

## Hasina declares

FROM PAGE 1

to resist the January 22 polls. "Holding of January 22 polls will have to be boycotted and resisted at any cost," Hasina said. The grand alliance as well as the people of the country will boycott the polls. So, no such election will be allowed to take place, she added.

"Even the international community, donor agencies and our friendly countries have already said this election will not be acceptable to them. So, none should get involved in the one-sided election just to become enemy of the people," she said, asking all including election-related officials, law enforcers and army personnel to keep off the polls.

"The people will brand those getting involved in the one-sided election as their enemies and will bail all out resistance against their activities," Hasina said amid repeated clapping from the rally that virtually turned into a human sea.

She also announced a country-wide demonstration for today to protest police atrocities on the grand alliance leaders and workers before and during the 72-hour non-stop nationwide blockade that ended at 6:00am on Tuesday.

The entire area around Paltan Maidan, including Paltan intersection, Noor Hossain Square, Bangabandhu Avenue and Gulistan Square, was crowded by workers and supporters of the grand alliance.

Explaining the alliance's election boycott stance, Hasina said, "We wanted to participate in the election. But there was no alternative but to boycott finally when we saw that the voter list was not updated, it contained serious flaws, 345 politically appointed election officials have not been made OSDs, a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election has not been created, and fake poll result sheets have been prepared.

She went on, "We have to go for election boycott only to protect the people's democratic right of voting ... We want an election participated by all the parties. But a free and fair election will not be held with Yes Uddin [Iajuddin Ahmed] as the chief adviser. He must quit the post, and a new chief adviser will have to be appointed.

"The Election Commission will have to be reconstituted, voter list must be updated, 345 politically appointed election officials will have to be made OSDs, transparent ballot boxes and voter ID cards must be arranged, and finally, a congenial atmosphere for free and fair polls

## Avoiding poll duty

FROM PAGE 16

officials) security, he further said.

The meeting held at the EC Secretariat and chaired by the EC secretary was told to ensure utility services on the poll day so that it can be held smoothly.

Sa m m i l i o K a r m a k a r t a Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKKOP) on Tuesday expressed concern over the security of government officials who are supposed to carry out election duties on the poll day of January 22.

Some of the SKKOP leaders even threatened to go for tougher actions like not cooperating in the election activities if the situation demands.

Asked about the acting CEC's comment on acceptance of the polls, Sarker said that there is no election law that specifies the percentage of casting votes that will give an election credibility or acceptability. "If five or ten percent of the total voters cast their votes in the election, it cannot be said that the election will not acceptable." The EC secretary added.

On Tuesday, the acting CEC told the reporters that if 50 percent voters cast their votes in any election, the election is acceptable then.

The EC secretary did not make any comments on the acting CEC's observation that the caretaker government would have to take responsibility for any violence on the poll day.

Replying to a question, Sarker

## CA seeks

FROM PAGE 1

Advisers Mahbubul Alam, Shafiqul Huq Chowdhury, Ruhul Amin, Fazlul Haq, Azizul Haq and Yasmeen Murshed also held an informal meeting at the Secretariat yesterday and discussed latest political developments for about an hour. They, however, declined to disclose the meeting discussions.

Earlier in the morning Adviser Shafiqul told the journalists that they asked the AL general secretary to sit with BNP secretary general to resolve the crisis. "The AL general secretary is yet to respond to the request," Shafiqul said when asked about his Tuesday's meeting with the AL leader.

"If the political parties reach a consensus through discussions, the January 22 polls can be postponed," he said.

Reacting to the chief election commissioner's statement, Shafiqul said, "Only the Election Commission, not the caretaker government, has to take responsibility if any violence takes place on the poll day."

The EC is provided with all the tools for holding a peaceful election. The tools -- the armed forces, administration and law enforcement agencies -- will function in line with EC directives, he said.

will have to be created."

Hasina asserted, "Only when all these are done, an election will take place. And no farcical election will be held before that." She instructed the alliance leaders and workers to continue movement until a fair poll is held in the country.

The AL president asked the law enforcers as well as the armed forces personnel not to be enemy of the people by resorting to torture and attacks on the grand alliance leaders to save the 'looters' of the BNP-Jamaat coalition.

