

## Decision to deploy army keeping advisers in dark, late night reversal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a sudden unilateral move, keeping his advisers in the dark, President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday decided to deploy army across the country in aid of the civil administration to maintain law and order.

The home secretary had sent the decision to the local administration in the afternoon.

But a late night handout by a joint secretary of the home ministry said: "In fact, regarding the army deployment the government has decided that the troops might be deployed after taking into consideration the situation. Since no such situation has arisen, the decision to deploy the army has not yet been taken."

However, the advisers were in the dark about the decision and only a hint of the deployment was dropped by Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam at the end of the council of advisers' meeting last night. The decision was taken in the afternoon, long before the meeting and sent to the deputy commissioners in letters signed by him.

Mahbubul Alam, adviser for information, told the media at 9:15pm that the issue of army deployment was not discussed at the meeting.

"I am not aware of any such decision," he said.

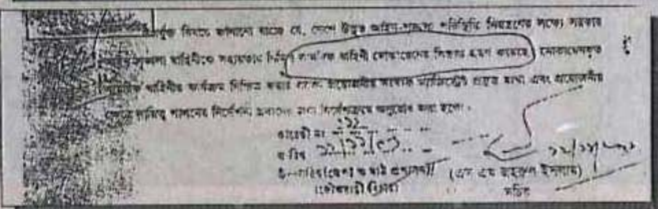
According to meeting sources, the president/ chief adviser did not

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### Late night press note

It is noticed that different television channels have been telecasting news saying, 'The government has decided to deploy the army to maintain law and order.' In fact, regarding the army deployment the government has decided that the troops might be deployed after taking into consideration the situation. Since no such situation has arisen, the

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The home secretary's circular about the decision to deploy troops.

## Blockade stops life in mid-track

### Peaceful demonstrations mark first day of indefinite programme

STAR REPORT

Normal life and business activities came to a standstill as an indefinite blockade programme enforced by the 14-party alliance demanding implementation of its 11-point task started yesterday across the country. The first day's blockade passed off almost peacefully.

In general, the activists of the Awami League-led alliance followed the police ban on carrying sticks and oars at rallies and gathering. A few places, however, witnessed defying of the ban.

The capital was cut off from the rest of the country on the first day of the countrywide blockade.

The demonstrators damaged train carriages and buses at different places of the country.

However, as both demonstrators and law enforcers did not resort to any extreme measures, no major incidents of violence were reported except for a few stray ones, including a firing in Bogra that left six bullet-hit.

Activities at the Chittagong and Mongla ports came to a total halt. No activities were also seen at any of the land ports.

Dhaka Stock Exchange remained closed although Chittagong Stock Exchange was open. Transactions at the banks were insignificant.

The government and semi-government offices remained open but presence was thin.

The countrywide blockade is the first ever demonstration against a caretaker government.

AL President Sheikh Hasina on Saturday declared the blockade programme on behalf of the 14-party alliance observing that Chief Adviser to the present caretaker government President Iajuddin Ahmed has failed to prove his neutrality since assuming office.

The alliance asked its activists to cut the communication over road, rail and river to paralyse the country. The alliance leaders said they will continue the blockade until their demands are met.

Six persons, including three BNP men and two AL adherents, received bullet injuries in a clash between the two parties in front of Sonatola AL office in Bogra yesterday afternoon.

The clash ensued when someone from a passing procession of the BNP threw bricks on a 14-

party rally at about 4:30pm. During the chaos, fires were shot and several crackers were blasted that left the six bullet-hit.

The injured are BNP activists Badsha, 40, Zahedul, 45, and Mukul, 40, Jubo League activists Helal, 28, and Rabbani, 30, and a pedestrian.

In Kishoreganj, three persons were injured when BNP and Jamaat workers locked in clashes with 14-party activists. The police intervened to bring the situation under control.

