

## Fresh polls

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina went on, "She [Khaleda] must stop hartal and blockade, killing of people, cutting of trees, and sever relations with the Jamaat and end torture on people. If these are done, we will again sit for talks [with the BNP]. If a consensus can be reached, then election will be held within the constitutional guidelines. The elections will be free, fair and neutral.

"If you don't do these, we will take whatever hard measures are needed to protect the lives and properties of the people of Bangladesh."

The next government to be formed following the January 5 polls will continue if the BNP does not meet the conditions, she added.

Amid applause from party leaders, the AL chief added, "We won't allow anyone to play with the fate of the people."

If the AL and BNP reach a consensus after the election, it will be at the cost of a huge amount of money and lives in the ongoing political impasse. From November 25 to Monday, at least 120 people were killed in violence.

Describing the BNP-led alliance's blockades and hartals as acts of terrorism, Hasina said people are being burnt alive on buses and trains. Jamaat-Shibir men are carrying out planned attacks on AL leaders and activists and minorities. "These are not mass movements. These are terrorist activities."

The prime minister said the BNP and Jamaat have declared war against the people to stop the country's advancement and to save war criminals.

About the unopposed election of 154 candidates, she said it was hoped that the BNP would participate in the election and considering this, her party had shared seats with its allies accordingly. But the main opposition party boycotted it. Many candidates have got elected uncontested as many had to withdraw their candidacies.

She said the BNP is refusing to take part in the election as the Jamaat cannot participate due to the cancellation of its registration as per a High Court order.

Hasina added the Jamaat is the main strength of the BNP. It kills people and blocks roads by felling trees while implementing the anti-government programmes announced by the BNP.

She also criticised environmentalists for their silence over the cutting of trees across the country by Jamaat-Shibir men.

The anti-liberation forces are also trying to destroy the economy, she said, alleging that the BNP chairperson declares hartals and blockades from her Gulshan residence where she eats luxurious food. "Does she ever think of the poor?"

She said, "We have rather resorted to development activities than taking revenge on BNP-Jamaat men who had unleashed killing, torture and repression on Awami league after coming to power in 2001."

Referring to the recent killing of 14 party men in Sathkira and dozens elsewhere by the Jamaat and BNP, Hasina warned the opposition parties not to test the patience of the government.

In this regard, the premier mentioned the attack on AL lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor by the Jamaat-Shibir and said Noor is not only an AL leader but also an eminent cultural personality.

### PM BLASTS PAKISTAN

The PM again condemned Pakistan for its reaction to the execution of war criminal Quader Mollah, saying, "The trial of war criminals is being held under the country's legal procedure and Pakistan has nothing to do with it."

Hasina said the trial of war criminals was the demand of the nation. "Those who lost their near and dear ones during the Liberation War want justice."

She added said it has been proved that Jamaat-e-Islami is still the collaborator of Pakistan. "Though they live in Bangladesh, their hearts remain in Pakistan."

She yet again affirmed that the war crimes trial criminals will continue.

At the meeting, it was decided that the party will make a countrywide organisational tour to protest the BNP-Jamaat's mayhem. The date will be fixed at a meeting today.

The AL president will also begin its election campaign for the party nominated candidates on December 26 from the southern part of the

## Anti-polio

FROM PAGE 1

nationwide blockade that will be in force from Saturday morning through Tuesday evening. While announcing the programme at a news briefing yesterday, BNP leader Nazrul Islam Khan assured the authorities that the NID programmes would be kept out of the purview of the blockade.

Unicef Bangladesh representative Pascal Villeneuve said, "Full access to children must be protected and preserved so that the heroes of the polio campaigns -- the volunteers, the vaccinators and the social mobilisers -- can continue to make history by keeping the scourge of polio away from our children."

Thushara Fernando, WHO representative to Bangladesh, said, "Together with Unicef, I urge all political parties to ensure that work of thousands of health workers and community volunteers would not be hindered, district and upazila health managers could send vaccine and logistics to immunisation centres on time and children from all communities would be brought to the immunisation centres to get polio drops. The support of all stakeholders is even more important now to ensure children of future generations will live in a polio free environment."

