

# Opposition to boycott

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 the country's problems, lead to reform, or regain people's faith in political parties," he said in a press conference following the meeting.

He added that the decision would not affect the "legitimacy" of the vote and the party would not "obstruct" polling.

Embattled premier Yingluck Shinawatra, who called the February 2 elections in an effort to cool tensions, has insisted the polls will go ahead regardless of the Democrat decision.

But the move throws Democrat backing firmly behind protesters who are calling for democracy to be paused for an unelected "people's council" to be installed to enact reforms before a future vote.

Demonstrators want to rid the country of Yingluck and the influence of her Dubai-based brother Thaksin -- an ousted billionaire ex-premier who is despised by a coalition of the southern Thai poor, Bangkok middle classes and elite.

Thailand has seen several bouts of political turmoil since Thaksin was ousted in a military coup in 2006, with rival protests sometimes resulting in bloody unrest.

"I think if the Democrats ran in the election, we might get the most votes and be able to form

a government -- but then again people will be mobilised to rally against our party," former premier Abhisit added.

The boycott announcement comes a day ahead of a planned major rally by the protesters, who are led by firebrand former Democrat MP Suthep Thaugsuban.

Suthep, who has vowed to rid Thailand of the "Thaksin regime", has dismissed the election, saying it will install another government allied to the divisive former premier.

He has appealed for army support, in a country which has seen 18 successful or attempted coups since 1932.

But the military has indicated it is unlikely to intervene directly this time.

The Democrats, Thailand's oldest party, have not won an elected majority in some two decades.

The party last took power in 2008 by parliamentary vote after a court stripped Thaksin's allies of power, angering his "Red Shirt" supporters who launched mass street protests three years ago that ended in a military crackdown that left dozens dead.

Thaksin, who now lives in self-exile, is adored by many outside Bangkok, particularly in the north and northeast, for his populist policies.

# Gonojagoron activist hurt in blast

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 Bappadiya said he along with his colleague Al Amin Mahadi was going to Shahbagh intersection by a rickshaw around 7:20pm.

"Mahadi was on the rickshaw and I went to meet my friends on the pavement near the Aziz Super Market. The rickshaw-puller was standing on the street. All of a sudden, miscreants blasted several bombs in the area," he mentioned.

Bappadiya and the rickshaw-puller were admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, while Jamal Hossain received primary treatment there.

Bappadiya was out of danger with minor injuries in his left leg, while the rickshaw-puller received injuries in his chest and legs, said doctors.

Gonojagoron Mancha spearheads a movement for capital punishment to war criminals. Imran H Sarkar, spokesperson of the platform, said the attack came at a time when the mancha announced a countrywide campaign to boycott Pakistani products.

**ATTACK IN BOGRA**  
 Suspected Jamaat-Shibir men hurled at least six homemade bombs at the Gonojagoron Mancha at Shatmatha in Bogra town around 11:00am yesterday, leaving eight people injured.

Witnesses said miscreants exploded the bombs when the Gonojagoron Mancha activists were preparing to form a human chain demanding the government cut off diplomatic ties with Pakistan.

A cop, a photojournalist and a rickshaw-puller were among the injured.

# Mahbubul Alam Hanif

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 the land, worth Tk 2.97 crore, is located within 200 metres of the country's lone mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, in Mongla while the rest three acres, worth Tk 1.98 crore, is in Gazipur.

He bought the land in Mongla to set up a shipyard although as per the Environment Conservation Act and Wild Life Preservation Act, setting up factories within 10 kilometres of the Sundarbans is not permissible.

But Hanif's Sun Marine Shipyard Ltd got the environment ministry clearance in 2010. The same year, it got registered as one of the associate organisations of his Quest International located at TCB building in the capital's Karwan Bazar area.

Hanif is the chairman of Quest International and his brother-in-law Kazi Hasan Sharif is the managing director of the shipyard. Adjacent to Hanif's land, Sharif also bought 180 acres of land at Joymonigol village in Mongla.

Hanif, who had been Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's special assistant until October 11 this year, said the Department of Food had already set up a warehouse and the Navy a shipyard near the Sundarbans.

"We have bought the land, as foreign investors showed interest in setting up shipyards there," he said, adding that he had not used any influence to obtain clearance from the environment department.

"If I was the only one to get the permission, it could be said that I have influenced the process," he argued.

In his wealth statement, Hanif declared that he annually earns Tk 3.27 crore from his fish

farms (in Khulna and Patuakhali), Tk 7.23 lakh from house rent and Tk 4.8 lakh as remuneration for being PM's special assistant.