Referring to new facilities provided to the police force during the AL rule, Hasina asked the law enforcers why they swooped on its leaders and workers so brutally? "The consequences will not be good if you further torture them," Hasina warned. She asked the alliance leaders and workers to identify those involved in such torture.

Clarifying her parliament speech on April 12 in 2001 that election will have to be held within 90 days of caretaker government's (CG) tenure, Hasina said she delivered the speech as the then Election Commission (EC) worked independently, voter roll was updated properly and a congenial atmosphere for a fair poll was created for all-party participation.

Advocate Afsana Begum appeared for the petitioner.

## HC rejects writ petition against takeover as acting CEC

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday rejected a public interest litigation (PIL) writ petition challenging the legitimacy of performing responsibilities as acting Chief Election

Commissioner (CEC) by Justice Mahfuzur Rahman.

Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuz took over as acting CEC on November 23, 2006 after Justice MA Aziz agreed to go on leave for three months under political pressure.

A division bench comprising Justice Mir Hasmat Ali and Justice M Fazlur Rahman passed the order.

Emerging from the court, aggrieved petitioner Mahbub Minhaj, a businessman, told reporters that he would move in the Supreme Court against the HC refusal, as there is no provision of acting CEC in the constitution.

Advocate Afsana Begum appeared for the petitioner.

## Tax papers

FROM PAGE 1

expenditures, and a photocopy of the last income tax return-- if the candidate is a taxpayer.

Khaleda Zia, who is contesting from Barisal Sadar constituency, and the 25 others did not submit their papers as of 8:00pm last night. Khaleda is contesting the January 22 elections from five constituencies and her documents have been sent to one of those constituencies, said Asaduzzaman Khasru, city BNp general secretary and member secretary of the election conducting committee of the EC and preparation of voter roll. This was done in violation of the constitution, she alleged.

The AL president categorically blasted the CA for his failure to create a congenial atmosphere for fair polls, Iajuddin took over as CA violating the constitution and is still violating it to bring the looters of BNP-Jamaat to back to power through vote theft.

The BNP-Jamaat is controlling the CA from Hawa Bhaban to return to power by any means as they know that people would force them to give back the money they looted during their five-year rule, and bring them to trial for large scale corruption and misrule, Hasina said.

Asked whether the foreign election observers would stay away from observing the elections, he said that he do not have any such information.

Secretary of the information ministry and high officials of power, post and telecommunication ministries as well as the heads of the utility agencies were present in the meeting.

**BANK KARMACHARI**

**PERFORM ELECTION DUTIES**

Bank Karmachari Federation, Bangladesh (BKF) yesterday decided not to carry out election duties in the 'one-sided election' on January 22 amidst insecurity.

The decision was taken at a meeting of its central executive body held at the Sonali Bank Bhaban at Motijheel.

In the meeting, the BKF leaders said that the caretaker government has failed to create an environment for holding a free and fair election and that's why the major political parties have decided to boycott the election.

About 100 vehicles got stuck on Mawa side while 300-400 vehicles got stuck on both sides of the river Padma. Three ferries-- Ropypura, Dhaka and Shitalakhy-- were also caught up in the mid river.

Five flights were delayed by two hours at Zia International Airport due to dense fog.

## 10 RMG units

FROM PAGE 1

The demonstrators then vandalised seven other garment factories.

During the vandalism, other groups of the agitating workers set up barricades on the Tongi Diversion Road.

A large number of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men rushed to the factories and tried to give the demonstrators assurance of finding Sayeed, the missing workers' leader.

An 11-member delegation of the demonstrators, Rab, police and officials representing the Padma factory searched the entire seven-storey building but failed to find any body.

P a d m a D G M ( a d m i n ) Nuruzzaman Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "We have nothing to do with Sayeed going missing. He had a fight with outsiders outside the building as a sequel to his personal rivalry with them on Monday." He also dismissed the allegation that the owner of the factory had Sayeed removed or killed.

He said the factory would be reopened soon.

Police and Rab were deployed in front of Padma.

**PROBE BODY**

The BGMEA yesterday formed a 12-member probe committee to investigate the employees' unrest and vandalism at Padma Poly Cotton Knit Fabrics Ltd at Tejgaon industrial area.

