

Chronology of keeping off polls

FROM PAGE 1
performing his constitutionally mandated responsibility as chief adviser to the caretaker government in the interest of the people.

The hope that flickered with KM Hasan's refusal to take office of the chief of the caretaker government seemed to have been dimmed as the BNP and Awami League (AL) failed to reach a consensus about who should head the caretaker government and President Iajuddin Ahmed offered himself as a possible head, a suggestion that the AL outright rejected.

AL President Sheikh Hasina at a press conference said President Iajuddin Ahmed should take immediate steps for a non-partisan person to take oath as the chief adviser to the caretaker government to put an immediate end to the countrywide violence.

BNP Chairperson and outgoing Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at a rally urged the opposition to accept whatever decision the president should take on caretaker chief and said her party will do the same.

October 29
President Iajuddin Ahmed assumed the office of chief adviser to the non-party caretaker government in addition to his presidential responsibilities as "major political parties failed to reach a consensus on an acceptable person for the post".

The President sought cooperation from all in holding the general election in a free and fair manner. "We are determined to hold a free and fair election to parliament rising above party and opinions," he said in his address to the nation over radio and television.

The AL-led 14-party alliance that vehemently opposed the president's proposal for assuming the post himself neither accepted nor rejected the new caretaker chief terming it a violation of the constitution. At an emergency meeting at Sudha Sadan, the alliance observed that Iajuddin's activities will decide whether they will contest the next polls or not.

October 30
The 14-party alliance leaders met President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed and demanded that he should perform 11 urgent tasks, including reconstitution of Election Commission (EC) and neutralisation of civil and police administration, within November 3, 2006 to prove his neutrality. The chief of the non-party interim government assured them that all possible steps would be initiated for holding a free and fair election.

October 31
Ten advisers to the caretaker government headed by Prof Iajuddin Ahmed were sworn in at Bangabhaban ending two days' speculations about the appointments. The advisers were Justice Fazlul Haque, former cabinet secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former foreign secretary CM Shafi Sami, immediate past army chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, former inspector general of police M Azizul Haque, former secretary Dhiraj Kumar Nath, human rights activist Advocate Sultana Kamal, Chairperson of Scholastica Pvt Ltd Yasmin Murshed, Journalist Mahbubul Alam, and Prof Emeritus Sufia Rahman.

The 14-party in its reaction said they would observe activities of the advisers whether they play a role in creating environment for a free and fair election and then speak about them.

November 1
President and Chief Adviser Professor Iajuddin Ahmed allocated portfolios to the advisers of his caretaker government, keeping all the vital ministries under his stewardship. The portfolios that he held are the Chief Adviser's Office, Armed Forces Division, Cabinet Division, Election Commission Secretariat, NGO Affairs Bureau, Defence Ministry, Establishment Ministry, Bangladesh Public Service Commission, Ministries Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Education.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing said 14-party coalition's demand for restructuring the Election Commission (EC) is 'new' to him. "There is no scope in the constitution to take any action against anyone in the EC."

Mannan Bhuiyan welcomed the newly appointed advisers to the caretaker government and said the interim government will hold a general election in three months' time and appointing the advisers was a step forward to that direction.

November 2
Two advisers -- CM Shafi Shami and Sultana Kamal -- on instruction from Chief Adviser to the caretaker government met AL President Sheikh Hasina conveying the message that they have initiated effective steps to reconstitute the EC. Following the meeting the AL softened its ultimatum ending on November 3 for tough action unless the caretaker government implements its 11-point demand including EC reconstitution.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a press briefing said the CEC and the other commissioners are "neutral and non-partisan people." The country cannot concede to AL and its allies' "illogical demand" for removal of the commissioners, she said.

November 3
The 14-party alliance extended the November 3 deadline by a week and asked the president to appoint a non-partisan person as the caretaker government chief in addition to carrying out the previous 11-point task.

Otherwise, they would enforce indefinite blockade programmes across the country, AL President Sheikh Hasina warned at a huge

rally at Paltan Maidan.

