



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

Today's issue 24 pages



COMMITTED TO  
People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 761

VOL. XVI NO. 332

DHAKA WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 20, 2006

www.thedailystar.net

POUSH 6, 1413 BS

JILKAD 28 1427 HIJRI

24 PAGES PRICE: TK 7.00

## Polls must be held on time

### Khaleda asserts at rally, blasts AL's anti-poll stance under current timetable



PHOTO: STAR

A section of the huge crowd gathered at the BNP-led four-party alliance's grand rally held at Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday firmly demanded that the next parliamentary election be held "on time" and blasted the Awami League (AL) led grand alliance for its stance against participating in the polls under the current schedule.

"We have only one demand to the caretaker government: A free and fair election must be held on time," Khaleda said at a grand rally of the BNP-led four-party alliance at Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Hinting at the AL-led alliance, she said those, who are speaking of holding the election beyond the constitutionally stipulated 90-day time, "want to destroy the country and hamper the constitutional process".

"The election must be held within 90 days and the caretaker government will have to work for it. There is no alternative to it," the immediate past prime minister said, referring to the constitutional provision for holding election within 90 days from the dissolution

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## EC working to hold polls within 90 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Mahfuzur Rahman yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) is working in its own way to hold the next general election within 90 days as per the constitution.

"We are taking our preparation... Let us see what happens in future," he said. There is a constitutional obligation to hold the election within 90 days set for the caretaker government, he added.

Mahfuzur Rahman was talking to newsmen at his office about preparations for the election amidst the 14-party and its allies' ultimatum to meet the 'prerequisites' for a free and fair poll.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## SC stays collection of candidates' personal key information

### Order comes only two days before nomination submission deadline; bench didn't hear petitioners

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed the High Court (HC) verdict ordering the Election Commission (EC) to collect and make public some vital information including income and wealth statements of the candidates for general elec-

tions.

The top court order came just over two days before the deadline for filing nominations for the upcoming election ends at 5:00pm tomorrow.

The HC verdict that had been greeted with popular acclamation has become invalid for now follow-

ing a controversial move by barrister Azmalul Hossain yesterday. Barrister Omar Sadat assisted Azmalul in moving for Abu Safa who had filed an appeal this year against the HC order. The SC stay shall be in effect till disposal of the appeal.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Advisers' last ditch bid fails to break stalemate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The last moment efforts of the council of advisers to resolve the electoral deadlock through renegotiating the package proposal finalised 15 days ago failed to yield any positive result yesterday, with only a day remaining before the deadline tomorrow for filing nominations.

The four newly inducted advisers yesterday renegotiated with Awami League (AL)-led 14-party the proposals for sending two election commissioners, SM Zakaria and Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury, on leaves of absence, and extension of the deadline for submission of nomination papers by a few more days, sources said.

But 14-party did not consent to the proposals as the new move came 15 days following finalisation of the proposal for sending two controversial election commissioners on leave. The coalition also

asked the advisers to come up with a response to its other demands for properly updating the voter list, rescheduling the election, and depoliticising the civil and police administration, sources said.

BNP-led four-party alliance however agreed to give its consent to the new set of proposals if no new election commissioner is appointed and if AL-led alliance participates in the election under the current poll schedule within the stipulated 90 days of dissolution of the last parliament.

The council of advisers last night discussed the prevailing political situation to find ways to resolve the crisis ahead of the deadline for filing nomination papers tomorrow under the current election schedule.

Emerging from the meeting, Information Adviser Mahbul Alam told reporters, "We are discussing the demands of the two

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## AL talks seat sharing with allies from today

### Its own candidates almost finalised

HASAN JAHRID TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) that has almost finalised its own candidates starts negotiations today with its allies over seat sharing for the election.

The party however sticks to its stance not to take part in any election according to the current schedule.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led four-party coalition has already drawn up its list of candidates. Highly placed sources in the party said the high command might today announce the names formally if the deadline for submission of nomination papers is not shifted from December 21.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil last night said, "We are over and done with the scrutiny of our prospective candidates. But the names will be declared later."

Jalil, also coordinator of the 14-party alliance, said they will formally announce the names of the

candidates after discussion with the Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led Jatiya Oikya Front and several other Islamic parties who have joined forces with the 14-party combine and forged a grand alliance.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star that his party is ready to leave at least 80 seats for their allies and like-minded parties.

