

# 14-party warns CA

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 general secretary of AL, said only 24 hours are left for Iajuddin to meet the demands that include among others reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC). If he fails to carry out the proposals "aimed at creating an atmosphere conducive to free and fair conduct of the election" by this time, the countrymen will go on with the blockade programme for the third time.

The plot thickens due to the dilly-dallying tactics of the president, the AL leader alleged.

He observed, "He [Iajuddin] is still trying to keep intact the BNP-Jamaat's blueprint for election engineering. By taking hasty measures to announce the election schedule even before initiating steps to reconstitute the Election Commission, Iajuddin in fact is trying to destroy the electoral and democratic process."

The president is dragging his feet despite knowing well that the blockade will start again on Monday, Jaiil said adding that public patience is wearing thin with Iajuddin's indifference to the 11-demand.

He also said if the AL and its allies are compelled to take up the agitation, the CA, chief election commissioner (CEC), three other election commissioners, and the bureaucrats working for BNP-Jamaat will have to shoulder the responsibility.

Jaiil warned that situation would turn even more volatile if the four-party alliance does not desist from backing CEC MA Aziz and the politically appointed election commissioners immediately. Anxious about having to suffer an election debacle, the BNP-Jamaat coalition has been pushing the country towards violent confrontations, he added.

The 14-party leader alleged that the immediate past ruling coalition has long been conspiring to hold a 'blueprint election' like that of 15 February 1996. They have been

# Iraqi troops hunt on for kidnapped Westerners

AFF, Basra

Security forces were hunting yesterday for two Westerners kidnapped in southern Iraq after an American hostage was found dead and two others rescued in the violence-wracked country, where British Prime Minister Tony Blair conceded the situation was a disaster.

Five Westerners -- four US citizens and an Austrian -- working as security guards for a Kuwaiti company were kidnapped on Thursday while escorting a 49-truck convoy near the southern town of Safwan.

The latest kidnapping, which came just two days after dozens were abducted from a Baghdad government ministry building -- with many still missing -- is yet another example of increased violence in war-torn Iraq.

Five more people were killed Saturday, including three policemen shot dead by insurgents in the restive Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad. Three corpses were also found in Baquba, the capital of Diyala.

Blair on Friday acknowledged that the situation in the country after the US and British invasion of March 2003 was a disaster.

In an interview on Al-Jazeera's newly launched English-language channel, Blair was challenged about what interviewer David Frost said had "so far been pretty much of a disaster".

# 1-pt movement

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 AD Joint General Secretary Obaidul Kader has threatened to lay a siege to Bangabhaban demanding removal of the president if the demands are not met.

The rally was addressed, among others, by Motia Chowdhury, M Nurul Islam, Pankej Bhattacharya, Moinuddin Khan Badal, Dilip Barua, Abdul Mannan and Anisur Rahman Malik.

# WB committed

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 That actually is quite a narrow definition of the World Bank's spending in microcredit, it relates only to credit lines on lending to microcredit institutions," she said.

The actual number "could be up to six percent of its total budget, about 1.3 billion dollars, if you use a much broader definition that includes credit lines, policy advice, payment systems, work on regulation and supervision as well."

"I would argue that the actual percentage of money spent in the field of microfinance is not the best measure for the commitment of an organisation to building that field," Littlefield added.

Both Yunus and Littlefield attended the summit in Halifax, Canada, at which campaigners announced their goal of extending tiny loans known as microcredit to 175 million of the world's poorest people by 2015.

Yunus, a Bangladeshi who won the Nobel prize in October, believes microcredit is one of the most powerful tools to combat dire poverty and help individuals boost their incomes.

Yunus's Grameen Bank makes loans averaging 100 dollars to destitute and often illiterate people so they can expand a small busi-

ness, such as selling food or handicrafts.

Yunus has had frequent disagreements with the World Bank over how to best alleviate world poverty.

He said at the summit that more of the global development lender's large infrastructure projects should be owned and run by local poor people, not by governments.

Littlefield said World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz is "extremely supportive" of microfinance and has visited projects in Indonesia, Mexico and India.

She said the bank's work in helping to develop domestic financial markets, payment systems and credit bureaus was "critically important to opening up access for poor people to the kinds of financial services that can help improve their lives."

Littlefield is also the chief executive of The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), a collection of 33 public and private development agencies, which promote microfinance. CGAP is housed at the World Bank.

