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AL, allies may go to polls

Wait on EC's extending time for filing of nominations by 3 days; EC declines to entertain advisers' request to extend deadline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League-led alliance has decided in principle late last night to go to polls if the Election Commission (EC) extends the deadline for submission of nomination papers—which expires today—by three days.

The grand electoral combine refrained from declaring its decision to participate in the polls after the EC in the evening unexpectedly went back on an early morning understanding between the 14-party and the council of advisers about extending the time limit by four days.

The 14-party alliance will take

part in the election if the deadline for submitting nominations is extended now by three days, a top AL policymaker told The Daily Star last night. "We also informed the council of advisers about the decision of our presidium meeting."

In response to the request of the AL-led alliance, the council of advisers decided last night to formally ask the EC to extend the date of filing nomination up to December 26, said Information Adviser Mahbulul Alam after a lengthy meeting at Bangabhaban.

AL General Secretary and 14-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil meanwhile said they will now wait on the

EC to extend the deadline before confirming their participation in the polls.

Earlier in the morning, the AL-led alliance and the advisers talked about extending the nomination submission deadline by four days and sending controversial election commissioner Modabbar Hossain Chowdhury on leave, sources said.

The caretaker government then advised the EC to settle the issue of polls schedule, assuring the 14-party that they would request Mudabbar to go on leave.

But Acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mahfuzur Rahman refused in the afternoon to extend the time limit by more than

two days, upsetting the smooth going of an effort towards solution.

He decided against complying with the 14-party plea as the BNP leadership advised him to give two-day's concession only after the 14-party alliance declares to take part in the election.

With the morning efforts falling apart, the advisory council late in the night initiated negotiations again with the four-party, 14-party and the EC to break the deadlock.

One of the advisers told The Daily Star that a solution must come by this afternoon.

If the EC does not reschedule

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VANDALISM AT SC SC Bar demands punishment of IO for serving 'vested quarter'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday demanded punishment of the investigation officer (IO) of the November 30 vandalism at the Supreme Court (SC).

The Bar accused the IO of rushing in to submit the charge sheet against distinguished lawyers of the country to serve the purpose of a 'vested quarter'.

Sammilito Ainjibi Samannay Parishad will stage demonstrations today at bar associations across the country demanding withdrawal of all charges against the eminent lawyers. It will also hold a meeting

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People, looking forward to spending their Eid holidays with their family members living outside Dhaka, stand in queues at Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday to purchase train tickets in advance.

Time again for defaulters to clean up loans

As election nears, some even think of recourse to court to run the race

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite the persisting stalemate on polls-related issues, a number of loan defaulters are preparing to contest the next general election either by getting High Court (HC) stay orders on classifying their loans, or by rescheduling those.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) sources, quoting from its Central Information Bureau (CIB) list, said the HC has so far given such stay orders following writ petitions by 108 loan defaulters, seven of whom

are aspirant candidates for the election from different political parties.

Banking sources said the number of loan defaulters who got HC stay orders may be more than the CIB figure. Of them, a number of businessmen cum politicians would place the stay orders during scrutiny of their nomination papers by the returning officers.

Besides, a number of top leaders of both the major political alliances started getting their defaulted loans rescheduled early this year,

which still continues.

"Many businessmen are waiting for green signal from their parties to contest the poll. Once their getting party ticket is confirmed, they will get their defaulted loans rescheduled," said a senior official of a nationalised commercial bank.

"Aspirant candidates in the upcoming polls will approach the banks for rescheduling their defaulted loans till the last date of nomination filing, and we have instructed our bank branches to

extend the time limit by more than

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Manju joins BNP alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju has decided to contest in the upcoming parliamentary elections along with the BNP-led four-party alliance, apparently signalling rift in his party.

Earlier, a JP press release signed by Additional Secretary General Sadek Siddiqui asked his party candidates to submit their nomination papers today.

But, following Manju's decision, JP Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam in another press release claimed that the JP would only compete in the elections when all other parties agree to participate. He asked his party candidates not to submit their nomination

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Grand alliance not filing nominations today

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Awami League (AL)-led grand electoral alliance last night did not make it clear whether it is participating in the upcoming election under the current schedule, creating confusion amongst grassroots level leaders and ticket aspirants.

Although today is the last date for submitting nomination papers, AL and its allies Jatiya Party, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Zaker Party and other allied parties are not submitting the nomination papers today.

"We have learnt that the

Election Commission (EC) will extend the time for nomination submission by three days. We are observing whether the situation changes," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said at a news briefing in Dhanmondi AL office following a meeting of AL-led 14-party coalition.

