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Blockade to be relaxed on CG's positive decision

Decides 14-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance may relax the ongoing blockade programme if the caretaker government (CG) gave a "positive" decision over the reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

AL President Sheikh Hasina at an emergency meeting with the liaison committee of the 14-party coalition last night discussed details of the blockade programme and its impact on common people and businesses.

The 14-party blockade programme has almost paralysed the country during the last three days. The coalition enforced the non-stop countrywide blockade programme to press home its 11-point demand to create a congenial atmosphere for holding a free and fair election.

The demands include reconstitution of the EC, removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC),

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All but 4-party say yes to CEC's ouster

4-party won't accept any change in EC beyond solution from 2-day talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All major political parties -- except BNP and its allies -- participating in the talks with the caretaker government advisers have strongly recommended reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) for holding a free and fair election.

On the second day of the dialogue yesterday, the Jatiya Party (JP) and Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) demanded immediate removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC) by any means, an idea opposed strongly by the BNP-led four-party alliance.

"We told them that we would not accept anything done beyond

the constitution and there is no scope in the constitution to make any changes in the EC," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters after the meeting between the council of advisers and the delegation of four-party leaders at the state guest-house Padma.

Asked if they would accept any solution worked out by advisers within the ambit of the constitution, Bhuiyan said, "We will have to see the solution first. We cannot say anything in advance."

Bhuiyan was also critical of the recent transfers of government employees by the caretaker government. "These transfers create

instability in the administration. So, it should be stopped immediately."

Asked about the demand of some political parties to take punitive actions against those involved with corruption, the BNP secretary general said, "The only duty of the caretaker government is to conduct election and execute the routine tasks."

Blasting Awami League's (AL) claim of a "peaceful blockade," he said the 14-party's obstruction to vehicular movement and attacking the police held the entire nation hostage.

"Who are they? Why will the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Shop owners won't sell to Aziz, family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shop owners of the capital have declared to stop selling products to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and his family if he does not step down by Friday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Shop Owners' Association (DMSOA) made the unusual announcement at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday saying that their business is being hampered due to the political crisis centring Aziz.

The DMSOA leaders also said that they will arrange special prayers in mosque after the next Juma prayers so that the 'Almighty makes the CEC see the point and resign from his post', if he does not stand aside by then.

"We would welcome if you [the CEC] resign and play a historic role like the former chief justice KM Hasan, otherwise we would have no option but to boycott you in every respect," DMSOA President Md Helal Uddin said holding the CEC responsible for the current political impasse and consequent

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Election commissioners 'unwilling' to continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three election commissioners are not willing to continue in their posts amid growing political crisis but the chief election commissioner (CEC) still remains rigid on his stance that he will not resign in any situation.

Talking to newsmen separately in the last couple of days, the three election commissioners -- Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, SM Zakaria and Mahmud Hasan Mansur -- hinted that they might step down anytime.

In a dramatic development, even the Election Commission (EC) secretary yesterday told reporters that he is unwilling to

continue with his job here amid 'such a chaotic situation'.

The election commissioners are very much worried about the increasing uncertainty in political arena ahead of the next parliamentary election. They also expressed their anxiety about the overall situation in the country, sources close to them said.

The sources further said public support for the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party's countrywide blockade programme has prompted the commissioners to get mentally prepared to resign.

EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar told reporters, "I don't want to stay here ... Pray for me so that the government transfers me

elsewhere."

As the political stalemate persists centring demands for resignation of CEC MA Aziz, the election commissioners have become frustrated that they could not discuss the situation with him. The CEC reacted sharply on several occasions when journalists asked him about his resignation, and this is why they (commissioners) avoided taking up the issue with him, sources said.

"I am falling sick both mentally and physically day by day while continuing with my job in such a horrible situation. I could not smile in the last few days as the situation is getting worse," an election

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Crisis to end 'very soon'

Iajuddin assures businesses

UNB, Dhaka

President and Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday expressed his hope to settle the ongoing political crisis very soon when a delegation of businessmen called on him at Bangabhaban.

The delegation, led by FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain, expressed their grave concern over the present turmoil in the country's politics.

