

Uncertainty grips country as blockade restarts today

14-party finds new allies to realise demand; 4-party declares to stay on streets to thwart agitation

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) led 14-party combine resumes today non-stop countrywide blockade this time calling for President Iajuddin Ahmed to stand down as chief adviser as the second deadline for implementation of its 11-point demand expired last night.

In significant developments yesterday, Jatiya Oikya Front comprising Liberal Democratic Front (LDP), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation joined forces with the AL and its allies.

The same day the BNP-led four-party alliance declared that it will be in the streets today to protest the

'anarchy' of the 14-party, raising the spectre of violent confrontations. It will hold rallies and processions across the country.

In line with a decision taken at a joint meeting, Jatiya Oikya Front will take part in the blockade to push for ouster of Iajuddin Ahmed at the caretaker government chief. They will work in unison with the 14-party combine to press home the demands that include among others reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC), depoliticization of the administration and correction of the voter list.

Besides, three other parties-- Islamic Front Bangladesh, a faction of Islamic Oikya Jote and Nezame Islam Party-- have expressed

solidarity with the 14-party alliance in its campaign for removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and three other election commissioners.

In another development, AL President Sheikh Hasina met President Iajuddin Ahmed at the Bangabhaban last evening.

During the two-hour meeting, Hasina told him that he had failed to prove what she said was his neutrality. She said a non-stop blockade would resume today until the demands are met.

The 14-party set the second deadline for Iajuddin to carry out the 11-point demand on November 15.

The AL chief first declared the blockade programme on November

11 and postponed it after four days, considering public sufferings and their confidence in the negotiations with the advisers.

As expected, Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday imposed a ban on processions, rallies, demonstrations, and blockade, carrying firearms, sticks, oar, pole, sickle and other ammunition in the capital.

The official ruling will be in force till the next order is issued.

Around 15,000 police, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) will be posted across the city

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

People lose trust in EC

Says Butenis; UK envoy concerned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis yesterday said the people of Bangladesh have lost trust in the Election Commission (EC) while UK High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury said political parties' confidence in the election machinery is essential for holding a credible election.

Both the diplomats expressed their concern over the ongoing political crisis centring the reconstitution of the EC ahead of the next parliamentary elections.

Butenis yesterday held a meeting with Power and Energy Adviser Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury at his secretariat office while UK High Commissioner Choudhury met the chief election commissioner (CEC) and the three election commissioners.

The advisers to the caretaker government are trying to impress the president to move forward towards the right direction, Butenis

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Advisers irked at no progress to end crisis

Feel atmosphere not created for fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After 20 days of taking oath, the advisers to the caretaker government (CG) are now feeling frustrated with it, saying that so far the CG has failed to create an environment suitable for a free and fair election.

The transfers and postings of government officials and employees so far also failed to impress any body, they said adding that none of the transfers are related to officials who will perform election duties.

They admitted that they failed to resolve the political crisis springing from the popular demand for resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and said only the president can solve the crisis.

Adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday

day urged all the people of the country including the civil society to step forward for bringing sense into the rival political alliances to save the country from getting lost in

darkness. He was talking to the media after an hour and 45 minutes long meeting with three other advisers -

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Dr Akbar Ali Khan



Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury

EC secretariat made off-limits to journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a sudden move, the Election Commission (EC) yesterday banned journalists from entering its secretariat that is preparing to conduct the next parliamentary elections.

A large number of journalists, who regularly visit the EC Secretariat to collect information about the preparatory work for the next election, were barred from entering the main building of the secretariat yesterday morning.

Neither the EC nor any senior EC Secretariat official, however, clarified the reasons for the ban.

Security personnel at the EC Secretariat told reporters that the authorities directed them not to allow any journalist to enter the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

CA told of his failure in proving neutrality

14-party tells press after meeting Iajuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday told President Iajuddin Ahmed that he has failed to prove his neutrality as the chief adviser to the interim caretaker government but he still has time.

"We have given you enough time to act neutrally as the head of caretaker government," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil quoted Hasina as telling Iajuddin during her second meeting with the chief adviser.

Hasina also asked Iajuddin not to



take any move to declare the election schedule without reconstituting the Election Commission (EC). Otherwise, people will build up strong resistance, she said.

A 14-member delegation of the AL-led 14-party alliance yesterday met Iajuddin at the Bangabhaban upon his invitation.

The chief adviser remained silent when the 14-party leaders raised their demands and different allegations, Jalil said while briefing reporters at the AL Dhanmondi office after the meeting.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Tarique files defamation suits against Hasina, Jalil, Quader

Court orders judicial probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman yesterday filed three separate defamation suits against Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader, accusing them of conducting 'malicious campaign' against him.

After hearing the petitioner, Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Hel Baqui, ordered judicial inquiry into all the three cases without taking the matter into

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

EC RECONSTITUTION

CA turns a deaf ear to majority voices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government's move to make the Election Commission (EC) credible has failed as its chief adviser (CA) continues to choose to ignore the majority opinion of the council of advisers and of political parties regarding reconstitution of the EC.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, who assumed the office of chief adviser on October 29 in addition to his presidential responsibilities on the basis of a majority opinion of the political parties with representation

in the immediate past parliament, this time around however is paying no attention to the majority opinion regarding making the EC effective.

