



No polls under present timetable, says Hasina

Hartal on Thursday; new grand alliance says Iajuddin must go; vow to resist any one-sided election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The grand electoral alliance led by Awami League (AL) yesterday announced that they will boycott and resist any election under the current poll schedule since in their view prerequisites for a free and fair election have not been fulfilled.

In defence of the stance, AL President Sheikh Hasina at a grand rally in the capital yesterday said the atmosphere for a fair election has yet to come to existence, an acceptable voter list has not been prepared, controversial men are still dominating the Election Commission (EC), the administration is still politicised, and the caretaker government has failed to perform neutrally.

"We want a free and fair election. The people will not allow holding of an election designed in line with a blueprint provided by BNP-Jamaat-led alliance... any attempt to hold a unilateral election will be resisted," said Hasina, the top-most leader of AL-led 14-party coalition, adding, "We want a response within 24 hours whether an atmosphere conducive to holding a free and fair election will be created."

As part of resisting an election under the current schedule, Hasina's grand alliance also announced a countrywide dawn to dusk hartal scheduled for December 21, the last date for filing

nomination papers for the ninth parliamentary election, to be held on January 22 according to the current poll schedule.

Hasina urged the people of the country to make the December 21 hartal a success and to continue

agitating to protect the people's right to vote. "Inshallah (may Allah be willing), the people will clinch victory!" she said prompting thunderous applause from the participants in the mammoth rally.

In a significant political polaris-

ation ahead of the polls, AL-led 14-party from the grand rally in Paltan Maidan launched the largest ever political alliance since independence with Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP),

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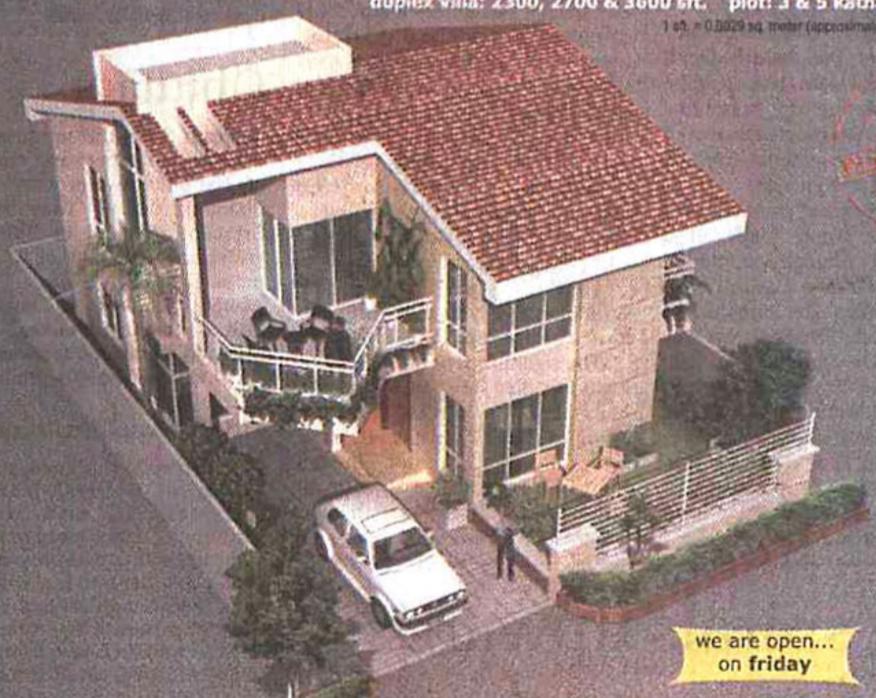


PHOTO: STAR

A bird's-eye view of the grand rally of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance and its allies at Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday.

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