She said that Wolfowitz had attended a meeting of CGAP agency heads in Paris last month.

# BNP tightens

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 upcoming election," Bhuiyan said, adding that the election process has to be completed before 15 days of the 90-day tenure of the caretaker government.

The high-power BNP delegation led by Khaleda also told Iajuddin that the BNP will keep supporting the caretaker government if it goes by the constitution.

"The task of the caretaker government is to carry out routine work and cooperate with the Election Commission," Bhuiyan said.

The BNP chairperson's first meeting with the chief adviser took place at a time when the caretaker government is under tremendous pressure to end the existing political deadlock through reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

From the outset, the BNP and its allies have been vehemently opposing the move to reconstitute the EC through removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC). The top leaders of the alliance have also been critical of the caretaker government for initiating the move for reconstitution of the EC.

Meanwhile, the council of advisers to the caretaker government yesterday sat at an emergency meeting to find out ways to resolve the ongoing crisis.

The advisers sat first in the morning and discussed over two hours before adjourning the meeting until 9:00pm. The BNP chairperson met the chief adviser in the evening.

Sources said the BNP delegation at the meeting strongly opposed the caretaker government's move to reconstitute the EC.

The BNP leaders also discussed the issue of transferring the civil servants.

The former ruling party leaders expressed dissatisfaction over the caretaker government's moves to sack and transfer government officials who are not related with the election process.

"The civil administration is about to disintegrate completely due to massive transfer within it," Mannan Bhuiyan told the press, adding, "A large number of officials have been transferred although their jobs are not related with the election."

"Termination of a few government officials were even beyond the capacity of the caretaker government," Bhuiyan said.

Replying to a query, Bhuiyan said the president assured them that he will look into the matter.

The BNP high command also urged the president to take necessary steps to maintain law and order and to protect life and property of the people.

On the 14-party demand for termination of the CEC and three other election commissioners, he said, "This is not our concern...We asked the chief adviser to run the caretaker government as per the constitution in all matters."

The BNP delegation, which entered the Bangabhaban at 6:40pm and emerged from it at 8:40pm, included BNP Standing Committee members Saifur Rahman, Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, KM Obaidur Rahman, Moudud Ahmed, Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui, vice-presidents MK Anwar, Tariqul Islam and M Shamsul Islam.

AL-led 14-party threatened to

# Hill districts

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 present political crisis during the meeting with the AL chief.

Expressing his concerns over the voter list, Larma said many fake voters were enrolled on the list in Chittagong hill tracts. "The enrolling of voters was not done properly in the hilly region," he added.

The three hilly districts -- Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban -- witnessed two decades' of insurgency before a peace deal was signed in 1997.

Larma, who also heads the regional political party Parbatya Chhattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, said he favours the removal of Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz to end the current political stalemate.

"The present political stalemate should not continue, it is not good for the country," he added.

When asked if his party would join the AL-led 14-party alliance, Larma said no such issue came up during the meeting.

# Milon

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 also sought his help regarding the matter.

Barrister Zia had an appointment on Friday (November 17) with BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman at Hawa Bhaban, Milon said. Everything, however, went wrong when LDP leader Mahi B Chowdhury and his supporters created a chaotic situation on Thursday in Barrister Zia's house, he added.

"I stayed at his house from 6:00pm to 12 midnight on Wednesday," the former state minister said adding that he again visited Zia's house the next day.

On the allegation that Milon was accompanied by BNP cadres during the alleged kidnap attempt, the BNP leader told the reporters that those who came to Barrister Zia's house at that time were from his Dhamrai constituency.

Barrister Zia, who won the last parliamentary election from BNP ticket, joined the LDP recently leaving BNP.

Contacted, Barrister Zia denied any communication with Enhsanul Haq Milon over telephone.

"So far, I never called Milon, he (Milon) himself phoned me and requested me to return to BNP which I refused," Barrister Zia said adding that had he really made up his mind to return to BNP, he could have started the process all by himself and did not need any mediator to do that.

# Iajuddin keeps quiet

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 two hours when she urged him again to start the electoral process including announcing the election schedule immediately.

About the morning's meeting held in Bangabhaban, the advisers however said things were moving positively towards reaching an amicable solution to the political crisis prevailing ahead of the next parliamentary election centring the demand for resignation of the chief election commissioner (CEC).

