

## OPPOSITION LONG MARCH

# Cops go for blanket arrest as march to Dhaka starts

STAR REPORT

As activists and supporters of the 14-party opposition combine began marching in thousands towards Dhaka yesterday, the police went on blanket arrests of grassroots opposition leaders and workers as a counter measure.

In retaliation, leaders of the opposition line-up yesterday warned, if the police clampdown does not stop, the entire country would be brought to a standstill.

Under the apparent bid to stifle the February 5 showdown, law enforcers since Wednesday night have continued to raid houses of

opposition men, unit offices of the 14 parties, and bus and launch terminals.

Outside the capital, until last evening, they had arrested at least 2,000 opposition men, mostly belonging to the main opposition Awami League, according to reports received from our correspondents and police sources.

While in Dhaka, some 500 people, mostly ward-level opposition leaders and workers, had been arrested until 9:00pm yesterday, with the number continuing to climb.

Sources said this time the government high-ups instructed the

police to crack down on the grassroots organisers of the opposition parties to ensure a poor turnout in the long march towards Dhaka.

According to them, the police top brass from the headquarters quoting a home ministry directive asked the senior police officials in the districts to restrict the long march in their respective areas. Besides, the police in the districts have allegedly directed transport owners not to rent buses and trucks for the march.

The Daily Star contacted two ministers over telephone for their comments on the clampdown, which they denied.

On the other hand, the 14-party leaders have received reports of arrests of several hundreds of their grassroots leaders in the last two days, AL General Secretary and 14-party coordinator Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star last night.

"We have asked our field-level leaders to resist any move of the government to foil the long march," he added.

The long march, spearheaded by the AL-led 14-party combine, is scheduled to reach Dhaka on February 5 to press home its demands to the government.

According to reports from The

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## FRESH VOTER LIST EC files appeal, hearing Feb 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

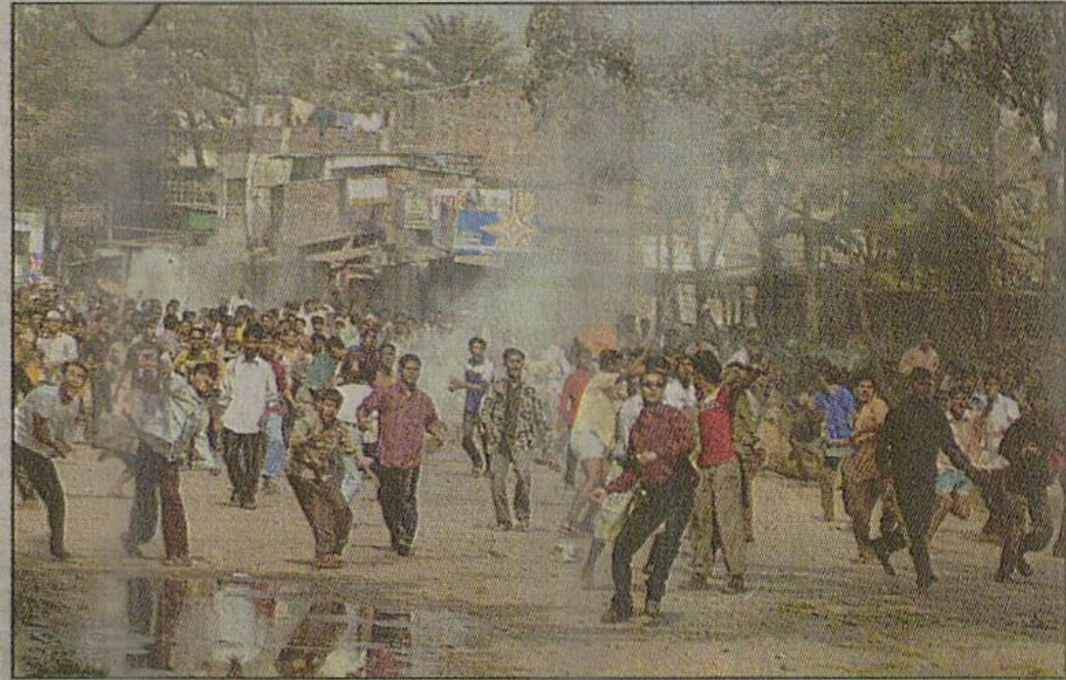
The full bench of Supreme Court (SC) will hear on February 6 the Election Commission's (EC) petition for leave to appeal and a stay order against the recent High Court (HC) directives on the preparation of a fresh electoral roll.

