

## Cabinet secretary gets extension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cabinet Secretary Saadat Hussain has been given one-year extension of service on expiry of the first year of his contract-service yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia approved the extension amid strong lobbying against it.

The Ministry of Establishment yesterday evening issued an official notification on the extension of Saadat's service.

Highly placed sources said there had long been strong opposition to Saadat, the senior most and experienced bureaucrat in the civil administration. A section of ministers and bureaucrats wanted replacement of Saadat by a new one.

The prime minister had earlier discussed appointment of cabinet secretary with her senior colleagues. And most of them favoured extension of Saadat's service saying there is no such 'efficient' secretary who

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# Huge arms cache seized from deep CHT forest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized a huge cache of firearms and ammunition including seven AK47 rifles, two M16 rifles, and one rocket launcher from deep forest of Naikkhongchhari under the district yesterday noon.

Other seized firearms are one point 22 bore rifle, two 12-bolt shotguns, and two assault rifles. Besides, the BDR seized 1,671 bul-

lets, 1,275 of which are of AK47 rifle and 90 of M16 rifle.

On a tip-off, BDR jawans of 40 Naikkhong Battalion led by Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Hasinur Rahman launched the drive in the criminals' den and seized the arms and ammunition, BDR sources said.

The arms and ammunition were kept in a temporary place prior to sending those to different parts of the country, they added.

The BDR demolished the den, but could not arrest anyone in this connection.

In last one and a half years, a total of 28 firearms including sophisticated AK47 and M16 rifles and a few thousand bullets were seized from the hilly district.

Law enforcers, in different earlier operations, recovered six AK47 and two 303 rifles, three shotguns, two pistols, 15 locally made guns, 576

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## When a baby sells for Tk 300

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Crushed by poverty, a mother was compelled yesterday to sell her one-month old daughter. The incident, which occurred within the premises of the Satkhira collectorate, comes only five days after her husband died.

The ill-fated baby was Parvin Akhtar, daughter of the late Abdur Razzak, of the village Benla in Assasami upazila. According to a source, Abdur Razzak, a day labourer, died five days ago, leaving behind a wife, Salma Khatun, and three daughters.

After her husband's death, Salma Khatun struggled to provide meals for her daughters. Unable to bear the pain of poverty, she decided to sell her youngest daughter.

Upon hearing the news, Abdul Mazed, son of Nasiruddin of the

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# AL top brass criticised over key policy issues

ALCWC meet witnesses lively debate

SHAKHAWAT LITON and SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The main opposition Awami League (AL) top brass came under heavy fire from a number of party leaders at a meeting yesterday for what they said was party policymakers' 'indecision and inconsistency' on some key policy issues.

At the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting, the leaders asked why the party went for the nine-point charter of demands with other opposition parties ignoring the ALCWC, the highest decision-making body of the party.

They alleged the party suffers from indecision in taking crucial

decisions on a number of issues including its regular participation in Jatiya Sangsad sessions, sharing of parliamentary reserved seats for women and enforcement of hartals in the antigovernment movement, meeting sources said.

AL leader AKM Jahangir Hossain said the party chief and leader of the opposition declared ousting government movement on 15-point demand, but the party is now in a movement on nine-point demand.

"How can we jump to nine-point from the 15-point without discussion at any party forum?" he asked.

Mohammad Nasim said the nine-point demand misses a key demand of the main opposition for

reforming the caretaker government system.

Some other leaders including Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Akhtaruzzaman seconded them. They alleged the party high command in many cases suffers from 'indecision and inconsistency' in fixing strategies as the main opposition party.

They said the party does not know for sure whether its lawmakers will actively participate in parliamentary sessions and what will be the fate of the reserved women seats in parliament.

The leaders thought none of AL's antigovernment movements picked

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## Commission declares jihad against graft

New chief discards alliance-bias fear, promises significant result in a month

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAMIM ASHRAF

The newly formed Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) vows to start a 'jihad' against the all-pervading graft and bring about significant improvements in the country's grim corruption scenario in a month.

The Commission, however, believes corruption cannot be eliminated from the country. "It would not be possible to root out corruption totally, but it can be reduced to a great extent," ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain

Khan said yesterday.

"And you will see significant changes in the combat against corruption within a month," the former High Court judge said in an interview with The Daily Star at his residence, half an hour before the Commission officially started functioning yesterday.

The ACC chairman, however, did not elaborate on the three-member Commission's strategy to make such remarkable changes in such a short period of time.

