

FBCCI, BGMEA hail 14-party for halting blockade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association yesterday hailed the 14-party combine for postponing its nonstop blockade programme until Sunday.
"We definitely appreciate the decision... It's a good decision, it's good for the country and the economy," FBCCI President Mir Nasir told the UNB over phone.
Nasir along with some other business leaders called on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her residence on Tuesday night and requested her to avoid any programme that ultimately affects the economy.
"We're very happy as she has

Blockade postponed

14-party pins hope on advisers' efforts, gives chief adviser 4 more days to do 11 tasks

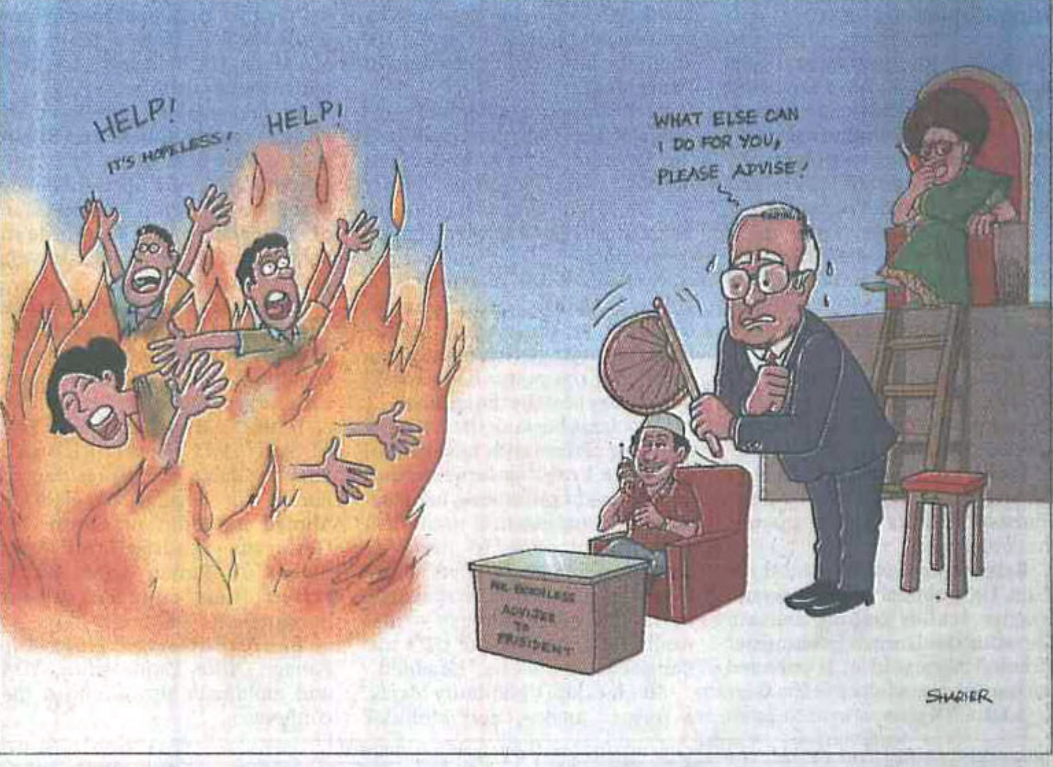
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday postponed its ongoing nationwide blockade up to Sunday and asked the chief adviser again to meet its demands, including reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) and removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC), by this time.
The blockade will resume on Monday if the alliance's 11-point demand is not met within Sunday, Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina warned President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed.

"We are giving the president and chief adviser time until Sunday evening to realise our demands. If he fails to prove his neutrality and does not meet the people's demands by this time, the indefinite countrywide blockade programme will resume on Monday," Hasina told at a crowded press conference at her Dhanmondi office.
"We have postponed our blockade programme considering people's sufferings and having confidence in the sincerity of the advisers to the caretaker government as a discussion is going on over reconstitution of the Election Commission between them and the political parties," she said.
Prior to the press conference the AL chief held meetings with the



No election commissioner willing to quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday claimed that none of the election commissioners is willing to resign now while the three election commissioners, who earlier told reporters of their unwillingness to continue their job, remained silent.
"They [election commissioners] do not have the attitude to resign from the posts. I talked to them," Secretary to the EC Secretariat Abdur Rashid Sarkar told reporters in his office yesterday.
Directed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz, the EC secretariat in a press release yesterday termed 'baseless' the report run by a section of



Ball now in CA's court

Advisers update Iajuddin on dialogue outcome, wait for his guideline to resolve crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
All eyes are now fixed on the president and chief adviser of the caretaker government as the advisers are expecting directions from him to decide the future course to resolve the ongoing political crisis.
Wrapping up a three-day dialogue between the major political parties and the caretaker government, the four advisers who on behalf of the council of advisers opened the talks, yesterday met President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed and apprised him of the outcome of the talks.