"We are discussing all the issues...we are trying to resolve the stand-off. We will sit again tonight, if necessary tomorrow morning too. We will let you know after settling the issue...you will be pleased," Information Adviser Mahbubul Alam told reporters emerging from the meeting.

Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury echoed the same view and hoped to find a way out.

The advisers however did not specify as to which direction the progress is heading, particularly concerning the EC.

At the council meeting, the advisers discussed several options for resolving the electoral crisis including appointment of a few more election commissioners to the EC as CEC MA Aziz had rejected outright the idea of his resignation, sources said.

The meeting however could not reach a consensus on any of the options proposed by the four-member delegation of advisers that negotiated with political parties.

UNB reported last night quoting a Bangabhaban source that the president, during his meeting with Khaleda Zia, told her that he is ready to appoint two more election commissioners to reform the EC if the political parties demanding EC reconstitution agree to it.

Some advisers however expressed their doubts about the idea of appointing more election commissioners to bring balance in the four-member EC.

"We are not sure whether appointing more election commissioners will make the Election Commission effective," an adviser told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

At the meeting, the four members of the advisers' delegation, Dr Akbar Ali Khan, CM Shafi Sami, Mahbubul Alam and Yasmeen Murshed, briefed the council about the outcome of the bilateral dialogues with political parties.

In the dialogues, Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jatiya Oikya Front, and Jukto Front categorically demanded reconstitution of the EC through resignation of the CEC and reshuffling of the administration. On the other hand BNP-led four-party alliance vehemently opposed reconstitution of the EC and massive reshuffle in the administration.

AL-led 14-party threatened to

enforce tougher programmes including a countrywide blockade again from tomorrow if the demand for reconstitution of the EC is not met by the end of today.

In a bid to counter 14-party's programme, BNP and its allies also announced street demonstrations and threatened to launch tougher programmes if the CEC is removed.

Amid such a situation, the advisers wanted to reach a decision in yesterday morning's meeting, which was convened urgently apparently in the face of severe criticisms for delaying to hold a meeting, but the chief adviser adjourned the meeting till 9:00pm, sources said.

The meeting, where some advisers emphasised on holding meetings with the chief adviser regularly, also discussed reshuffling of the administration.

The council of advisers started searching for ways to make the EC credible from its first meeting on November 1 and continued discussing the issue at several other meetings on November 2, 4, 8, 12 and 13.

On November 2, it sent an adviser to CEC MA Aziz to know whether he would resign if requested by the caretaker government. But the CEC stubbornly refused to resign and instead announced that the next parliamentary election will be held under the present EC.

On November 13, the council of advisers formed the four-member delegation, which held bilateral dialogues with seven political parties.

The advisory committee wrapped up the talks with political parties on November 15 and informed the chief adviser about the outcome, but the chief adviser did not immediately convene a meeting of the council of advisers. The advisers were informed that the issue would be discussed at the cabinet meeting which was originally scheduled for tomorrow.

But in the face of an avalanche of criticisms, the chief adviser suddenly convened the meeting two days earlier yesterday morning.

# B Chy

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 made the announcement, said a party press release.

President Iajuddin's taking charge as the chief adviser (CA) of the caretaker government is the result of BNP-Jamaat alliance's conspiracy, Badruddoza said, adding that the CA is working under the direction of Khaleda Zia.

Badruddoza, who is also a former president, accused Iajuddin of moving in an extremely slow pace.

Executive President of the LDP Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed Bir Bikram demanded legal actions against corrupt ministers and MPs of BNP.

Secretary General of LDP Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan, Alamgir Kabir, Maj Gen (ret'd) Anwarul Kabir Talukdar, Abdul Karim Abbasi and Ali Kader, among others, spoke on the occasion.

# Navy flouts rules

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 "Among the defence forces, only the navy can procure anything directly."

But DGDP sources contradicted him saying that in case of emergency, the naval base station can procure goods worth Tk 2 lakh directly and the navy chief can buy goods worth Tk 2 crore directly through an open tender. Anything worth above this sum have to be procured through the DGDP or other higher authorities. Procurement on non-emergency basis should also be processed through the DGDP.

Again, in emergency, the navy can also purchase equipment or spares valued beyond Tk 2 crore without the DGDP's involvement. But in that case, it will have to buy those only from the original manufacturer through the Bangladesh embassy concerned with approval from the principal staff officer (PSO) of the Armed Forces Division (AFD) or the minister concerned.

None of these procurement rules was followed in this case.

