

## Assault on Chechens over 82 Russian hostages freed, 18 missing

MOSCOW, Jan 18: The Russian assault against Chechen rebels in the village of Pervomaiskaya ended today and a total of 82 hostages were freed and 18 were missing, President Boris Yeltsin said today, reports agencies.

In the Chechen capital of Grozny, a Chechen separatist spokesman meanwhile said that Chechen guerrillas had

## Anwar Hossain Manju granted anticipatory bail

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Anwar Hossain Manju, who was energy minister under former president H M Ershad, in an anti-corruption case related to leasing out Haripur Oil field to Scimifur Exploration Ltd. S.A.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Haq and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman granted him bail on a bond of Tk two lakh with the satisfaction of the Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka.

The Anti-corruption Bureau on January 16 lodged an FIR with Tejaan thana against Ershad, now in jail, and Anwar Hossain, under Section 109 of the Penal Code read with Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

## Phone exchanges in MP hostels closed

Three 500-line telephone exchanges in the MP Hostels were closed yesterday temporarily to avoid their misuse by some MPs of the dissolved Parliament, reports UNB.

Official sources said a number of former MPs — both from the ruling party and the opposition parties — were still staying at the three MP Hostels and making numerous phone calls everyday. Parliament Secretariat sources also said that many outsiders had been staying in different rooms allotted to MPs as per the instruction of the ex-MPs.

## If there is a will

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other in Pakistan in 1977 (Nusrat Bhutto case)— which were not similar cases but in which the court condoned violation of constitution in order to safeguard it.

"If they (the political leaders) had wanted a solution, there were always enough room — but they did not or could not devise a solution," Barrister Rafiqul Haq pointed out.

Barrister Amirul Islam told The Daily Star "Actually, if there is any political resolution, then the lawyers can find out ways. There will be constitutional engineering only after the leaders reach an understanding."

He added that the President could do many things to resolve the political crisis or bring about a consensus, but he had remained inactive. "Still, he can play an important role," Amirul Islam noted.

## Defamation suit

## Charges against 4 newsmen framed

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court yesterday framed charges against four senior newsmen in a defamation suit filed by Labour and Manpower Minister Mir Shaukat Ali, reports UNB.

The accused are Golam Sarwar, News Editor of Daily Ittefaq, Fazlur Rahman Mauroof, Managing Editor of Banglar Bani, Molur Rahman Chowdhury, Editor of Bangla Bazar Patrika, and Mustafizur Rahman, Editor of Dainik Rupali.

Mir Shaukat filed the defamation suit against the dailies on September 19, stating that the newspapers in their September 12 issues published a defamatory statement against him.

