

# Shadow on hope as Aziz talks polls with Iajuddin

Advisers kept in wait for a guideline meeting with CA

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Politics once again seems to be on a rough chart as the chief election commissioner (CEC) met with Chief Adviser President Iajuddin Ahmed last night to discuss election schedule, dwarfing caretaker government advisers' talks with major political parties on Election Commission (EC) reconstitution.

CEC MA Aziz, who met Iajuddin with his team of commissioners within hours of BNP and Jamaat's demanding for immediate announcement of polls schedule, told reporters that nothing but election preparation was on the

agenda in his talks with the president.

The chief adviser asked the CEC and three other election commissioners to announce the poll schedule as soon as possible, meetings sources said.

Aziz earlier told the press that the election schedule will be announced by November 25.

Early yesterday afternoon, an angry 14-party team met Iajuddin and told him to reconstitute the EC before announcing the election schedule. Otherwise, a tougher movement including countrywide blockade will commence from Monday, the Awami League-led 14-

party leaders said.

The Liberal Democratic Party and Jatiya Party had also demanded reconstitution of the EC in their separate meetings with the advisory council.

Although the time fuse gets shorter, the president and chief adviser finds no time to sit with his advisers before Monday to discuss whether his cabinet could pull up any solution to the EC debate.

Observing the situation, many said both the president and the caretaker government advisory council are apparently moving slowly to break the ongoing political stalemate centring the EC

reconstitution and this is triggering apprehension of further deepening of the crisis.

The council of advisers, who could not take any decision over reconstitution of the EC in the last 17 days, has been waiting for directives from the president and chief adviser on the basis of the outcomes of a dialogue between the advisers and major political parties.

Meanwhile, wrapping up the three-day long dialogue on Wednesday, the advisory committee yesterday repeatedly communicated with the Bangabhaban to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Life back on track

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Life in the city picked up its pace again yesterday after lumbering for four days as Awami League (AL) led 14-party combine suspended its countrywide blockade programme until next Sunday.

The public and private enterprises, banks, schools and shopping malls were buzzing with activities while the usual traffic jam scenario was seen at different intersections of the city as motorised vehicles returned to the streets, which were dominated only by the rickshaws for the past few days.

Businesses at the Motijheel moved on in full swing with people thronging the commercial hub of the capital.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

# Announce poll schedule regardless of parties taking part in election

Khaleda asks CG not to talk lot and help EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday asked the caretaker government to take measures to announce the election schedule without delay.

"No matter who takes part in the election and who doesn't... your only duty now is to announce the

schedule for the national polls," she said pointing at the caretaker government.

At a view-exchange meeting with leaders and workers of Diploma Peshajibi Parishad at Diploma Engineers Institute auditorium in the city, she also said, "The election must be held within 90 days. It's not the caretaker gov-

ernment's job to work out who to participate in the election and who not."

"Instead of talking a lot, you should better help the Election Commission hold a free and fair election," she said calling on the interim government not to bother about any unconstitutional or

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Home retracts army circular for deployment

UNB, Dhaka

The home ministry has retracted its circular issued on November 12 on deployment of army in aid of civil administration.

"The circular issued by the home ministry on November 12 has been cancelled," said an order signed by Home Secretary SM Zahurul Islam yesterday.

The abrogation order has been sent to cabinet secretary, establishment secretary, all divisional commissioners, all chief metropolitan magistrates and district magistrates.

The circular was issued regarding army deployment in aid of the administration to maintain law and order across the country in view of political unrest over election issues.

## Deprived officials demonstrate at ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of government officials deprived of promotion and posting during last five years staged a sit-in inside and in front of the establishment secretary's office yesterday to press their demand for immediate promotion.

The group led by Abu Alam Shaheed, former personal secretary to then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, urged the ministry to be unbiased in promoting and posting officials.

"We are worried that a section of officials loyal to the immediate past

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Banks in business centres to remain open on Saturdays

Covered vans can move thru' city during daytime

UNB, Dhaka

The commercial banks at important business centres will remain open on Saturdays while covered vans and trucks will be allowed to move in Dhaka and Narayanganj during daytime until Sunday.