He, however, mentioned no income from his three other businesses.

As cited in his wealth statement, Hanif now has around Tk 44 lakh in cash. He and his wife have shares worth Tk 1.22 crore. He bought two cars with Tk 1.18 crore, a piece of land in Kushtia with Tk 11 lakh, and built a house there spending Tk 20 lakh.

Contacted, Hanif yesterday claimed that both the cars had been bought under loans and that he had wealth and properties worth half the amount of his loans.

Hanif's statement says he has loans of Tk 14 crore in two banks -- Tk 12.5 crore and Tk 1.14 crore with National Bank, Karwan Bazar branch, and Tk 35 lakh with Rupali Bank, Kushtia branch.

Asked how he made this fortune in the last five years, he said he had been involved in business since 1986, from the inception of Quest International. Besides, he also imports textile chemicals.

He said he had sold his 3,500 square-foot apartment on Road-29 in the capital's Gulshan area in 2006 for Tk 1.30 crore, one bigha of plot in Narayanganj Bisic industrial area in 2003 for Tk 33 lakh, and some land in Rupsha, Khulna for Tk 50 lakh in 2004.

Part of this money had been used to buy the lands in Mongla and Gazipur, he claimed.

Asked whether he has wealth and properties in his relatives' and friends' names, the AL leader replied in the negative.

# Mahbubur Rahman

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 submitted before the Election Commission in 2008 and this month, he and his wife have their wealth increased by 18.18 times.

His previous affidavit mentioned that the couple had wealth and property worth about Tk 41.88 lakh. Now they have wealth worth about Tk 7.61 crore as mentioned in his affidavit.

The annual income of the former state minister and his wife was Tk 2.15 lakh in 2008. But after the elections, their yearly income rose to Tk 1.74 crore. In the affidavit, Talukder, who is set to be elected uncontested from the

Patuakhali-4 constituency, has however not clarified the sources of his income in details.

Despite repeated efforts to reach him over phone and even after sending him a text message, Talukder could not be contacted.

As shown in his latest statement, Talukder earned Tk 6.35 crore and his wife Tk 1.26 crore from miscellaneous sources -- mainly business.

But he did not give details as to how much money they had earned from which particular sources as wanted in the affidavit form.

Interestingly, Talukder has highly

# Bangladeshi boy killed

FROM PAGE 2  
 Vitolo, the school's principal, said grief counselors would be available for children and staff members over the winter vacation.

Several parents, including Rubel Hassan, 43, a waiter with five children, two of whom used to attend P.S. 152, said there was not normally a crossing guard at the intersection where Noshat was killed.

"People speed, and there's no crossing guard," Hassan said. "Once my kid almost got run over."

The child's death comes about a month and a half after a 9-year-old boy was killed when the driver of a Ford Expedition ploughed into a group of people on a street corner in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

The driver, Anthony Byrd, 59, was not intoxicated and did not try to flee the scene. Nonetheless, Byrd was charged with negligent homicide and other offences -- a welcome development for pedestrian advocates who have criticised the police for not bringing serious charges in fatal accidents.

# Vandalism on highways

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 Opposition activists set fire to two goods-laden trucks on Dhaka-Sirajganj highway, on the west approach road of Bangabandhu Bridge.

Another truck carrying bricks was torched on Dhaka-Sirajganj highway.

Blockaders, in the guise of passengers, boarded an autorickshaw and set it ablaze near the Wasa intersection in Chittagong city in the morning. No one was reported to have been hurt in the incident.

The main opposition BNP started the blockade yesterday, renewing the demand for the upcoming 10th general election under a non-party caretaker government.

Traffic in the capital increased significantly compared to that of previous hartals and blockades, as city dwellers got tired of such programmes being enforced perpetually and also because security measures within the city had recently been enhanced.

However, a handful of passenger buses departed from the three inter-district terminals in Dhaka amid a fresh 83-hour blockade, despite the assurance by Shajahan, also a transport workers' leader.

Some 40 buses left Mahakhali and Sayedabad terminals with fewer passengers while no bus left Gabtoli, transport owners and police sources said.

Several people waiting at the terminals blamed the government for their sufferings. Hearing the announcement by the shipping minister, they went there but did not find buses available.

Among 21 outgoing buses from Mahakhali, 17 went to Mymensingh and four to Tangail, said Shawkat Ali Babul, executive president of Mahakhali Bus Terminal Sharak Paribahan Malik Samity.

