



**Taka depreciation likely to continue: Bangladesh Bank**



**Sporting pitches in BCL encouraging seamers**



**Gaza children dizzy from hunger as food aid halted**



**Sand lifting threatens riverside villages**

## Vote for boat to let us serve you again

Hasina tells Sylhet rally, kicks off AL's campaign

UNB, Sylhet

Sylhet city wore a festive look, and the ambiance all around was one of joy and fervour, as Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday kicked off her party's election campaign at the Government Alia Madrasah ground yesterday.

Addressing a grand rally there, she urged people to vote for AL so that the party can once again serve the nation.

The event was organised by the local district and city units of the ruling party.

Before coming to the venue, Hasina, also the prime minister, offered prayers at the shrines of saints Hazrat Shahjalal and Hazrat Shah Paran on the outskirts of the city.

As the programme began, local singers performed traditional Sylheti songs to welcome Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana.

After getting on the boat-shaped stage, Hasina and Rehana waved Bangladesh flags as the crowd cheered and waved mini flags.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with her sister Sheikh Rehana waving the national flag during a grand rally at the Government Alia Madrasah in Sylhet city, as she kicked off the ruling party's election campaign yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

## TRAIN SABOTAGE Cops zero in on two unidentified young men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Moments before the fire was spotted in the coupling between the Ja and Jha carriages of Mohanganj Express on Tuesday morning, two youths were seen acting suspiciously.

Although a cold wind was blowing, the two were standing near the door of a carriage keeping it open. At one stage, a passenger asked them why they were standing there.

The youths said they were discussing something and that they would take their seats soon, a top official of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star yesterday quoting a passenger.

He said they were talking with passengers and recording their statements.

"We are verifying the

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**"They [BNP-Jamaat] thought that with some incidents of arson attacks, the government would fall. It's not that easy..."**

Sheikh Hasina

### OUST-GOVT MOVEMENT

## Non-cooperation call after 27 years

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP and its allies have announced a non-cooperation movement to press home their demand for a neutral polls-time government, in echoes of the one launched by the then opposition Awami League and its allies in 1996.

"From this moment, we are urging government employees of all tiers and also the patriotic people not to cooperate with this illegal regime," said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, while announcing the party's non-cooperation movement in a virtual press briefing yesterday.

The outcome that the BNP and its allies are hoping for is what the AL had achieved 27 years ago.

On February 15, 1996, a general election was held that was boycotted by all major opposition parties.

The then opposition led by the Awami League was demanding the installation of a neutral caretaker government to oversee the election, citing a 1994 by-election that was marred by extensive irregularities as evidence of the BNP's inability to hold a free and fair election.

Despite the boycott, the February election went ahead and the then prime minister

Khaleda Zia's BNP was re-elected for the second term in a landslide victory.

A series of hartals were called by the other parties and an indefinite non-cooperation movement was called until demands for a new, free election under a caretaker government were met.

On March 23, 1996, the Janatar Mancha was set up in front of the Jatiya Press Club. Led by Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, who was a member of the Planning Commission then, a section of government officials and employees of the secretariat violated public service rules and joined the AL's Janatar Mancha to dislodge the BNP government.

Given the escalating political turmoil, two days after the Janatar Mancha was formed, the sitting parliament enacted the thirteenth constitutional amendment to allow a neutral caretaker government to assume power and conduct a fresh parliamentary election.

To mobilise support for the non-cooperation movement, the BNP and its allies including Jamaat-e-Islami have called for a three-day countrywide mass contact programme from today and a dawn-to-dusk nationwide blockade on December 24.

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## Rail vulnerable to sabotage at 350 points

Finds Bangladesh Railway, moves to address the risks

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Amid increasing acts of sabotage, Bangladesh Railway has identified 350 vulnerable places on the nearly 3,000 kilometres of railway lines across the country.

In Dhaka, Gazipur, Tangail, Narsingdi, and Narayanganj districts, there are 55 spots, said Anowar Hossain, superintendent of Dhaka Railway Police, adding that police were guarding those spots round the clock.

Bangladesh Railway (BR) officials say it is difficult to ensure proper security on the rail lines that go through remote areas, swamps, secluded places, and forests.

Since the risky places are in those areas, railway police would soon patrol the lines on foot, sources said.

AM Saleh Uddin, joint director general (operations) at the BR, said officials were taking measures to address the vulnerabilities at the 350 spots.

It is hard to combat saboteurs who board trains as passengers, he said. "But we are doing our best to make railways safer."

Four travellers, including a toddler, died in a fire at Mohanganj Express in the capital before daybreak on Tuesday. Police say the train was set on fire by saboteurs.

Around 7:00pm yesterday, BR employees in Rajarhat upazila of

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STORIES ON PAGE 3

- ➡ No AL independents in 16 Dhaka seats
- ➡ 'King's parties' offices gather dust
- ➡ AL grassroots 'siding' with independents
- ➡ Ctg-8 to get fourth lawmaker in five years

## Soumya heroics in vain

Kiwis seal ODI series

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Soumya Sarkar's first century in international cricket after five years was the only bright spot in a comprehensive seven-wicket defeat for Bangladesh against New Zealand in the second ODI of the three-match series at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday.

Soumya's career-best 169 off 151 deliveries – the highest score by an Asian batter in ODIs in New Zealand – powered Bangladesh to 291, their highest ever ODI total against the Kiwis in New Zealand.

But the total proved woefully insufficient in the batting friendly conditions in Nelson as the Kiwis chased the target in 46.2 overs.

Apart from Soumya, experienced Mushfiqur Rahim's 45 was the only other significant performance for the Tigers

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Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar jumps in the air to celebrate his century against New Zealand during the second ODI at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. The left-handed batter ended a long lean patch with a record-breaking 169, but Bangladesh lost the game by seven wickets to concede the series.

PHOTO: AFP

## Another 31 BNP men jailed over political violence

Charges framed against 213 others including Aman in two cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 31 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment yesterday in two cases filed in 2018 over political violence in the capital.

With this, at least 1,096 BNP-Jamaat activists have been jailed since November 7 this year in 64 cases lodged between June 2011 and December 2018 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets, rioting, damaging properties, arson attacks on vehicles, vandalism, and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

Yesterday, 19 BNP leaders and activists were given two years' imprisonment in a case lodged with Paltan Model Police Station in February 2018.

Of the convicts, Rafiqul Alam Majnu, member secretary of BNP's Dhaka south city unit, and Saiful Alam Nirob, former Jubo Dal president, were present at the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mainul Islam delivered the verdict.

BNP Joint Secretary General Habibun Nabi Khan Sohel, executive committee member Mashhur Rahman Biplob, former JCD president Razib Ahsan and BNP's Savar municipality unit President Kazi Md Refat Ullah are among the convicts.

During the trial, five prosecution witnesses testified

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