Before 1986, an estimated 11,500 children in Bangladesh developed polio every year, said the Unicef-WHO release.

Following the launch of the Global Polio Eradication programme in 1988, intensified polio vaccination activities, notably through the organisation of NIDs, led to the gradual decline of polio cases.

Bangladesh has successfully maintained polio free status since 2006, after the last case of importation related poliomyelitis. This dramatic achievement is a result of sustained bi-partisan political commitment to child immunisation in general and to polio eradication in particular, and strong partnership between government, civil society and development partners.



**While the national level leaders of Awami League and BNP have failed to reach a consensus, Sadullapur upazila units of the two major parties have set a rare example. In the wake of escalating violence, the archrivals have come together to prevent anarchy and work for peace at their upazila in Gaibandha. In this photo, they pose just after a joint meeting at the Sadullapur Press Club.**

PHOTO: STAR

## Bangladesh a great concern

FROM PAGE 20

political reform in Bangladesh, and for other purposes.

The Senate Committee, at a meeting on Wednesday with its Chairman Senator Robert Menendez in the chair, cleared the way for a hearing on the resolution in the US Senate.

The meeting was held at the Capitol Building at 2:15pm (Washington DC time).

In its six-point recommendation made in the three-page resolution, the Senate Committee urged political leaders to ensure the safety and access of observers to Bangladesh's upcoming elections.

The committee also urged them to take immediate steps to rein in and condemn the violence as well as provide space for peaceful political protests.

It supported the ongoing efforts by UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco to foster political dialogue between political factions in Bangladesh.

The committee urged the Bangladesh govern-

ment to ensure judicial independence, end harassment of human rights activists, and restore the independence of the Grameen Bank.

The resolution will be followed by a full hearing in the US Senate anytimesoon.

It notes that that hundreds of Bangladeshis have died in violent clashes as a result of political violence and unrest, and some opposition and human rights activists have been arrested.

It observed that trials held by the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during the Liberation War have fallen short of international standards.

The government of Bangladesh eliminated a constitutional provision requiring the governing party to cede power to a neutral caretaker government three months before an election.

The numerous nationwide strikes and blockades called by the 18-party opposition coalition lead to violence, resulting in dozens of deaths.

Students cannot attend school and complete

mandatory exams; and many citizens have had their work and daily activities disrupted due to the strike-related violence, the resolution said.

It also said a stable, moderate, secular, Muslim-majority democracy with the world's seventh largest population, and the world's fourth-largest Muslim population, will have lasting positive impacts in the region and beyond.

"The success of the democratic process in Bangladesh is of great importance to the United States and the world," it said.

Turning to the issue of the Grameen Bank, the resolution said the bank's revolutionary microfinance lending to the poor has helped reduce poverty not only in Bangladesh, but has served as an innovative and powerful model for helping the poor elsewhere in the world.

The Department of State, Congress, and other high profile international voices have recognised the Grameen Bank's innovative work and expressed great concern over actions by the government of Bangladesh that undermine the

## Blockade, again

FROM PAGE 1

blockades since November 26, a day after the Election Commission announced the schedule for the 10th parliamentary polls.

The opposition has been demanding the suspension of the election schedule, installation of a non-party polls-time government and the release of its leaders.

People had a brief respite of five days from blockades in the last 24 days, and the possibility of getting some relief next week also seems thin, as BNP insiders hinted that the opposition may enforce another four-day blockade from December 28.

At least 97 people were killed and 678 others, including 293 law enforcers, injured in political violence between November 25 and December 18, according to the police headquarters.

Yesterday's announcement of countrywide blockade came as a fresh blow to the business community that has repeatedly urged the political parties to shun the path of violence.

In a desperate move on December 15, it held white-flag rallies across the country for a peaceful solution to the ongoing crisis and the return of trade-friendly environment.

Exporters say their businesses are on the

verge of collapse, and the fresh blockade will add to their woes, disrupting the supply chain all over the country.

Further violence would result in a collapse of the economy, said Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the country's apex trade body.