Bangladesh Bank yesterday reminded the commercial banks to keep their branches open on Saturdays to facilitate foreign trade and transactions.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

# 14-party accuses Iajuddin of partisan activities

Says he will have to take responsibility if poll process hampered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leaders of the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance yesterday said President and Chief Adviser of the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed would be responsible if election process is hampered due to his 'unconstitutional and partisan' activities.

"If you (president) fail to act neutrally as the chief of the caretaker government, confrontation is must and the election will be uncertain. If such a situation is created, you will be responsible," 14-party coordinator Abdul Jalil

quoted his conversation at the press briefing at AL's Dhanmondi office following a meeting with Iajuddin.

"We have told him [chief adviser] to carry out the 11-point demand to create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election," he said, adding, "We have also told him that non-stop countrywide blockade programme will resume if he fails to meet our demand."

Prior to the briefing the 14-party held a meeting there with AL President Sheikh Hasina in the chair and discussed details of the

current political situation.

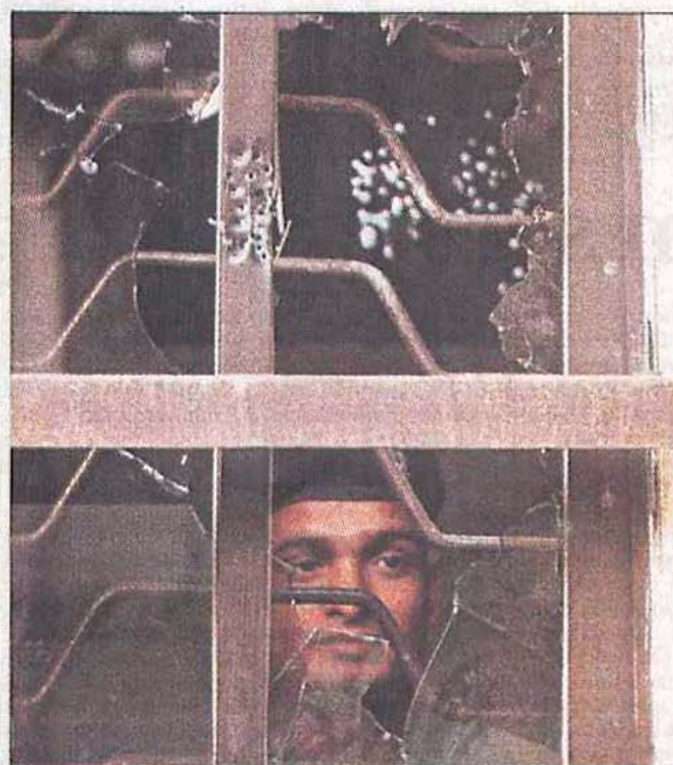
Earlier a three member AL delegation -- Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim -- met the president and chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) and asked him to realise the 11-point demand within Sunday to prove his neutrality.

At the press briefing, Jalil said they have also told the chief adviser that if he fails to take proper action, people will build up resistance and create mass upsurge in the country to press home the demands.

If the partisan president cannot

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

# Shots fired at election commissioner's house



Bullet-riddled windowpane of the Mohammadpur residence of Election Commissioner Mahmud Hasan Mansur.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite stepped up security for the election commissioners, the Mohammadpur residence of Election Commissioner Mahmud Hasan Mansur came under fire yesterday morning.

The commissioner was home when some unknown men shot several times at the house on 7/10, Sir Syed Ahmed Road. None suffered any injury though.

Witnesses said they saw a white microbus roaming the road and its adjacent lanes around 5:45am.

On finding the house after some time, the attackers fired several shots at it and sped away in the microbus, said Momen, a next door guard.

No one tried to stop the vehicle, said an employee of Nabil Paribahan, located 25 yards off the scene.

The law enforcers found five bullet holes on the boundary wall and the tin-roofed guardroom on the premises.

