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Long talks yield no solution

Hopeful advisers sit today to give 'acceptable formula' to end crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed's much advertised crucial talks last night with the chiefs of the two major political alliances separately to resolve the prevailing political crisis ended without producing any instant positive result.

Coming out of the summit between Iajuddin and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at 12:55 this morning AL General Secretary and Coordinator of 14-

party Coalition Abdul Jalil told reporters that his coalition will go on with enforcing the scheduled countrywide indefinite blockade today.

The summit between BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia and Chief Adviser (CA) Iajuddin Ahmed ended at 9:45pm.

After the meet BNP sources said their leader told the CA that her alliance is ready to accept some changes in the Election Commission (EC) and corrections on the voter list but it is not ready to concede to the

14-party demand for resignation of the current CA to the caretaker government (CG).

Khaleida-led four-party delegation also told the CA that rescheduling of the polling date is not something they are ready to accept as an option although some changes in the over all election schedule is alright. Withdrawal of 14-party's countrywide blockade must precede any amicable settlement, stressed Khaleida Zia, according to the sources.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters after the meet, "There is no question of conceding to the demand for the CA's resignation. But we told the CA that the voter roll can be corrected until the day of the poll."

On the other hand AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said his leader told the CA that her coalition demands a thorough reconstitution of the EC instead of 'band-aid' solutions and it also demands scrapping of the

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Blockade must go before discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan last night said the four-party alliance has no objection to making any changes in the polls schedule but it has strong reservations about shifting the January 21 polling date.

Briefing reporters after a two-hour meeting between a four-party delegation and



President Iajuddin Ahmed, he said they had told the president and the advisers to ask the 14-party to withdraw the fresh blockade before any discussion.

"The election must be held within the stipulated time as there is not enough time to shift the date of polling," Bhuiyan told reporters at BNP Dhaka City unit office at Naya

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Blockade stays until demands considered

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance and several other parties resume their non-stop countrywide blockade today as their late night meeting with President and Chief Adviser (CA) Iajuddin Ahmed failed to achieve any immediate result.

At a crucial meeting with the president at Bangabhaban,



AL President Sheikh Hasina reduced the number of her demands to five points from the previous 11 points which still include resignation of the president from the post of chief adviser and reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

The talks between Hasina and Iajuddin started at 10:17pm and ended around

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1.22cr false names on voter list

Excess ballots, clerical error may make election result not perceived as credible, says NDI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1.22 crore names registered in the updated voter list are either excess or duplicates, a survey report of National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs revealed yesterday.

Of this, 6 percent names are excess and 7 percent duplicate, while at least 2.5 percent eligible voters are missing in the list, according to the second NDI survey on the integrity of the voter list.

The report has been prepared on the basis of checking 22,000 names, interviews of 11,000 individuals in 37 villages of Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong-Sylhet, and Barisal-Khulna regions. NDI Residential Director Owen Lippert presented the report at a press conference at a city hotel.

With improvements, the voter list can be part of a credible election, but an accumulation of risk factors including excess ballots and clerical error could lead to a situa-

tion where a potentially acceptable election result may not be perceived as credible, the Washington-based institute said.

Correcting the voter list is possible in two months, provided the political parties and the civil society of the country cooperate in the process, Lippert said.

Termining the list "only one important part" of the election process, the NDI chief in Bangladesh said responsibility for a credible election lies not only with the Election Commission, but also with the caretaker government, public administration, political parties and ultimately the citizens.

The supplement list of new voters often did not match the existing voter list, Lippert said. Suggesting double checking, he said, "Improved matching of supplemental and existing voter lists will reduce the possibility of confusion on election day."

NDI Project Manager Najia Khogyani-Hashemee identified migration, incorrect registration, death, and registering names of unknown or under-age persons as the reasons for excess names in the electoral roll.

She said rural centres are more prone to error and Rajshahi region has the highest level of error.

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Owen Lippert

Six die, 20 missing in boat capsized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Six people died and 20 others went missing when an engine boat capsized in the Kongsha River near Gaglajur Bazar under Mohonganj upazila of the district early yesterday.

Three of the dead were identified as Abdul Hye, 32, Ratan Mia, 30, of village Bhatipara and Babul Mia, 28, of village Kolpotak under Barhatta upazila. The identity of the remaining three could not be known.

Police said the engine boat was carrying 26 passengers to Lapsia Bazar from Mohonganj upazila headquarters. It sank in the river after a collision with a Mohonganj

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Resolve political crisis, save economy

Businesses urge chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders of the country yesterday requested the chief of the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed's all-out effort to save the national economy by resolving the ongoing political deadlock and holding the next election in due time.

"You (chief adviser) are the constitutional chief, chief adviser and guardian of the nation. Presently you possess the authority and also the responsibility to save the nation by upholding the

constitutional obligation of holding the national election within 90 days of the caretaker government's tenure," Mir Nasir Hossain, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said.

Failure to hold the election in time will create a constitutional vacuum, affect all business activities and thus destroy the country's economy, said Nasir while addressing the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of FBCCI at Chamber Building Auditorium in

Dhaka.

He also hoped that the two leaders of the feuding parties would reach a consensus and find a way to hold a peaceful election at their meetings with the president. Their meetings with the president were supposed to be held later in the evening yesterday.

Speakers at the AGM also expressed their concern over the congestion at Chittagong Port and said export and import of the country are greatly affected by the politicisation of the port and

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Businessman shot dead

2 'criminals' killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people, including two criminals, were killed in separate incidents at city's Paltan, Khilgaon and Mohammadpur yesterday.