The FBCCI would hold a board meeting on Sunday to decide the next course of action, Ahmed said.

The garment sector lost more than Tk 4,000 crore between January and September, as 1.32 lakh tonnes of ready-made garments had to be sent to their destinations in expensive air shipments for strikes and blockades, according to an estimate of Exporters Association of Bangladesh.

Production in the sector has declined by at least 10 percent because of the recent political violence, and many international retailers have cancelled their orders.

"We are losing edge over our competitors for political violence, and the international retailers are also losing their confidence in us," said EAB President Abdus Salam Murshedy.

"Our entire supply chain has been disrupted," he said.

## Pak Taliban enraged, issue threat

FROM PAGE 20

According to well-placed sources, law enforcement agencies have submitted a report to the interior ministry saying that the Taliban have expressed annoyance with the Bangladesh government over the execution of Mollah and could attack the Bangladesh embassy.

Security agency officials had called for preventive measures in the wake of the threats, added the report.

Talking to The Nation, a senior security official said they have drafted an elaborate security plan for the Bangladesh embassy, located at a posh residential neighbourhood in Islamabad.

"We've also deployed police commandos at these sensitive places to avoid any untoward incident during Christmas holidays, while patrolling has been enhanced around them," the official added.

### COUNTRYWIDE PROTESTS

Activists of Gonojagoron Mancha, which spearheaded a youth movement for trying suspected war criminals, gathered in the capital's Gulshan area yesterday to lay siege to the Pakistan high commission demanding the government sever diplomatic ties with Pakistan.

Law enforcers charged batons on the protesters as they tried to break through a police barricade. The agitators vowed to

continue the movement to press home their demand.

Journalists and different professional groups strongly condemned and protested Pakistan's reaction to the execution of Mollah.

Speaking at a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, journalist leaders demanded Pakistan make an apology for committing genocide during the Liberation War in 1971 and also for meddling in the trial of war criminals.

There were also demonstrations in Mymensingh, Bagerhat, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Munshiganj, Narsingdi and Rajshahi University. Protesters brought out processions, formed human chains and burnt effigies of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan.

Reacting on the issue, Finance Minister AMA Muhith told newsmen at the secretariat, "Pakistan had been a country of hordes of barbarians and they still remain the same. I'm lost for words to condemn them. They are yet to stand up as a nation."

The ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday announced a three-day demonstration programme protesting the parliamentary resolution. The alliance will stage protest rallies in upazila and district headquarters on Sunday and Monday and a

protest rally in the capital on Tuesday.

"Adopting the resolution, Pakistan has proved that Mollah was their ally and a real war criminal," Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told a press conference at his office.

The aggression and brutality Pakistan had resorted to in 1971 has yet to be changed, he added.

### DHAKA EXPRESSES CONCERN

As the news of Taliban threat spread, Dhaka communicated with Islamabad and expressed concern over the threat.

A foreign ministry high official talked with a senior official of the Pakistan foreign ministry and sought adequate security for the high commission in Islamabad and the consulate in Karachi.

The official said Islamabad assured Dhaka of ensuring all-out security for the Bangladesh mission and its officials.

Subsequently, Islamabad also voiced concern about the security of its mission in Dhaka. Bangladesh assured Pakistan of arranging full-scale security for the mission.

Convicted war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah was hanged on December 13. The Pakistan National Assembly on Monday adopted a resolution expressing concern that Mollah had been "hanged for supporting Pakistan in 1971".

## Jamaat, BNP

FROM PAGE 1

On Monday, unidentified miscreants vandalised a temple in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat, known as a den of Jamaat-Shibir activists. On the night of the day, Jamaat-Shibir activists also removed 100 fishplates at two points of Lalmonirhat-Burimari route in Patgram upazila to disrupt rail communications.

## A rare unity

FROM PAGE 1

torn apart by violence.

Jamaat leaders were not invited to the meeting that lasted until 3:00am from midnight.

They said there had been a long-standing friendship among all political parties of the upazila but it was ruined recently. They vowed to renew this friendship by respecting each other's programmes.

They expressed firm commitment to not allow anarchy, arson attacks or rampage in the name of political programmes.