## Zia's birthday

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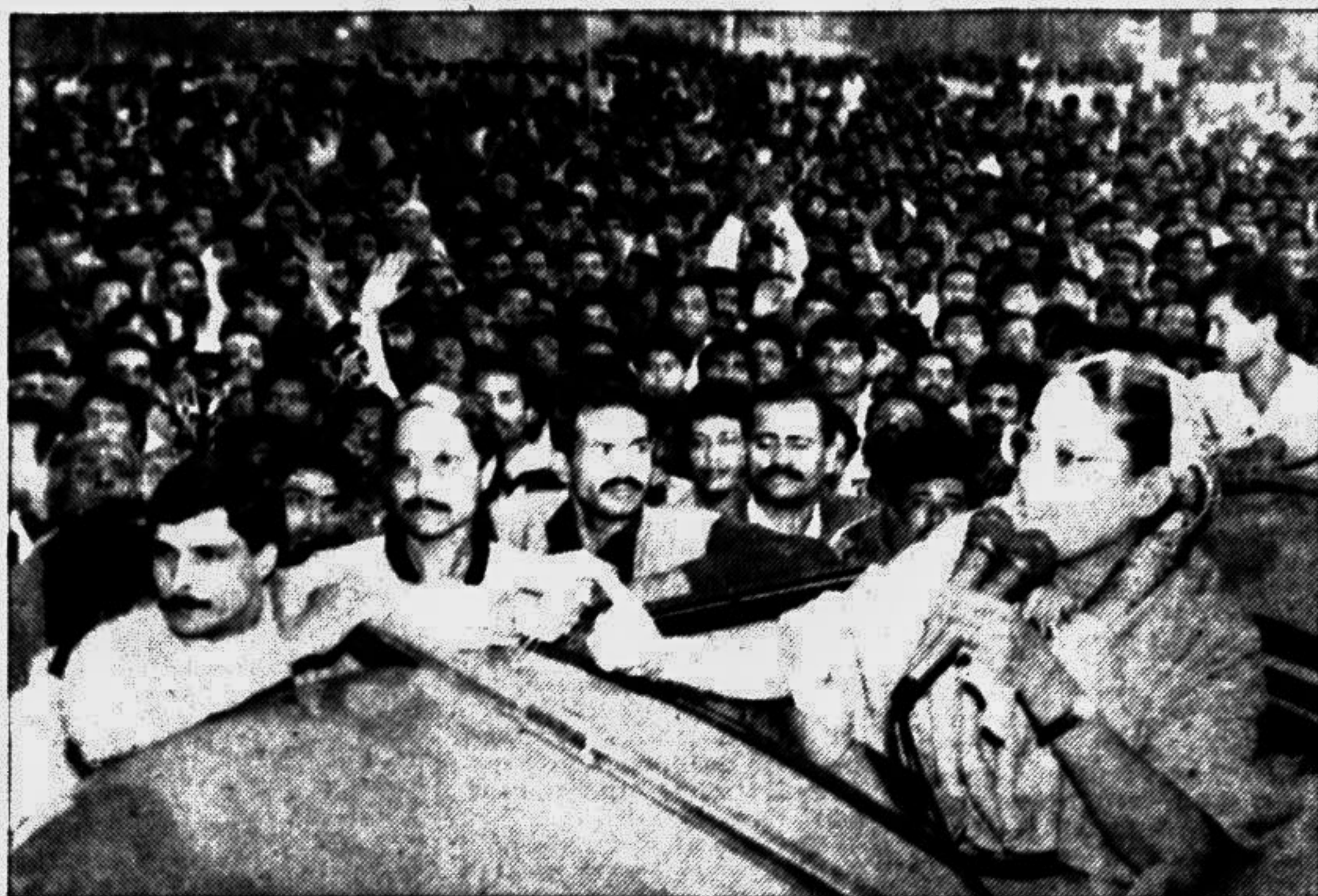
mazar of the late leader at 9 am, discussion at Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 4 pm, documentary film show and cultural functions.

President of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Fazlul Huq Milan and general secretary Nazimuddin Alam, in a joint statement, yesterday urged the members of their organisation to observe the day at district, thana, union and ward level.

The programmes of the Jatiyatabadi Sheba Sebak Dal include rally at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman at 8:30 am laying of wreaths and offering of feteha at 9 am.

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina addressing a rally at the Panthapath in the city yesterday before proceeding to gherao the Election Commission Secretariat. — Star photo

## 'Polls without Opposition to deepen crisis'

Senior Nayebe-e-Ameer of the Jamaat-i-Islami Abbas Ali Khan said yesterday that holding the general elections without the participation of the opposition parties would deepen the crisis further, reports BSS.

Addressing a rally at the Maghbar crossing, the Jamaat leader said the crisis could be resolved only by holding the polls under a caretaker government.

Secretary General of Jamaat-i-Islami Maulana Matir Rahman Nizami said if elections were held with some addressless political parties, it would lower the image of the Election Commission and the country in the outside world.

He said the Prime Minister should resign immediately in the interest of holding meaningful elections as well as to ensure participation of all political parties. There was no alternative to this for the resolution of the crisis, he said.

Organised by the Dhaka City branch of the Jamaat-i-Islami, the rally was presided over by the Ameer of City Jamaat-i-Islami A T M Azharul Islam and also addressed by Jamaat leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, Abdul Kader Mollah and Prof Mojibur Rahman.

## Non-cooperation

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The Prime minister speaks of democracy and the Constitution but herself violates those by resorting to vote rigging and politicising the administration," the AL chief alleged.

Gherao of the EC Secretariat was part of a country-wide Opposition programme yesterday, the date for scrutiny of the nomination papers filed for the February 15 polls.

As the AL procession reached Farmgate on its way to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, police intercepted it, sprinkled coloured water and hurled tear gas shells to disperse on.

Referring to the last-ditch negotiation efforts, the former leader of the Opposition in the Fifth Parliament said, the diplomats also came up with valued suggestions and "we cooperated with them but, Khaleda Zia even rejected their proposals."

Without elaborating Sheikh Hasina said, "We gave a lot of concessions with the good intention of reaching a settlement but they (BNP) did not listen to the words of logic."

She also drew a comparison between deposed president Ershad and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia saying "Ershad relinquished power in the face of people's demand but Khaleda did not do so".

