

## Opposition announces 9-point movement

AL, 11-Party, others to wage anti-govt agitation starting with Teknaf-Tentulia human chain on Dec 11

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mainstream opposition parties in a major development in their anti-government strategy yesterday declared a simultaneous movement on a common nine-point charter of demands with the ultimate goal of overthrowing the BNP-led coalition regime.

The main opposition Awami League (AL), left-leaning 11-Party Alliance, Jatiya Samjtantrik Dal (JSD), National Awami Party (NAP)

and Jatiya Janata Party came up with an identical programme for the first time since the government took over in 2001.

The combined opposition agitation will begin with a one-hour human chain stretching from the northern tip (Tentulia) to the south (Teknaf) of the country from 3:00pm to 4:00pm on December 11 to express 'no-confidence' in the alliance government.

The opposition parties finalised

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### CHARTER OF DEMANDS

Overthrow of the coalition government and polls under a neutral caretaker government after reforms to the electoral system

Ouster of the war criminals from the cabinet and administration

Expulsion of criminals from political parties

Constitution of an independent anti-corruption commission and forfeiting resources of the corrupt

Curbs on the spiralling prices of essentials

Reopening of state-run mills and factories

Cut in prices of agricultural inputs

Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts accord

Ensuring maximum utilisation of natural resources

## Bhuiyan takes charge of home ministry instead of Altaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in a fresh notification yesterday gave the charge of home ministry to LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in absence of State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar.

In an earlier notification on Wednesday, the Cabinet Division named Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury to look after the home ministry during Babar's absence. Babar, now in Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, will return on November 25.

For the change of decision, a meeting was chaired by Altaf at the home ministry yesterday to review law and order was called off.

Official sources said the home secretary yesterday met Bhuiyan and briefed him on the home ministry affairs.

In line with yesterday's notification, Bhuiyan will act as home minister in addition to his own portfolio.

Altaf who returned home yesterday from India leaves tomorrow for Pakistan on a weeklong visit.

## Over 100 wounded as police, Rohingyas clash in Ukhiya

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Over a hundred Rohingya refugees and law enforcers were injured in a violent clash at Kutupalong camp in Ukhiya upazila yesterday.

Sources said the trouble erupted at about 9:30am when police and ansars went to the camp to rescue a police officer, detained by some Rohingyas during his visit to the camp earlier in the morning.

Camp-in-charge Mohammad Nurul Alam Chowdhury along with police officer Mohammad Wahid visited the camp to inspect its latest condition after the Eid vacation.

Police said the two noticed that over 100 refugees were holding a meeting on a hilltop against their repatriation to Myanmar. They requested them to refrain from holding such meetings, which is

illegal as per law of the land.

The irate refugees then held police officer Mohammad Wahid and beat him. The camp-in-charge somehow managed to escape. On information, police and ansars from nearby barracks rushed to the spot to rescue the police officer.

"As soon as police and ansars arrived at the place of occurrence, the Rohingyas opened fire on them. We also resorted to gunfire in self-defence," police said. They arrested nine Rohingya refugees including their leader Ishaque Master.

When the news of arrest of Rohingyas spread, a horde of frenzied refugees attacked the nearby police and ansar barracks.

On information, police reinforcements from Ukhiya Police Station joined in the fight at about 10:30am. At one stage, the detained

cop managed to flee.

At least 85 refugees and 15 police and ansars were injured in the clash that continued for two hours. The two sides traded around 300 rounds of bullets.

Police officer Wahid was admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. The injured police and ansars were treated at the hospital of Concern Bangladesh, an NGO, inside the refugee camp.

Fighting over, the belligerent refugees fled into deep forests in the nearby hills.

Talking to the news agency, Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner M Habibur Rahman said the camp situation was "under control".

Some 8,000 Rohingya refugees are waiting for repatriation at the Kutupalong camp while 12,000 at Nayapara camp.

## India to remove trade barriers before Nath's Dhaka visit

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath is likely to visit Bangladesh sometime in February after taking necessary measures to remove all trade barriers that restrict Bangladesh's exports to their market.

Kamal Nath expressed his interest in visiting Dhaka at the invitation of Bangladesh Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Choudhury when he met his counterpart during a four-day tour of India.

"He (Kamal) instructed the officials in his ministry to remove the trade barriers by February," Altaf told reporters at the Zia International Airport on his return yesterday afternoon.

He said the Indian minister also apprised that his ministry already had cleared the anti-dumping issue on Bangladeshi lead-acid battery and was now pending with the finance ministry for clearance.

During the meeting, he said, Kamal Nath asked his staff to contact their finance ministry for immediate clearance of the issue.

"He (Kamal) also instructed his ministry officials to specify the

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## 2 criminals killed in 'shootout' with army

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two criminals were killed in a shootout with the army in the deep forest near Liragaon under Roangchhari upazila yesterday.

They are U Chi Mong, 35, and Mong Kya Mong, 30, both residents of Liragaon.

Sources in the security forces said Chi Mong and Kya Mong were arrested with a revolver Wednesday. Following their statement, the army were taking them to their hideout to seize firearms, they said, claiming they died falling from a hill while fleeing.