In the three-day long series of dialogues between political parties and the caretaker government, Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led Jatiya Oikya Front, and Jukto Front categorically demanded reconstitution of the EC through resignation of the present chief election commissioner (CEC) while BNP-led four-party alliance vehemently opposed

it. Quite a large number of civil society groups are also proposing reconstitution of the EC and resignation of the present CEC.

The CA's latest concocted proposal of appointing two more election commissioners instead of thoroughly reconstituting the EC, in essence meets BNP-led alliance's demand for not to reconstitute it, rendering the council of advisers' move to reconstitute the commission a futile exercise.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

RUSH BEFORE BLOCKADE

City gridlocked in day, eerie in the evening

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commuters experienced untold sufferings yesterday as most of the city dwellers rushed to finish their last moment business before today's blockade programme but they found fewer vehicles in the streets.

The city streets were crammed with heavy traffic until afternoon, but the scenario changed in the evening, when fearing vandalism by the blockade activists, many transport companies suspended their services leaving people returning from their workplaces stranded at different parts of the city.

Thick crowds of people were seen walking down the city streets until 10:00pm due to lack of public bus and CNG three-wheelers. Some two thousand people were seen at Farmgate in the evening waiting for transports to return to their homes.

Fearing police harassment and SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Hundreds of commuters wait for transports at Farmgate in the capital yesterday evening as most of the bus services were suspended fearing vandalism ahead of the 14-party blockade.

JUDICIARY SEPARATION

SC judgment on contempt charges deferred

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court yesterday deferred for a week the pronouncement of judgment on the contempt charges against 13 government officials, including four secretaries, for non-compliance with its orders for separation of the judiciary from the executive.

A seven-member full court of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain, passed the order of deferment.

As the order was pronounced, SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Correction

The Daily Star's yesterday's report headlined "Navy flouts rules in boat spares deal" contained some factual errors.

It said that the six naval high-speed boats were delivered in Bangladesh upon purchase. Actually those were delivered in SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

4-party warns of agitation again

Presses on for polls schedule at city rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance yesterday staged demonstration in the capital as a showdown of strength on the eve of the 14-party's indefinite blockade that resumes today.

Meanwhile, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir took position at Muktangan from yesterday evening and vowed to continue their sit-in at the venue until the schedule of election is announced.

Earlier, four-party leaders from the rally at Muktangan threatened to launch a movement if the caretaker government does not comply with provisions of the constitution.

"Announce the schedule for the next election without any delay. We will accept (any move) if you do anything through discussion and of course among the framework of the

constitution. Don't do anything beyond the constitution," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan advised the caretaker government.

The rally was organised to protest against the 'anarchy' and 'chaos' created by their 14-party rivals over electoral issues.

Four-party alliance will also hold rallies and bring out processions across the country today to protest against 'chaos and anarchy', Bhuiyan announced at the rally.

Amid the slogans of the supporters, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged the president, "Restore law and order at any cost and announce the election schedule. Do not transfer any official who are not involved in the election process."

"There is no reason to think that SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Garment owners stage sit-in today

Threaten to sue Iajuddin if he fails to break deadlock

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment factory owners will stage a sit-in around Bangabhaban premises early today if the president and chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government failed to break the current political deadlock by 4:00am.

The leaders of BGMEA at a press conference yesterday afternoon said they would take legal action against the interim government if the apparel sector suffered for their failure to make a decision and restore the environment for the country's economic activities.

Issuing the ultimatum, the leaders of Bangladesh Garment

Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) urged the president and CA to find an acceptable solution that would save the country's economy and quell the political unrest.

"We urge the president and the CA to resolve the political impasse within 12-hour. Otherwise, we will stage a sit-in around Bangabhaban premises along with our thousands of workers," BGMEA President SM Fazlul Haque said at the conference at the organisation's office.

He said, "The government is responsible for saving the country's largest export-oriented industry. If a garment factory SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

WOMEN TRAFFICKING

Cops find nexus of govt staff, agencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police unearthed important information about a strong network of women traffickers at Fakirapool in the capital and their links with the officials of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

"The unholy alliance is involved with a huge illegal business," said Investigation Officer (IO) Shahadat Hossain after interrogating the detained BMET officials and five of the 31 women whose travel to Lebanon was held up at Zia International Airport on Friday morning, as the BMET clearances including work permits were found to be fake.

The four staff of BMET and another of Bangladesh Biman were

detained following the incident for okaying the women's documents. During the police interrogation, they also admitted of the BMET involvement in issuing the clearance illegally.

The staff posted at the Welfare Desk of BMET -- Welfare Officer Mohammad Shahjalal and computer operators Mosharrar Hossain, Hasan Jahurul and Hafizur Rahman -- earlier said that there was disturbance in their computer, which is why they could not check the women's documents.

Detained Biman official Ramzan Ali and witness Abdul Kader, another BMET official, were also interrogated.

The five government staff are SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

CONTAINER TERMINAL

Shipping agents give 24 hrs time to resume operations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Shipping Agents Association of Bangladesh extended its ultimatum for resuming operations of Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) in Chittagong Port for another 24 hours.

Operations at all three berths of CCT remained suspended since November 12 following political agitation and protest from a group of dockers demanding cancellation of an agreement signed with a private company for operating four sophisticated gantry cranes.

The dockers besieged the terminal and are not allowing any gang-bookings (booking dockers for a job) for loading and unloading SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



A gearless ship (ship without crane) loaded with containers stands still at a jetty of Chittagong Port as dock workers continued prohibiting loading and unloading of goods. The photo was taken yesterday.