



## AL's alliance to go for blockade Jan 7-8

Threatens indefinite siege of Bangabhaban over publication of 'proper' voter list, resignation of Iajuddin as chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL)-led grand electoral alliance yesterday announced back-to-back country-wide blockades on January 7 and 8 demanding publication of a 'proper' corrected and updated voter list, and resignation of Chief Adviser (CA) Iajuddin Ahmed.

Speaking at a packed news conference yesterday, AL President Sheikh Hasina warned, if the demands are not met, the president's official residence, Bangabhaban, will be blockaded indefinitely.

"If the demands are not met even after the countrywide blockades, Bangabhaban will be blockaded indefinitely," Hasina said at the grand alliance news conference



Flanked by former presidents— AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, left, and HM Ershad—Awami League President Sheikh Hasina announces fresh agitation programmes yesterday.

flanked by Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, and top leaders of AL-led 14-party coalition.

Asked if AL will boycott the election if their demands are not met even after the countrywide blockades, Hasina said, "We don't want to run away from the battlefield. We want to stay there and fight till our demands are met."

The AL chief accused the president and CA of not being interested in creating a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election. "Every time we peel off one layer of his conspiracy another layer appears."

Replying to a query whether the grand alliance will participate in

## Khaleda to kick off poll campaign from Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will formally kick off electioneering by offering special prayer at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal in Sylhet tomorrow.

She will leave for Sylhet by road around 10:00am. During her daylong visit, the BNP chairperson will also offer special prayer at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Poran.

But it is not sure whether she will address any public meeting in Sylhet.

On the Eid Day on January 1, Khaleda will exchange greetings with diplomats and cross sections of people at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban Plaza.

She will exchange greetings with diplomats from 10:00am to 10:30am and with people from 10:30am to 11:30am.

Later, the BNP chairperson will address a function organised by her party's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

## Dense fog bedevils home rush for Eid

Ferry service at Paturia, flights at ZIA remain suspended for hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dense fog in the early hours yesterday disrupted road and river communications across the country and forced suspension of flight operations at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) for hours, causing immense sufferings for the home-bound passengers ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

Thousands of passengers had to wait from Thursday last night until 11:00am, as there were long queues

of vehicles at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry terminals. Chilly weather on the riverbank added to their sufferings.

"My family left for Magura early in the morning but reached there at 5:00pm. As they had to wait for several hours to get the ferry at Paturia, the four-hour journey took 10 hours and the kids had to suffer much," said a resident of Lalmatia in the capital yesterday.

No flights left Zia International Airport for nine hours until

11:00am yesterday and the authorities had to reschedule 22 international flights due to poor visibility, flight enquiry sources said. As the sun remained invisible until 11:00am in most of the places, motor vehicles had to move with their fog lights on especially in the northern region and riverside areas.

A three kilometer-long jam at Paturia and a two-kilometre long one at Daulatdia terminal were

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## BNP bins grand alliance demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rejecting the demands of Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the question of resignation of the chief adviser of the caretaker government does not arise at all.

On the alliance's demand on voter roll updating, he said, "Voter roll updating work is going on as it is a continuous process but there is no scope to re-fix the election schedule."

Terming all the demands raised by the alliance as 'resolved issues',

he said, "The 14-party [AL-led alliance] wants to make issues of the resolved ones."

"Abandon the illogical demands and join the election process to prove your popularity," he urged the AL-led alliance during a press briefing held at Hawa Bhaban, the office of the BNP chairperson, last night.

"The caretaker government and the Election Commission should hold elections according to the constitutional timeframe and it has no alternative," the BNP secretary general said.

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## Ershad, B Chy cast doubt on polls

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad has said the upcoming general elections may not be held if the grand alliance's demands are not met.

"A congenial atmosphere for holding a free and fair election is yet to be created. If the grand alliance's demands are not implemented, the election may not be held," Ershad told reporters after attending a press conference with AL President Sheikh Hasina at a city hotel yesterday.