"There was no conflict among the political parties, especially between the Awami League and BNP but some vested groups are trying to create conflict. We must be aware and show due respect to the programmes of each others," upazila BNP General Secretary Abdus Salant told the meeting.

He assured that the BNP would observe its programmes peacefully.

Upazila Awami League President Mozharul Islam said, "I request my BNP friends not to organise any programmes with Jamaat to avoid violence and maintain peace." He claimed that he always stopped to show respect to a BNP procession passing by.

He urged all to ensure peaceful co-existence of political parties in the upazila.

On December 13, upazila Awami League Secretary Shahriar Khan sustained severe injuries when Jamaat-Shibir activists attacked him and vandalised his motorcycle. A few days later, agitated Awami League men set fire to the home of BNP leader Mainul Hasan Sadik.

The meeting was presided over by Upazila Press Club President Mahmudul Huq Milon and addressed by, among others, Awami League Organising Secretary Ruhul Alam, its youth front Jubo League President Shah Fazlul Huq Rana, BNP youth wing Jubo Dal President Abdul Hamid Sarker and leaders of a few

## Some JP men

FROM PAGE 20

Though the party has yet to make a formal announcement, two leaders -- Liakat Hossain Khoka and Selim Uddin who are set to be elected uncontested in the January 5 polls -- told reporters yesterday that JP was back to the polls.

"With the permission of our father [Ershad] and upon order from our mother [Raushan], we are going to contest in the polls," Khoka said after coming out of Raushan's Gulshan residence.

"The party's chairman is sick. So, we are going to the polls upon order from Raushan. We believe that Ershad is our father and Raushan is our mother. For that reason we are going to contest the election upon our mother's order," Khoka said.

An intelligence agency picked up Ershad from his Baridhara residence in the capital on December 12, just a few hours after he had sent a letter to the Election Commission requesting it not to allocate his party's electoral symbol, plough, to anyone since his party had decided to boycott the polls.

The Daily Star yesterday obtained a letter in the party's pad signed by Ershad without any date. The letter said as Ershad was "confined" in CMH and the government might force him to go abroad, he handed over his authority to Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader and presidium member GM Quader.

Asked, presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid told The Daily Star he heard that Ershad had handed over his power to Hawlader and Quader.

### KAZI ZAFAR'S SPECIAL COUNCIL

Kazi Zafar, who is heading a new committee of Jatiya Party after being expelled by Ershad, said his committee would decide on the expulsion of Ershad in its "special council conference" to be held at Jatiya Press Club today.

The council would take a decision about joining the BNP-led 18-party alliance in its anti-government movement.

Zafar said this while addressing a briefing at a Gulshan restaurant in the capital yesterday.

The expelled leader of JP announced a new interim committee declaring himself as its chairman on November 29, a day after Ershad expelled him on the grounds that the former had spoken against him.

## ACC won't

FROM PAGE 20

submitted before the ninth election.

Their wealth increased from two times to 107 times within the period, as observed in the report published yesterday.

Of the AL candidates, former state minister for housing and public works Abdul Mannan Khan and his wife have had their wealth increased by 107 times. The couple had properties worth about Tk 10.33 lakh five years back, which now stands at Tk 11.03 crore.

Awami League lawmaker Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton and his wife had moveable and immovable properties worth Tk 62.63 lakh in 2008, which have increased to the monetary value of Tk 41.64 crore.

Environment Minister Hasan Mahmud's wife Nuran Fatema made a giant leap in terms of wealth, owning properties of Tk 13.74 crore from only Tk 60,000 five years ago.

According to Hasan's latest statement, he accumulated four times the wealth he had shown back in 2008. He previously claimed to have assets worth Tk 37.57 lakh but he has now declared ownership of properties worth Tk 1.72 crore.

ACC Commissioner Shahabuddin said, "It is not that we take steps immediately after a report is published in a newspaper. Now an atmosphere is prevailing for election and a process is on for dialogue [to break the political stalemate between the ruling and the opposition parties]."

"So, if the ACC becomes active on the issue, the situation will worsen."