The committee led by BGMEA Vice-president Harun Rashid was asked to submit the investigation report by 5:00pm today, according to sources.

The committee was formed after Padma factory workers gathered in front of the BGMEA head office in Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday afternoon following the vandalism.

"Strictness in checking at the airport contributed to the lessening of illegal or undocumented migration," an official of the Ministry of

## BGMEA places

FROM PAGE 16

and formally placed the set of recommendations, according to a press release.

The BGMEA president told the president that the apparel sector was the worst victim of the ongoing volatile political situation in the country. Besides, for the last six months, the industry have been facing a series of setbacks including labour unrest, vandalism and arson.

As a result, orders have been dropped drastically and new orders are not being received by a satisfactory level either.

The seven point recommendations include, shifting the schedule of term loan for at least six months without interest so that no factory faces loan default cases, disbursement of loan in easy term for payment of at least three months' salaries and allowances to the workers, increasing the time limit for payments against back to back letter of credit by at least 60 days, instructing the banks to increase the cash limit and payment option for gas and electricity bills in long term instalments for at least one year.

The BGMEA also requested not to disconnect any gas or electricity connection at garment factories for overdue bills and keep the Chittagong port operational at all times.

The president Iajuddin Ahmed assured the BGMEA leaders of considering their recommendations

## SC gives

FROM PAGE 1

satisfactorily explain why it is delaying the implementation, the court would issue contempt rule against all concerned government officials, including the attorney general, the court said.

On January 26, 2002, the court had cleared the draft amendments of four rules regarding the separation.

The court yesterday said that these four amended rules must be published in gazette notification within a week.

"The court had given a light which the government has turned off," the court said.

The four rules are: Judicial Service Commission Rule, 2002, Bangladesh Judicial Service Pay Commission Rule, 2002, Bangladesh Judicial Service (Service Constitution, Composition, Recruitment, Suspension, Dismissal and Removal) Rules 2002 and Bangladesh Judicial Service (Posting, Promotion, Leave, Control, Discipline and other Service Condition) Rules 2001.

When the attorney general was submitting his statements before the full bench of the Appellate Division headed by JR Mudassir Hossain, former law minister Moudud Ahmed was seen prompting him with various points, said barrister Amir-ul Islam, the counsel of the judiciary separation case, who was present at the court.

Amir was assisted by barrister Shamsul Hasan and Moniruzzaman Asad.

## NDI, IRI

FROM PAGE 16

Election Observation Mission for the upcoming general elections in Bangladesh may not proceed as expected if the political stakeholders fail to resolve the ongoing crisis.

"A failure of the current electoral process would be a major setback for democracy in Bangladesh and for the international credibility of the country," the EU stated in a release of the local EU presidency.

## ANOTHER GRAFT CASE

UNB reports, a HC Division Bench yesterday deferred by a week the hearing of the appeal filed by Ershad to overturn the lower court verdict that jailed him for three years in a corruption case.

The bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chakrader and Justice Sheikh Abdul Alal Mosarrif handed down the order following a petition moved by his counsel Barrister Rafique-ul-Haq.

Almost fifteen years ago, the Special Court for Dhaka Division found Ershad guilty of keeping Tk 2 crore in cash, 11 sets of precious jewellery and other valuables in his residence illegally.

The government also filed an appeal against the trial court verdict to extend the period of his jail term.

## 6 killed

FROM PAGE 16

during the "shootout" and died instantly, while his cohorts managed to flee.

He was wanted in 12 cases, including three, for murder, the sources added. The law enforcers recovered a revolver and some bullets from the spot.

## Golden goose

FROM PAGE 1

US\$ 4.92 billion against US\$2 billion in 2001 while about 4 lakh people left the country for joining jobs overseas last year, which was less than 2 lakh in 2001, according to the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

The money sent by the Bangladeshis abroad was US\$4.25 billion in 2005 and the number of overseas manpower employment that year was only around 2.52 lakh.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) hired 1,30,204 people, the highest number, while The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) employed 1,09,513 people, the second highest number of contract or temporary workers from Bangladesh last year.

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