

# Spoke put in advisers' EC recast wheel

## Iajuddin now wants Zakaria to stay in EC after finalising package proposal

SHAKHAWAT LITON and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

President and Chief Adviser (CA) to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed suddenly appears opposed to the sending of Election Commissioner SM Zakaria on leave as proposed by the advisory council to reconstitute the Election Commission (EC).

"Let him [Zakaria] be there. One man can do nothing to the election process," an adviser last night quoted the president as saying at the advisers' meeting on Wednesday night.

The adviser was talking to The Daily Star in return for anonymity.

The president's stance has irked Awami League (AL) and its allies who had earlier decided to move

towards the polls on the advisers' assurance that the commission would soon be reconstituted.

The AL-led 14-party combine yesterday renewed its call for the interim government to keep Zakaria inactive till the election is over while the BNP-led four-party alliance stood firm in favour of the controversial election commissioner.

A delegation of the four-party

alliance yesterday met a four-member panel of advisers at the state guesthouse Padma and said they will not accept any move to send Zakaria on leave, meeting sources said.

"We will have no objection if the president appoints a new election commissioner and make him the acting chief election commissioner

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# EC starts righting voter roll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) starts correcting the mistakes in the updated voter list today through door-to-door visit by its staffs to detect the fake and duplicate names in the list, allocating eight days for the task as per the EC's latest decision.

Amidst widespread allegations that the updated voter list contains over one crore 'excess' voters, the EC on Tuesday decided to correct the mistakes by sending its staffs for door to door visit in only three days - December 8 to 10.

As per the latest decision, the field level staffs will visit door to door till December 15. Earlier, it took 22 days to complete the field

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# Election on Jan 23

## EC announces fresh polls schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday rescheduled the upcoming ninth parliamentary elections, setting January 23 as the polling day instead of January 21, to ensure participation of all political parties in the next elections.

The dates for different stages of the election - submission of nomination papers, their scrutiny and withdrawal of candidature - have also been rescheduled in the new timetable.

The EC announcement of the new schedule - after 10 days of its surreptitious and hasty declaration of January 21 as the election date - came following a series of negotiations between the council of advisers



Abdur Rashid Sarkar

to the caretaker government and political parties.

"The [polls] schedule was re-fixed so that all political parties can participate in the election," EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar said at a news briefing after announcing the new schedule finalised at an EC meeting yesterday afternoon.

"The election was rescheduled on the basis of a consensus among the political parties," he said.

Acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, however, declined to make any comment on the rescheduling.

The BNP accepted the changed polls schedule while The Awami League (AL) said it would comment

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# Ershad now mulls loose alliance with 14-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In yet another show of ever changing political stance, Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad now mulls forging a loose alliance with the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine ahead of the next general election.

He will make a formal announcement to this effect soon, sources said.

"The possibility of our joining the (BNP-led) four-party alliance is very slim, rather we are more likely to reach an electoral understanding with the 14-party combine," Ershad told reporters at the airport on his return from London yesterday.

He however said his party will not join any alliance.

Asked about his wife Roushan

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

As the winter approaches, villagers in festive mood fish in receding water at a beel in Narsingdi, a common sight in rural Bangladesh.

# Hasina accuses CA of setting hurdles

## Threatens '20 lakh' people's protest near Bangabhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed of making the prevailing political situation more complex by hindering implementation of the package proposals of the caretaker government advisers.

Hasina asked her party men to remain prepared to enforce a non-stop sit-in demonstration around the Bangabhaban to press home their demands for electoral reforms.

"We must say fair election is not

possible with this chief adviser in office if the Election Commission [EC] is not reconstituted as per the discussion with the caretaker government advisers," Hasina said at a meeting with AL leaders of Dhaka district and metropolitan units at her Dhanmondi office.

"The caretaker government assured us of fulfilling our demands for creating a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair poll. But if it does not implement its package proposals, we will have no option but to stage a non-stop sit-in demonstration around the

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# VANDALISM AT SC Judges to resume work Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) judges yesterday decided to resume court proceedings from Sunday ending their unprecedented work abstention.

The judges started work abstention from last Tuesday demanding apologies from the SC lawyers and punishment of vandals responsible for the vandalism at the SC premises on November 30 that was triggered by a stay order by the chief justice.

On November 30, minutes before a High Court bench was preparing to announce rulings on

three writ petitions filed by 14-party alliance leaders, Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain stayed the proceedings of the petitions.

The judges' decision came from a 45-minute meeting of the High Court (HC) Division judges at the judges' lounge with Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain in the chair.

"Considering the sufferings of the people seeking justice, the judges will resume court proceedings from December 10," Supreme Court Registrar Fazlul Karim told the reporters on behalf of the judges. The appellate division

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# Sit-in ends in polls mood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance wrapped up its sit-in programme around the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat in the capital yesterday by launching an unofficial campaign for the next general election.

The activists of the alliance vowed to prepare for the next general elections in a way so that the alliance comes out victorious in the election to form a new government.

Even though they were in a festive mood as they sang and danced during the 10:00am-2:00pm programme at all the three sit-in points, Agargaon, Russell Square and Mohakhali, the 14-party activists warned of further street agitations if the caretaker government failed to implement their proposed package-reforms by Saturday.

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# MEGHNAGHAT-3 PROJECT Move on to revive controversial bid

## Official from president's office makes secret trip to power ministry

SHARIER KHAN

Going out of its way, President Iajuddin Ahmed's office has taken an initiative for reviving the controversial unsolicited bid for the Meghnaghat 450 megawatt phase-3 power project.

Sources said an official from the president's office earlier this week visited the power ministry and collected the power project's documents prepared by the immediate

past alliance government for approval by the cabinet's purchase committee.

The official from the president's office asked officials concerned of the power ministry to keep his visit a secret. The president's office is reviewing how to get this project approved during the caretaker government's tenure.

Though there has been tremendous pressure from the 'alternative centre of power' of the immediate

past BNP-led alliance government and a big real estate developer cum leading tissue paper manufacturing company, the government could not award contract for the Meghnaghat-3 power project in the last two years. The unsolicited proposal for this project, given by inexperienced and unknown US-Irish joint venture Cadogan-Manning Group (CMG), violates many rules and regulations and

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PHOTO: STAR

Police set up a barbed wire barricade at Mirpur Road-Dhanmondi Road-27 intersection in the capital yesterday to prevent 14-party alliance's processions towards the Election Commission Secretariat to stage a sit-in there.

# Just retired Abu Solaiman given new job

## Admin top brass irked at shakeup

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The immediate past Cabinet Secretary M Abu Solaiman Chowdhury was made chairman of Privatisation Commission yesterday with the rank and status of a deputy minister.

M Abdul Karim, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR), was appointed the home secretary.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Chowdhury was first given forced retirement, which was later changed upon his appeal to go on voluntary retirement.

Meanwhile, Wednesday's major reshuffle in the civil administration sparked widespread resentment among the top brasses of the

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