Being divided over the issue of participating in the next poll under the current schedule, top leaders of AL, especially members of the presidium, yesterday decided to rely on party chief Sheikh Hasina to take the final decision on the matter. "If our party chief says yes

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NUKE STANDOFF Sanctions slapped on defiant Iran

REUTERS, United Nations

The UN Security Council voted unanimously yesterday to impose sanctions on Iran's trade in sensitive nuclear materials and technology, an effort to pressure Tehran to halt uranium enrichment work.

"Today [Saturday] we are placing Iran in the small category of states under Security Council sanctions," acting US Ambassador Alejandro Wolff told the council before the 15-0 vote.

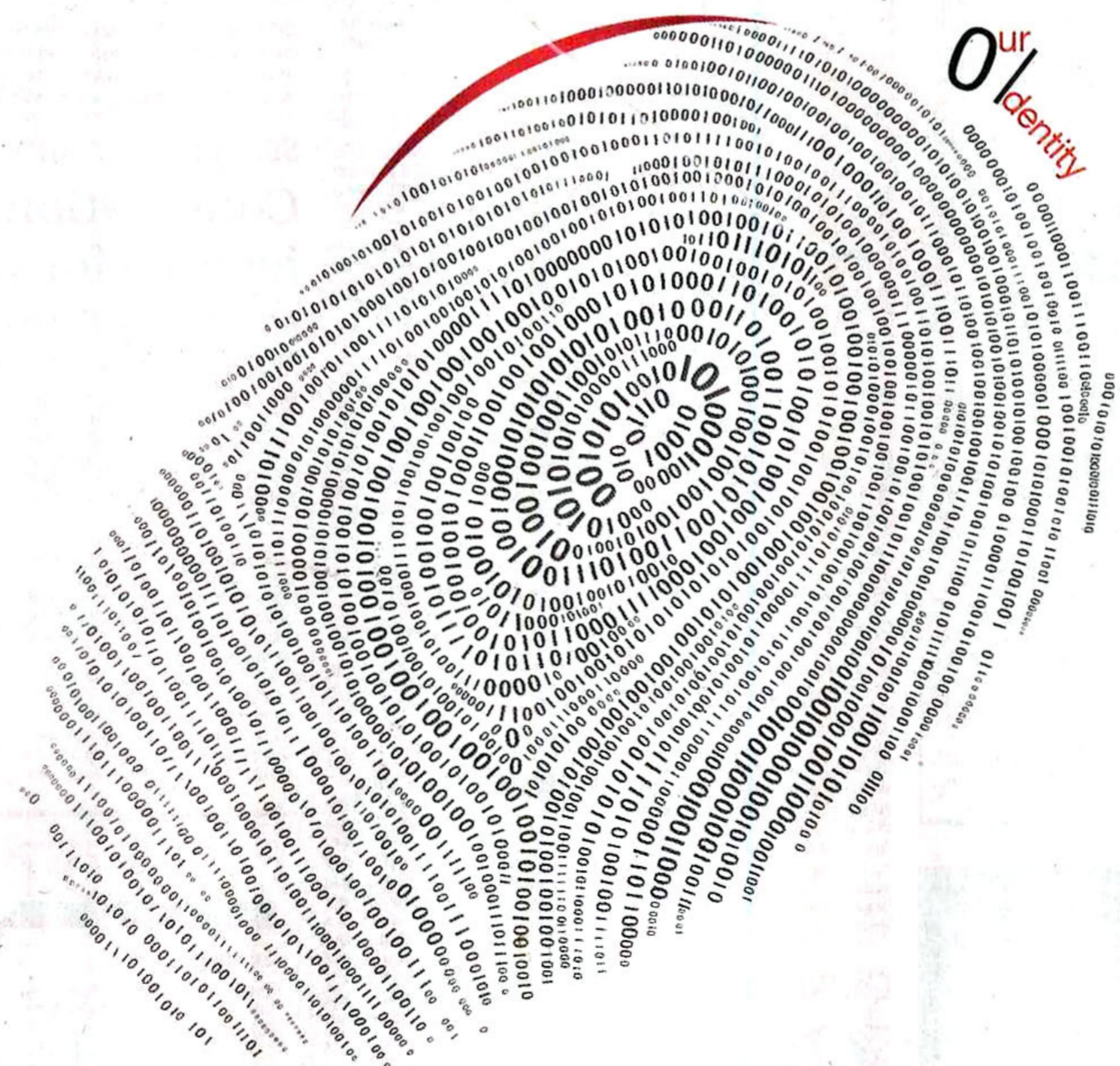
Iran immediately condemned the resolution as illegal and said it would not affect its "peaceful" nuclear activities.

The resolution demands Iran end all research on uranium enrichment, which can produce fuel for nuclear power plants as well as for bombs, and halt all research and development that can make or deliver atomic weapons.

The thrust of the sanctions is a ban on imports and exports of dangerous materials and technology relating to uranium enrichment, reprocessing and heavy-water reactors, as well as ballistic missile delivery systems.

In Tehran, Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini told state-run television

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