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Advisers decide to recast EC, transfer secretaries

Polls schedule to be rearranged and voter list corrected, too

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers to the caretaker government yesterday decided to reconstitute the Election Commission (EC) and transfer secretaries of some ministries that are considered to have an important bearing on the conduct of elections.

In a significant breakthrough in the efforts to resolve the long-drawn-out political crisis, they have already asked the EC to rearrange the election schedule and correct the voter list so that all

parties take part in the polls.

The advisers said they did not take the decisions under any pressure from any quarters.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said they will comment on the advisers' decisions and measures after hearing about those formally.

On the other hand, the Awami League (AL) led 14-party combine at an emergency meeting last night suspended its blockade programmes. However, it neither rejected nor accepted the package of proposals set forth by the advisers

on Sunday. It has decided to observe the implementation of the advisory council's decisions.

The decisions came at an hours-long meeting of the advisory council with President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed in the chair at the Bangabhaban.

The president/chief adviser himself will initiate the move to send two controversial election commissioners -- SM Zakaria and Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury -- on leave until the next parliamentary election is over, said meeting sources.

The president will appoint one or two new election commissioners once the two election commissioners are on leave. If any of the new election commissioners happen to be senior to the acting CEC, he will replace Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, the sources added.

Against this backdrop, two advisers -- Justice Fazlul Huq and M Azizul Huq -- last night went to the residence of Justice Tafazzel Islam, an Appellate Division judge of the Supreme Court, amidst speculation from different quarters

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BNP keeps 45 seats reserved for allies

They demanded 115

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three allies of BNP in the four-party alliance have demanded 115 parliamentary seats for their candidates in the next general election but BNP has kept only 45 seats reserved for them, sources said.

Top leaders of the alliance will finalise the seat sharing issue after the selection of BNP candidates through interview.

Meanwhile, BNP completed distribution of nomination forms yesterday, and interview of the nomination seekers will begin today at Hawa Bhaban.

Nomination seekers from Sylhet and Chittagong divisions will be interviewed by the party parliamentary board headed by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia on the first day.

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14-party to observe advisers' work to fulfil promises

Says Hasina; Blockade suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a positive political development, the Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday suspended the fourth round indefinite blockade programme as the council of advisers decided to implement several of its demands.

"We are postponing our non-stop blockade. People will go back to normal work from tomorrow

[Tuesday]. We want to see how the caretaker government acts in meeting our demands, as assured by the advisers," Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, coming out of an emergency meeting, told the press.

The bigwigs of 14-party alliance gathered in the meeting at her Dhanmondi office after the council of advisers declared to carry out some vital decisions for fair polls.

Hasina, however, said her alliance would stage a sit-in around the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat today to realise their demands including cancellation of the polls schedule and updating of the voter roll.

Threatening to resume the non-stop blockade and sit-in demonstrations if the interim government fails to fulfil the promises it

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SECOND DAY BLOCKADE

3 die in AL-BNP gunfight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three people were shot dead and 50 wounded in a fierce gunfight between BNP and Awami League (AL) men in Moheshkhali Island under Cox's Bazar district yesterday as the renewed transport blockade enforced by the 14-party combine entered the second day.

The dead were identified as local leader of BNP's youth front Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal Jainal Abdein Badainna, 22, Jubo Dal leader Abdul Goni, 28, and local Jubo League (AL's youth front) leader Mozammel Hossain, 28, -- all from Kalamarchara union in Moheshkhali upazila.

Rajib Barua, a sub-inspector of Moheshkhali Police Station, was bullet-hit in the leg while three other policemen were also critically injured in the clashes that started at 1:00pm.

The injured were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar hospital, Moheshkhali Upazila Health Complex and Chakaria Upazila Health Complex. At least 20 houses and 10 shops were also ransacked during the clashes.

The two-hour-long gunfight

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PHOTO STAR

14-party activists attending a cultural programme occupy one side of a road at Badda in the capital during their blockade programme yesterday.

Nothing to be accepted beyond constitution

Bhuiyan says about advisers' latest move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the caretaker government's latest decision on Election Commission reconstitution, changes in election schedule and voter roll, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said BNP will not accept anything beyond the constitution.

"BNP is a big party. If the care-

taker government bends under any pressure then we can go on action," Mannan Bhuiyan said when a reporter asked him whether they would boycott the election if anything is done beyond the constitution.

"According to the constitution, the election must be held within 90 days and we will not accept

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Major changes in admin on cards, 353 promoted

Many of them were deprived in last regime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday announced to bring major changes in the civil administration as demanded by the Awami League-led 14-party alliance.

On the other hand, the government yesterday promoted 353 officials, including 10 to the rank of secretary, many of whom had been

deprived of their promotion during last few years.

After a hectic meeting of the Council of Advisers at Bangabhaban, Information Adviser Mahbubul Alam told reporters that the council decided to transfer seven to eight secretaries in a bid to create a condition conducive to holding a credible election.

The 14-party has been

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AL-leaning lawyers to probe SC vandalism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pro-Awami League (AL) lawyers yesterday formed a committee to probe the vandalism on the Supreme Court (SC) premises while those loyal to the BNP kept pressing the chief justice for a suspension of the apex court's operation.

The two opposing groups of lawyers held daylong demonstrations yesterday to press home their

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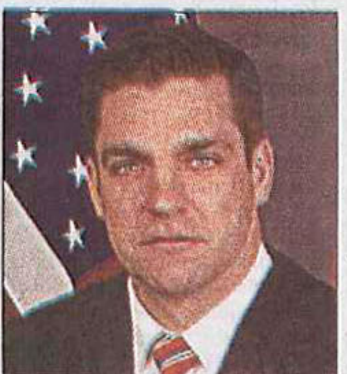
Gastright for flexibility to end political crisis

UNB, Dhaka

US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs John Gastright has urged all political parties to show a flexible approach and think with an open mind as much as possible to have a creative solution to the present political crisis over election in Bangladesh.

Gastright, who came here yesterday morning on a two-day visit, made the remarks to reporters after his meeting with Finance and Planning Adviser Akbar Ali Khan at

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John Gastright

NDI clarifies voter list survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Democratic Institute (NDI) has said in a clarification that its second voters' list survey released on Saturday identifies duplicate and incorrectly listed names, but does not judge them as fictitious or false names.

It said the purpose of the survey was to identify names on the voters' list that are there in error. The survey does not judge the motives of the people whose names might have been listed twice or more, said

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EC meets urgently to find ways of correcting voter list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of a proposal by the council of advisers to the caretaker government (CG), the Election Commission (EC) at an emergency meeting last night started searching for ways to correct mistakes in the updated voter list, and it will inform the CG today about possible steps to further update the electoral roll.

"We discussed updating the voter list," acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mahfuzur Rahman told reporters while leaving office at 8:45 last night.

He declined to reply when asked if the EC discussed changing the election schedule announced on November 27.

Sources however pointed out

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