The grand alliance's demands

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## Ershad appeals to confront rejection

EC not accepting bank appeals to cancel defaulters' nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

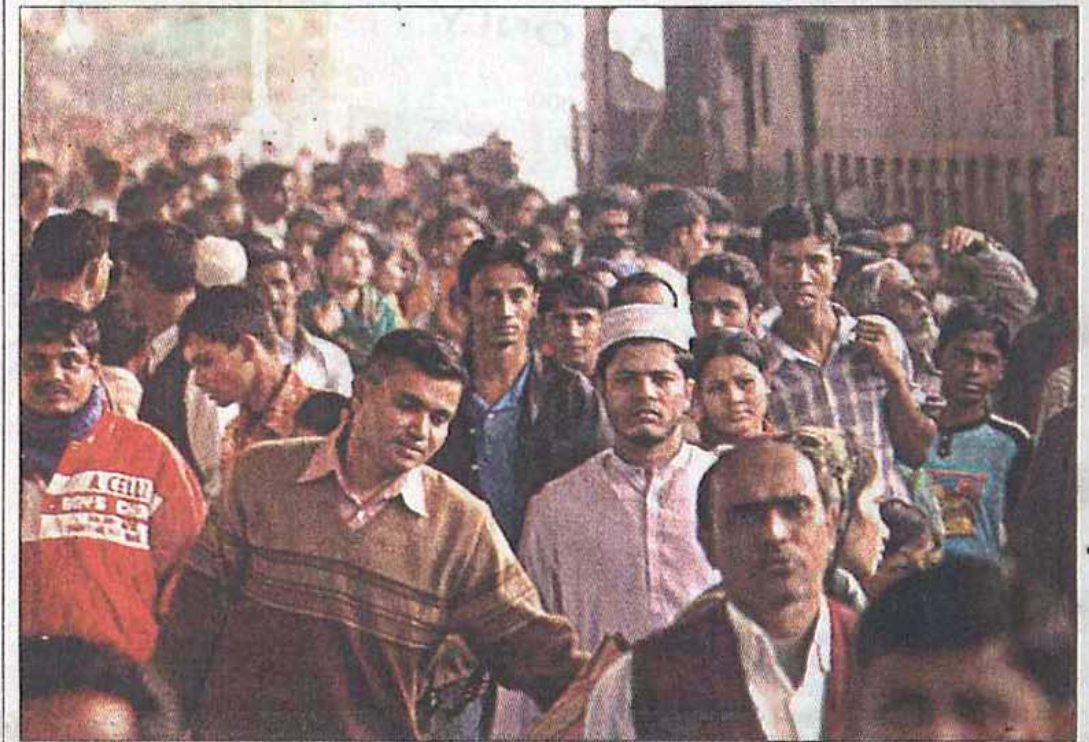
A total of 70 aspirants including Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, whose nomination papers had been rejected by returning officers (RO), yesterday filed appeals with the Election Commission (EC), challenging the validity of the RO's decision.

The number of appealing candidates whose nomination papers

were rejected on different grounds now reached 79 in two days of the three-day process for filing appeals against the RO's decision.

Meanwhile, the EC is not receiving bank appeals to cancel nominations of loan-defaulting candidates, whose nominations have been accepted by the ROs although it had accepted 22 such appeals ahead of the last parliamentary election.

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Hundreds of people walk towards their trains at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday as the Eid holiday rush to head home from the capital gathers pace.



Pilgrims pray on the plain of Arafat near Makkah yesterday during the Hajj, the largest congregation of the Muslims.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Muslims pray for peace at Arafat

REUTERS, Mount Arafat, Saudi Arabia

More than 2 million elated Muslim pilgrims crowded onto holy Mount Arafat near Makkah yesterday, praying for Muslims around the world and hoping for a safe hajj.

Muslims believe Allah is more likely to answer their prayers if they are made within the sacred zone on the mountain plain, the site of Prophet Mohammad's last sermon 1,400 years ago.

Wearing simple white robes to symbolise equality and selflessness, many trekked at dawn to the rocky outcrop, known as Jebel al-Rahma (Mount Mercy).

"Whenever I stand on Jebel al-Rahma I feel reborn," said Ruquia Manouzi, a Moroccan woman.

Mohamad Thiam, a telecoms engineer from Senegal, said pilgrims are praying for Muslims in hotspots around the world.

"I'm very happy, look how our nation is expanding," he said. "But we have to pray for our brethren in

Iraq, in Palestine, in Sudan. There are people dying there."

