



Today's issue 24 pages

People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

Vol. XVIII No. 236

DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

www.thedailystar.net

BHADRA 26, 1415 BS

RAMADAN 9, 1429 HIJRI

24 PAGES PRICE: Tk 10.00

Hold JS polls first

AL asks EC during talks, presses it for detailed schedule right away; protests some RPO criteria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday strongly opposed the Election Commission's (EC) plan for holding upazila polls before the parliamentary election, and demanded that the commission announces the detailed schedule for the long stalled ninth parliamentary ballot without any delay.

On the closing day of the four-day long third round of parley between the commission and political parties, marked by a boycott by BNP and its allies, AL however said although a detailed schedule for upazila elections can be announced now, those must be held after the national poll.

It also demanded total withdrawal of the state of emergency without any delay for ensuring an environment free of fear and intimidation, and conducive to holding an election with participation of all parties, which will be credible nationally and internationally.

The caretaker government and the EC must take notice of the national consensus that has already been formed on two issues -- withdrawal of the state of emergency and holding the parliamentary poll first, AL noted.

There are apprehensions of the crisis deepening if you keep imposing decisions that contradict the



CEC ATM Shamsul Huda greets Awami League acting President Zillur Rahman before the dialogue at the EC Secretariat yesterday.

constitution, ignoring opinions of all political parties, the civil society and the people," Zillur Rahman, acting president of AL, told the EC during the talk.

He also hoped that the commission and government will refrain from taking unilateral decisions.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Ziku), Krishak Samik Janata League, and National Awami Party also had separate talks with the EC yesterday.

Coming out of the talk, JSD

(Ziku) Secretary General Abdul Malek Ratan told journalist that the EC assured them of declaring within a few days a specific date for the parliamentary election and detailed schedules for upazila polls.

On political parties' mandatory registration with the EC, AL demanded cancellation of some of the newly framed criteria for registration which imposed restrictions on parties' having front organisations of professionals, terming the

AL DEMANDS

- Hold upazila polls after JS election
- Withdraw state of emergency
- Scrap 'no-vote' provision
- Lift ban on front organisations
- Release Hasina unconditionally

criterion unconstitutional. Demanding cancellation of another criterion that restricts parties' having overseas units, AL said the Bangladesh government does not have jurisdiction for imposing a ban on the Bangladeshi diaspora forming organisations affiliated with parties at home, if those operate legally in foreign countries. It also said AL has no objection to the mandatory registration of

BNP, allies to press hard for JS polls schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led alliance last night announced a fresh programme to press home its demands for withdrawal of the state of emergency and announcement of schedule for the parliamentary polls soon.

Leaders of the four-party combine came up with the programme of holding rallies across the country on September 20 after a closed-door meeting at the city residence of BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Meanwhile, the alliance has taken preparations to accord a grand reception to BNP Chairperson and former prime

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

AL welcomes Khaleda's bail JP not happy with the happening

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rare political gesture, Awami League (AL) acting president Zillur Rahman yesterday expressed satisfaction over the bail of political archrival BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"This is good. We are happy as we are always against political persecution," Zillur told reporters in a reaction after the High Court yesterday granted Khaleda three-months bail in the GATCO and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Khaleda granted bail in last two cases

Her counsels see no legal bar left for release; ACC goes to SC for stay on bail in two other cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted three months' ad interim bail to detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in GATCO and Niko graft cases.

With yesterday's, the former prime minister has obtained bail in all four cases against her, filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

According to Khaleda's counsels, now there is no legal bar to her release.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Mansur Habib however said the ACC would appeal against the bail orders.

The anti-graft body yesterday already filed two petitions with the Supreme Court (SC) for stay on the bail she was granted last month in Zia Orphanage Trust and Barapukuria coalmine cases.

The BNP chief's lawyer Rafiqul



Islam Mia said they hope she will be freed within 24 hours.

"The court orders today prove she is innocent. As she wanted all along, she is going to be released through a legal process, not through the backdoor."

Allowing Khaleda interim bail, the HC vacation bench of Justice

Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman directed the ACC and the government to explain why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail.

Referring to securing bail in all cases, Khaleda's counsel Khandker Mahbubuddin Ahmed said it is a "victory in their long legal battle".

