

WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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## RMG LOAN

The sector turns a big defaulter of state banks

PAGE B1

## NATIONAL REFORM COUNCIL

Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra unveils plan for a way out of the political crisis

PAGE 8

# Focus shifts to Sunday

*18-party, govt face off over march to Dhaka*

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and RASHIDUL HASAN

The government and the opposition are on the verge of a face-off, as the BNP-led alliance is determined to make Sunday's march to Dhaka a success to compel the government to postpone the January 5 election.

On the other hand, the government has taken a tough line and will do whatever is necessary to frustrate the 18-party combine's plan. It might deny the opposition permission to hold the programme, according to government sources.

Meanwhile, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has said the government will face dire consequences if it tries to obstruct the opposition's march.

She made the comment while speaking to a delegation of the Christian community at her Gulshan office on the occasion of Christmas.

The main opposition party yesterday sought permission from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police to use loudspeakers around its Nayapaltan central

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

*Delightfully different*

MP Mostafiz's wealth declines

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At a time when most Awami League ministers and lawmakers appear to have amassed huge wealth in the last five years, the story of Mostafizur Rahman has turned out to be different.

The value of his assets has rather decreased by

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## AL aloof, alone

INAM AHMED and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Never before in Bangladesh's political history, has any major political party faced such present and future isolation at home and abroad as is being suffered by the Awami League.

And the way the ruling party has been reckoning the situation is bizarre, dangerous and yet inexplicable. It looks like no book on politics has written any chapter on the AL's present course.

The AL is today isolated domestically on its plan to hold a one-sided election that many have already termed farcical.

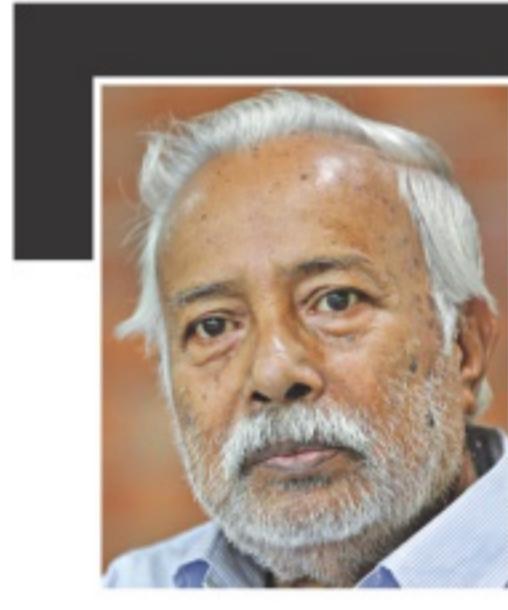
It has successfully left the BNP, the other major party, out of the election. But it has also failed to rope in the 'third'-in-line Jatiya Party (JP) which it thought would be its partner in political gambit. Even today, nobody is sure about the JP's position on the January 5 election.

JP chief HM Ershad is interned in the name of treatment (and was about to be sent abroad), something that reminds us of the bygone years of dictatorial rule by Pinochet and Saddam Hossain.

Using brute force, the ruling party is still getting some half-hearted support from Ershad's wife Rawshan.

The AL's other ragtag election contestants are name-only parties. Nobody believes they could ever win a single seat in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



## Photojournalist Aftab Ahmed murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A veteran photo journalist was found dead at his house in the capital's West Rampura yesterday.

When police recovered the body of 79-year-old Aftab Ahmed in the morning, his hands and legs were tied up and a gag was wrapped around his mouth, police sources said.

After a post mortem,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Icy diplomacy

REZAUL KARIM

A serious diplomatic standstill has been created over the last few months as most countries have suspended bilateral and multilateral engagements with Bangladesh due to the deadly violence centring on the election.

Diplomatic sources say there has been no official visit for negotiations for aid, loan, project approval or development initiative for long, except for those from countries like the US, the UK, China and India that are closely associated politically with Bangladesh.

They add countries like Japan, Korea and Australia and most European and western countries have almost suspended all of their activities here.

Bangladesh officials said it would be very difficult to make up for the pending engagements with the foreign countries if the current standstill was not removed immediately.

From European Union, the last visit was paid by a five-member Election Exploratory Mission from September 7 to 23.