The advisers have also continued negotiation with the major political parties 'behind the scene' to reach a consensus, sources said.
"We have already informed the president about the outcome of the dialogue with the political parties and the onus now lies on him," Dr Akbar Ali Khan, who led the four-member advisory committee in negotiating with the major political parties, told reporters yesterday.
Another member of the advisory committee, CM Shafi Sami also expressed similar views.
The council of advisers to the

caretaker government is likely to sit today.
During the three-days dialogue that ended yesterday, the advisers' panel talked with major political parties and alliances and sought their opinion to resolve the ongoing political crisis centring the demand for reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).
All the political parties and alliances, except BNP and its allies, strongly recommended reconstitution of the EC including removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC).
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Juktofront for CEC's ouster

JP (Manju) tells advisers to ensure level playing field for all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Juktofront leaders yesterday unequivocally demanded immediate removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and the three other election commissioners, while Jatiya Party (Manju) said if the removal is necessary for ensuring participation of all political parties in the election, the caretaker government (CG) should decide accordingly.
On the third day of bilateral dialogues between a four-member delegation of the council of

100 hurt outside Dhaka on day 4 of blockade

STAR REPORT
The fourth day of the blockade yesterday, enforced by Awami League-led 14-party coalition, was marked by sporadic clashes in different districts across the country while the capital remained peaceful.
More than 100 activists of rival 14-party and 4-party alliances were reported injured in the clashes in Sylhet, Khagrachhari, Rajshahi and elsewhere in the country, while 50 vehicles were burnt and vandalised during the blockade.
Like on Tuesday, trading was on

Transfer process of 42 police officers halted in last moment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Advisory Council for Administrative Affairs last night approved transfer of 42 police officers, including 35 superintendents of police (SPs), but the process was halted in the eleventh hour.
While the process was on for getting President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed's signature on the transfer order, a "politically appointed" official of the former prime minister's office intervened and halted it, well-placed sources said.
The decision to transfer the 42

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Activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir set fire to several motorcycles of 14-party men at Chondipul in South Surma, Sylhet, on the fourth day of blockade yesterday.

Decision to deploy army came from president

Home secy tells VOA
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam categorically told Voice of America (VOA) on Tuesday that the decision to deploy army was taken at the instruction of President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed.
"I want to make it clear that I did not take the decision on my own. It was a decision of the government. I just carried out my duties by virtue of my position," Jahurul told VOA Bangladesh Service.
Meanwhile, although the government later decided to cancel its decision to deploy the army, it is yet to issue any circular in this regard.
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Ctg port springs to life as lockdown suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Full operations of Chittagong Port resumed last night following postponement of the 14-party's countrywide blockade programme.
Delivery of goods from the port and other activities started in full swing, reports received in Dhaka said.
All activities at the country's premier seaport remained suspended for two days-- Sunday and Monday-- due to the blockade, and partial operations resumed Tuesday morning.
Although limited activities at the port continued till yesterday

4-party extends its counter agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The BNP-led four-party alliance yesterday decided to continue its counter programmes across the country protesting 'killings, anarchy, terrorism and vandalism' by the 14-party combine.
The alliance extended its sit-in programme at divisional headquarters and rallies at district towns also for today.
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement yesterday called upon city, district and upazila-level liaison committees of the four-party coalition to make the programmes a success in their respective areas.
Meanwhile, the four-party held rallies and brought out processions in different areas of the capital

4 robbers killed in gunfight, 2 lynched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Four robbers were killed during a gunfight with police while two others lynched by locals in Raozan upazila of the district early yesterday.
The dead were identified as Azad, 27, Absar, 27, Khokan Barua, 26, Afsar, 24, Salahuddin, 27, and Alamgir, 25. All the six hailed from Kadalpur in Raozan.
Police recovered two light guns, two pipe guns, seven cartridges, one camera, two mobile phone sets and three torchlights from the spot.
Sources said a contingent of 40 cops, led by the officer-in-charge (OC) of Raozan Police Station, took position in Bibichhara area near Shamshernagar at midnight Tuesday on information that a

EC security upped amid attack report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Security was beefed up at the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat and in adjoining areas yesterday following intelligence information of 'possible attack on Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) due to his rigid stance on not stepping down.'
Several hundred additional law enforcers, uniformed and plainclothes, were deployed on the EC secretariat premises after the intelligence report about an organised threat to the security of the CEC and the three other election commissioners, sources in the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said.
Security of the residences of the CEC and the election commissioners was also tightened.
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