Advocate Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, also a ruling BNP lawmaker, yesterday moved the application at the Court of Chamber Judge Amirul Kabir Chowdhury who fixed the date for hearing.

On January 4, the High Court (HC) made a five-point observation asking the EC to revise the existing voter list. The court's observations came in response to two writ petitions challenging the EC's preparation of a fresh electoral roll.

Awami League lawmakers

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Stranded Pakistanis of Geneva Camp throw stones at police in city's Mohammadpur area after they were barred from marching to the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka to press home their demands.

PHOTO: STAR

## Incoming vessels stuck abroad as Ctg port agents stop booking Demand reduction of gantry crane charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The shipping agents at Chittagong Port yesterday stopped booking vessels from different international ports and threatened to suspend the operation of feeder vessels at the port if the authorities concerned do not withdraw additional charges for using newly-commissioned rail-mounted gantry cranes within three days.

At least 15 container-laden vessels got stuck at the ports of Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka due to this suspension of all incoming schedules declared by the Bangladesh Shipping Agents

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# Saudi bus crash kills 13 Bangladeshis

## 8 out of 14 injured in critical state

UNB, Dhaka

Thirteen Bangladeshi workers died and 14 others were injured, eight of them critically, in a bus accident near Riyadh in Saudi Arabia yesterday morning.

Zahirul Huq, director general of external publicity (DGEP), told the news agency that the victims are all Bangladeshi workers. They were being taken to a construction site near Riyadh. The bus driver was also a Bangladeshi.

Of the injured, 11 were admitted to Aliman Hospital, while the

remaining three released after first aid.

Three of the critically injured were being operated upon at the hospital at 1:30pm (Saudi local time).

Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ekramul Huq visited the injured at the hospital.

Zahirul Huq said the foreign office received preliminary information from Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia about the accident and the casualties. "We're waiting for detailed information," he said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed deep shock at the death of 13 Bangladeshi workers in a tragic road accident near Riyadh.

In a condolence message yesterday, the prime minister conveyed her profound sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and prayed for the salvation of the departed souls.

She also prayed for early recovery of the injured Bangladeshis and asked the foreign ministry and Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia to ensure their better treatment.

## BAGHABARI-MOHANGANJ BIWTA fails to finish dredging in a month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) failed to complete dredging of the 20km long channel from Baghabari river port to Mohanganj in a month, which was scheduled to be completed within 15 days.

This correspondent, during a visit to the Nakalia dredging point on Wednesday, found that the workers were dumping the dredged up silt in the same river, which was bringing it back to the main channel again with the flow of the current.

The dredging started on January 3 to increase the depth of the channel from one metre to three metres at five points and to increase its

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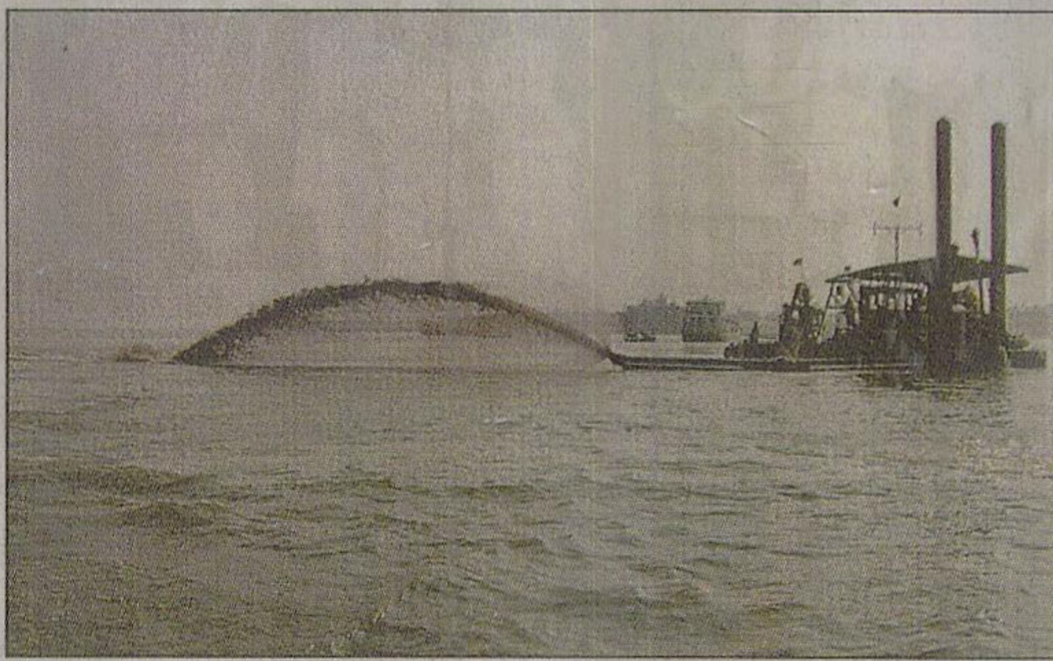


