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CARETAKER SYSTEM, EC

## AL to join parliament, place reform proposals

### Hasina at post-long march rally warns govt of mass resignation if recommendations not accepted; agitation on street will continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at a grand rally in the capital yesterday announced that her party will return to parliament to place the proposals for reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems. "But if the government refuses to carry out the proposals to the letter, we will resign all together," Hasina told the rally where people in their thousands gathered after a four-

day long march towards Dhaka. "The public has given its verdict in favour of our reform proposals and registered once again no-confidence in the Khaleda-Nizami regime by joining the long march," she said. "Carrying with us the people's verdict, we will place the reform proposals in parliament to establish the people's right," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), added. Sources said AL will return to

parliament either on Tuesday or Wednesday. The ongoing session has been scheduled to be protracted on February 15. With the return, AL will end a 16-month boycott for, they maintain, not allowing the opposition to speak. The return will also save the membership of the opposition leader who remains at the risk of losing her seat in case of not attending the House in the next six workdays. Amid thunderous claps and slogans by thousands of demon-

strators, Hasina said, "The government has no alternative but to agree to implement the reforms in the caretaker government and Election Commission." She reiterated that the 14-party opposition alliance will neither contest nor allow any election in the country before the reforms are brought about. "Agitation on the streets for an end to the despotic rule of Khaleda-Nizami will run in parallel with the

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## US, UK, EU hail AL decision to join JS

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The USA, the UK and the European Union (EU) yesterday welcomed the decision of the Awami League to join parliament.

"We certainly welcome Awami League's return to parliament and hope that they will be able to engage in constructive dialogue in parliament rather than (agitating) on the street," a US Embassy spokesperson, reacting to Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina's declaration at a post-long-march rally, told the news agency last evening.

Similar welcome notes also came from the UK and the European Union's Delegation here.

"We obviously welcome the decision by the opposition and we always want them to play their role in the House for the sake of democracy and people," said a spokesperson at the British High Commission.

A spokesperson for the European Commission Delegation

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## High Court halts mass arrest again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued injunction restraining the government from any further arrest without warrant under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Ordinance.

The court order came amid blanket arrests of opposition leaders, activists and common people across the country ahead of the 14-party opposition's long march towards Dhaka.

Law enforcement agencies arrested over 10,000 people across the country to contain the long march. The government, however, denied the allegation.

The court also asked for strict compliance of the High Court guidelines of April 7, 2003 regarding exercise of powers of arrest without warrant under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure

(CrPC) and section 86 of the DMP Ordinance.

The two-member HC division bench directed the respondents to submit a report in two weeks detailing the names and particulars of persons arrested under the two laws.

The bench also issued a rule upon the government asking it to explain why section 86 of the DMP Ordinance should not be declared unlawful and ultra vires of the constitution.

The rule is returnable in three weeks.

It asked the government to explain why the 'wholesale' arrests and detention of citizens under section 54 of the CrPC should not be declared illegal and why it should not be directed to refrain from 'unwarranted and abusive exercise of powers' under section 86 of the DMP Ordinance.

The court asked the respondents to strictly exercise powers of arrest and investigation within the limits established by law and the constitution and in particular the safeguards guaranteed by the constitution.

Furthermore, the court asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to pay compensation to those arrested and detained 'in derogation of their fundamental rights'.

The respondents are secretaries of the ministries of home and law, inspector general of police, chief metropolitan magistrate, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and IG (prisons).

The HC injunction and rulings came following a writ petition filed by advocate ZI Khan Panna, chairman of the human rights wing of