Denying flatly their political

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Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, centre, a former High Court judge, joins his new office as chief of Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Nine city markets prone to fire hazards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

At least nine city markets are termed as "potential fire bombs" due to their structural vulnerability and grossly inadequate fire fighting preparedness, officials of the Fire Service and Civil Defense Directorate have warned.

In addition, they said that up to fifty markets and public places in the city are listed in the fire service books as 'highly risky and prone to devastating fire' at any time. The revelation comes following Monday's devastating blaze, which killed one person, wounded 50 and gutted 1,900 shops of New Bangabazar Hawkers' Market and

12 film-distributing offices in the city's Gulistan area. The fire caused an estimated loss of TK 150 crore.

The fire service officials yesterday told The Daily Star that the Dhaka City Corporation-owned Fulbaria Bangabazar Hawkers' Market, Gulistan Municipal Hawkers' Market, Dhaka Mahanagar Fulbaria Hawkers' Market, Fulbaria Adarsha Hawkers' Market, Ananda Market, as well as privately-owned Bakusha Hawkers' market in Nikhet, Gausia Market and Chandni Chavk in New Market, Sadarghat Market, Agargaon Market and parts of Karwan Bazar Market top their list as the "most vulnerable to fire".

Dhaka City Corporation, in the name of rehabilitating footpath hawkers, built these markets without any consultation with the fire service. These structures were built with highly inflammable construction materials such as bamboo, timber, hardboard, asbestos and canvas.

A fire fighter who served in the department for nearly 30 years said that if fire breaks out in any one of these listed markets during peak hours, hundreds of innocent shoppers and shop employees risk death from either asphyxiation or burns.

The passages are narrow, confusing and surrounded by highly

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## BANGABAZAR FIRE Traders still see no rehabilitation move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The traders of New Bangabazar Hawkers' Market in Gulistan in the capital, who were rendered pauper by Sunday's devastating fire, yesterday alleged that the authorities were yet to make any move for their rehabilitation.

They also alleged that the market committee was not letting them talk freely to the press about the fire seen by many as a 'mysterious' one that gutted merchandise worth around Tk 200 crore and killed one person.

Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday said they are waiting for the reports of the probe committees of the home

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## Mahmudur flies off handle over graft query

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahmudur Rahman, who resigned as the executive chairman of Board of Investment (BOI) yesterday, became furious and called some reporters names when asked if there was any allegations of corruption against him or his organisation that had prompted him to the decision.

He even asked a senior reporter of The Daily Star to leave his room immediately as he raised the question. "I shall not allow any one from The Daily Star in my room," he shouted choking in apparent rage.

Rafiq Hasan, a senior staff correspondent of The Daily Star, along with some other reporters went to the BOI office in the city's Motijheel to get his comments on the resignation.

"You, The Daily Star people, have always come up with allegations of corruption. Otherwise, there was no

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## BoI chief resigns over dispute with high-ups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Board of Investment (BoI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman tendered his resignation yesterday morning reportedly following a recent dispute with the government high-ups over dissolution of a committee that used to overview issuance of work permits to foreign workers.

"I submitted my resignation to the prime minister this morning and am awaiting her response," he told a group of reporters at his office yesterday afternoon.

The resignation letter was sent through the official channels and might take some time before getting the feedback, he said, adding, "I am going to continue in my office till the government decides on my resignation".

According to BoI sources, Mamud decided to leave the office following an allegation of taking

bribe by a section of BoI officials for issuing work permits to expatriate workers.

After his appointment as the chief of the board, the government gave it the responsibility of issuing work permits to foreign workers outside export processing zones.