Former law minister Moudud Ahmed moved against a High Court order and got the functions of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) stayed up to January 21 amid growing demands for investigation into corruption of ministers and officials of the immediate past government. The Supreme Court (SC) order means the ACC will not be able to function during almost the whole tenure of the caretaker government. However, the ACC was learnt to be preparing for applying to the court to modify the order so that it can function.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing urged the president and chief adviser of the caretaker government to take action against two advisers who visited Sudha Sadan and met AL President Sheikh Hasina.

Advisers to the caretaker government said two of their colleagues met AL Chief Sheikh Hasina following a consensus decision and on instructions of President Iajuddin Ahmed and there is no room for controversy.

November 4
CEC MA Aziz expressed his unwillingness to the council of advisers to resign if requested by the caretaker government (CG) for reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC), putting the CG in a difficult situation as regards holding a free and fair election. One adviser went to the residence of MA Aziz to know whether he will resign if the council requests him.

November 5
The 14-party alliance at a press conference urged opponent BNP-led four-party coalition not to pressurise the caretaker government but help it create a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil alleged that the four-party alliance placed its 10-point demand to the caretaker government as part of a conspiracy to foil the next election and urged BNP not to try to protect the "controversial" CEC and three other election commissioners.

November 6
The advisers at an unscheduled meeting in a state guesthouse without the chief adviser discussed the overall situation and agreed that the process of creating a congenial atmosphere for the next parliamentary election should be expedited.

In a dramatic turnaround from his earlier decision, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad at a meeting with his party leaders decided not to join the BNP-led four-party alliance following strong opposition from his party lawmakers.

November 7
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia blasted the council of advisers to the caretaker government for November 6 meeting without the chief adviser and accused them of conspiracy. "The meeting without the chief adviser was very much unconstitutional," she told a huge rally in front of the BNP central office.

November 9
President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed at a meeting with the secretaries reminded that the present form of government has become a "presidential form of government" and underscored his supreme authority over the state and government affairs, saying any unwarranted remarks about his personal officials are tantamount to interference in the affairs of the state.

November 10
The AL-led 14-party alliance leaders at a press briefing said President Iajuddin Ahmed opened up scopes for impeachment for 'violating' his oath and making 'unconstitutional' remark that the present government has become a presidential form of government. The alliance also declared to enforce an indefinite countrywide blockade from November 11 if their demands are not met.

The BNP-led four-party alliance, on the other hand, announced that it would resist the AL-led coalition's programme by being on the streets.

November 11
A non-stop countrywide blockade enforced by the 14-party alliance began amid heightened tension as the extended deadline given to the president/chief adviser for implementing the alliance's 11-point task ended on November 10 without meeting major demands.

Terming the blockade programme "unlawful and unconstitutional", the non-party caretaker government directed the law enforcers to go tough during the blockade programme.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a press briefing said her party did not announce any programme for the next two days to avoid confrontation, saying BNP believes in peace and political consensus.

November 12
In a sudden unilateral move, keeping his advisers in the dark, President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed decided to deploy army across the country in aid of the civil administration to maintain law and order. The home secretary had sent the decision to the local administration in the afternoon. A late night handout by a joint secretary of the home ministry, however, said: "In fact, regarding the army deployment the government has decided that the troops might be deployed after taking into consideration the situation. Since no such situation has arisen, the decision to deploy the army has not yet been taken."

The AL expressed its surprise at the decision to deploy the army and said no such situation has arisen in the country that necessitates army deployment in aid of the civil administration.

"We hope no-one will use our

national asset army with a political motive and conspire to put them face-to-face with the people," AL General Secretary and coordinator of the 14-party alliance Abdul Jalil said in a press statement.

November 13
Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz told the reporters the election schedule will be declared by November 25, 2006.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan threatened to enforce counter programme if 14-party alliance continues the ongoing countrywide blockade.

November 13
In the face of strong objection from the advisers to the caretaker government (CG), the home ministry's unilateral decision on deployment of army without following proper procedure was cancelled. Irked by the decision, the advisers observed that the decision and issuance of a circular to deploy army were gross mistakes, and the move was not taken in accordance with proper procedure.