**THE CAPITAL**  
A festive mood was seen among the 14-party leaders and activists gathering at Paltan, Muktangan, Noor Hossain intersection, and Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital during the blockade yesterday. Participants sang folk songs during intervals between speeches while many youths with red bands tied around forehead were seen dancing.

The demonstrators dominated the streets in Mirpur, Pallabi and Gabtoli since morning.

The first day's blockade passed off almost peacefully in the capital except for incidents of vandalising glasses of two buses and the wind-

shield of a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) pickup van.

Demonstrators assembled at the Mirpur-10 roundabout, Pallabi bus stand and Mazar Road in the morning. They held rallies and sang patriotic and party songs.

The Gabtoli Bus Terminal remained idle all day long with no buses leaving or arriving. No vehicles except rickshaws were seen on the Dhaka-Chittagong and Kanchpur-Narsingdi highways.

Two persons-Rokonuzzaman, 26, a Jatiyabadi Samajtantrik Dal activist, and a pedestrian-suffered burn injuries while setting fire to an effigy of Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz.

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of Jahangirnagar University set fire to a passenger bus on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway in the morning.

The police picked up three BCL activists for picketing on the highway but released them later. A Rab member beat up an on-duty security guard for not being able to identify who set ablaze the law enforcement agency's vehicle.

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## Aziz wants to announce polls schedule Nov 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz remains nonchalant about the growing crisis in the political arena centring demands for his immediate resignation and is preparing to declare the schedules for the next general elections.

"The election schedules will be declared by November 25," Aziz told reporters while leaving his office yesterday afternoon. He, however, repeatedly declined earlier to talk to reporters who tried to communicate him through his personal secretary.

Aziz declined to answer any further questions regarding the next parliamentary elections and left the EC premises amid tight security.

Meanwhile, the 14-party alliance led by Awami League (AL) also remains rigid on its stance against participating in the polls under the

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## Advisers fail to find EC reforms answer, sit again today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers to the caretaker government (CG) last night discussed how to make the election commission (EC) acceptable but failed to reach a conclusion. It will meet again today to discuss the same issue.

The discussion took place at an emergency meeting of the council in the office of the president, Bangabhaban, with Chief Adviser (CA) Iajuddin Ahmed in the chair where all advisers were present.

The council talked in detail about the EC for a long time and discussed all alternative proposals, which came from the advisers, for making the EC acceptable to all, said sources.

Adviser Hasan Mashhud

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## Situation doesn't call for army deployment, 14-party says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The AL has expressed its surprise at the decision to deploy the army and said no such situation has arisen in the country that necessitates army deployment in aid of the civil administration.

"We hope no-one will use our national asset army with a political motive and conspire to put them face-to-face with the people," AL General Secretary and coordinator of the 14-party alliance Abdul Jalil said in a press statement last night.

"We are surprised to know that the home ministry has decided to deploy army in aid of the civil administration because no such situation has arisen in the country that has necessitated deployment of army to assist the civil administration," reads the handwritten statement The Daily Star received

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14-party in support of its blockade programme brings out a procession, left, from Cherag Ali shopping centre in Tongi yesterday that marched towards Tongi Railway Station; Activists of 14-party stopped a train at Tongi Rail Gate and set fire to one of its seats.



PHOTO: STAR

## CG, EC must respect their neutral roles

### Boucher says after meeting Iajuddin

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher yesterday said the caretaker government and the Election Commission must respect their neutral roles under the constitution in holding free and fair polls, without any outside influence.

"They must respect their constitutional role and act neutrally without being biased so people's voice is heard," he told reporters at the gate of Bangabhaban after his nearly an hour-long meeting with President and Chief Adviser Prof Iajuddin Ahmed.

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## Goods pile up at ports on political gridlock

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business activities at the country's sea and land ports came to a halt yesterday due to countrywide non-stop blockade by Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance.

Sources said loading and unloading of goods at Chittagong seaport suspended yesterday afternoon when blockade-supporting port workers first stop their works and then forced others to do so.