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Mahmudur Rahman

## Rallies in Tentulia, Teknaf for Dec 11 human wall plan

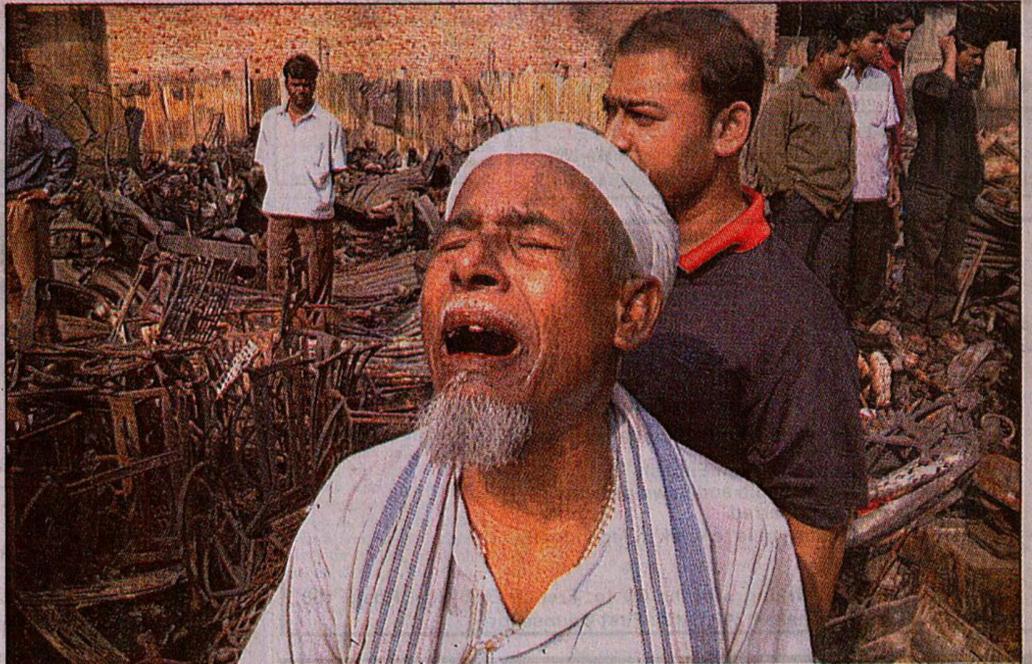
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dispelling all confusion, the mainstream opposition parties yesterday decided to hold two combined public rallies at Teknaf on November 28 and at Tentulia the next day to drum up public support for the December 11 no-confidence human wall.

Senior leaders of the main opposition Awami League (AL), components of the 11-Party Alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), National Awami Party (NAP) and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Mahub) will address the rallies.

The 11-party combine includes Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Workers Party (WP), Gono Forum, Ganotantri Party, Samyabadi Dal, Ganotantrik Majdur Party, Gano Azadi League and Communist Kendra.

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Altaf Hossain wails beside the charred remains of his only source of livelihood yesterday. He lost his shop along with sewing machines worth some Tk 20 lakh to Sunday's inferno that burnt down New Bangabazar Hawkers' Market and a dozen adjacent offices at Gulistan.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

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## VAT waived from export industries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has exempted from November 20 all 100 percent export-oriented industries from VAT, a perk billed to give local exportable goods a competitive edge in the quota-free era only 38 days shy.

The industries will be exempted from VAT in handling charges in port operations, freight forwarding, clearing and forwarding, shipping and insurance.

The export-oriented industries will also enjoy 80 percent VAT waiver in gas, 60 percent in water and 80 percent in electricity bills.

The businesses, especially apparel exporters, yesterday lauded the government for exempting all export-oriented industries from VAT payment.

They said the waiver will help Bangladeshi products become price competitive in world market in the post-MFA (multi-fibre arrangement) era.

The VAT relief for the exporters follows appeals to the government by Bangladesh Garment

Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). The BGMEA has thanked the prime minister and finance minister for the VAT withdrawal.

BGMEA President Annisul Haq yesterday said through the move the government has showed its sincerity and seriousness about facing the challenges at the end of apparel quota era.

"Previously, there was a provision for exporters to get VAT refunds but the long procedure discourages exporters from applying for the refund. Sometimes, it took over a year to collect VAT and many exporters faced hassles too," he said.

The BGMEA is sitting with different stakeholders such as insurance companies and others to find ways on how to reduce cost of service to help prepare the garment sector, which contributes 75 percent of country's total export earnings, face challenges of the quota-free era.

Vice-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Abul

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## BNP leader killed in bomb blast at party office

UNB, Chuadanga

A BNP leader was killed and seven others were injured in bomb explosion at a union BNP office in Chuadanga Sadar upazila yesterday.

Locals said the bomb exploded at about 6:00pm when Bapa Union BNP President Shafiqul Islam Shafi was holding a meeting with the party activists in the office at Hashadah bazaar. He died instantly.

The injured, Rashid, Shawkat, Zafar, Salam, Israfil, Kawsar and Shahjahan were admitted to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

Police rushed to the spot and suspected that underground operatives might have lobbed the powerful bomb targeting the BNP leader.

At least 40 people were killed in Chuadanga district this year. Janojuddho, a faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), claimed responsibility for most of the killings.

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