The BNP-led four-party alliance decided not to accept any caretaker government move to reconstitute the EC by changing existing CEC Justice MA Aziz.

President Iajuddin Ahmed appointed his controversial Press Secretary Mokhesur Rahman Chowdhury as an adviser with the rank and status of a state minister.

November 14
All major political parties -- except BNP and its allies -- that participated in the talks with the caretaker government advisers strongly recommended reconstitution of the EC for holding a free and fair election.

JP and Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) demanded immediate removal of the CEC by any means, an idea opposed strongly by the BNP-led four-party alliance.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan informed the council of advisers at a meeting at the state guesthouse Padma that they would not accept anything beyond the constitution and there is no scope in the constitution to make any changes in the EC.

November 15
The 14-party alliance postponed its ongoing countrywide blockade and asked the chief adviser again to meet its demands, including reconstitution of the EC and removal of the CEC.

The EC Secretariat claimed that none of the election commissioners was willing to resign while the three election commissioners, who earlier told reporters of their unwillingness to continue their job, remained silent.

Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam categorically told Voice of America that the decision to deploy army was taken at the instruction of President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed.

The BNP-led four-party alliance decided to continue its counter programmes across the country protesting 'killings, anarchy, terrorism and vandalism' by the 14-party combine.

November 16
The 14-party alliance at a press briefing said President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed would be responsible if election process is hampered due to his 'unconstitutional and partisan' activities.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a press conference asked the caretaker government to take measures to announce the election schedule without delay.

November 17
The European Parliament in a resolution adopted on Bangladesh urged the caretaker government to take immediate steps to reconstitute the EC so that it can perform and can be seen to perform its work in a truly neutral manner.

Bangladesh Printing Industry Samity and Bangladesh Printing and Marketing Samity decided not to print the faulty voter list, which the EC has prepared, alleging that the controversial CEC MA Aziz hatched a plot to embezzle the taxpayers' money.

November 18
President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed proposed appointment of two new election commissioners in his last ditch effort to strike peace between two major parties wrangling over reconstitution of the EC.

The AL ruled out Iajuddin Ahmed's proposal with the exception that it is ready to accept the peace formula if the two new appointees replace the Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz and Commissioner SM Zakaria.

November 19
The 14-party combine resumes non-stop countrywide blockade demanding reconstitution of EC as the third deadline for President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed to implement its 11-point demand ended.

Jatiya Oikya Front comprising Liberal Democratic Front (LDP), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation joins forces with the AL and its allies to push for ouster of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and three other election commissioners.

The BNP-led four-party alliance declared that it would be in the streets, raising the spectre of violent confrontations. It will hold rallies and processions across the country to protest the 'anarchy' of the 14-party.

After 20 days of taking oath, the advisers to the caretaker government (CG) felt frustrated, saying that so far the CG has failed to create an environment suitable for a free and fair election.

The BNP-led four-party alliance staged demonstration in the capital as a showdown of strength on the eve of the 14-party's indefinite

blockade. Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir took position at Muktangan and vowed to continue their sit-in at the venue until the schedule of election is announced.

November 20
A full-day hectic meetings by the advisers yielded a light at the end of the tunnel as the CEC Justice MA Aziz, with all probability, may either go on leave until the elections are over or resign in a couple of days.

President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed sent Advisers Mahbubul Alam, M Azizul Haque and Advocate Sultana Kamal to the poll chief in a last-ditch attempt to find a way to break the standoff. Through the delegation, the president had asked Aziz to make a swift decision in view of the gravity of the situation. The advisers met the CEC with a request from the CA to step down to resolve the crisis.

November 21
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan urged the CA not to take any step, which would violate the constitution. In a sudden visit to the CA, he expressed his dissatisfaction over the 'unnecessary transfer' of government officials.

November 22
CEC MA Aziz informed the president verbally that he would take a three-month leave of absence in response to the presidential initiative to resolve the political deadlock centring the popular demand for reconstitution of the EC. The CEC also set a condition that he will stay in the country under full security protection from the government.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a view exchange with the agriculturists urged the caretaker government to immediately announce the election schedule and declared that the 4-party alliance would continue its demonstrations across the country until the demand is met.