Rafique-ul-Huq, another counsel for the petitioner, said the government has in fact violated human rights and the rule of law by arresting former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

"Hasina is the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Khaleda the widow of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman."

"I've been fighting the legal battles for them to establish the rule of law. Awami League or BNP should not be brought here to confuse the issue," he observed.

Asked about Commerce Adviser

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Tarique, family ready to leave country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman may leave for treatment abroad anytime. Sources, however, said there are still some official procedures to be completed before his departure.

Despite widespread speculation last night that Tarique would leave the country on a Singapore Airlines flight, he is still at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital.

Ahmed Azam, Tarique's lawyer, told journalists that Tarique, his

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Stop bickering to avert another 1/11

Ex-PMs' counsel asks AL, BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq, counsel for both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, yesterday said he is afraid the country will continue to have 1/11 if the political leaders do not end bickering even after what they have been through in the last one and a half years.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Around 1,000 flood-affected families take shelter on Faridpur town flood-protection embankment at Sadipur as flooding in the district wiped out their homes. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Court orders Thai PM to quit for violating constitution

AFP, Bangkok

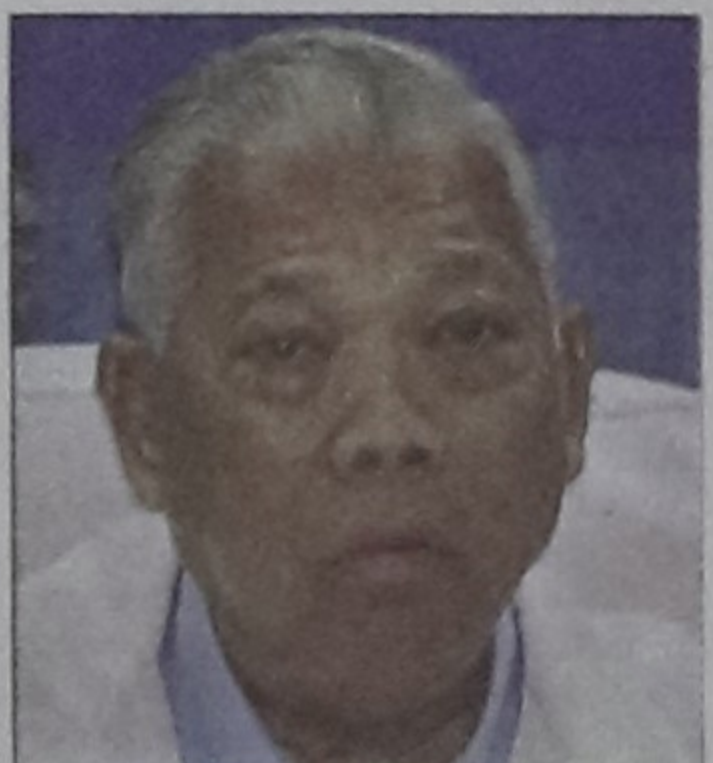
A Thai court yesterday ordered Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej to resign for accepting payments for hosting TV cooking shows, but the governing coalition said it was ready to vote him back into office.

The Constitutional Court ruled that Samak had violated the charter by receiving money for his "Tasting and Grumbling" and "All Set at 6 am" cooking programmes, ordering him to stand down immediately.

His cabinet can remain as a caretaker administration for 30 days until parliament elects a new prime minister, the court said.

The ruling ratcheted up the pressure on the embattled premier, whose offices have been besieged for the last two weeks by protesters demanding his resignation, saying he is a puppet for ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

The Constitutional Court unanimously agreed that Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej has



Samak Sundaravej

violated the constitution, article 267 -- therefore his ministerial position has ended," the verdict read.

"As Samak's ministerial status has ended, his entire cabinet must go. But they have to stay as caretaker government until the new cabinet is formed," it added.

Despite the ruling by the nine judges, Samak is not barred from

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Waterborne diseases spread as floodwater starts receding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waterborne diseases are spreading in the capital and in the northern region as floodwater is receding.

A large number of roads in the central and south-central regions still remain submerged. The marginal flood victims are still suffering from lack of food and drinking water, although relief efforts by the government and non-government level are going on at many places.