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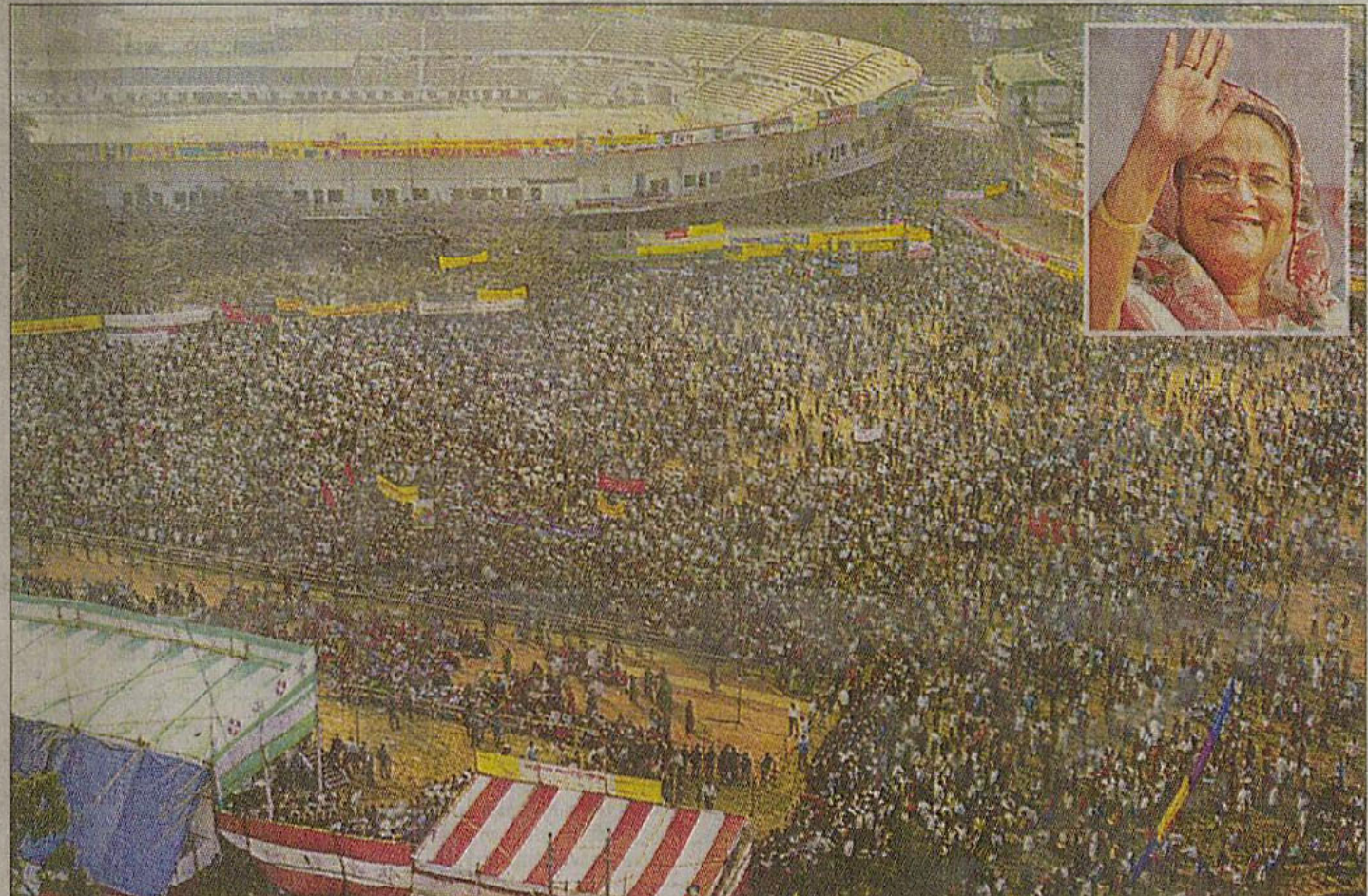


PHOTO: STAR

A bird's eye view of the post-long march rally organised by the 14-party opposition combine in the city's Paltan Maidan yesterday.

## Opposition calls hartal for Feb 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition alliance will observe countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on February 15 demanding uninterrupted power supply and reduction of the prices of fertiliser and fuel.

The 6:00am to 6:00pm hartal will also coincide with the day of controversial sixth parliamentary elections in 1996 that was held amid boycott of the major political parties except then ruling BNP.

Leader of the Opposition and AL chief, Sheikh Hasina announced the month-long agitation programme as part of the opposition's ongoing movement to force the BNP-jamaat-led coalition to

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## CARETAKER GOVT SYSTEM BNP bigwigs see no need for reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party government is not going to reform the caretaker government system as demanded by the mainstream opposition political parties.

Awami League and its allies are demanding amendment to the caretaker government system so that a person acceptable to all can be appointed as the chief adviser.

