

## CHT issue

### BNP MPs may submit memo to President tomorrow

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Members of Parliament belonging to the major opposition BNP plan to hand over a memorandum to President Shahabuddin Ahmed tomorrow, demanding annulment of the CHT accord.

According to a BNP press release, the party lawmakers will wear black badges and carry black flags while going to the Bangabhaban in a procession. The procession will start from Minto Road official residence of the President.

See Page 12 Col 8

### Road barricade in Khagrachhari postponed

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: The Parbatya Sarbadalia Oikkyo Parishad (PSOP) postponed its road barricade programme from 4 pm today in Khagrachhari hill district, sources said.

The postponement came after a meeting between the PSOP leaders and the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari earlier in the day, administration sources said.

The PSOP started making this afternoon at Khagrachhari about postponement of the barricade programme. Movement of vehicles resumed at Khagrachhari after 4 pm today.

In Rangamati and Bandarban, the barricade programme was already relaxed for today and tomorrow, the sources added.

### BISTEC to be renamed BIMSTEC

**By Staff Correspondent**  
The BISTEC — the regional grouping comprising four littoral countries of South Asia — Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand — will be renamed at a Bangkok meeting of state ministers for foreign affairs this week.

As the four founding nations have already agreed to admit Myanmar as a full-fledged member at a conference of senior officials now in progress in Bangkok, BISTEC will be renamed BIMSTEC, diplomatic sources said.

### Over 3000 vehicles stranded at 3 ferry ghats

**SAVAR, Dec 19:** More than 3000 vehicles remained stranded at Aricha, Nagarbari and Daulatdia creating serious traffic congestion at the three ghats, reports UNB.

BIWTC sources said some 1,755 vehicles were kept in their serial at the three ghats till 6 pm today to be ferried across the river.

Numbers of vehicles kept in the BIWTC serial were: Aricha-Nagarbari 925, Nagarbari-Aricha 370, Aricha-Daulatdia 210 and Daulatdia-Aricha 250.

Besides the BIWTC serial, another 1,500 vehicles were waiting outside terminals at the three ghats.

Outside the terminal at Aricha ghat, almost a five-kilometre long queue of vehicles was formed on the Aricha-Dhaka highway till this evening, local sources said.

## Inside Today

### Article

#### There Was a Will, and There Was a Way

Column: Beneath the Surface  
by Abdul Bayes  
Page 4

## Star Literature

The crusader with a pen; and No mulling over broken dreams  
Pages 6 & 7

## International

Kim Dae-Jung new ROK president  
Page 5

## Business

Dealers import, market hazardous pesticides, reveals survey  
Page 8

# Crime syndicates traffic women, children

**By Morshed Ali Khan, back from Benapole and Jessore**

Organised networks of crime syndicates dominate trafficking of women and children from the country and Jessore is believed to be one of the main centres for the trade.

According to local police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources, the networks stretch upto villages, towns and cities, both in Bangladesh and in India.

"The members of the syndicates are everywhere in the country," said a Benapole businessman requesting anonymity. He explained how the syndicates operated and said, "For instance, the moment a Cox's Bazar syndicate member sees off two women and two children, he informs the Jessore syndicate chief who immediately alerts his agents in Dhaka, Benapole and Bongaon in West Bengal."

In Dhaka, the agents help the 'party' change bus and the women are asked to wear a particular band or *tabiz* (talisman) on their arms for easy identification at the destination. "The accompanying children are usually given a dose of sedative with their food and they sleep in their mothers' laps all the way," he said.

At the border, the 'parties' are kept in particular houses for pre-arranged fees and then they walk across the paddy fields at a convenient time.

Police and BDR sources in Benapole said a senior police official, adding that the culprits often went free as the victims withheld their complaints.

"Here, the victims are charged under Section 11C of the Passport Act and go free the moment they reach the border area, said that the last three months a special BDR strike force had managed to reduce the trafficking.

"But the syndicates are so well-informed that once we tighten Benapole, they divert their parties to another exit," said the Naik Subedar.

"They use any one of the Goga, Bhomra, Kalaroa, Jhau-danga, Darsana and Jeeban Nagar points when the other is closed for safe passage," he said.

BDR officials said Jessore area has a total of 140 kilometres of border for which some 20 outposts — each manned by three personnel — have been set up.

They said although kilometers of border area remained unguarded, the traffickers always prefer to cross into an area which has transport and communication facilities and where they have established contacts with villagers.

The SP of Jessore, All Imam Chowdhury, told The Daily Star that at a meeting with senior Indian police officials last month, he had pinpointed a place under Jayantapur police

See Page 12 Col 3

# Sharif's man back in election race

**LAHORE, Dec 19:** A judge today allowed the ruling party's candidate back in the presidential election race, suspending his rejection on Thursday by the Election Commission, reports Reuter.