Other members of the delegation are Mahbubur Rahman, Syed Manzur Elahi, Fazlul Haque, Mohammad Ali, Annisul Huq, AK Azad, Abdur Rashid, MA Awal and Abdul Momin.

"The president has told us that he is aware of the ongoing political crisis and hoped that there will be an amicable solution to it," Nasir told the news agency after the meeting.

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PHOTO: STAR

A tiny girl gets tired waiting at Zia International Airport yesterday as hundreds of incoming passengers had to wait for hours due to lack of transports on the third day of the 14-party blockade.

Caretaker Govt Butenis against street violence, behind-the-scenes manipulation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apparently referring to both Awami League- and BNP-led alliances, US Ambassador in Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis yesterday asked all political parties to stop "pressuring" and "influencing" the caretaker government through street violence or "from behind the scenes".

"I would like to ask the parties... all of them... to stop pressuring and trying to influence the government and advisers -- whether they are doing it in the streets through violence or from behind the scenes -- for manipulation," Butenis told reporters after a meeting with Finance and Planning Adviser Akbar Ali Khan.

Butenis said it is time to get behind the caretaker government

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Blockade continues to cripple life

STAR REPORT

The third day of the countrywide indefinite blockade enforced by 14-party coalition passed peacefully yesterday, unlike on Monday, continuing to cripple normal life for three consecutive days in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Trading was on, albeit on a smaller scale, in Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges, and a little activity was noticed inside the Chittagong port.

Except some minor stray incidents of confrontations, Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition activists reigned on the streets with marches and rallies almost without any challenge at 22 points in Dhaka city demanding immediate realisation of their 11-point charter of

demands.

But tension was mounting as fear of violence ran high at several points in the city and elsewhere in the country as BNP-led four-party alliance held rallies to counter AL demonstrations.

The capital still remains cut off from the rest of the country and land ports are still inactive due to the blockade.

Meanwhile, Mongla port still remains inactive, while no goods were transported at Chittagong port although there was a little bit of activity inside the port.

Train communication was disrupted in different places due to the blockade, while a very few launches left Sadarghat Launch Terminal due to low number of passengers.

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AL-BNP CLASH 100 vehicles damaged, 30 hurt in Ctg

UNB, Ctg

The supporters of the four-party alliance clashed with the activists of Awami League

(AL)-led 14-party combine at Barik Building crossing in the port city yesterday afternoon, damaging about 100 vehicles, roadside shops and injuring some 30 people.

Witnesses said the clash broke

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ARMY DEPLOYMENT CIRCULAR Home secy's transfer halted mysteriously

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A move to transfer Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam to the education ministry has halted midway for a mysterious reason.

Jahurul issued the controversial circular regarding army deployment Sunday, keeping the advisers to the caretaker government in the dark.

President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday summoned him to the Bangabhaban

for an explanation and the same day a step was initiated to send him to the education ministry.

According to sources, the president also wanted to know from the home secretary whether he had taken any action against the policemen responsible for Monday's mayhem at Karwan Bazar that left one killed and several others injured.

In reply, the home secretary informed Iajuddin that he was

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Controversial cop Kohinoor sent to CHT

Hartal called in Rangamati for today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Controversial Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Kohinoor Mia, held responsible for Monday's killing of an Awami League (AL) leader at city's Karwan Bazar, was transferred to Rangamati yesterday.

He will replace Mahfuzul Islam, commanding officer of the 5th Armed Police Battalion (APBn), who has been ordered to join the

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BNP protests 'killings, anarchy' by 14-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday demonstrated in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country protesting what it said, 'killings, terrorism, anarchy and conspiracy against the upcoming election by 14-party coalition'.

The immediate past ruling party held rallies and brought out marches at 17 venues in the capital.

It will hold peaceful sit-in programmes at six divisional headquarters, and marches and rallies in district towns today. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan

Bhuiyan yesterday in a statement urged the people to make today's programmes a success and also thanked them for making yesterday's programmes successful.

From the rallies, BNP leaders yesterday strongly criticised Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition for 'creating anarchy and terror'. They urged the caretaker government to announce the election schedule quickly and asked 14-party leaders to withdraw their blockade programme.

Yesterday at a rally in city's

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