Over one hundred medical teams have started Medicare for the flood-hit people in many areas in the north as water-borne diseases are spreading, BSS reports. In the capital, the number of diarrhoea patients has shot up to 600 from 400 within two days.

Floodwater of the Padma and the Arikha is receding quickly in 18 unions of eight upazilas in Faridpur, the district flood control office sources say, reports our correspondent in Faridpur.

About 3km of Faridpur-Charvadrason road is still under

knee-deep water and communication remains snapped. Around 20,000 families of Aliabad union take shelter on the town protection embankment, while four unions -- Aliabad, Northchannel, Decreechar, and Charnadhabdia -- under Sadar upazila are still waterlogged.

Nurunnahar, 60, a flood victim of Sadipur, said, "We have not got any relief, although relief is being distributed."

Ruma Akhter, 13, a student of Sadipur High School, said, "About a month we are waterlogged and have taken shelter on the highway."

Over 93 primary schools in four flood-affected upazilas remain closed due to flood, while four others were eroded away by the surging water affecting education activities seriously, reports our correspondent from Gaibandha quoting the district primary education office.

Over ten thousand children are being deprived of education.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

PUBLIC HOSPITALS Patients pay for free tests

SHAMIM ASHRAF and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Barring a few, public hospitals in Dhaka are charging patients at general beds for pathological and imaging tests meant to be free of costs.

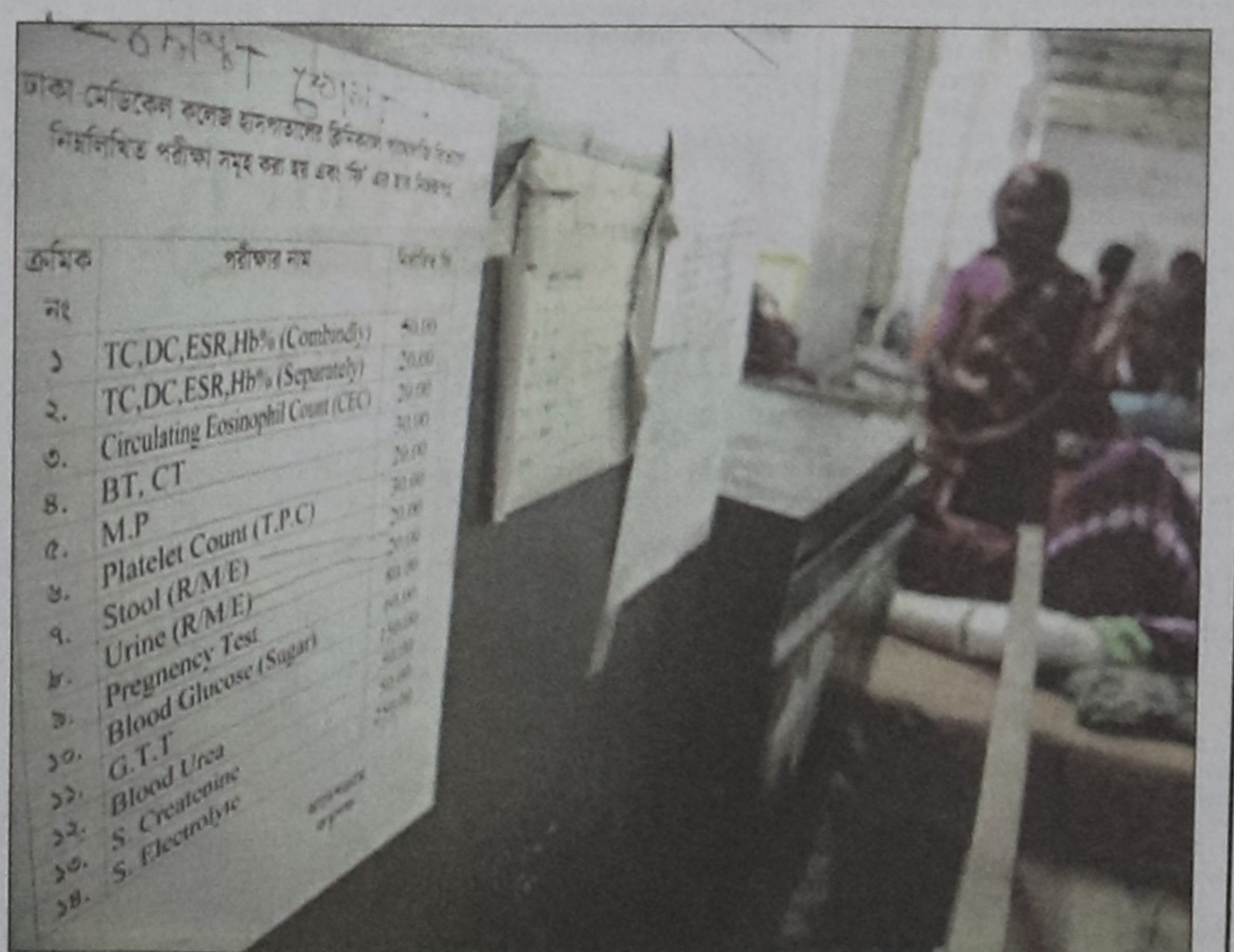
Some of these hospitals require the patients to scramble recommendations from the hospital directors or senior doctors if they want to get tests done free.