When these rules were brought to the notice of navy official concerned, he expressed his ignorance about these.

The deal was initiated in May this year as an "emergency procurement". But the "emergency" procurement followed two rounds of restricted tender floating and killing of more than six months time. Sources said both the tenders were notified in the naval headquarters blackboards but not in any newspaper or mass media. The first tender gave seven days time to submit proposal and the second only three days.

The first tender was based on the navy chief's approval to procure spares worth Tk 70 lakh. This restricted tender was cancelled without any explicit reasons. The navy then floated the second tender in August and amid the chaotic political situation, hurriedly issued the work order this month.

"If the navy could afford to wait for six months to issue its urgent work order, it could have done the same through the DGDP and get the best transparent deal," noted a navy source.

It is not clear why the NSSD issued two separate orders to the AJA International when one was sufficient, sources said. One work order asks the supplier to deliver spares worth Tk 2.66 crore by November 27 and the other worth Tk 3.42 crore by January 5. Habib Enerprise has been asked to

# Kyoto countries

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 Experts say Kyoto's so-called second commitment period must deliver swingeing reductions in emissions to avoid potentially crippling damage to the world's climate system by fossil-fuel gases.

The 2008 negotiations are officially a "review" of the Kyoto Protocol -- a broad assessment of what changes should be made for the treaty's next commitment period.

Any changes will then have to be negotiated in full and subsequently ratified.

Agreement came after the 12-day marathon talks in Nairobi under the 189-member UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) went hours into overtime.

Developing countries had feared that any preconditions for the review meant they would be forced into accepting binding curbs on their pollution -- a requirement that would carry an economic price.

Under Kyoto's present format, only 35 industrialised nations that have signed and ratified the pact are required to make targeted cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO2).

But China, India and other high-population developing countries are fast becoming big emitters of CO2 in their own right as they voraciously burn oil, gas and coal to power their economies.

Environment ministers from industrialised countries also agreed that global emissions of greenhouse gases had to be halved, although they did not set a date.

The European Union (EU) has been pushing for a deadline of 2050, contending this will limit the rise in Earth's atmospheric temperature to 2 C (3.6F) by 2100 compared with 1900.

"Thanks to the leadership of the European Union, we now have a solid work plan to combat emissions after 2012," said European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas.

"There is no time to wait. We must cut emissions by 50 percent in the next half a century to end global warming."

The present Kyoto Protocol obliges industrialised countries to reduce their emissions to a level that is around five percent below the 1990 benchmark.

For the 2013-2017 commitment period to work, a way must be found to get the big developing countries to tackle their burgeoning pollution and also tighten the screw on emissions by industrialised countries.

Another problem will be how to establish tighter cooperation with the United States, which by itself accounts for a quarter of global emissions.

Under President George W. Bush, the United States has refused to ratify and abide by the Kyoto Protocol.

Even if a pro-Kyoto president takes office in the United States in January 2009, he or she is unlikely to have the political elbow room to ratify Kyoto in time for joining the negotiations for 2013-2017, diplomats in Nairobi said.

Activists say the 2013-2017 negotiations must wrap up by the end of 2009, as the outcome will take two or three years to be ratified.

Any spillover into 2010 could lead to a gap between Kyoto's commitment periods, which would badly dent confidence in the fledgling carbon markets, launched under Kyoto in 2005, said Hans Verolme, director of WWF's climate-change programme.

The Nairobi meeting also ran into fire from grass-roots advocates for poorer countries.

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer, though, said developing nations would "walk away with a very significant package".

He pointed to decisions on managing and financing Kyoto's Adaptation Fund to help vulnerable countries cope with the effects of climate change and on setting a five-year work programme to identify which kind of adaptation measures would be useful.

Another area of progress was on streamlining the Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), an incentive for transferring low-polluting technology to poor countries, so that African economies could benefit from it, said de Boer.

Kyoto became operational in February 2005 after a long and agonising gestation.

Two more countries, Sierra Leone and Lebanon, have now ratified it, bringing the total to 168, it was announced in Nairobi on Friday.

# Businessman

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 session during the time of abduction, added his relatives.

The abductors later called up Nazim's family and demanded a Tk 10 lakh ransom for his release, the relatives said.

Nazim returned home from a Middle Eastern country almost a year ago and runs numbers of businesses in the area including public transport and poultry farms, they said.

