



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 polarisation, the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and several other parties yesterday forged the largest ever alliance to advance the 'movement for a free and fair election'.

Ending all speculations, former presidents HM Ershad and AQM SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

14-party, Ershad, B Chy form largest-ever alliance

HASAN JAHID TUSHAR

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Ershad says he was tortured for speaking against 4-party 'graft'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said he and his party have been subjected to constant threats and torture for speaking out against what he said was unbridled corruption of the BNP-led four-party alliance.

"I am getting threats that I SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

No election without EC reconstitution Says B Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said no election could take place in the country without reconstituting the Election Commission (EC), SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



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.

Govt borrowing spirals upward

32pc rise in first 5 months of FY07

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Government borrowing from banks has shot up by a staggering 32 percent in the first five months of the current fiscal year compared to the last fiscal year's same period due to low revenue income and a massive drop in foreign aids.

To rein back the borrowing spree, the caretaker government has decided to tighten regulations and scrutinise project fund disbursements under the Annual

Development Programme (ADP) more closely.

From July to November the amount of government borrowing stood at Tk 4,661 crore, compared to Tk 3,547 crore in the corresponding period of last fiscal year.

Finance ministry sources fear that the government might be forced to borrow even more due to additional spending required for the elections and chances of fall in revenue earning caused by SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

4-party yet to set strategy to face new alliance

Holds grand rally today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance leaders seem confused and have not yet decided what they would do, if the Awami League-led grand alliance, formed yesterday, boycotted the upcoming elections, sources said.

However, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing at Hava Bhaban in the capital yesterday said they would clarify their position on the issue at today's grand rally.

The BNP-led four-party alliance SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Lack of voter list hampers DCs' poll preparation

Election advanced by a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy commissioners (DCs), also returning officers for the upcoming general election in their districts, informed the Election Commission (EC) at a high-level meeting yesterday that their preparations for the

polls are being hampered as they did not get copies of the updated voter list.

The EC announced at the meeting that the election will now be held on January 22 instead of January 23 as it coincides with the SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Advisory council meet ends without decision on package proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The meeting of the council of advisers yesterday ended without any specific decision regarding the implementation of the "package proposal," especially the reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

With President and Chief Adviser (CA) to the Caretaker Government (CG) Iajuddin Ahmed in the chair, the advisers discussed ways to implement the remaining SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

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