November 23
Seething with frustration with the way Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed has been taking his decisions unilaterally and treating them with a distant interest, five advisers refrained from attending office. Officially, all the five advisers -- Akbar Ali Khan, Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Shafi Sami, Sultana Kamal and Mahbubul Alam who did not attend office -- told the media that they were 'sick'.

Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman in a surprise move convened a meeting of the EC and authorised himself to act as the CEC for the next three months in absence of CEC MA Aziz. Justice Mahfuz, who was confirmed that he would be made the acting CEC, claimed that he convened the meeting "on his own" and "as per the laws". The president did not give him any direction in this regard, he said.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a press conference welcomed the president's decision on EC reconstitution and said, "We demanded the solution under the framework of the constitution and finally that has happened despite various obstacles."

Terming CEC MA Aziz's going on leave as 'victory of the people's movement', AL President Sheikh Hasina at a press conference said the coming election is to free people from the grip of the corrupt and looters. She postponed the non-stop blockade and declared staging sit-in demonstrations in front of Bangabhaban and EC Secretariat on November 27 and 28 respectively to press home their 11-point demand.

November 24
Hinting at AL, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said the caretaker government could not announce the election schedule timely, despite its willingness, due to the 'anarchy and chaos created by a political party'.

About 40 former and in-service senior civil servants, who are known to be close to BNP and 15 of whom are currently holding posts of deputy secretaries to secretaries, joined a secret party hosted by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman in his business office in the capital's Uttara area. They discussed the current political situation and the upcoming election. But Mahmudur Rahman told reporters that they did not discuss political matters.

November 25
The government decided to investigate the incident of in-service senior civil servants attending the surreptitious party hosted by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman.

The EC started sending election materials across the country in accordance with the EC's plan to announce the schedule for next general election without initiating steps to make the updated voter list credible.

Acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman said the election schedule would be announced in November. Rejecting the demands for making the updated voter list credible, the acting CEC also said it was not possible to do anything in this regard due to time constraint.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia during her address at a meeting of Association of Engineers Bangladesh asked the caretaker government to announce the election schedule immediately without bothering about the demands placed by the AL-led 14-party combine.

November 26
Eleven leaders of the 14-party alliance, Jatiya Party (JP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Zaker Party -- a faction of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) -- and Islamic Front jointly filed three writ petitions with

the High Court against the president's assumption of the post of chief adviser, his manner of exercising executive power, and the EC move to declare election schedule before finalising the voter list.

Addressing a teachers' view-exchange meeting, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said a conspiracy is being hatched against the country and the conspirators are trying to destroy democracy, the constitution and important institutions.

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad expelled its presidium member GM Quader from the party.

November 27
Following a consultation with President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed, the EC announced the schedule for the next parliamentary election, setting January 21 as the polling day and urged the electors to choose a member from each of the 300 constituencies to constitute the ninth parliament.

Most of the advisers to the caretaker government expressed surprise over the announcement and said they were not informed about it.

The president appointed two new election commissioners -- one of them is former IGP Modabir Hossain Chowdhury who aspired and was working for over a year to be a candidate of the four-party alliance from Habiganj-2 (Ajmiriganj-Baniachang) constituency while the other one is Saiful Alam who served as judge in the lower judiciary.

Hundreds of leaders and activists of the 14-party alliance took to the streets leading to Bangabhaban in protest against the announcement of the election schedule.

Advisers to the caretaker government (CG) fired a broadside at President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed over his apparent retreat from a promise to consult them before the appointment of two more election commissioners and announcement of the schedule for next general elections by the EC.

November 28
Two advisers to the caretaker government said parliamentary elections without participation of any major political party like the AL will not be accepted either at home or abroad. They also observed that the controversy surrounding the election schedule could have been avoided if it had been discussed with the political parties and had not been arranged hastily.