But then, hospital staffers would not tell them about it as fifty percent of the extracted fees go to the doctors and employees.

"It's strictly prohibited to charge general-bed patients for the tests available at public hospitals," Akhter Hossain Bhuiyan, director (hospitals and clinics) at the Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star.

He wondered if any public hospitals would be making the general-bed patients pay for 'free' tests.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



A chart of charges for diagnostic tests is hung in the non-paying female medicine ward-21 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The tests listed there are supposed to be free of cost.

PHOTO: STAR

Focus on Bangladesh

Climate change meet starts in London today

UNB, London

A high-profile conference on climate change begins in London today to focus on the need for an agreement on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide and enhance Bangladesh's capability to adapt to perilous impacts of climate change.

Britain and Bangladesh have jointly sponsored the conference titled "UK-Bangladesh Climate Change Conference: Bangladesh Facing the Challenge" at Royal Geographical Society, which is being attended by environment scientists, experts, officials and civil society.

Douglas Alexander MP, Minister for UK Department for

International Development, and Bangladesh Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam will jointly inaugurate the conference, first-ever international meet exclusively designed for Bangladesh, a worst victim of the erratic behaviour of nature causing frequent cyclones, floods and prolonged droughts.

The adversities stemming from the changing climate under the impact of heavy carbon emission by developed countries are threatening to set back the impoverished nation's efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals by 2015, particularly through its devastating consequences for agriculture and food security.

A 39-member Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Amar Desh served with legal notice

Asked to apologise for malicious report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A legal notice has been sent to the editor, publisher and a reporter of the daily Amar Desh for publishing a false, malicious and defamatory report about The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Transcom Group.

The notice asked Amar Desh editor Ataus Samad, publisher Hasmat Ali and the correspondent concerned to immediately withdraw the false, malicious and defamatory report published in the daily (Amar Desh), to beg unconditional public apology and to publish the full rejoinder earlier sent to them.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Future of integrity strategy hangs in political balance

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The interim government is going to set a standard of integrity through a 'national integrity strategy' (NIS) to be maintained at different institutions of state organs, but its effective implementation depends entirely on the political will of the future governments.

Experts involved in formulation of NIS documents are initially identifying problems or challenges in the state and non-state institutions, defining goals and devising strategies to achieve those.

The state institutions where the strategies would be employed are parliament, executive, judiciary,

civil service, local government, attorney general, Public Service Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Election Commission, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and Ombudsman.

On the other hand, the media, NGOs, civil society, political parties, private sector and family among the non-state institutions would come under its purview.

Sources involved say though the present government is planning to adopt the national strategy, its longer-term implementation lies with the commitment and political will of the future political governments.

"We're formulating NIS taking opinions from cross-section of people including the politicians," says an expert.

"The implementation of NIS would be smooth if the political parties reach a consensus during formulation of the strategies that they will maintain it without considering who is forming the government," he adds.

Commenting on the issue, Barrister Manzoor Hasan, director, Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), Brac University, said: "The state has the main responsibility in implementing a national integrity strategy. Other major players are

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5