They said the bullets were fired from shotguns.

Seven policemen were posted at the house during the attack. Of them, one was watching over from the guardroom, another was walking on the lawn while the rest were inside the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

# ROW OVER GANTRY CRANE Full operations at Ctg port hampered

RAFIQ HASAN

Business activities at Chittagong Port could not resume fully yesterday as the operation of four vital gantry cranes remained suspended.

The four Quay Gantry Crane (QGC) were installed in January this year at a cost of Tk 150 crore to accelerate the loading and unloading activities at the premier port.

Suspended since November 12 for political agitation programme,

operation of the gantry cranes could not resume yesterday even after postponement of the programme as Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury opposed the operation by private operators, sources said.

Negotiation is going on to start operation of the gantry cranes, Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) member (Traffic) Ahsanul Kabir said yesterday evening.

A delegation comprising CPA

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

# Files pile at overloaded CA's ministries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government Iajuddin Ahmed has been under tremendous workload as huge number of files from the 10 ministries and divisions under his supervision await his approval on a daily basis.

Bangabhaban sources said the condition of the chief adviser's health does not permit over work and his personal physician suggested tolerable workload for him.

The chief adviser has to sign more than 500 files and letters

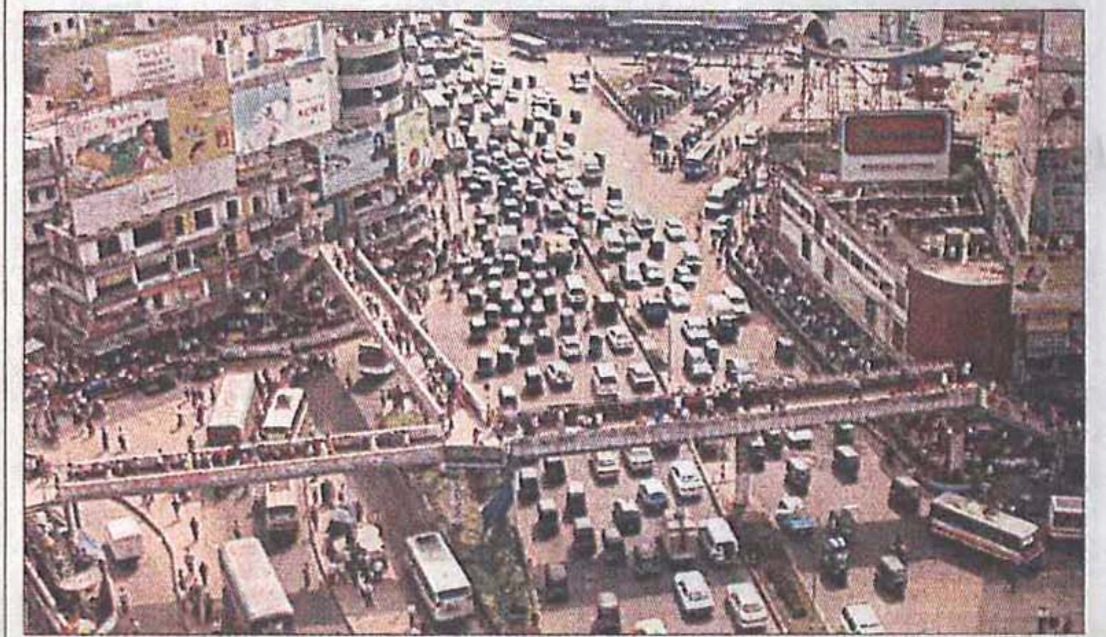
everyday.

Sources said over 2,000 files from the education ministry alone have been stockpiled in the Bangabhaban awaiting the chief adviser's perusal.

"The education ministry every day needs signature of its minister on more than 200 files which now awaiting the chief adviser," an official of the ministry told The Daily Star requesting anonymity.

He said files related with all kinds of recruitment, project approval and fund-release need

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Heavy traffic was seen again at Farmgate in Dhaka yesterday after the postponement of 14-party blockade.

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