The 14-party alliance alleged that the President and Chief Adviser (CA) Prof Iajuddin Ahmed stopped all ways for peaceful and credible elections, made the ongoing political crisis more complicated and made the people head for demonstrations rather than elections, in a bid to implement BNP-Jamaat alliance's plot to rig the polls.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia told a function that AL has chosen the course of "chaos" as it has no chance of winning the upcoming general election because the people will vote for the BNP due to the massive development works it carried out in the last five years.

November 29
The first Bangladeshi Nobel laureate, Dr Muhammad Yunus, at a civic reception accorded by the city mayor urged the battling political parties to sign a peace accord, agree to participate in the coming elections and pledge themselves to form a coalition government, whatever the election results. Under Yunus' draft proposals, the party to lose the election would still get one third of the posts in the cabinet. The tenure of the coalition government would be one year and it would be charged with devising a long-term solution to the political crisis.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a view exchange meeting with the bank employees accused the advisers to the caretaker government of breaching oath, saying it seems that they have been made advisers to thwart free and fair election.

UN secretary general's special envoy Craig Jennings after a meeting with the foreign secretary said the United Nations is concerned about free, fair and transparent general elections in Bangladesh and urged political leadership to resolve differences in the electoral process through dialogue.

Iajuddin sent his Adviser Mokhesur Rahman to AL President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to discuss different burning issues, including possibility of rescheduling the election date.

Mokhes met Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence and conveyed the president's message that he is ready to sit with the chiefs of the two major political parties to reach a consensus over rescheduling the polls.

November 30
The chief justice stayed the proceedings of writ petitions challenging the legality of the president's taking over as chief adviser and his 'unilateral' decisions, just minutes before a High Court bench was supposed to issue a ruling on them.

After the Chief Justice's stay order, agitated people vandalised the car of Barrister Shahjahan Omor on the Supreme Court premises and also damaged the offices of the Chief Justice and the Attorney General.

December 1
President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed's talks with the chiefs of the two major political alliances separately to resolve the prevailing political crisis ended without any positive result.

The BNP high command demanded that the election be held as per the schedule, announced by Election Commission, 'at any cost' regardless of whether any party

takes part or not.

December 2
The Awami League-led 14-party alliance and several other parties resumed their non-stop countrywide blockade as their late night meeting with President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed failed to achieve any immediate result.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said at a press briefing that the four-party alliance has no objection to making any changes in the polls schedule but it has strong reservations about shifting the January 21 polling date.

December 3
A team of advisers to the caretaker government talked with the two major political alliances with a package proposal in an apparent last-ditch effort to resolve the pre-vailing political crisis.

The BNP-led four-party alliance has responded positively to the package of proposals set forth by the caretaker government and agreed to have the Election Commission (EC) recast by sending two controversial election commissioners on leave while appointing two new ones.

Responding to the package proposal of the caretaker government, AL-led 14-party coalition placed three demands to be met immediately, which it placed as a prerequisite for its participation in the upcoming election. The demands are cancellation of the poll schedule, preparing a fresh updated voter list and announcement of a fresh poll schedule.

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) starts boycotting the court of the chief justice (CJ) demanding his resignation as the CJ stayed the proceedings of writ petitions challenging the legality of the president's taking over as chief adviser and his 'unilateral' decisions.

December 4
The council of advisers decided to reconstitute the Election Commission (EC) and transfer secretaries of some ministries that are considered to have an important bearing on the conduct of elections.

The Awami League-led 14-party alliance suspended the fourth round indefinite blockade programme as the council of advisers decided to implement several of its demands.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told journalists at a press briefing that BNP will not accept anything beyond the constitution.

December 5
The judges of Supreme Court (SC) started refraining from carrying out court proceedings. The judges started the work stoppage demanding apologies from the SC lawyers who had demonstrated on the premises of the court on November 30.

December 6
The Election Commission (EC) decided to rearrange the entire election schedule, including the polling date, following a tedious negotiation among the caretaker government and the two rival political alliances.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at a press briefing said that there is no scope in the constitution to extend the 90-day limit for holding election.

December 7
The Election Commission (EC) reschedules the upcoming ninth parliamentary elections, setting January 23 as the polling day, instead of January 21.