## PM's office, US embassy deny press report

Both the Prime Minister's Office and the US Embassy in Dhaka yesterday denied that US Ambassador Merrill had sent any letter to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on the coming election, reports UNB.

In a statement, Mohammad Mozammel Haq, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, described a news item published in a section of the press yesterday about the Ambassador's letter as "baseless and motivated".

He said no such letter was either written by the US Ambassador or sent to the Prime Minister through BNP Secretary General Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder.

The Press Secretary said the story was aimed at creating confusion among the people.

The US Embassy in Dhaka in a special release yesterday also said that Ambassador Merrill had sent no correspondence to the Prime Minister "on the subject of the upcoming national elections."

"The reports in yesterday's newspapers to that effect are erroneous."

## Dacoity at ACME office

By Staff Correspondent

A robbery was committed at the head office of the ACME Laboratories Ltd, a pharmaceutical company, in the city Wednesday night.

A gang of dacoits broke the iron vaults in three rooms on the ground and first floors of the head office building located at 55 Saat Maajid road and escaped with about Tk two lakh, said ACME officials.

A case has been filed with Mohammadpur thana. However, none was arrested in this connection till last night, police said.

## Faruque Thakur's bail cancelled

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court yesterday cancelled the bail of Faruque Thakur, the principal accused of the businessman Shamsul Alam murder case, and issued warrant of arrest against him, reports UNB.

CMM Shahiuddin Ahmed also ordered attachment of his immovable property.

The court orders came as Faruque failed to appear before the court on due date after his release on bail granted on January 7.

Bail-bond sureties had been asked to produce the main accused of the sensational murder case of Gulshan Thana before the court yesterday.

The lawyer of Faruque Thakur, a film producer, filed a petition in the court yesterday stating that Thakur has been hospitalised with heart ailment. The counsel submitted a medical certificate to prove his client's illness.

Earlier, prosecution had filed petition in the court praying for cancellation of the bail.

## Contested polls

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mula that we are advancing here for a settlement between the government and Opposition, but we remain hopeful that the political leaders of the country will together work out a resolution that moves democracy forward, that enhances the democratic process. That's our interest," Burns said.

When asked whether the State Department was frustrated as there was nothing happening despite the hectic efforts by Ambassador Merrill, the spokesman said the United States would continue efforts for promoting the democratic process in Bangladesh.

"We are determined — and here Ambassador Merrill has done a fine job — to push our view, which is that there ought to be elections, the democratic process ought to be enhanced, and there ought to be cooperation between the government and the Opposition," Burns was quoted by USIS.

He added: "And, you know, because there hasn't been significant progress doesn't mean we're going to stop our efforts. We'll continue to assert that these are things that should happen."

Burns said Ambassador Merrill had acted over the past couple of months to try to facilitate meetings between the government and the Opposition, and Ambassador Merrill certainly enunciated the strong hope that the government and the Opposition in Bangladesh would cooperate on a political solution to their problems.

In recent weeks, US Ambassador David N. Merrill brokered back-stage parleys between top leaders of the government and the Opposition for a peaceful solution to the agonising political deadlock.

On Tuesday, the US Ambassador and diplomats of five other developed nations played a go-between in a last-ditch effort for resolving the country's nagging political crisis. But the move apparently failed to yield any results.

## The Midnight File

### US spying network in Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Jan 18: The United States has mounted a major electronic and human spying network in Bosnia with "unprecedented" cooperation between the CIA and the military to support NATO's peacekeeping effort, senior US intelligence officials said today, reports Reuters.

## 21 injured in Lahore bomb explosion

LAHORE, Jan 18: A powerful bomb exploded in the hostel of a local college here today, injuring 21 students and employees, four of them seriously, the official Associated Press of Pakistan said, reports AFP.

It said the bomb went off in a dormitory of the city's ancient Dyal Singh College at around 9:30 pm.

Other sources said the blast sent the college library on fire, causing heavy losses.

Another report says: Unidentified men attacked the headquarters of a faction of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), Karachi's main political party, with rocket-propelled grenades late Wednesday but no-one was hurt, party sources said Thursday.

Another five people, including a policeman, were shot dead in various incidents Wednesday taking the death toll from violence in Karachi this month to 71, police and witnesses said.