Justice Malik Mohammad Qayyum of the Punjab province's Lahore High Court referred the case to his Chief Justice after an appeal by candidate Mohammad Rafiq Tarar, who is a Senate (upper house) member of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party.

Acting Chief Election Commissioner, Justice Mukhtar Ahmad Junejo, a judge of the Supreme Court, on Thursday rejected Tarar's nomination for an opposition challenge on the grounds that he had made remarks defaming the judiciary.

Justice Qayyum set December 23 for the next hearing and said that meanwhile Tarar "shall be allowed to participate in the election provisionally subject to further orders."

The controversy over Tarar's nomination has echoes of a bitter power struggle between the government and judiciary which led to the resignation of President Farooq Leghari this month.

The Pakistan People's Party of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto said in a statement it feared Sharif's government would remove Junejo from his office and that such a move would "deepen the constitutional crisis beyond redemption and will bode ill for the federation (of Pakistan)."

Tarar had seemed certain to replace Leghari. Tarar's lawyer said the Constitution stipulated that presidential hopefuls had to be at least 45 years old and a Muslim member of parliament, and his client qualified on all counts.

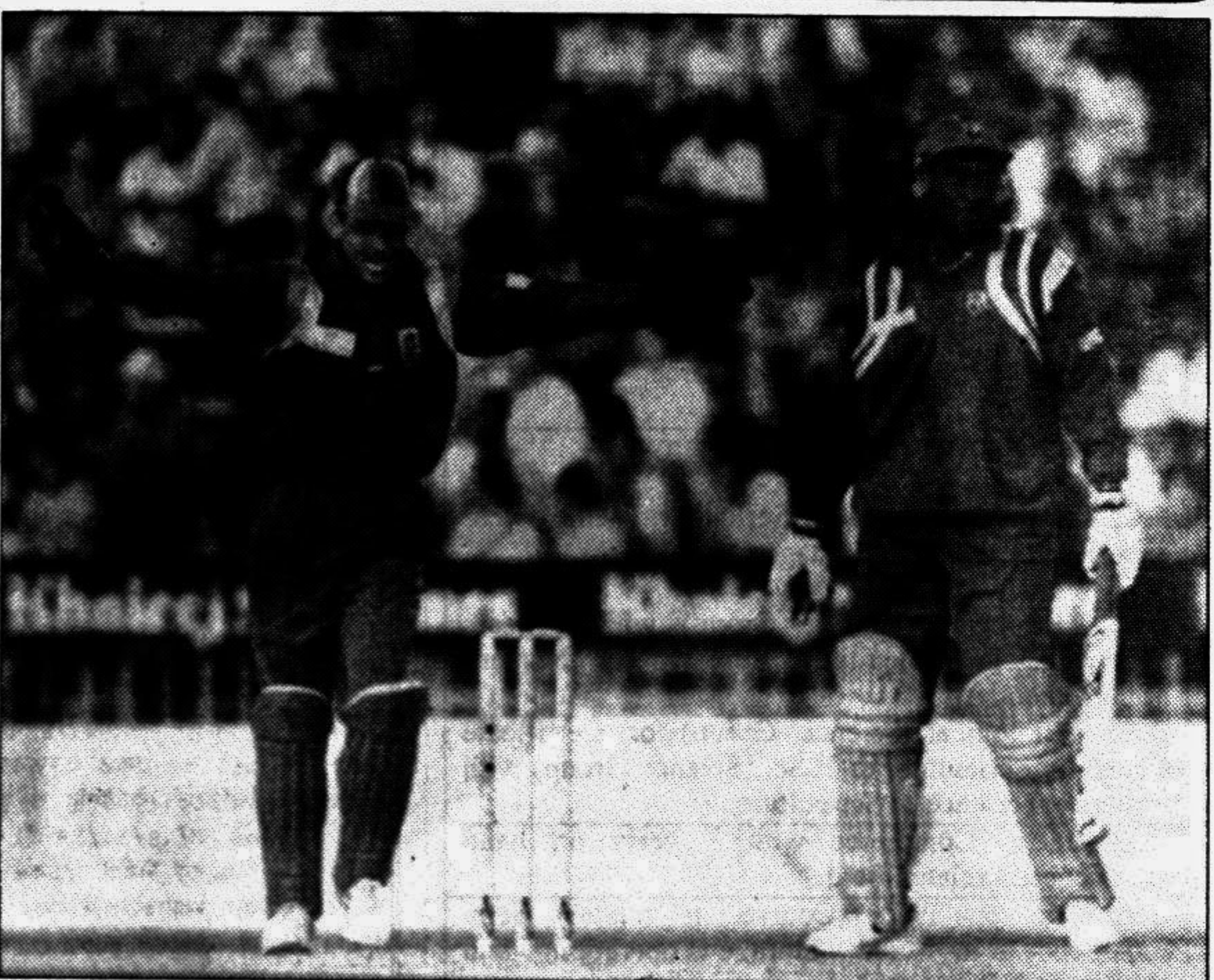
The PML has a huge majority in the electoral college formed from the two-chamber national parliament and four provincial assemblies which will elect the next president.