There has been no high-level visit from Korea, an important development partner

## Army starts election duty today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

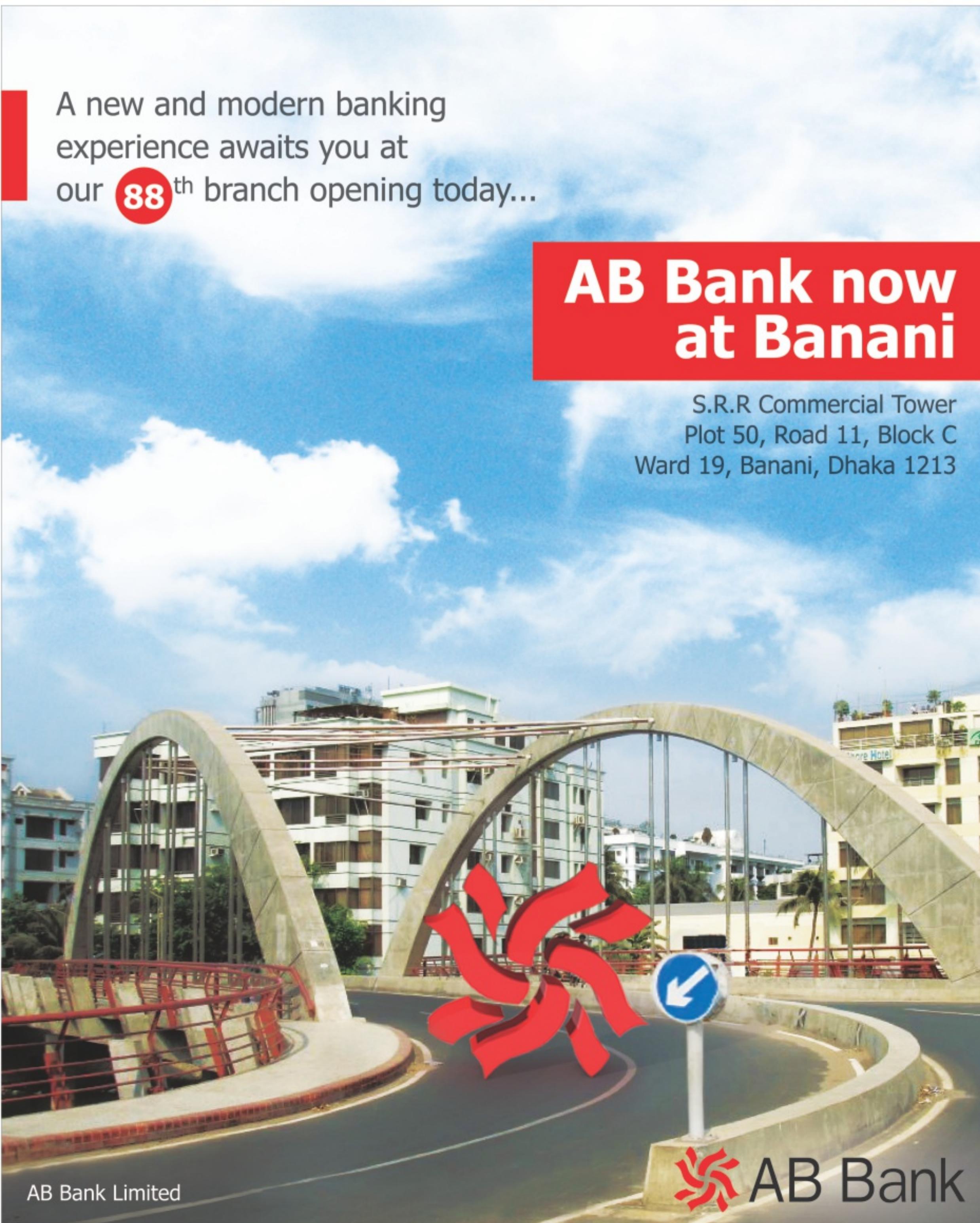
The armed forces personnel will start working as a striking force for 15 days from today to maintain law and order in the 10th parliamentary polls scheduled for January 5, amid a boycott by the BNP-led opposition.

The voting will take place in the 146 out of 300

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