Heavy shooting erupted and lasted for over 20 minutes as members of the MQM Haqiqi faction defended their

## 83 nominations

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Our Chittagong correspondent reports: Out of 79 nomination papers submitted for 15 constituencies in the districts, only two were rejected. Nomination paper of BNP candidate M A Jinnah (Chittagong-1) was rejected as he was found to be a loan defaulter and that of independent candidate Md Hosain (Chittagong-11) was found incomplete.

## Khaleida

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didates other than those selected by the nomination board, to withdraw their candidature by January 23, the last day for withdrawal. Disciplinary action will be taken against those violating the instruction, another source in the party said.

In many constituencies, BNP candidates, who failed to set party nominations, filed nomination papers. The party had also asked other aspiring candidates to file nomination papers, as the 'second choice'. By January 23, the BNP nomination board would finalise the list of candidates in those seats.

BNP central leaders, contesting the polls, are planning to go to their respective constituencies to start campaign from January 24.

Meanwhile, the BNP top notches including those who were engaged in negotiation with the Opposition were evaluating the latest political situation at different levels. Commenting on the issue, the BNP joint secretary and Food and Agriculture Minister, who was one of the negotiators of the party, told some newsmen at his Bailey Road official residence last night, "We made our best efforts to bring the Opposition to the polls. We could easily sink the minor differences on the proposed advisory council under the President to oversee the polls if they attended Tuesday's crucial meeting, which was scheduled following a series of backstage parleys."

When asked whether the State Department was frustrated as there was nothing happening despite the hectic efforts by Ambassador Merrill, the spokesman said the United States would continue efforts for promoting the democratic process in Bangladesh.

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He added: "And, you know, because there hasn't been significant progress doesn't mean we're going to stop our efforts. We'll continue to assert that these are things that should happen."

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A rally of the Jatiya Party at the Panthapath-Mirpur Road crossing (Top) and a procession of the Jamaat-e-Islami on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the city yesterday afternoon. — Star photo

## Wolves are smiling

From Page 1

times better than where we have now landed ourselves into.

Whatever may have been their respective positions at first, when the two sides finally parted ways, the differences were reduced to a minimum. It got stuck in whether or not the so-called 'chief' of the so-called Advisory Council should or should not have executive power. In a five plus five configuration, and when a consensus was needed for a decision, what earth shaking measure the President could or could not take, which made the two sides risk everything, and throw the elections to the wolves.

It is doubtful whether Begum Zia really weighed the pros and cons of her decision to go for a one-plus-fringe party elections. If she goes through with it, as she seems determined to, then she will have thrown to the winds the most important element of her unquestioned prestige — the fact that she was elected in a universally participated elections. After 21st February '96 she will, at best, appear as the winner of a controversial election. A laurel far removed from the one she enjoyed for the last five years.

The ruling party always worked on the assumption that the opposition did not really want to participate in the elections. Thus every new demand of the opposition

was one more proof of its foregone conclusion that AL, JP and Jamaat would ultimately not come to the polls. The genuine suspicion of the opposition parties about the fairness of the polls, and all its preparatory procedures did not make any impression on the minds of the BNP stalwarts.

Similarly the opposition parties had come to their own conclusion that BNP would never hold a free and fair election because it is too corrupt to permit it.

However illogical or contrary to proof these views may have been, leaders on both sides operated as if their suspicions had been proven beyond all doubt. It is our view that at the very end the government party did try very seriously to have a rapprochement. But by then it was too late, and the opposition parties had concluded that they could come to the polls only if it were held sometimes in March or April. Thus in addition to the issue

of what type of government was to oversee the elections, a second demand of postponement of elections beyond the Constitutional limit, made an understanding between the two sides all but impossible.

We deserved to have been celebrating today; celebrating the fact that proving all the skeptics wrong, we were about to hold our second election under a democratic system. We would have been celebrating the strengthening of our democratic institutions. Most importantly we would have been celebrating the fact of making and unmaking, once again, our own government. Through elections we, the people, would have been asserting ourselves as the ultimate 'Boss', with all our leaders paying homage to the 'people' as the source of all democratic power.

Instead of celebrating, we are waiting with trepidation as to what will happen tomorrow and the day after. We are afraid that the coming elections, instead of being an exercise of 'people power', may become an exercise of demonstrating 'masthan power'.

After having sacrificed so many lives for liberating our country, after having fought so many battles to defeat autocracy, and after having worked so very hard to bring some semblance of respectability to us as a nation WE DESERVED BETTER.

## Opposition

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programmes might include a general strike on the day of the February 15 parliamentary elections.

Besides, a series of strikes across the country could also be called, they said.