But a number of policymakers of the government said the caretaker government law already provides for appointing a chief adviser accepted to all.

Following the 14-party combine's long march yesterday, the

opposition declared that it will place the caretaker government reform proposal in parliament.

Standing Committee Member of the ruling BNP and Health Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain told The Daily Star that BNP does not feel the necessity of amending the existing provision for appointing the chief adviser.

The caretaker government law already covers the opposition's demand for appointing a person acceptable to all as the chief adviser, he pointed out.

According to the constitution's article 58(c), the caretaker government will be formed with a chief

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## Bill seeking 2-yr extension of speedy trial law placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill was placed in parliament yesterday seeking another two-year extension of the much-talked-about Speedy Trial law, while the government will soon place another bill for enacting the anti-terrorism act.

Once the bill is passed by the House, the speedy trial law will have effectiveness until April 2008. The law, which was enacted in 2002 for two years and extended for two more years in 2004, expires on April 9 this year.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry for scrutiny.

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## Urea output hiccups on tripping plants

REAZ AHMAD

With the suspension of urea production in one factory or the other almost on regular intervals, fertiliser production in the country is now facing a setback during the peak sowing season.

Production at the Jamuna Fertiliser Factory, one of the six urea factories run by the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), came to a complete halt on Thursday last due

to a reactor leakage and the authorities fear it will not be operative before February 14.

Thirteen days of Jamuna closure would mean production loss of 19,500 tonnes of urea at the most conservative calculation of per day production capacity of 1500 tonnes, officials concerned said.

Last month BCIC incurred a production loss of 26,400 tonnes of urea due to suspension of work at Zia Fertiliser Factory for 22 days at a stretch.

Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company (CUFL) was out of production for a record 61-day last year.

BCIC is worried at repeated suspensions of production at one factory or the other as low level of domestic urea production and rising demand for the chemical fertiliser in the country have forced the government to arrange import of nine lakh tonne urea in 2005-06 fiscal year.

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## VOTER LIST SC orders full bench hearing of EC petition on Feb 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday re-fixed February 19 for a full-bench hearing of the Election Commission (EC) petition for leave-to-appeal against the January 4 High Court (HC) observations on the preparation of a fresh voter list.

The hearing was scheduled for today. Now the hearing will take place a day before the EC deadline for collection of voters' information for listing them.

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### ANNOUNCEMENT

On the occasion of its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, The Daily Star is bringing out a series of six special colour supplements.

The 52-page second supplement titled "Trends" will be included in tomorrow's issue. It portrays the changing lifestyles of modern Bangladeshis in urban settings. It will have special sections on fashion, interior decoration, furniture, jewellery etc.

The next supplement on "Our Cities" will come out on Friday, February 10. It focuses on the historical and contemporary aspects of six of our biggest cities. It includes a special 20-page section on Dhaka, suggesting ways to solve some of its urgent problems.

Ask your hawker for your copy. Price Tk 10 (daily paper plus the supplement)

# The Daily Star

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## 100 hurt as cops beat up marchers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Defying countrywide mass-arrest, obstacles, harassment and attacks by police and ruling alliance cadres, the leaders, workers and supporters of the 14-party opposition line-up yesterday joined the grand rally at Paltan Maidan, ending the four-day long march.

The police charged baton on 14-party opposition gatherings at some places, with the ruling coalition cadres joining them at Daudkandi, Manikganj, Gouripur and Sadarghat and Tantibazar in the capital, injuring over 100 rally-goers.

The opposition marchers from across the country started entering the capital since early in the morning through Gabtoli, Uttara, Sadarghat, Kamalapur, Syedabad,

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## POWER CRISIS Farmers hem in MP's home, DC office

UNB, Chapainawabganj

More than a thousand farmers of the Barind region besieged the residence of ruling party lawmaker Harunur Rashid and the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office yesterday demanding uninterrupted power supply for irrigation to IRRIBoro fields.

The procession of farmers submitted a memorandum to the lawmaker and DC pleading for power supply. They said their paddy fields would dry up if they did not receive adequate power supply. A large number of irrigation pumps have already been damaged due to severe load shedding, they added.

Expressing solidarity with the farmers Rashid assured them of

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STAY GLOBAL