Tarar's candidature was challenged by an opposition candidate and two lawyers on the basis of newspaper reports that quoted him criticising judges during the constitutional crisis over Leghari.

Junejo said Tarar's interview in an Urdu-language weekly, *Takbeer*, "leads one to an irresistible conclusion that the author of the interview wanted to defame the judiciary of Pakistan and to bring it into ridicule."

"I do not think that there can be any doubt about this," he said.

See Page 12 Col 4



Carl Hooper (R) of the West Indies looks dejected after being adjudged leg before to England's Matthew Fleming (not shown) while wicketkeeper Alec Stewart acknowledges the verdict during yesterday's four-nation Champions' Trophy cricket final in Sharjah. England clinched the title with a three-wicket win. (Story on Page 11) — AP/UNB photo

# US expert tells The Daily Star SPA is a 'blotch' on the Constitution

**By Staff Correspondent**

A leading US constitutional expert is of the view that the Special Powers Act is a "blotch and a legal incongruity" in the context of Bangladesh's generally good constitutional provisions.

"The Special Powers Act (SPA) is broadly drafted to give immense powers to the government. It creates a huge loophole in the domain of fundamental rights. I have never seen, in the modern world, a statute as broadly drafted as the SPA."

This view was expressed by William Eskridge, a professor of law at the University of Georgetown Law Centre and Yale University Law School while talking to The Daily Star in an exclusive interview during his recent visit to Dhaka.

Eskridge has several publications to his credit on comparative constitutional laws and related issues.

Prof Eskridge however said that during his discussions with a cross-section of people, some felt the SPA was an "instrument of tyranny" while others viewed it as a "weapon of selective oppression."

He said the SPA creates a situation where anybody in Bangladesh can be deprived of his or her fundamental rights on the basis of a decision of a government official.

He felt that the SPA has been enacted with the assumption of

See Page 12 Col 1

# Mercury dips further

**By Staff Correspondent**  
It felt like the coldest, so far this season. City dwellers got the bite last night as temperature fell gradually throughout the day.

Mercury went down as clouds disappeared and cool breeze came from the western direction, the Dhaka Met Office said.

The lowest temperature recorded in the capital during the day was 13.5 degree Celsius, one degree down from the previous days, it said. The Met Office reading, however, did not reflect the cold at night.

Jessore was the coldest with 10 degrees. The day before, Srimangal was lowest with 11.6.

According to meteorologists, temperature is likely to fall further over the next couple of days.

The Met Office, however, could not say how far the mercury went down at night.

# Opinion poll 68 pc against leasing out all oil blocks

**By Staff Correspondent**  
Sixty-eight per cent people of Dhaka city think that the government should not open the whole of Bangladesh to foreign companies for oil and gas exploration now.

This was revealed in an opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD).

The poll on the on-going controversy over oil and gas exploration was conducted between December 11 and 13 and included 721 households.

Of those surveyed, only 31.9 per cent approved the government's plan to lease out all the 15 blocks. A large majority of 68.1 per cent prefer a 'gradual approach' in leasing out and preferred 'leasing out in sectors'.

See Page 12 Col 5

# 20 injured in post-polls clash in Cox's Bazar

**From Our Correspondent**  
COX'S BAZAR, Dec 19: At least 20 people, including seven policemen, were injured in a post-UP election clash in Cox's Bazar Sadar thana today.

Police fired gunshots and resorted to baton charge to disperse the supporters of a defeated UP chairman candidate.

Among the injured, Sirajul Haque, 25, received bullet wounds. He was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Others were released after first aid from Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

The supporters of a defeated chairman candidate of Jhilomza Union barricaded the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway following announcement of the unofficial results of UP elections which was held on Thursday. The supporters alleged rigging in three polling centres of Jhilomza union.

The trouble began when police tried to remove barricade in

See Page 12 Col 5

# Ctg port faces acute congestion again

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: Chittagong port faces an acute congestion of cargo ships both at its jetties and outer anchorage that causes much delay to the vessels, port sources and users said.

Such delay beyond the scheduled time, forces foreign cargo vessels to incur huge losses against operational costs, they said.

Port officials attributed the congestion of ships to the 'go-slow' programme of dock workers following dispute with stevedores over payment of 'speed-money' and frequent calls for hartal.

Over 30 ships are now anchored at the jetties and the outer anchorage while six vessels carrying general cargo remained stranded at the outer anchorage for the past 15 days.

Other vessels including container ships are also required to stay at Chittagong port for about 12 days on an average against the normal stay of 5 to 6 days, they said.