A joint force comprising the army and Bangladesh Rifles personnel has been in a drive for the last one month to rescue two people including a retired subedar who were abducted recently.

UNB adds: Police sources said the gunfight ensued when an army patrol came face to face with criminals in the deep forest. Two criminals who died on the spot during the shootout were in military uniforms.

## School textbooks for 2005 unlikely in time

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Textbooks for secondary level are unlikely to be available in the market in time as the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is yet to award the job of printing 1.47 crore books to publishers with only 42 days left for the academic year 2005.

The NCTB however says the textbooks will be printed and distributed in time.

"The board has initiated all steps and we are hopeful the books will hit the market in time," NCTB Chairperson Dilara Hafiz told The

Daily Star.

"NCTB officials have assured me of timely availability of the books," she said referring to a monitoring meeting held recently.

President of Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity Rabbani Jabbar also said, "I don't see any possibility of delay and I am sure secondary level books will be in the market in due time."

The first instalment of books for secondary classes is expected to hit the market on January 2, the second on January 9 and the last on January 14, he added.

Meanwhile, about 30 per cent books of primary level have already reached different parts of the country and printing of the rest 70 per cent has ended, the NCTB chairperson said.

The NCTB will print and distribute about 8.5 crore books of primary and ebtedayee level madrasa free of cost. Of the books, about 6.64 crore are for primary schools and the rest for madrasas.

Late availability of textbooks caused enormous sufferings to students in the past. The situation

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## EC plans no move to reform polls laws

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) has no plan to initiate a move to amend electoral laws in a bid to curb influence of black money and muscle power on the upcoming parliamentary polls.

"We are not thinking about any reform programmes. The new chief election commissioner will be appointed in May next year, he might initiate such a move," said Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali.

The EC itself however termed the existing electoral laws insufficient for holding fair elections and feels to reform them, a demand made by the mainstream opposition political

parties to ensure that the next general elections are held free and fair.

The possibility of a move by the present EC to reform the electoral laws, however, is slim, as the government itself has no such plan at the moment. Such a move is likely to be taken by the next EC which will be composed in May 2005 after expiry of the tenure of incumbent chief election commissioner (CEC), sources at the EC said.

The five-year tenure of CEC MA Syed and Election Commissioner Safur Rahman, who were appointed by the former Awami League government, expires in May and June next year.

The present EC expects such a move for electoral law reforms may

be initiated once the new EC is formed, which will conduct the next general elections at the end of 2006 or early 2007.

The main opposition Awami League, left-leaning 11-Party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and different non-governmental organisations have been demanding electoral law reforms. But the EC as well as the BNP-led ruling coalition is reluctant to act on the issue.

Talking to The Daily Star, the election commissioners pointed to the loopholes in the existing electoral laws and said it will not be possible to hold the general elections in a free and fair manner by

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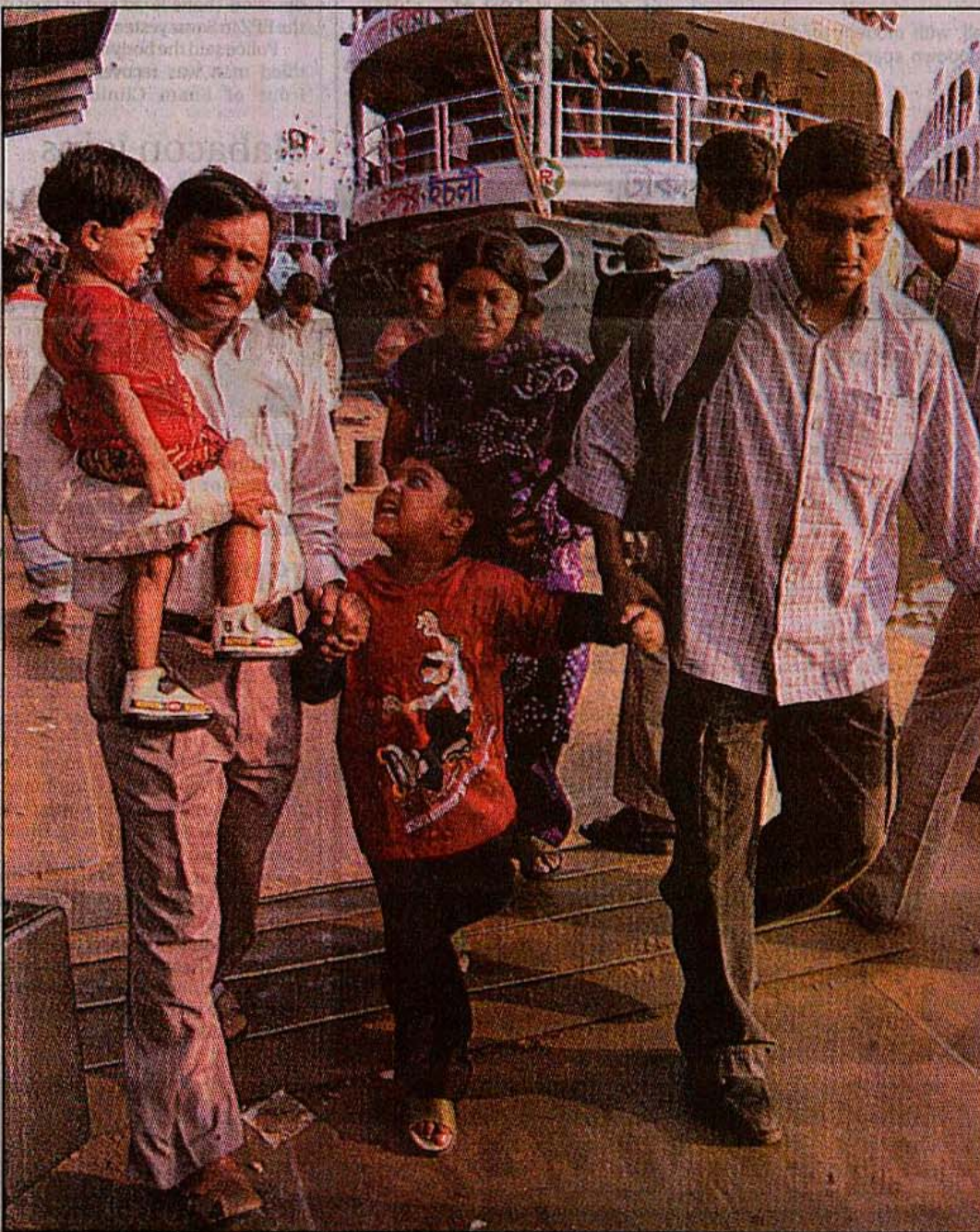


PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

A family, like thousands of others, arrives at Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday after a long Eid vacation at its village home.

## GAIBANDHA EXPLOSIVES JIC to quiz Mujahedin commander

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

With little headway in the probe into the recovery of powerful explosives from a train at Bonarpara station as yet railway police have decided to send arrestee 'regional commander' of Islamist outfit Jamaat-ul-Mujahedin Amjad Hossain and his accomplice explosives carrier Anisur Rahman to Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka for further quizzing.

Government Railway Police at Bonarpara will seek fresh remand of the arrestees tomorrow on expiry of a seven-day remand.

A GRP contingent recovered 24 gelatin high-speed explosive bars and 125 electric detonators from Anisur Rahman on board a Santahar-bound local train at Bonarpara on November 12.

Anisur told investigators a cassette bearing a statement of the Islamist militant group and slogans like "democracy is kufrism, annihilate kufrism to establish Islam" is now being prepared.

The recorded statement termed Islamic political parties of Bangladesh and the government "Tabude-Deen" and called for wiping them out, he said.

The statement aims to motivate young activists of Jamaat-ul-Mujahedin gathering in different mosques in remote areas of Shaghat upazila, Anisur mentioned.

"Amjad Hossain had asked me to be present at Gaibandha railway station at the scheduled time of the local train and one Naim handed over to me a shopping bag containing explosives. He asked me to reach it to a specific person at Bogra station," said Anisur.

Gaibandha police are also looking for some other persons suspected of having links to the incident.

## FAKE NOTES

Cops look for Pakistani woman's bank account

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Failing to get any 'significant information' till yesterday, police are now looking for bank accounts of the Pakistani woman arrested along with nine others from Ramna area on Sunday with a huge amount of counterfeit local currency and foreign currencies.

Wahed Gaffar, husband of arrestee Khairunnesa, is still to be traced five days into the incident.

A joint team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) police and police yesterday interrogated Khairunnesa, on a fresh remand for one day, at Ramna Police Station.

"She is not giving us any significant information about her husband or source of the seized money.

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## Pirates make coasts unsafe

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Frequent piracies and robberies in the coastal belts of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar and the outer anchorage of Chittagong port have jeopardised safe movement of cargo ships and fishing boats, sources said.

But the authorities are yet to take any effective steps to combat the crimes.

According to reports available here, 102 incidents of piracy took place at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port in 21 months till September this year.

Port officials said International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in its reports last year termed the outer anchorage of Chittagong port here the second most risky zone of piracy after an Indonesian port in the world's maritime service.

But most of the piracies and robberies in the coastal belts of Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, Sandwip channel and on the high sea mostly go reported or recorded

unless major casualties occur, sources said.

In the latest major incident of piracy, a gang attacked a fishing boat in Cox's Bazar coast near Sonadia offshore island on the night of October 27, forced 14 fishermen into the ice chamber of the boat to die and decamped with fishing equipment and fish. The incident pan-

icked fishermen community in the coastal areas.

Member-secretary of anti-piracy committee formed by the Ministry of Port and Shipping Kamrul Hossain said, "Killing of 14 fishermen in one incident of piracy in a fishing boat posed a threat to movement of ships and fishing boats at sea".

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PHOTO: STAR

Two quacks show off their wares of supposed healing virtues to a bunch of potential buyers in the capital yesterday. They also retrieve lost valuables of villagers from ponds and lakes using the tools on their shoulders as a sideline.

### Announcement

The Daily Star drops the Star Weekend Magazine today because of the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation. The price of the 20-page newspaper remains Tk 7.

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