

14-party, allies want poll date deferred by 45 days

Rigid stance against participating in polls under announced schedule; formal joint announcement soon

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The 14-party alliance, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Liberal Democratic party (LDP)-led Jatiya Oikya Front and several Islamic parties have taken a rigid stance against participating in the upcoming elections under the announced polls schedule as they believe a level playing field is yet to be created for fair polls.

They will make a formal announcement soon from a com-

mon platform that they will not participate in the election according to the present timetable and ask the caretaker government (CG) to put off the date until March, sources said.

Keeping this view in mind, the 14-party is likely to form a grand electoral alliance with like-minded parties and forge a simultaneous movement calling for the election to be delayed by at least 45 days from the announced election date,

January 23.

In the meantime they want the CG to create a level playing field by depoliticising the field level administrations and implementing the package proposals of the advisers. They also want announcement of a fresh polls schedule as per the constitution after correction and publication of the updated voter roll.

Most of them think both the CG and the Election Commission (EC)

will not be able to carry out the tasks within 90 days' time as 48 days have already gone.

It will not be possible for the party to participate in the polls currently scheduled for January 23, AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star, adding that they will take part in the election only after the package proposals are implemented completely.

If the polling date is not refixed

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Hasina again demands fresh polls schedule

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday demanded fresh election schedule after the publication of an appropriate electoral roll, saying that under the previously announced polls schedule no free and fair election is possible.

She again gave a hint of participating in the upcoming general elections and asked the people to get united to resist the BNP-Jamaat "conspiracy" of vote rigging.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance wants to snatch people's mandate to return to power and people will have to foil their evil design," Hasina said at a discussion, marking the Martyred Intellectuals Day

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V-Day back as struggle to uphold democracy on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation today celebrates the 35th anniversary of its glorious victory over Pakistani occupation forces in the nine-month long Liberation War in 1971 with a fresh vow to uphold the spirit of the hard-earned independence and democracy.

A grateful nation pays homage to the three million martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War for the much-cherished freedom of the country.

The Victory Day will be celebrated across the country and at Bangladesh missions abroad amid utmost festivity and with the hope for a prosperous country enlightened by the spirit of independence.

People, who have been living in uncertainty caused by the ongoing political impasse, expect a peaceful end to the prevailing situation followed by a free, fair, credible and acceptable election.

They hope the political leaders and the government will show respect for the Liberation War and the country's independence by taking honest and effective initiatives to break the political deadlock.

On this day in 1971, General AAK Niazi, chief of 93,000-strong Pakistani occupation forces, surrendered to the Bangladesh-India Joint Command at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka following a miserable defeat to the Bangalee Mukti Bahini (guerrilla forces) in the March-to-December war.

On March 26, 1971, the Pakistani armed forces committed one of the cruellest genocides in the annals of human history by killing at will the freedom-loving unarmed Bangalees in the then East Pakistan.

The nation, under the leader-

ship of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, finally achieved independence on December 16, 1971 after the nine-month long bloody war.

The day is a public holiday. National flag will be hoisted atop all

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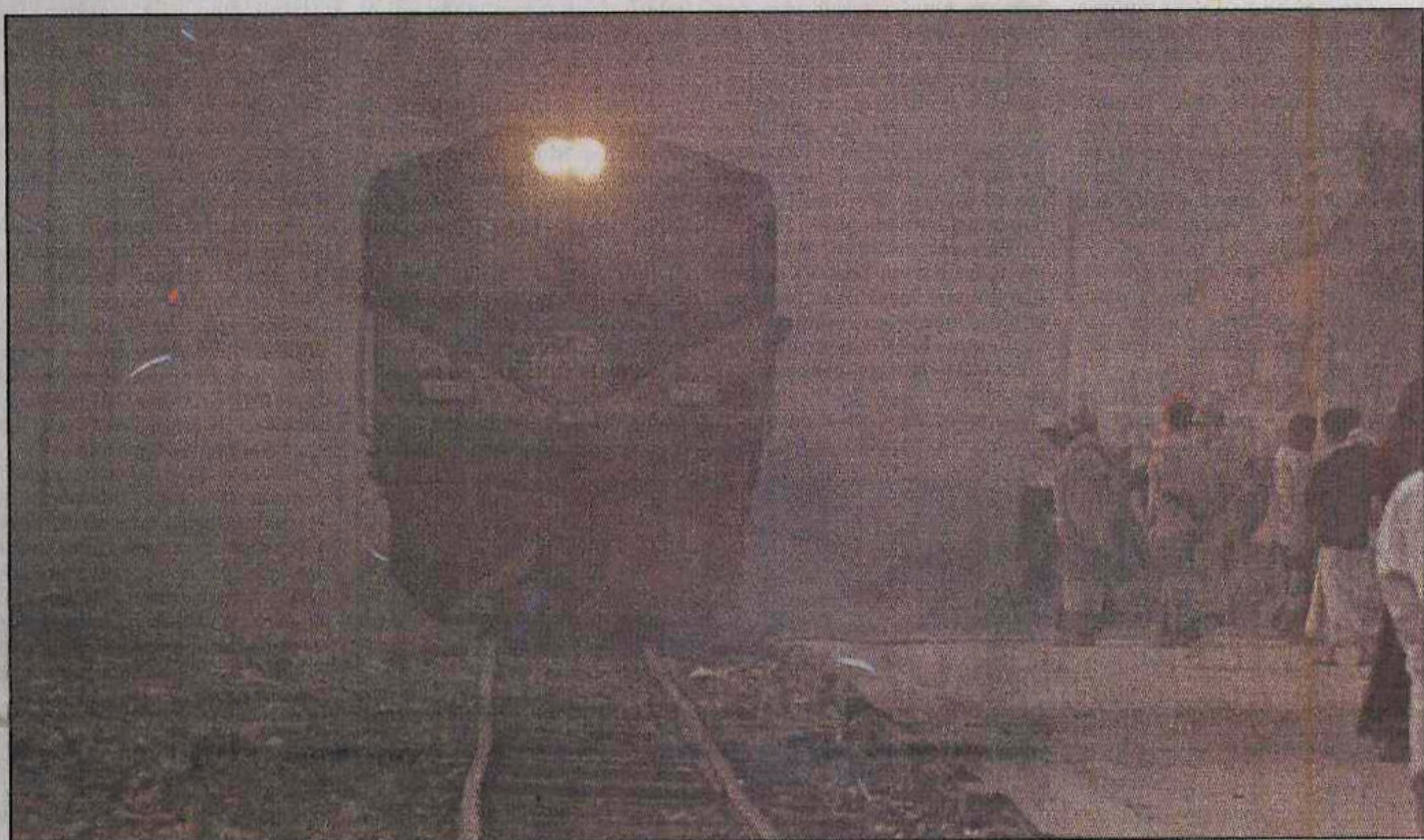