In one of the world's biggest displays of mass religious devotion, pilgrims spend five days following a route around the mountains of the ancient city of Makkah.

The gruelling ritual is a duty for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to make the trip.

With such large crowds, Saudi Arabia deploys more than 50,000 security men to try to avoid deadly stampedes, as well as attacks by Islamists opposed to the U.S.-allied Saudi royals.

Security fears are heightened this year because of concerns over ongoing sectarian strife between Sunni and Shia Muslims around the region.

A record 1.65 million pilgrims have come from abroad, a 6 per cent rise on the last hajj. Several hundred thousand people inside

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## AL man killed, 50 injured in clash with BNP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An Awami League (AL) activist was killed and 50 others were injured in a clash between the AL and BNP men at Islamnagar village in Daulatpur upazila of the district yesterday.

The dead was identified as Saad Ahmed, 36, son of Kural Sheikh of the village.

Police said the clash erupted at about 11:00am following an altercation between Saad and BNP activist Shamsul over the upcoming election.

At one stage Shamsul beat up Saad as he said AL leader Mahbul Alam Hanif will win the election from Kushtia-1 constituency, defeating BNP candidate Reza Ahmed Bachchu Mollah.

Immediately after the incident, local AL men, led by party leader Fazar Ali, went to the spot and locked in a fierce clash with the BNP activists, leaving at least 50 of both sides injured.

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## Saddam may be hanged in hours

All papers ready for rapid execution

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Iraqi officials have completed all paperwork necessary to execute Saddam Hussein and could hang him as early as today, but may wait



Saddam Hussein

until later in the week, said an aide to the prime minister.

"All documents relating to the implementation of the execution are compiled and ready," Sami al-Askari, a member of Iraq's main Shiite parliamentary bloc and a political consultant to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, said Friday.

"Saddam has only a very short time ahead of the implementation of the execution. The execution will be either before dawn on Saturday, or immediately after the Eid holiday," Askari told AFP.

Eid al-Azha will begin at the weekend and last until Wednesday night, and Iraqi officials have already said that it would be unlikely that an execution be carried out during a religious holiday.

Meanwhile, an Iraqi judge authorised to attend his hanging

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## JMB LEADERS' APPEAL AGAINST DEATH SENTENCE

# Court's rejection order fails to reach jail in a month

Prison authorities to fix execution date only after receiving the paper

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Even after a month of the Supreme Court (SC) judgment on the Jhalakathi judges murder case that confirmed death sentences of six Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders, its copy has not yet reached the prisons where the six convicts have been kept.

While the people of broad walks of the society are eagerly waiting to see the execution of the verdict for JMB's killing of a number of innocent people including judges in the name of religion, it is still uncertain when the jail authorities will get the court order.

The prisons authorities said they cannot fix the date for execution of the six JMB convicts until

they receive the court order. "The court order will initiate our necessary activities," Inspector General (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hasan told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

It now completely depends on the chief justice and other judges of the Appellate Division that passed the order.

The SC on November 28 rejected the six JMB men's petitions seeking permission to appeal against a High Court (HC) judgment upholding the sentences for killing two judges in a suicide bomb attack in Jhalakathi on November 14.

The six convicts are JMB chief Abdur Rahman, top kingpin Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, three other Majlis-e-Shura mem-

bers Ataur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal and Khaled Saifullah, and suicide bomber Iftekhar al Mamun.

Asadul Islam alias Arif, another militant convicted by the trial court, has been on the run.

The Appellate Division only pronounces the order while passing a judgment. It takes time later for drafting the text of the judgment, examining the draft by the Appellate Division members several times, and making necessary corrections.

After finalising the draft, all the members sign it and send it to the section concerned for providing the prisons with its certified copy.

Delay in providing the copy of an Appellate Division judgment

has been an issue of discussion for long. But no one makes open criticism as it remains the jurisdiction of the highest court and there is no provision for providing the copy of a judgment in a specific period of time.

SC Registrar Fazlul Karim told The Daily Star Tuesday that the order has not yet reached the section concerned but when it does, the order will be sent to the prisons concerned.

Deputy Attorney General Hellauddin Mollah, who moved in the court for the state in the judges murder case, said the judgment is yet to be prepared.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel

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The Daily Star

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