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## Hasina at terror risk

Intelligences see extremist threat again, examine Indian media report; security beefed further up

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Security and intelligence agencies last month warned Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina of possible attempts on her life by extremist groups including Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Huji) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, said sources concerned.

It was at that time Special Security Force (SSF) assumed the responsibility of ensuring her security they added.

Meanwhile, security measures for Hasina have been stepped up following news by an Indian television network that

Huji has unleashed a six-member suicide squad to kill the former prime minister.

SSF Director General (DG) Major General Ashraf Abdullah Yussuf told The Daily Star yesterday, "We often receive such leads and none of those is less important to us. We have taken extra safety precautions for Sheikh Hasina like we do each time after we have such information."

However, sources close to the administration said the news prompted the government high-ups to discuss the matter immediately.

General Ashraf communicated it to the

chief adviser, home adviser, home secretary and top officials of law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

He said he has been assured of all-out cooperation to put in place foolproof security arrangements for Hasina and the other VIPs.

The law enforcement and intel agencies were examining the authenticity of information that came up in the story on fresh threats against the AL chief.

CNN-IBN, India-based English-language news channel, yesterday reported, "Indian intelligence agencies

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## Polls symbol allocation gets more chaotic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has asked the returning officers (ROs) of two parliamentary constituencies to allocate electoral symbols for a BNP and an AL nominee as independent candidates since their previous symbols were scrapped following court orders.

The EC Secretariat in a surprise move on Friday night issued the circular asking the ROs to do so, ignoring the electoral laws that do not allow the two parliamentary

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## No easy going yet for court-cleared aspirants

Disqualification on the cards even if elected; EC decides to launch legal battle

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will challenge the court orders that have enabled the loan defaulters and convicted individuals to be candidates in the December 29 parliamentary polls.

"We will contest the cases at an appropriate time," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain told reporters yesterday at his office.

"If the Appellate Division's ruling in the end goes against a candidate who has participated

in the election on the High Court's order and won, he will be disqualified as a member of parliament," he added.

The EC has already consulted a former attorney general regarding the rulings, sources in the commission said.

The lawyer has suggested that this time the EC challenge the orders and get to the bottom of the matters.

The EC faces legal problems before every general election, but seldom pursues those once the election is over.

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## Check further emergence of terrorists

