

Siege to district EC offices ends

STAR REPORT

At least five Awami League (AL) leaders were injured in an attack in Satkhira yesterday during the 14-party alliance's Election Commission (EC) district offices siege programme.

The programme was observed peacefully elsewhere in the country. The protesters were unable to reach the EC offices amid heavy police build-up around the EC offices, our correspondents from different districts report.

The 14-party leaders and workers blockaded different highways for hours and held rallies in different districts where they criticised the president and chief of the caretaker government for deploying army unnecessarily and later asking them to be on 'stand-by'.

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OVER MONTH'S STANDOFF AT CTG PORT

## Cranes come to life after HC directive

RAFIQ HASAN

Private company Saif Powertec Limited resumed operation of the four sophisticated gantry cranes at the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) last night after remaining inactive for over a month due to opposition by a section of dockworkers loyal to the Chittagong city mayor.

The company took the charge again following the directives of the High Court division of the Supreme Court, sources said.

Saif Powertec Limited suffered huge financial loss as they had been

'illegally' prevented from operating the cranes, Tarafder Ruhul Amin, managing director of the company, said, adding that as per the agreement with the company, the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) will have to pay compensation for the loss.

The High Court issued a rule nisi on Tuesday asking the CPA and the Ministry of Shipping why the forced suspension of operation of the four rail-mounted Quay Gantry Cranes for handling containers by the petitioner company would not be declared illegal and unlawful.

A High Court bench comprising Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Mamnoon Rahman issued the rule nisi.

The respondents were also directed to restore the operation of QGC at CCT by the petitioner and his employees with positive assistance and without any hindrance for three months.

After getting the directive, the CPA sent a letter to the private company Saif Powertec asking it to start operation of four sophisticated gantry cranes immediately. The port authority also assured full security and all other logistic

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## Nepal's king faces the boot as talks go on

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's governing parties and Maoist rebels held talks yesterday an interim constitution that could bring the rebels into government and see the monarchy suspended.

Leaders from the ruling seven-party coalition, including Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, attended the talks, while the Maoists were represented by their second-in-command, Baburam Bhattarai.

Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara said the docu-

ment could be finalised later Thursday but added the political parties "not us were taking their time over the document".

Senior government negotiator Pradeep Gyawali said talks Wednesday were "positive and sorted out differences that cropped up on some crucial issues, including who (was) to be made the head of state in the interim period".

But he did not divulge details.

The Maoists have said they want to strip King Gyanendra of his title and name a temporary head of

state, such as Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala -- the respected octogenarian architect of last month's peace deal that officially ended a decade-long civil war.

Some members of the interim coalition, however, would prefer to see the position left open or the king -- who is still revered by many in the conservative nation as a Hindu deity -- retain a strictly ceremonial role.

"Unlike the previous constitution of 1990, the new interim

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## BNP to hold counter rally Dec 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance has decided to hold a grand rally on December 19, just a day after the scheduled rally of the 14-party combine, at the city's Palan Maidan in a bid to show off its power to its arch-rival.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the secretaries-general of the parties of the alliance yesterday at BNP Central Office at the city's Naya Palan. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan presided over the meeting.

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## Hasina sees Ershad verdict influenced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad has been sentenced to two years in jail as the judiciary is still being influenced by 'remote control' by the BNP-Jamaat alliance as he refused to join the four-party alliance.

In a fierce reaction to the High Court verdict that jailed Ershad for two years in the Japanese boat purchase case, the AL chief said the court handed down a two-year sentence on Ershad even before the hearing of the case was complete.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed, General Secretary Abdul Jalil and LDP Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury rushed to Ershad's residence at around 8:00pm last night upon hearing the verdict.

Hasina's reactions came at a meeting with the family members of the martyred intellectuals at her Dhanmondi office commemorating the Martyred Intellectuals Day.

The AL chief also questioned the motivation of the verdict as it came right after the speculation that Ershad might join the 14-party

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## Sonali Bank chief quits over transfer Order allegedly came upon a loan refusal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sonali Bank Chairman Mirza Azizul Islam resigned yesterday following a government proposal to transfer him to Agrani Bank allegedly under pressure from a powerful vested quarter.

Islam took the decision after a discussion with the finance secretary and submitted the resignation

Jatka fishing in deep sea goes unabated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Although banned, indiscriminate netting of jatka (hilsha fry) and its sales in different markets in Cox's Bazar is going on unabated under the nose of the law enforcers.

During a recent visit to different wholesale markets, fish traders were seen busy packing jatka to send to other parts of the country including Dhaka. The fry was also selling openly in different local markets.

The traders were selling jatka, 12 cm in length, at Tk 4,000 a maund though a government order bans netting of hilsha fry less than 23 cm in length.

Fish traders said hundreds of maunds of jatka are being traded daily in different wholesale

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Small boats bring ashore jatka (young hilsha) from deep-sea trawlers at Cox's Bazar as fishermen continue catching jatka defying a ban while the authorities concerned turn a blind eye.

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## Asia's greenhouse gases 'to treble' in 25 years

AFP, Manila

Fast-rising family incomes and brisk demand for cars will treble Asia's greenhouse gas emissions over the next 25 years, according to a study backed by the Asian Development Bank and released yesterday.

The report, "Energy Efficiency and Climate Change: Considerations for On-Road Transport in Asia," presents one of the first comprehensive analyses of the relationships between transport and climate change in Asia, Philippines-based ADB said in a statement.

Even under the most optimistic current scenarios for road traffic expansion management, emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the Asian transport sector will treble over the next 25 years, the study said.

At the same time, local air pollution and congestion from transport

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PHOTO: STAR

Streets in the capital get overcrowded with vehicles adding to greenhouse gases. The photo was taken from Kakrail recently.

SEDITION CASE  
HC bench feels embarrassed to accept Kamal's application

UNB, Dhaka

A High Court division bench yesterday felt embarrassed in accepting an application filed on behalf of Dr Kamal Hossain, who faces a sedition case, for hearing.

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Murderers of intellectuals must be tried  
Says Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Paying rich tributes to the martyred intellectuals, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said their killers must be

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Rab kills over 350 in custody  
Says US rights group

REUTERS, New York

Bangladesh's elite security force has killed more than 350 people in custody and could be used by the country's former ruling party ahead of next month's election, a US-based human rights group warned yesterday.

A 79-page Human Rights Watch

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### Prayer Timing

December 15

	Azan	
Fajr	5-20	5-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-22	5-25
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Probe finds Diana's death an accident

AP, London

A British police inquiry released yesterday concluded that the deaths of Princess Diana and her companion in a 1997 Paris car crash were a "tragic accident" and that allegations of murder are unfounded.

"Our conclusion is that, on all the evidence available at this time, there was no conspiracy to murder any of the occupants of the car. This was a tragic accident," said Lord John Stevens, former chief of the Metropolitan Police, who led the

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Princess Diana

letter to the bank, sources said. The letter will be forwarded to the finance ministry Sunday.

"There was a proposal to transfer me to Agrani Bank," Islam told The Daily Star last night. "But I did not find it acceptable. That's why I resigned."

According to a bank official, Sonali Bank being the largest

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