have not held any discussions about the issue.

Asked whether there would be any scope for BNP and other parties to take part in the polls, Election Commissioner Rashida Sultana said, "If they want to join the election, we will surely discuss to find a way."

"We will make a decision. We will welcome the BNP if it decides to join the polls. We of course respond to its call if the party wants to contest the election," she said while talking to reporters at her EC office.

The election commissioner also said they want an election that is participated by all parties.

On November 15, the EC announced the polls schedule, stating that the 12th parliamentary election will be held on January 7.

The last day for submitting nomination forms is November 30 while the forms will be scrutinised on December 1-4 and the last date for candidature withdrawal is December 17.

The commission announced the schedule when the country is going through a political turmoil. Two major political parties -- ruling Awami League and Opposition

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28 Gaza babies evacuated to Egypt

12 killed as strike hits hospital; US, Israeli officials say hostage deal edges closer

AGENCIES

Twenty-eight premature babies were evacuated from war-torn Gaza to Egypt yesterday as the enclave's health ministry accused Israel of launching a deadly strike on the territory's Indonesian Hospital.

Frantic diplomatic efforts were meanwhile underway to seal a deal for the release of some of the 240 hostages Hamas fighters took during their October 7 attacks on Israel.

The Gaza health ministry charged that Israel's army killed at least 12 people in a strike on the Indonesian Hospital in the Palestinian territory's north, a war zone where entire city blocks have been reduced to rubble.

Those killed included patients, said Ashraf al-Qudra, a spokesman for the ministry which has reported a death toll of more than 13,000 as the Gaza war rages on into its seventh week.

Dozens more were wounded and 700 people remained trapped inside the "besieged" medical centre, Qudra said.

More than 2.4 million Palestinians are trapped in Gaza and only several hundred war-wounded, foreign nationals and dual passport holders

have been allowed out.

The UN World Health Organization yesterday said 28 premature babies evacuated from Gaza's biggest hospital, Al-Shifa, had been taken to safety in Egypt through the Rafah crossing, revising down by one a number given by Egyptian media.

"All babies are fighting serious

 Palestinian death toll passes 13,000, including 5,500 children

 28 premature Gaza babies evacuated to Egypt

 14 Palestinians killed in air strikes on houses in Rafah

infections and continue needing health care," the WHO said, while the Israeli army said it had "helped facilitate" the transfer.

The bloodiest ever Gaza war has seen Israeli troops raid, occupy and evacuate Al-Shifa hospital.

Israel, backed by the United States, argues that Hamas has used vast tunnel networks below Al-Shifa

for military purposes. It has shown recovered weapons but was yet to reveal evidence of a major military headquarters below ground.

Alarm has surged over the dire humanitarian situation across Gaza where cold autumn rain has deepened the misery by soaking families living in tents and turning dust to mud.

The WHO warned of spreading sickness with 44,000 cases of diarrhoea and 70,000 acute respiratory infections registered in shelters.

A field hospital sent by Jordan entered Gaza yesterday to treat patients in the south despite "catastrophic conditions" marked by "aggressive aerial and artillery strikes," said Mohammed Zaqout, director-general of Gaza hospitals.

As intense urban combat raged in northern Gaza, many thousands more fled south on Sunday, said the UN humanitarian agency.

Families walked along cracked roads as gunshots and explosions rang out in the distance.

"It's like the apocalypse," said one tearful woman, Renad al-Helou.

"We are tired. There's no water, no food ... There's nothing left in Gaza. There's only destruction, suffering and torture."

HARTAL, BLOCKADE Security for BRTC buses, trains to be scaled up

4,000 Ansar members to be deployed

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As trains and BRTC buses are being attacked, the authorities are stepping up security to keep the services going amid hartal and blockade enforced by the BNP and its allies.

At an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday, the railways ministry decided to take several measures, including intensifying security on trains, rail lines and in other establishments.

Around 4,000 more Ansar members will be deployed to ensure the safety of railways and its passengers, said meeting sources.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has already tightened security at its depots across the country. Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd has called a meeting today to review the safety of the metro rail service.

At least seven BRTC buses were torched and 12 other buses of the state-owned agency vandalised during the hartal and blockade, said BRTC sources.

Two trains came under arson attacks while crude bombs were hurled at running trains on several occasions, BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Besides, many attempts were made to set the rail tracks on fire in different areas, he said.

Officials of BR, police and the ministries of rail, home, and finance were present at the meeting at the Rail Bhaban.

Railways Secretary Humayun Kabir told this correspondent, "The meeting was held to find out safety loopholes and devise a plan to save railway properties and its passengers."

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Rohingya man killed in clash between two armed groups

3 top ARSA leaders held, says Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was killed in an alleged clash between ARSA and RSO at a Rohingya camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar on Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Syed Amin, 34, a resident of Block B at Rohingya Camp 3 under the Rajapalung union.

A clash broke out at the camp between the Myanmar-based armed groups Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) broke out, followed by a gunfight around 8:00pm, said Shamim Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station.

Syed was hacked to death during the clash, said

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A man carries a child injured in an Israeli strike on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Napoleon hat fetches record \$2.1m at auction

REUTERS, Paris



A bicorne hat believed to have belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte sold for a record 1,932,000 euros (\$2.1 million) at the Drouot auction house in Paris on Sunday.

It was initially estimated at 600,000 to 800,000 euros. The price beat the 1,884,000 euros paid for another Napoleon hat at Drouot in 2014, an official at the auction house said.

"One million four hundred fifty thousand (euros) to my left, 1.5 million, we have 1.5 million in the room, 1.5 million for Napoleon's hat. We're leaving it at 1.5 million for this major Napoleon symbol, I'm selling for 1.5 million (before fees), no regrets, sold," auctioneer Jean-Pierre Osenat said as he brought down the hammer to applause.

Ahead of the auction, Osenat told Reuters the black beaver felt hat in the traditional bicorne shape was a trademark for Napoleon, who had owned about 120 such hats throughout his life.

"The hat was part of the image he constructed, as Napoleon was a man of communication," Osenat said, adding that Napoleon always wore the hat with the corners aligned with his shoulders, while most people at the time wore it with the corners front to back.