Recently, right after the last Eid-ul-Fitr, he successfully negotiated the release of one of his abducted relatives, said the family sources. His family suspects that same abductors might be involved in Nazim's abduction.

Patiya Police Station confirmed the incident.

# Fortune-seekers

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 a relative cheated her of Tk 90,000 putting her in distress.

She came to Dhaka Thursday evening as asked by Joynal, who then gave her some documents including passport.

"I along with some other women went to the airport (Zia International Airport) at about midnight and was sitting there (at the lounge). An official wanted to see my documents and then declared those invalid," she said.

Another woman of the group, Jamila, 25, also from Manikganj, gave Tk 55,000 to a broker. She had borrowed the entire amount. The passport she carried was a forged one carrying her photo but some other's name and address, said the illiterate woman narrating her plight.

"Manpower (BMET) officials sent me to immigration section. Two officials refused to okay my papers but another sent me to a particular official, who checked and allowed to me to go the waiting room (lounge)," she said.

A number of other victims spoke

of similar sufferings.

At the shelter home, the women were seen crying while talking to their relatives over telephone. "I do not know when and how to go home. I don't think I can go abroad anymore," said Saleha from Savar.

BNWLA Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali said they will keep the women under their shelter and will try to send them back to their houses. They will also give them legal assistance, if needed, she said.

Meanwhile, Special Branch (SB) of police filed a case against 38 people, including brokers, officials of Caab and BMET.

The SB on Friday detained BMET Welfare Officer Mohammad Shahjalal, and computer operators Mosharraf Hossain, Hasan Jahirul and Hafizur Rahman and one Biman official Ramzan Ali from ZIA in this connection.

The police are interrogating the detainees but they could not yet catch any brokers.

# Russia warns

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 non-proliferation regime," he told reporters at an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Vietnam.

"But if we push this or that situation into a corner, then the threat of proliferation significantly heightens."

The North Korea crisis has been a key issue at the meeting of 21 Apec members in Vietnam.

Earlier the United States chided Russia and China Friday for holding up agreement on a UN resolution imposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme and urged them to "accelerate the pace" of the talks.

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns complained that negotiations at the United Nations over what sanctions to impose on Iran for refusing to freeze its uranium enrichment programme had dragged on for three weeks with insufficient progress.

"We have had a lot of debates, a lot of discussions, it's time to get on with it," Burns told reporters.

"We hope very much that the Russian and Chinese governments will accelerate the pace of work in New York," he said.

The major powers have been debating a draft resolution drawn up by Britain, France and Germany that would impose limited sanctions on Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile sectors for Tehran's failure to comply with an earlier UN resolution on halting enrichment.

China and Russia, both close economic partners with Iran, argue the measures are too extensive, while Washington has pressed for tougher action.

US President George W. Bush was due to raise the issue with his Russian and Chinese counterparts, Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao, over the weekend on the sidelines of a Pacific Rim summit in Hanoi, Burns said.

Despite the slow pace of progress, Burns was optimistic the UN Security Council would eventually impose sanctions on Iran under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, making the measures mandatory for all UN members.

"These are very complex and difficult negotiations, but we're working hard and I for one believe that we will have a sanctions resolution," he said.

The US and others believe Iran's uranium enrichment programme is ultimately aimed at producing fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Iran insists it will use the enriched uranium only to fuel nuclear power stations, something it is permitted to do as a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Burns said a report issued this week by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency was "filled with concerns about the lack of transparency" of the Iranian nuclear programme.

The report, leaked to reporters, notably said that unexplained traces had been found in Iran of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, materials that can be used in nuclear warheads.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier Friday that "rather than punishing Iran", the UN Security Council should give the lead role in the crisis to the IAEA, which is tasked with inspecting nuclear sites to ensure fissile material is not used for military purposes.

"The role of the Security Council is precisely to help and not to replace the IAEA in the process," Lavrov told reporters during a visit to India.

"We have been trying to help with the IAEA efforts to bring the matter to the negotiating table rather than block the pathways to the possibility of pursuing those talks," Lavrov said.

Burns described the US-Russian differences as "tactical disagreements" over which sanctions to impose on Iran now and which to hold back for use later in the even Tehran continues to defy the Security Council.

"We don't have a strategic disagreement," he said.

"No one is taking the position that there will not be sanctions, the only question is: What is the framework of this first sanctions resolution and then where do we go from there?," he said.

"I do believe we can work this out."

Israeli minister