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Govt still has time to reschedule polls : BNP

BNP yesterday asked the government for rescheduling the municipal elections to void chaos and confrontation, reports UNB.

"Still you have the time to reschedule the municipal elections sitting with the opposition parties," BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said.

Addressing a discussion meeting marking the 63rd anniversary of the birth of Ziaur Rahman, the founder of BNP, Bhuiyan cautioned the ruling party that they should not be dragged to the streets for dislodging it from the power.

Bhuiyan said the movement on four-point would be turned into movement on single demand of ousting the government after the countrywide hartal on Tuesday.

"When all the opposition parties have expressed no-confidence on the Chief Election

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Natore election office set on fire

From Our Correspondent NATURE, Jan 24: The election office here on the second floor of Natore Collectorate Bhaban was set afire by some unidentified miscreants in the early hours of today.

No major damage was reported. The fire was extinguished immediately.

According to a general diary with Natore Sadar Thana, the incident occurred at about 3-4 am when the night guard Khademul Islam was in the toilet. Sensing the fire he came out and started shouting. A group of miscreants who sneaked into the office fled the scene leaving behind seven polythene packets containing three litres of petrol and four torches.

Khademul told this correspondent that he could not identify the miscreants in the darkness.

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Over 100 weapons recovered, 26 arrested in Rangamati

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Jan 24: Police recovered a huge number of illegal weapons from some vehicles at Kaokali area under Rangamati hill district today.

Police recovered 82 swords, 24 choppers, one Chinese axe and arrested 26 persons in this connection.

Police on a tip-off rushed to the area and intercepted some vehicles.

Forces were deployed at Betbunia Rubber Garden, Manikchhari, Bhedabdi points on the Rangamati-Chittagong highway.

They said the weapons had been recovered from seven passenger buses, one microbus and an auto-rickshaw. Police also seized the vehicles.

The were identified as

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Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-00 4-15

Maghrib 5-41 5-44

Esha 7-10 7-20

## Submission of nomination papers for local polls Opposition stretches hartal by 6 hours as EC relaxes deadline

By Staff Correspondent

have ended at 6:00pm.

The EC announcement prompted the opposition parties to go a step further. They decided in an emergency meeting that the hartal would continue till midnight.

The EC however kept date for scrutinising nomination papers and withdrawal of candidature unchanged - January 27 and February 3 respectively.

After the EC directive to the returning officers which came in the afternoon, leaders of the BNP-led opposition alliance met in the evening at the Minto Road residence of the Leader of the Opposition.

Kazi Feroz Rashid and Ka-

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Playing a cat-and-mouse game, the Election Commission (EC) yesterday gave five more hours for submission of nomination papers for municipal polls and the opposition parties responded by stretching hartal by six hours on the day.

The Election Commission said returning officers would accept nomination papers from candidates till 10:00 pm on January 26 (Tuesday) instead of the usual 5 p.m. The decision, understandably, came to facilitate the work after the hartal hours.

BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ had earlier called a daylong, countrywide hartal that would

have ended at 6:00pm.

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Election Commission, said Zahid,

emerging from the meeting at 9:30 last night.

Kazi Feroz Rashid and Ka-

See Page 12 Col 6

The hurriedly called meeting, chaired by BNP chief Khaleda Zia, decided to extend hartal hours till midnight of January 26 (Tuesday).

The Commission decision

clearly proves that it has

adopted a deceitful strategy to

foil the opposition objective,"

said BNP leader Anwar Zahid.

"The opposition response

came in protest against such

fraudulent means taken jointly

by the government and the

Election Commission," said Zahid,

emerging from the meeting at 9:30 last night.

Kazi Feroz Rashid and Ka-

See Page 12 Col 6

The mainstay opposition

parties, which recently forged

an anti-government stance

among themselves, have already announced that they would boycott the presidential speech.

Explaining reasons behind

the decision, the parties — BNP,

Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — said that the President

was ready to deliver a speech

full of "false praises about the

government's performance".

The session beginning today

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the JP's parliamentary wing,

specially because the party

chief, H M Ershad, has already

asked party MPs to abstain

from joining the session on the

opening day.

Anwar Hossain Monju, a JP

legislator and Communication

Minister in the Awami League

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to be serious to make sure that

his supporters join him in the

House on the first day. If he is

successful, the session will witness

an unprecedent split in the JP's parliamentary group.

The opposition parties have

also announced that they would

abstain from attending the JS

Meeting, scheduled to take place

at 11:00 this morning.

The Advisory Committee, an

all-party parliamentary body

headed by the Speaker, decides

the length of a session and the

major issues to be discussed.

However, it is a constitu-

tional obligation of the Presi-

dent to address the parliament

in its first session of the year,

while the convention is that

the session begins at 11:00.

The rest of the bills sought

legal provision for appoint-

ment of "more than one vice

chancellor" in the universities.

Introduced in the last session,

all the ten proposed legisla-

tions were sent to the parliament

standing committees concerned

for scrutiny.

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JP situation still remains unclear

By Special Correspondent

How many of the Jatiya Party MPs are going to abide by the whip of party chief General HM Ershad?

It remained an unanswered question till yesterday.

Even the known dissidents remained tight-lipped on whether they would be in the House when the President delivers his New Year speech this afternoon.

The party chief sent out letters on Saturday to all 33 MPs including the communications minister asking them not to be present during the presidential speech. Copies of the letter were forwarded to the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Choudhury told The Daily Star last night that he had received the letter yesterday afternoon.

"But I have nothing to do in this regard," Choudhury said.

"However, if anyone raises any question or a situation

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## JS session opens today Opposition to boycott President's speech

By Nurul Kabir

asked party MPs to abstain from joining the session on the opening day.

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legislator and Communication Minister in the Awami League Cabinet who was recently expelled from the party, is learnt to be serious to make sure that his supporters join him in the House on the first day. If he is successful, the session will witness an unprecedent split in the JP's parliamentary group.

The opposition parties have also announced that they would abstain from attending the JS Meeting, scheduled to take place at 11:00 this morning.

The Advisory Committee, an all-party parliamentary body headed by the Speaker, decides the length of a session and the major issues to be discussed.

Explaining reasons behind the decision, the parties — BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami — said that the President was ready to deliver a speech

full of "false praises about the government's performance".

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asked party MPs to abstain from joining the session on the opening day.

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