The Election Commission (EC) starts correcting the mistakes in the updated voter list.

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad now mulls forging a loose alliance with the AL-led 14-party combine ahead of the next general election.

The 14-party alliance wrapped up its sit-in programme around the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat in the capital by launching an unofficial campaign for the next general election.

December 8
The AL-led 14-party coalition and its allies jointly issue a 24-hour ultimatum to the caretaker government to implement fully the package proposal negotiated between them.

December 9
Disregarding strong objections from the advisory council, President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed ordered army deployment in aid of the civil administration to maintain law and order ahead of the upcoming general election.

December 10
President and chief of the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed justifies army deployment in his address to the nation.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said army has been deployed to assist the civil administration in the prevailing unstable situation stemming from "anarchic" activities of the AL-led 14-party combine. Sharply reacting to the sudden deployment of army, Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina said no such situation has been created in the country that requires deployment of armed forces.

December 11
Four advisers -- Dr Akbar Ali Khan, Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, CM Shafi Sami and Sultana Kamal -- sent in their resignation letters from the caretaker government to the president.

Housing and Public Works Adviser Dhiraj Kumar Nath tells reporters that the president refused to make a written request to the four advisers, who have resigned, asking them to return to the caretaker government.

Terming President Iajuddin Ahmed the "mastermind" of all crises, the AL-led 14-party alliance once again firmly demanded his

immediate resignation from the post of chief adviser in the interest of holding a free and fair election.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has expressed hope that the four advisers, who stepped down, would join their posts again and carry out their duties once the president and chief adviser has a talk with them.

December 12
President and chief of the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed picks four new advisers.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina makes 27 poll pledges at a meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham).

December 13
President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed ordered the armed forces to remain on 'stand by' but not to actively engage in law enforcement, pledging he would re-initiate moves to send two 'controversial' election commissioners on leave.

New advisers are hopeful of an amicable settlement.

December 14
The High Court handed two years' imprisonment to former dictator HM Ershad, rejecting his appeal against the trial court's verdict in a corruption case of purchasing Japanese boats.

The Election Commission extended the time for the ongoing field level work of correcting the updated voter list by three more days -- up to December 18, but was yet to re-fix the poll date.

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad withdraws the expulsion order on GM Quader.

December 15
At a discussion meeting, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan criticised Awami League leaders for expressing sympathy for Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad and said issuing any statement against the verdict of the High Court is contempt of court.

December 16
Jatiya Party (JP) enforces a dawn-to-dusk hartal in five districts of greater Rangpur, protesting the High Court verdict that sentenced JP Chairman HM Ershad to two years' imprisonment in the Japanese boat purchase case.

December 18
The AL-led 14-party coalition, Jatiya Party (Ershad), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and several other parties forged the largest ever alliance to advance the 'movement for a free and fair election'.

December 19
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia firmly demands the next parliamentary election be held "on time" at a rally and blasted the AL-led grand alliance for its stance against participating in the polls under the current schedule.

The Supreme Court stays the High Court verdict ordering the Election Commission (EC) to collect and make public some vital information, including income and wealth statements of the candidates for general elections.

December 20
The advisory council of caretaker government requested Election Commissioner SM Zakaria to go on leave of absence to facilitate the holding of election within the 90-day constitutional obligation.

AL-led 14-party coalition, Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) reject the proposal of requesting SM Zakaria to go on leave, terming it a part of election conspiracy.

December 21
Election Commissioner SM Zakaria remains absent from the office, after the advisory council requested him to go on leave until the election is over to 'resolve' the political crisis.

The caretaker government deploys the army to tackle political demonstrations in the city and elsewhere in the country for the first time since restoration of democracy through a mass upsurge in 1990.

December 22
Investigators of the November 30 vandalism on the Supreme Court premises pressed charges against 13 persons, including eminent jurists Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and Barrister Amir-UI Islam.

December 23
Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil said at a press briefing that if the caretaker government and the Election Commission were sincere, a fair election could be held within the stipulated 90-day time.