On the first day, the AL will sit with the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), a component in the 14-party alliance. It has been learnt that the JSD has sought a total of 40 seats. But sources said they would be given highest three seats.

The AL had talks with the LDP yesterday and agreed to allow them 23 seats while the newly floated party wanted 40, according to party sources.

The 11-party and National Awami Party (NAP) will sit with the AL soon to settle the matters

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## Yunus returns home with Nobel prize

### Says no alternative to polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Muhammad Yunus returned home yesterday with the world's most prestigious award -- Nobel Peace Prize.

On arrival he hoped that the next general election in the country will be held peacefully as there is no alternative to it.

Facing a volley of questions from journalists on politics and election just after arrival he reiterated his call for all political parties to participate in the election. "Political uncertainty definitely exerts itself on the country's economy," was his only response to the questions about the existing volatile political situation.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

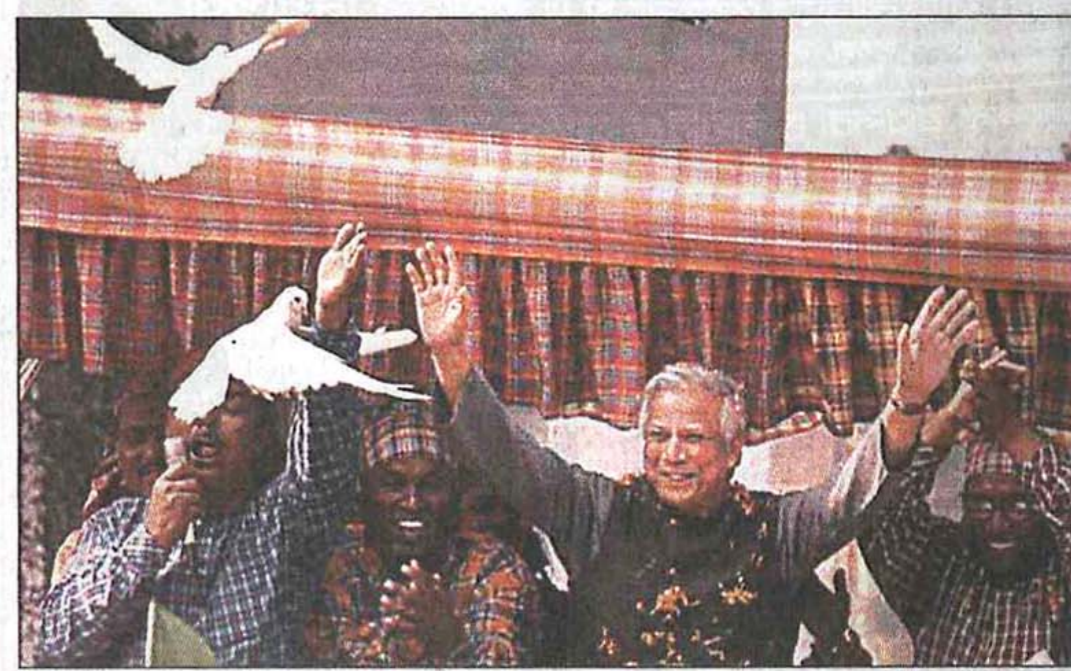


PHOTO: STAR

Doves are released and flower petals are showered on Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus at Zia International Airport yesterday on his return home after receiving the prestigious prize in Oslo, Norway.



## Congratulations

We extend our Heartiest Congratulations and Felicitations to our Vice Chairman, **Mr. Hossain Khaled** for being elected as the **President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry** - the premier and largest chamber of Bangladesh.

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## Don't push country toward civil war

### 14-party asks CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition yesterday urged the president and chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) to stop the process of preparation for an election under the current poll schedule to avoid pushing the country towards a 'civil war'.

"There is still time. Please stop all process of holding an election under the current schedule. Professor Iajuddin please don't push the country towards a civil war,"

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## US, UK, Canada ask parties to resolve impasse


UNB, Dhaka

The US, UK and Canada have urged the political parties of Bangladesh to find a solution to the remaining obstacles to participation of all in a free, fair and credible election.


The country's development partners came up with the suggestion as disputes over the election schedule and removal of the controversial election commissioners continued.

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance has threatened to boycott the polls and announced countrywide hartal on December 21, the last date for filing nomination papers, to press home their demands.


SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



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