PHOTO: STAR

A train, covered in a blanket of fog, switches on its headlight as it leaves Tejgaon station yesterday. Although winter has set in across the country, the city dwellers are yet to experience its bite.

ERSHAD'S CASE Bhuiyan criticises 'statement' against verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said issuing any statement against a verdict of the High Court (HC) is contempt of court.

He made the remarks while criticising Awami League-led 14-party alliance leaders for expressing sympathy to Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad following Thursday's HC verdict that rejected Ershad's appeal against a trial court's verdict.

Bhuiyan said Awami League (AL) leaders criticised Ershad and called him "a thief" when he expressed his interest to join the four-party alliance but now they

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EC men yet to show up in many city areas

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Several thousand eligible voters at Nobhodoy Housing Project area and Gabtoli Beribandh City Colony in the capital have not yet been enrolled as voters.

Most residents in the localities now see little hope of being included in the voter list as field level Election Commission (EC) staff did not visit their houses until yesterday, the eighth day of correction of the updated voter roll.

In Gazipur, agitated voters beat up an assistant registration officer (ARO) as he deleted the names of around 500 voters of Baimail village in Sadar upazila from the

updated list on Thursday.

Residents of Gabtoli colony where mainly class four employees of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) reside alleged that out of about 1,800 eligible voters, only around 300 were included in the updated list. Some EC staff on Wednesday visited the house of a BNP leader at the colony and went back without going to any other houses.

"Awami League (AL) has always been at an advantageous position at the colony as majority of the residents support it in any elections," said Monir Hossain a resident of the colony.

The DCC shifted the colony to its present site in Mirpur from

Gulshan around 14 months back.

Sixty-year-old Samiran, a sweeper, said she and three other members of her family have not yet been registered as voters. Arif, 22, who lives at Lane No 13 in the colony, said none of the 72 houses in their lane has yet been listed as voter.

The picture is even more bleak at Nobhodoy Housing Project in Adabor where, according to locals, around 4,000 people have never been enrolled as voter.

"Around 4,000 eligible voters at Nobhodoy project have not yet been listed," rickshaw mechanic Asgar Bepari of the area told this

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JU students set ablaze 2 trucks after road mishap

JU CORRESPONDENT

The angry students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) set fire to two trucks at Aminbazar in Savar yesterday following a road accident that left 15 students of the university injured.

The accident took place near Salehpur Bridge at Aminbazar at 9:30am when a truck hit a university bus, carrying students to Dhaka.

Of the injured, Bappi, a third-year student of English Department, and Shohag, a third year student of Government and Politics Department, were admitted to Lab Aid hospital in the

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US wants fair polls, AL participation

AFP, Washington

The United States has called on Bangladesh's main opposition party to participate in January elections and urged the caretaker government to ensure the polls are conducted efficiently.

Led by Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Hasina, the opposition is demanding that caretaker government head President Iajuddin Ahmed step down, saying fair elections were impossible with him at the helm.

It accuses the caretaker government of seeking to tilt elections set for January 23 in favour of the outgoing right-of-centre Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

"Obviously they may have their decisions, they may have their options but we think for the sake of

voters, it is important that there be candidates that represent the different major political point of views," US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said.

He said he had directly told Hasina and other political leaders during his visit to Bangladesh last month about the importance of their participation in the elections.

"So there is no question, I think, of our view, that we will like to see them participate and we will like to see them achieve the conditions that will be necessary to fairly participate and represent themselves in the election," Boucher told a forum in Washington.

The AL is expected to make its decision on participating in the elections in a few days.

"So we have to see what happens," said Boucher, who is in

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EU concerned over army deployment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Parliament has expressed 'serious concern' over the recent army deployment in Bangladesh, saying it will undermine the progress made in the past towards strengthening the democratic institutions.

Vice-President of the EU Parliament Gerard Onesta expressed the concern in a letter sent to President Iajuddin Ahmed on December 13. He also expressed EU's concern over the resignation of the four advisers to the caretaker government.

Onesta appealed to Iajuddin 'to take the necessary steps to keep the troops in their barracks and for the re-establishment of civil arrangements to guarantee law and order in the country.'

"As you might be aware, the

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