

November 21, 2006

Aziz decides his fate in two days

Advisers appear upbeat after hectic parleys; CEC may even quit

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MAAziz might tender his resignation to the president sometime today, an adviser to the caretaker government hinted last night.

Aziz sought two days' time yesterday to decide on how to respond to the president's initiative aiming to break the stalemate over reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

In the morning, Iajuddin sent a group of emissaries to the CEC in a last-ditch effort to settle the crisis.

Through the three-member delegation, he asked Aziz to make a swift decision, realising the gravity of the situation arisen out of the call for his resignation.

Writ petition filed against Iajuddin

Challenges his authority to hold CA's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed in the High Court (HC) yesterday to issue a rule to the President and Chief Adviser (CA) of the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed to show cause under what authority he is holding the office of the CA.

Adnan Anwar, a businessman and nephew of late President Ziaur Rahman, filed the writ stating that President Iajuddin did not comply with all the provisions of the constitution before assuming the office of the CA.

The respondents are the chief adviser, the president, and secretaries of Law and Establishment ministries.

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The presidential delegation comprising Advisers Mahbubul Alam, MAzizul Haque and Advocate Sultana Kamal reached the CEC's office at around 9:50am. They communicated the president's message to the poll chief.

Later addressing a news conference at night, Information Adviser Mahbubul Alam said, "We have found a way to resolve the ongoing national crisis."

The press briefing followed a meeting of the council of advisers to the caretaker government.

"We hope we will get a result by the next 24 to 48 hours," he added.

Mahbubul, however, declined to answer whether the EC will be expanded through appointing a few more election commissioners or it

will be reconstituted in the event of MaAziz standing down as the CEC.

He indicated that at the moment they are not thinking of any other alternatives. "We believe the solution to the crisis that we are expecting will be acceptable to all."

At the meeting, the advisers expressed optimism that the CEC will inform the president of his decision today and after that they will sit to discuss the next course of action.

An adviser seeking anonymity told The Daily Star last night that they are in fact awaiting an announcement of resignation from the CEC. "If he does not quit, it will not be possible to reconstitute the Election Commission," he added.

About the other election commis-

sioners, the adviser said, "Let's resolve the problem regarding the CEC first."

The information adviser said, "Now we can see a light at the end of the tunnel. And we are very happy that our efforts to break the deadlock are going to pay off."

"The CEC told us that he will inform the president about his decision tomorrow (today)," said Advocate Sultana Kamal, a caretaker government adviser and member of the presidential delegation that met Justice Aziz yesterday morning.

In the wake of the latest developments, the council of advisers that has been encountering

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Peaceful blockade marred in Natore

50 bullet-hit as 14-party, BNP clash

STAR REPORT

The entire country came to a grinding halt yesterday as Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition resumed an indefinite blockade for the third time amid noticeable support from people for reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

At least 150 people were injured, including 50 with bullet wounds, in gunfights between 14-party and BNP activists over capturing streets in Natore town.

Clashes between the rival political activists in Sirajganj and Bagerhat saw 24 people injured.

Otherwise the blockade passed peacefully elsewhere in the country yesterday with an increase in the number of blockaders on the streets.

General population seemed to be more or less in agreement with the blockaders all over the country, making it easier for them to enforce it rather peacefully.

AL-led 14-party joined by Jatiya Oikya Front comprising Liberal Democratic Front (LDP), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tarique Federation, resumed the blockade yesterday demanding reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) as the third deadline for President and Chief

Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed to meet its 11-point demand ended on Sunday.

Rail communication across the country, particularly in the western zone, came to a halt due to the blockade, according to railway sources. Although some trains on Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet routes in the eastern zone operated, seven of them were stranded due to barricades at Sathkhumar, Manikkhali, Sarishabari and Gouripur stations.

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