

CTG-DHAKA, CTG-SYLHET

# Derailment cuts rail links for 10 hours

STAR REPORT

The railway communications of Chittagong with Dhaka and Sylhet, which remained snapped for around 10 hours following the derailment of a freight train in Akhaura of Brahmanbaria, were restored around 6:30pm yesterday.

With the yesterday's incident of derailment, railway communications on the route remained suspended for more than 100 hours in 21 such incidents in the last 11 months, according to sources in the Bangladesh Railway (BR) and newspaper reports.

During the period, Jamaat-Shibir men were reported to have uprooted fishplates, rail tracks, and set fire to wooden plinths, causing derailment on a number of occasions.

They went on the rampage and damaged the railway tracks protesting at the verdicts against the top Jamaat leaders for committing crimes against humanity in the Liberation War in 1971.

Contacted, railway officials did not rule out any such possibility of sabotage in the yesterday's incident.

An official of the BR (East Zone) yesterday told The Daily Star that they would have to examine the tracks to determine whether yesterday's incident was an act of sabotage or not.

Sources said six compartments of a goods-laden

train veered off the track in between Akhaura Railway Junction and Gangasagar Railway Station around 8:15am.

Dhaka-bound passenger trains 'Upakul Express' from Noakhali got stuck at Kasba Railway Station, 'Mohanogor Prabhati' in Comilla, and 'Shubarna Express' at Kosba, and 'Chattrala Express' at Shoshidhal.

Chittagong-bound 'Karnafuli Express' was stranded at Bhoirab, 'Chattrala Express' at Metikanda, and 'Mohanogor Prabhati' at Akhaura station following the derailment.

Md Abdul Motlib, superintendent of Akhaura junction, said the derailment had also cut off the rail link with Chandpur and Noakhali.

The train services resumed around 6:30pm after a relief train salvaged the derailed compartments from the track, the railway official added.

In the last eleven months, three persons were killed and 80 others injured in train derailments, the sources added.

Md Tafazzal Hossain, general manager (GM) of Bangladesh Railway (East Zone), said they are unable to carry out maintenance work due to manpower crisis.

"Twelve workers are needed for proper maintenance of five kilometres of rail tracks, while only two are now working there," he added.



Scattered cargo containers, broken wagons and smashed up rail lines after a freight train derailed near Gangasagar Railway Station in Brahmanbaria snapping rail communication between Dhaka and Chittagong and Sylhet for hours yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA



## JS polls on Jan 5

FROM PAGE 1

Star office last night to know if the terminal exams scheduled for tomorrow will be held. The director general of the Directorate of Primary Education said the decision would come today.

However, there was no immediate clarification if the ongoing final exams scheduled for today would be suspended.

Meanwhile, angered by the schedule, opposition grassroots leaders and workers took to the streets and clashed with law enforcers in different districts.

Border force was deployed alongside regular law enforcers in the capital, Bogra and Sylhet to prevent any untoward incidents.

"The government is determined to ensure a peaceful atmosphere. We will show zero tolerance to any move aimed at foiling the election," Shamsul Haq Tuku, state minister for home, told The Daily Star.

A number of BNP policymakers said they saw no hope for a resolution to the crisis as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was hell-bent on remaining in office during the election, which the opposition contests.

"So, we have no alternative but to wage agitation to resist the election," a senior BNP leader told this newspaper, adding that a series of such programmes, including hartal and blockade, would follow.

The ruling Awami League, however, welcomed the schedule and directed its grassroots leaders to bring out processions in support of the announcement.

Party insiders said the government might go tough on the opposition if it created any obstacle to the election.

"We welcome the election schedule. We expect the Election Commission to take all measures for a free and fair election," said

### 10TH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

Total voters	9,19,66,290
Male voters	4,61,23,318
Female voters	4,58,42,972
Polling centres	37,711 (approximate)
Polling booths	1,79,053 (approximate)
Returning officers	66
Assistant returning officers	577
Presiding officers	37,711 (equal to centres)
Assistant presiding officers	1,79,053 (equal to booths)
Total registered political parties	40 (excluding Jamaat)

Mohammad Nasim, an AL presidium member.

This is the first time in about two decades that the EC would conduct the parliamentary election with a partisan government in office. The three previous elections in 1996, 2001 and 2008 were held under nonparty caretaker governments.

Interestingly, the AL that led the vigorous street agitation against the then BNP-led government in 1994-96 for introducing the caretaker government system is now in power to oversee the polls. The AL-led government abolished the polls. The AL-led government abolished the

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