Earlier, the 14-party alliance supporters and workers started different programmes from the morning in support of the blockade near the seaport area and different city points.

Chittagong City Mayor

Mohiuddin Chowdhury addressed a number of rallies around the port area and threatened to initiate tighter movement from today. "We won't allow any sort of operation inside the port and also in the Bandar Bhaban from Monday. No port officials would be allowed to work," Chowdhury said.

A total of 18,400 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) containers got stuck at the port due to the blockade.

However, operation at the newly built New Mooring Container Terminal was normal, sources said. Activities at Mongla seaport and 11 land ports were also remained suspended since yesterday morning, sources said.

Our Khulna correspondent

reported that no activities were took place at Mongla port till 4 pm yesterday. Port workers, loyal to 14-party alliance, observed a peaceful siege programme at the port.

Benapole port authority shut down all the gates of the port barring transportation of goods to and from India considering security measures, sources said.

A number of lorries carrying goods were stuck at India's Petrapole port due to yesterday's blocked programme. People, who were intended to travel India, got stranded at Benapole port, said sources.

Export and import of goods through Sonamasjid land port were also remained suspended yesterday.

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## FINANCE, SPORTS Move on to list political appointees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government is likely to cancel the appointments in finance and sports sectors made by the immediate past four-party alliance government, allegedly on political considerations.

"We already discussed the issue at one of our adviser's meeting, but we did not make any final decision in this regard," Finance and Planning adviser Akbar Ali Khan said yesterday while replying to the journalists' queries at his office.

The ministries concerned have already been directed to identify the employees who are politically biased so that the interim government can dismiss them to ensure a

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## 14-party demands new chief adviser

### To continue blockade until demands are met

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A hitherto undertow in the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition's movement rose to prominence yesterday as the coalition demanded that President Iajuddin Ahmed relinquishes the office of the chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) and appoints a 'non-partisan' person to the post.

The coalition also reiterated its demands that Iajuddin removes the present chief election commissioner (CEC) and the three other election commissioners, appoints a 'neutral person' as the CEC, and reconstitute the Election

Commission (EC). "Step down immediately from the post of the chief adviser and appoint an acceptable person to the post in accordance with the constitution," 14-party coordinator at a news briefing at AL's Dhanmondi office in the capital after a meeting of the coalition leaders.

Saying that the CEC has 'lied, taken stand against the interest of the people, and pushed the country towards confrontation', Jalil who is also the general secretary of AL, demanded that the president takes immediate action to remove

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## Blockade adds to sick industries' woes: BGMEA

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday expressed its grave concern over the future of the country's garment industry, as countrywide blockade began yesterday adding more sufferings to the sick industry.

During last six months, the garment industry has been facing adverse circumstances due to general strikes, blockades, factory vandalism, arson and other unwanted incidents.

BGMEA, in a press release yesterday, said the industry is not capable to bear further losses.

It said garment exporters apprehend that foreign orders might decline, as foreign buyers expressed their concern that the

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## BNP threatens counter programme if 14-party continues blockade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday threatened to enforce counter programme if Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance continues the ongoing countrywide blockade.

"The blockade programme was not peaceful at all and we cannot allow it for more days. We have to announce programme if they continue their programme," said the BNP leader after a meeting with the business leaders in Dhaka.

"We are observing them (AL) and will announce our programme anytime," he said.

When the reporters asked Bhuiyan about BNP-led 4-party alliance's possible reaction if the

caretaker government takes decision regarding CEC's resignation, he said, "We will see whether the decision goes against the country's interest or not. We will also examine whether it is taken in favour of any party or not."

Bhuiyan said, "They (AL) will raise another demand if Azz leaves, as they raised their demand on Aziz after fulfilling of their demand on Justice Hasan."

When asked about BNP's position if President takes initiative to resolve the present political impasse, Bhuiyan said, "We will accept if it is taken for the interest of the country. We will also give a look whether it is to favour any party or not."

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