The dead were identified as SM Alamgir Hossain, 50, an importer having two showrooms at the city's Polwellmarket, Amir Hossain, 20 and Mansur Alam Titu alias Tarun, 30.

In Paltan, unidentified gunmen shot dead Alamgir in the early hours.

Bilal Hossain, security guard of the apartment building where Alamgir lived, told The Daily Star, "I saw him (Alamgir) going out to say his Fazr prayers at dawn. A few minutes later, hearing two gun shots, I opened the gate again to see what had happened." At that

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VANDALISM AT SC

Cops identify 4 among 8 from video footages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective and Crime Intelligence unit identified at least four people including a lawyer who vandalised the offices of the attorney general and the chief justice as well as a vehicle on the High Court premises on Thursday.

A top official of the Detective and Crime Intelligence unit, formerly known as the Detective Branch, said they gathered pictures of around eight persons after scanning the video footages.

"We succeeded in identifying the names and other details of a lawyer and three others," the

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Clashes feared as SC lawyers begin agitation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Apprehension of clashes between two groups of Supreme Court (SC) lawyers, who are opposing and supporting the chief justice's stay order of writ petitions filed against the president on Thursday, looms large as they begin indefinite counter-agitation programmes on the SC premises today.

To avert violence, additional police will be deployed.

While pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum (JAF) blamed the pro-Awami League (AL) lawyers for

Thursday's vandalism on the SC premises, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) alleged the vandalism was also a pre-planned event of the "writ petition staying conspiracy."

The forum announced agitation programme to shut down all kinds of SC activities from today until a contempt rule is issued and proper legal actions taken against those "who misguided and instigated lawyers to create anarchy on the court premises after the court order on Thursday in an act

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33 killed as bridge falls on Indian train

AFP, New Delhi

At least 33 people were killed when a 140-year-old bridge toppled on an inter-city passenger train in eastern India, a spokesman of the state-run rail company said.

Rail officials had earlier placed the toll at 20 dead and 19 injured in the accident at a rail station in the Indian state of Bihar.

"The death toll has now touched 33 and also 18 other passengers are in hospital with injuries," spokesman Ashok Ganguli told AFP by telephone from the site of the accident in Bhagalpur town.

"Now there are no more bodies in the crushed coach," he said, adding that the rescue operation had also been called off. Rail officials had earlier placed the toll at five dead and 19 injured in the accident at a rail station in the Indian state of Bihar.

"Some of these people are very seriously injured so the death toll could change," spokesman Samir Goswami told AFP by telephone from the site of the accident in Bhagalpur town.

Among the dead were an infant girl and seven women, a senior police official said from Bhagalpur. The Press Trust of India (PTI) quoting another official put the death toll at 32 killed.

"Twenty-seven bodies have so far been brought to the Bhagalpur

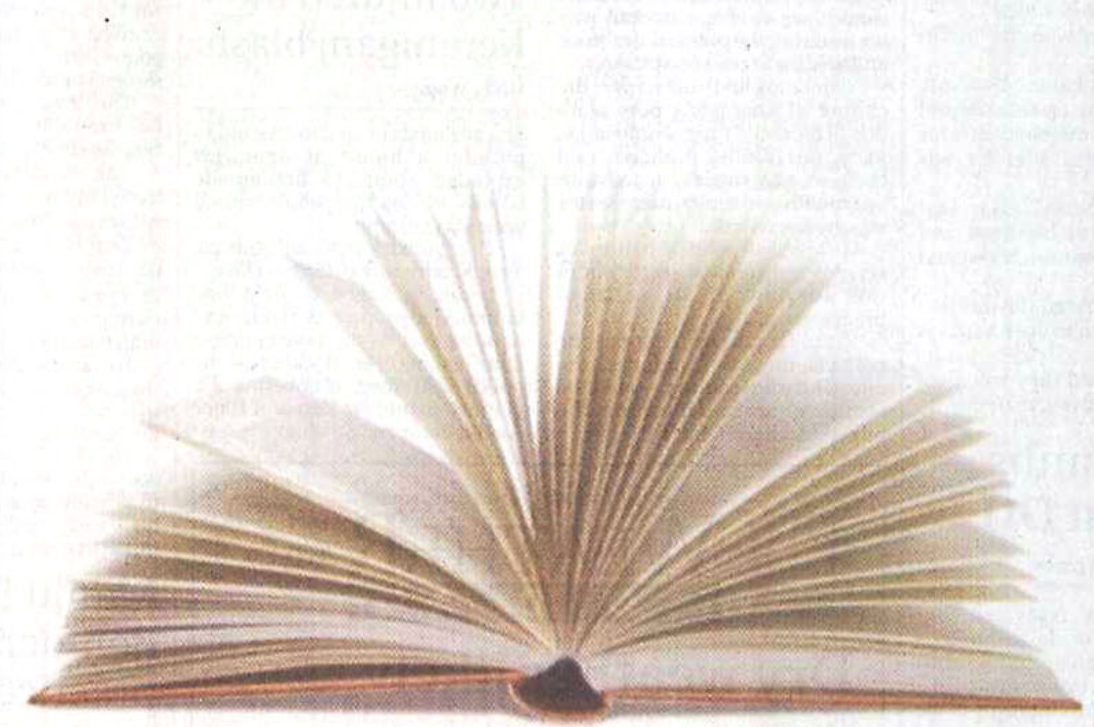
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PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Pratibandhi Forum holds a rally at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday ahead of the International Day of Disabled Persons today.

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