CA asks govt officials

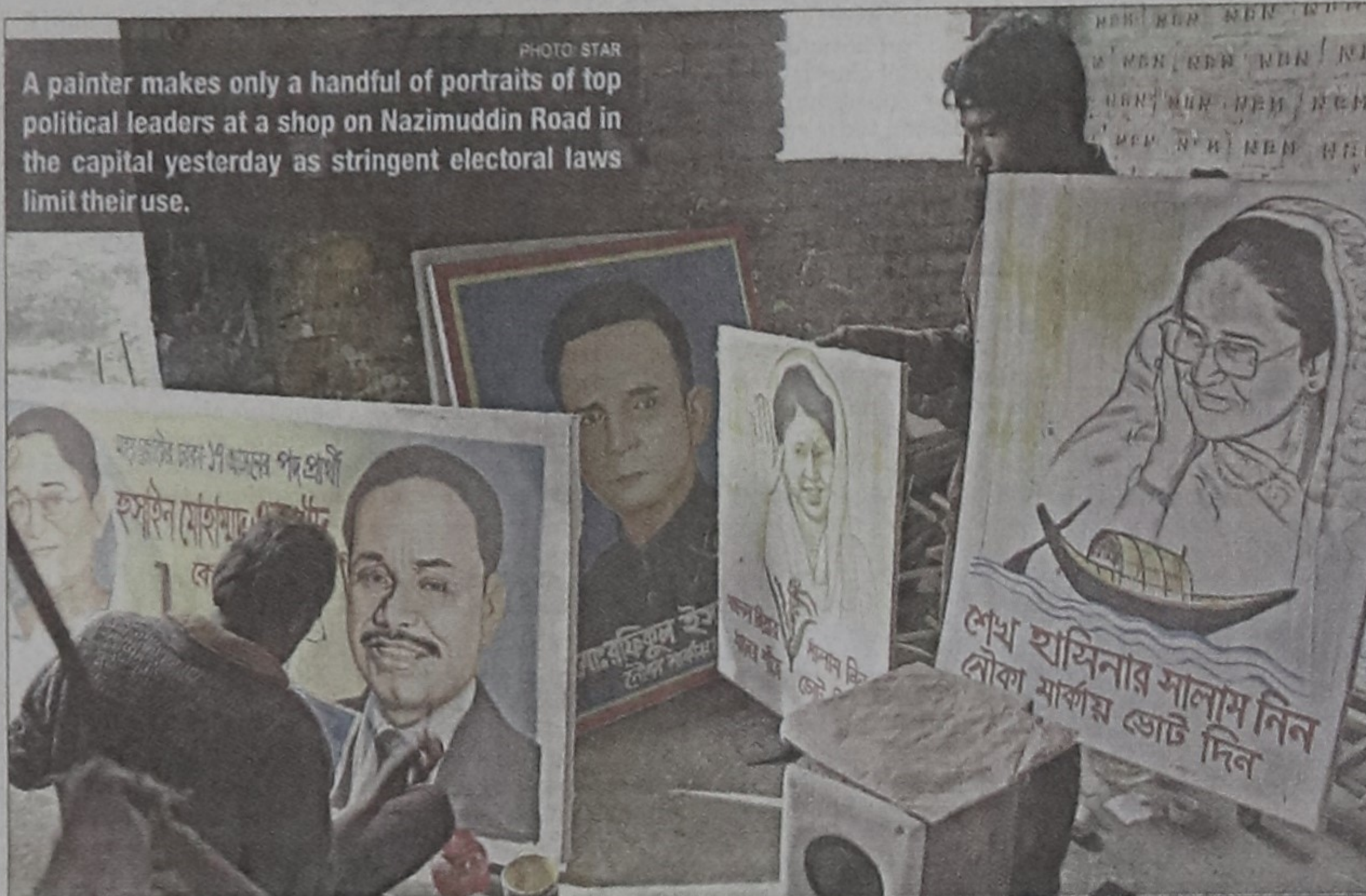
UNB, Barisal

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday asked the field-level government officials to take highest cautionary measures to check further emergence of terrorists, taking advantage of withdrawal of the state of emergency.

He also directed them to remain alert round the clock to deter any possible ill attempt of the banned organisations and evil forces before the general election.

The CA said his caretaker government, which carried out painstaking politico-electoral reforms in the interim period, would certainly present the nation with

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A painter makes only a handful of portraits of top political leaders at a shop on Nazimuddin Road in the capital yesterday as stringent electoral laws limit their use.

## 'Unsubstantiated' charges vex EU

Parties asked to contest polls with positive attitude

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

European Union (EU) election observation mission chief Alexander Graf Lambsdorff yesterday urged the political parties to refrain from making 'unsubstantiated' allegations against the election administration as it might harm the polls process.

He hoped that the parties would participate in the upcoming parliamentary election with a 'positive attitude' and accept the poll results.

Lambsdorff was giving a talk at Dhaka Reporters Unity following a meeting with the chief adviser.

"If someone makes an allegation, it has to be substantiated with documents. Unsubstantiated allegations will not serve interest of the people," the EU chief observer said in reply to a question about BNP's allegation of 'conspiracy' by the election administration.

"The comments delivered over election administration have no factual evidence to support such observations. I hope all

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## Shakhawat laments lack of neutral polling staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Brig (retd) Shakhawat Hossain yesterday said it is difficult to find neutral polling personnel because of partisan administration and 'acute division' in the country.

"Around 3.5 lakh polling personnel are required to conduct the national polls. As divisions are high in the country, neutral polling personnel are not found easily," he said at a discussion titled "Election and Future Bangladesh" organised by The Daily Prothom Alo at its office in the capital.

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## Certain party out to form puppet govt

Khaleda again too critical of CG

RASHIDUL HASAN, from Mymensingh

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said a certain party wants to obtain power and form a puppet government through an undercover deal with the caretaker government.

She said the people will not accept it. "This will be a remote-controlled government," she said at rallies during her daylong electoral campaign in Gazipur, Tangail and Mymensingh.

Khaleda, coming heavily down on Awami League and the caretaker government, said sufferings of people will increase if Awami League is voted to power. "Cast your vote for BNP if you want to live in peace," she said. She had almost lost her voice due to the hectic campaign schedule she has been maintaining for the last few days.

Accusing the caretaker government of trying to turn the country into a failed state she

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## Choose from 'deliverers', looters

Asks Hasina, wants steps against rigging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the caretaker government to take appropriate measures to prevent rigging in the upcoming parliamentary polls.

"Conspiracies had been hatched earlier centring people's franchise. Now I ask the caretaker government to take measures so that none can get a chance to rig the election," said Hasina.

The former premier was addressing two election rallies at Rasulpur Balurmath in Kamrangir Char in Dhaka-2 constituency and on Motijheel T&T Colony ground in Dhaka-8.

She also introduced AL-led grand alliance candidates advocate Qamrul Islam for Dhaka-2 and Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon for Dhaka-8 to the people.

The AL chief returned to Dhaka on Friday night after a four-day election campaign in the

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## Be graceful losers to begin new culture

Political parties in polls race urged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Whoever loses the upcoming national election must accept the results to usher in a culture of tolerance and cooperation, said political analysts, economists and civil society members yesterday.

The party that will form the next elected government will also be responsible for rendering the parliament effective, they said at a discussion on 'election and future Bangladesh' organised by the daily Prothom Alo in its office in the capital.

The next government should continue the drive against corruption and strengthen democratic institutions to maintain good governance, and to de-politicise the civil administration, they added.

Stating that 'politics of blame' severely harms the society, the speakers suggested that the government and the opposition in parliament must come to a consensus on basic national issues and form a high-level committee to face the impacts of the global economic recession.

"The government should create an environ-

ment for the opposition to remain in the parliament. I want integrity of the national institutions, curbing of corruption and accountability of the government," said Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Hasan Mashfud Chowdhury.

He said the opposition has to accept the poll results, refrain themselves from destructive activities, pledge that they will not go into hartals, and make significant contribution to the issues of national importance.

"The winners take all mentality should be avoided...politicians should remain in the parliament, not on the streets. They should be tolerant," said Syed Manzur Elahi, former adviser to a caretaker government.

Bangladesh's economy might face a serious blow in February-March next year because of a possible drop in profit margins from export commodities and in their prices, he said adding, "If politics remain unstable, the country's economy will get a double blow."

Dr Ali Riaz, professor and chair of the department of politics and government at Illinois State University in the US, said

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