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Vehicular movement increased in the capital on the first day of the sixth spell of the 48-hour blockade. Awami League's office on Bangabandhu Avenue (left) was relatively quiet yesterday as the sale of nomination forms ended on Tuesday. Meanwhile, BNP's Nayapaltan office remained locked with police personnel on guard.



'Flowers have started to bloom'
Quader on parties joining polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stating that there is no reason to worry about the upcoming polls, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the election process has started to gain momentum.

"Those who were worried as to who will participate [in elections] and who won't... flowers have started to bloom... there's nothing to worry... More flowers will bloom. Hundreds of flowers will bloom before the nomination s u b m i s s i o n deadline," he said.



He made the remarks at a coordination meeting at AL's Dhaka office in Tejgaon. It was held between the members of AL national election steering committee and the conveners and member secretaries of the sub-committees.

On November 16, Quader hinted that many political parties and individuals will eventually decide to contest the national polls before the nomination paper submission deadline.

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48-HOUR BLOCKADE Dhaka sees more traffic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traffic movement increased across the capital on the first day of the sixth spell of the 48-hour blockade called by BNP and its allies to protest the schedule for the 12th parliamentary elections.

Dhaka witnessed a significant rise in vehicular mobility yesterday with a higher number of public transports in some areas. A few inter-district buses, however, left the capital.

Sporadic traffic congestion was seen in some major points, including Banglamotor, Farmgate, Bijoy Sarani, Mohakhali, Shahbagh, Elephant Road, Science Lab, Jigatola, Dhamondi, Moghbazar, Satrasta, Banani, Uttara Jashimuddin, and Abdullahepur.

"It took me about 40 minutes to commute from Mohakhali to Shahbagh, which is much longer than the previous blockade days," said Kader Hossain, a CNG-run auto rickshaw driver.

Kader had to wait for about 10 minutes at the Bijoy Sarani intersection, and another eight minutes at the Karwan Bazar intersection during his commute.

ARSON ATTACKS

Meanwhile, arsonists torched a passenger bus in Asad Gate area around 2:20pm

yesterday. Following the incident, police arrested one Mamun from the spot.

"Mamun was arrested while trying to flee the spot," said Jahangir Alam, additional deputy commissioner (traffic) of Tejgaon zone.

Police also arrested Shamim Mahmud, joint convener of Dhaka South City unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, from Mugda on Tuesday for allegedly leading the violence in Paltan and attack on Rajarbagh police hospital during BNP's October 28 rally, Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner (crime and office) of DMP, told reporters at DMP media centre yesterday.

Shamim had planned the moves on October 26 and video footage proved his direct involvement in the October 28 incidents, he added.

"Following the directive of a central BNP leader, Shamim collected a bag from one Maruf from Dania footbridge the day before the rally to hand it over to one Riyad at Naya Paltan," said Mahid.

Police arrested Maruf, 20, over his alleged involvement in setting fire to a bus of Basumoti Paribahan in the Pallabi-II area early yesterday.

"Maruf torched the vehicle for Tk 3,000 on the directive of BNP councilors Sazzad and Jashim," said Mahid.

AL forcing people to join its 'King's Party': Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday accused the government of trying to influence the upcoming national polls through the Election Commission.

At a virtual press briefing, BNP Senior Joint Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged, "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has deployed her agencies in the field to form a party. Many leaders are being pressured and intimidated to join the Awami League's King's Party."

He claimed that an "abnormal situation" has been created in a "very planned way" for a one-sided polls.

Rizvi said, "The government has deployed 'helmet bahini' alongside law enforcement agencies. They are attacking the homes of BNP leaders and activists. On government order, false cases are being lodged against our leaders and activists."

Rizvi said law enforcers arrested more than 15,190 BNP men in 367 cases from October 28 till yesterday. He claimed 515 party men were detained and 21 cases were filed against 2,315 named and many unidentified activists in 24 hours preceding yesterday.

2013 EXPLOSIVES CASE 11 BNP men sentenced to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced 11 BNP men to seven years' rigorous imprisonment each in a case filed under Explosive Substances Act in 2013.

They are Dhaka north Jubo Dal unit's former president SM Jahangir, SI Tutul, Abdul Awal, Mohammad Monir Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Monir Hossain, Nasim Ahmed Apu, Ashraful Islam, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Fakhrul Islam, and Md Shahin.

According to the case statement, the accused illegally gathered in front of Azampur Rail Gate area in Uttara and blasted crude bombs during a blockade called by BNP led alliance on November 26, 2013.

VACCINE PRODUCTION ADB approves \$336.5m loan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ADB yesterday approved a \$336.5 million loan to establish domestic vaccine, therapeutics, and diagnostics manufacturing capacity in Bangladesh. It also aimed to strengthen the DGDA to ensure vaccine supply security, reads a press release.

"This project aims to build Bangladesh's resilience against future pandemics, improve vaccine supply security, and reduce the incidence and severity of vaccine-preventable diseases," said ADB Principal Health Specialist Dinesh Arora.

MRT police still not a separate unit

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Despite the prime minister's directive to form a dedicated police unit to ensure metro rail's security, the Metro Rail (MRT) Police has gained approval to operate only as a wing of Police Headquarters.

On October 31, 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued the directive, and posts for MRT police were created in May this year, but it was sanctioned as a wing of PHQ instead.

"We are the sole operational unit to ensure the security of metro rail, functioning as a PHQ wing," Jehadul Kabir, deputy inspector general of MRT police wing, told The Daily Star yesterday.

PHQ sent a proposal to the home ministry to create a separate police unit for metro rail, demanding a manpower of 1,039 officials, and the ministry approved 809 people.

Then the proposal got approved

as a "separate police unit" from the public administration and finance ministries with a manpower of 357 people.

Ultimately, the proposal got final approval from the secretary committee as a police wing with a manpower of 231 members, according to sources.

DIG Jehadul said, "We got to know that we got approval as a wing of PHQ, although it was supposed to be an operational unit."

"We wanted to investigate and prosecute criminal offences taking place in metro rail areas, but now it's not possible since we are working as a wing," he said.

Besides, the manpower is inadequate. The proposal was approved with a manpower of only three members per station, he said.

"But in reality, we are facing difficulties to tackle the pressure of huge numbers of

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Initially set to function as an independent unit, MRT police, struggling amid manpower crisis, currently serves as a wing under Police Headquarters. The photo was taken recently.

Cops want CCTV, scanners for metro stations

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In a bid to enhance security measures for the metro rail, the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) police wing has proposed the installation of luggage scanners at all stations.

A letter outlining the proposal was submitted to the Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL) last month.

Besides, MRT police also requested to install CCTV cameras outside the stations to ensure full-proof security during the ongoing blockade and strike. Currently, CCTVs are only inside stations.

The matter of installing scanners and CCTV was also discussed during a safety review meeting on Tuesday.

Jehadul Kabir, deputy inspector general (DIG) of MRT police wing, confirmed the developments to The Daily Star yesterday.

He emphasised the increasing number of individuals opting for metro rail travel, many of whom carry

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