PHOTO: STAR

Silts dredged up are being dumped again in the river during a BIWTA drive to make the Baghabari-Mohanganj channel deeper enough to reopen the Baghabari river port.

## Sacking of SP Masud Miah seen as an eyewash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The dismissal of former Rajshahi superintendent of police (SP) Masud Miah has turned into talk of the town since it is widely believed here he was made a scapegoat for helping militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai at the directives of the home ministry and some local high-ups of the ruling BNP.

"An official like SP cannot support wild tortures on people by militants without any directives from the home ministry or big guns," said an elderly man at a tea stall.

In several interviews with the

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## KANSAT KILLINGS UNO withdrawn for failure to tackle situation

UNB, C'nauwabganj

Shibganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Rafiqul Islam has been withdrawn for mishandling the situation that led to the killing of nine people in police firing at Kansat.

The district administration officials said the withdrawal order reached the deputy commissioner's office yesterday. He was transferred to Dhaka.

Nine rural power subscribers were killed in two incidents of police firing at Kansat, as the subscribers were demanding uninterrupted power supply in the area.

Normalcy returned to Kansat following release of Golam Rabbani and eight others on January 31.

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# Stranded Pakistanis clash with cops

## 100 including 25 policemen hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 100 people, including 25 policemen, were wounded during a violent clash between stranded Pakistanis and police at the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday.

Witnesses said the police fired shotguns and teargas shells at the stranded Pakistanis who threw back bricks and shoes on the law enforcers during the two-hour clashes in the morning.

The clash ensued as around 20,000 stranded Pakistanis attempted to march towards the Pakistan High Commission at Gulshan from the Geneva Camp at Mohammadpur, breaking police

barricade, to submit a memoran-

dum.

The memorandum demanded a tripartite meeting, involving the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC), and the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh, by March 23 to reach an agreement to settle their repatriation, ensure their safety and security and stop eviction of their camps in Bangladesh.

The police detained at least 15 people, including SPGRC leaders, during the incident. Six of them were later shown arrested while the rest were released.

SPGRC leaders said stranded

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## Mizan Chy passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran politician, former prime minister and a leading organiser of the Liberation War Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury breathed his last at city's Birdem Hospital in the early hours yesterday.

The 80-year politician, popularly known as Mizan Chowdhury, had been suffering from various old age complications.

He left behind his wife, four sons, four daughters, a number of grandchildren and a host of relatives, friends and followers to mourn his death.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and top leaders of different political parties expressed deep shock at the death of Mizan Chowdhury, saying that the nation suffered an irreparable loss at his death.

Leaders of the Awami League (AL) and different political parties



thronged the hospital and the house of the deceased to pay their last tributes to the veteran politician whose political career spanned nearly 61 years.

Opposition Leader and AL President Sheikh Hasina visited the house of Mizan Chowdhury, placed floral wreath at his coffin, prayed

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## Gunrunner dies in Rab encounter

UNB, C'nauwabganj

An alleged arms smuggler died and two other were injured in an encounter with Rab members at Shibganj yesterday afternoon.

On information of a group of arms smugglers, a Rab team rushed to Shantur under Shahabzpur Union at about 5:30pm. Sensing the presence of the Rab men, the smugglers opened fire, prompting the members of the elite force to retaliate.

During the shootout, three of the gang received bullet wounds. They were rushed to Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital where Shukurdi, 28, son of Giasuddin of Telkupi village died soon after admission. The two others, Rabiul, 27, and Khairul, 29, of the same village were sent to

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## Khairuzzaman gets extension as NBR chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Khairuzzaman Chowdhury has got his contractual appointment to the post extended for the third time.

This time, however, his service period has been extended for six months.

Chowdhury's second term contractual appointment was scheduled to expire on February 5.

A career bureaucrat, Chowdhury, had been secretary to the Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs ministry, energy and mineral resources division, and the food ministry before he joined the NBR as its chairman.

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