Meanwhile, the task force on Chittagong port yesterday held a meeting at the port office to review the overall situation, port sources said.

The meeting stressed the need for expediting cargo handling at the port to ease the congestion.

On the other hand, the Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC), a Singapore-based organisation of feeder vessel operators, in a letter addressed to the shipping minister urged for taking an immediate action plan to ease the congestion.

Otherwise, the CFTC will be compelled to go for drastic measures, as it did earlier, to make up the losses, the letter said.

Copies of the letter were sent to the port's Director (traffic), Port Users Forum and the convenor of the Task Force.



Union Parishad election campaign in a village under Louhajang thana of Munshiganj. — Star photo

# Train service in E-zone resumes

**From Staff Correspondent**  
CHITTAGONG, Dec 19: Train communication in the eastern zone of Bangladesh Railway resumed at 1.30 am last night after suspension for more than 8 hours, railway sources said.

Train service resumed as the drivers and guards postponed their strike programme for one week following a meeting with railway authorities, the sources said.

The drivers and guards went on a wildcat strike at 5 pm yesterday demanding special mileage allowance under the new pay scale.

# Train service from Sylhet stops for eighth time

**From Iqbal Siddiquee**  
SYLHET, Dec 19: Whimsical decisions of US company Occidental, engaged in oil and gas exploration at Magurchara, over operation of passenger trains between Sylhet and rest of the country has mounted sufferings of the people of greater Sylhet region.

Bangladesh Railway again suspended operation of trains to and from Sylhet without any prior notice on Wednesday due to restrictions imposed by Occidental, said a BR official.

"Whimsical decisions of the company compel the BR to suspend train service some times with prior notice and sometimes without notice," he said.

Occidental had earlier asked the BR to suspend train service from Thursday (December 18). But all of a sudden, the company asked it to stop the service a day ahead after the intercity train Jayantika Express had

See Page 12 Col 7

## Announcement

The Daily Star takes great pleasure in announcing that it is going to organise a conference of young professionals and entrepreneurs (between 25-35 years) at 3:30 pm on Sunday, December 28, at the British Council Auditorium in Nilkhet.

The conference is being organised to provide opportunity for the young people to express their views about the future of the country and of their respective professions. It will also address issues and problems faced by the young professionals and entrepreneurs and discuss ways to solve those.

Those interested to participate in the conference are requested to contact Rafi Hossain, at The Daily Star from today (between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm). For further information at Tel Nos. 500092-94 and 863036.

Watch for more announcements on the conference in the coming days.

## Conventions on citizens' rights under study

**By Mizan Ali**  
The government is examining seven international conventions on civil and political rights of citizens.

According to official sources, the government has already started seeking opinions from legal experts including a member of the Law Commission (LC) on implications of ratification of those conventions.

The seven conventions are: the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; Convention on Prevention of the Crime of Genocide; Convention on Political Rights of Women; Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage; Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Earlier, when the government sought opinion of the LC on Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, the LC recommended legislation making genocide a punishable criminal offence.

## Young man shot dead at Sayedabad bus terminal

**By Staff Correspondent**  
A young man was shot dead by a gang of assailants at the Sayedabad bus terminal in the city Thursday, police said yesterday.

The dead was identified as Rabul Ahsan alias Lithu, 30, a resident of Jurain area.

A gang of about five young men shot Rabul in the head from point blank range after Rabul had an altercation with the gang at about 6:30 pm, police said.

He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he died at about 11 pm.

## JP to propose JS discussion on CHT accord

**From Our Correspondent**  
NARAYANGANJ, Dec 19: Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad today said that his party would raise a proposal for discussions on the CHT peace accord in the next session of Jatiya Sangsad.

Talking to newsmen, the JP Chairman expressed the view that there would have been no misgivings among the people had the government discussed the issue in the House before signing of the accord.

Ershad attended an *Urs* at Kutubbag at Bandar thana here.

The JP leader, however, lauded the peace accord but suggested annulment of certain provisions that "does not match the spirit of the country's Constitution."

Though JP had its representation in the National Committee on CHT (NCCHT), "our representative Fazole Rabbi, MP, had no knowledge about the contents of the accord," Ershad said.

## 100 shops gutted in Chittagong

**CHITTAGONG, Dec 19:** A devastating fire at Dohazari Bazar in Chandanaisa thana gutted about 100 shops on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Fire Brigade sources said, the fire that might be originated from a cigarette butt engulfed the area at 1 am.

The loss was estimated about Tk several lakhs.

The firemen brought the fire under control with the help of the local people at 3 am.

BSS adds: In another fire incident ten shops were gutted at Gojara Bazar, Noapara, under Raajan thana, police and Fire Service sources said.

The fire originated from electric short-circuit. The loss was estimated at about Tk 2.5 lakh.