On a regular day, more than 500 buses travel from this terminal to different destinations, he added.

"Whatever happens in this country, people vent their anger on the streets by vandalising vehicles. Amid such culture, it is really hard to decide to run buses," Shawkat said.

Every time buses left Mahakhali, two police vans escorted them up to Abdullahpur, Traffic Inspector Mizanur Rashid said.

He added policemen from upazilas and districts were given the responsibility to escort the vehicles when those passed the areas.

A very few passengers were seen waiting at Gabtoli bus terminal.

At Sayedabad, Belal Hossain, owner of Sylhet-bound buses, told The Daily Star that waiting for six hours staff of one of the buses could only sell two-third tickets and so the trip would make a loss.

Meanwhile, rail communications on the Kishoreganj-Dhaka route remained suspended for two hours as miscreants removed a fishplate of the railway track in Bajitpur upazila of Kishoreganj.

Sirajul Haq, manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, said more than 400 vehicles were waiting on both sides of Mawa-Kewrakandi ferry route until filing of the report for crossing the river.

# Shajahan Khan

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 times in five years.

In 2008, the net assets of Shajahan's family were worth Tk103.11 lakh with an annual income of Tk7.74 lakh. But now the assets have increased to Tk404.04 lakh and the annual income to Tk26.64 lakh.

According to the minister's latest wealth statement, Shajahan paid the Rajuk Tk12 lakh as instalment for the Purbachal plot and his wife Tk14 lakh for hers. Rokeya Begum owns another plot worth Tk90.55 lakh, but its location was not mentioned in the affidavit.

As per the 2008 statement, Rokeya owned 1.5 katha of land at Anandanagar mauza and another 10 katha plot at Purbachal worth Tk20 lakh, which are not mentioned in the current statement.

Asked whether a lawmaker or minister's family can get allocation of two residential plots, a Rajuk director, requesting anonymity, said rules are the same for all.

"Nobody is eligible for another plot if his wife or any dependant already owns a Rajuk plot. Without making a false declaration he won't be able to get another plot," he mentioned.

# 5-yr-old hurt critically

FROM PAGE 1  
 been excited to find a red "toy" around 1:00pm, when he was playing with other children on the premises of an Awami League office in Upashahar New Market area.

"I heard a sudden blast and rushed towards it," said Mohammad Milon, a shopkeeper who saw the child first after the blast. "We saw him writhing on the ground and yelling in pain."

Mahin's grandfather hurried to the spot upon getting the news, and found him cradled in Milon's arms.

Contacted, Mustak Hossain, organising secretary of AL's Rajshahi city unit, said unknown pickets must have left the bomb there after the AL office was closed at midday.

Handmade bombs left this way by blockaders and pro-hartal supporters have been a worry for many parents with children who play outdoors.

Many people, especially children, do not know what a crude bomb looks like. In the last two months, at least 11 children have picked up bombs taking them for toys and thus lost limbs.

Their parents are running up huge debts to pay for their treatment.

Though Shajahan did not mention the type of his business, he showed that his wife earned Tk5.50 lakh annually in salary and income from business. In the previous statement her wife's annual salary was mentioned at Tk62.4 thousand.

The minister made no mention of the bank balance of his wife and dependants, and their business capital, although they started new businesses during last five years. In 2008, Shajahan showed Tk13.3 thousand in their two bank accounts.

The minister's latest affidavit did not say anything about 15 tolas of gold, three buses, one microbus and a car worth Tk56.50 lakh in his wife and another dependant's name.

In 2008, Shajahan showed Tk80 thousand as price of 10 tolas of gold. But interestingly, he lowered the price of gold to Tk80 thousand for 20 tolas of gold this year. A tola of gold now sells at over Tk40 thousand.

Besides, he mentioned having a piece of land worth Tk166 lakh, arable land worth Tk33 lakh and a bank balance of Tk18 lakh, which was around Tk2.3 lakh in 2008.

# Six murdered in city house

FROM PAGE 1  
 Ziaul said they found four of the victims with their hands tied. There were no injury marks in other parts of the victims' bodies except for their necks.

Quoting Lutfar's wife Salma, the Rab official said Lutfar told his wife before the evening prayers that about 10 to 12 people might visit him and asked her to prepare food for them.

They said the Maghrib prayers together in the house.

Ziaul said Salma told him that police had detained Lutfar a couple of years ago for claiming himself to be a follower of Imam Mahdi, believed by some to be one who would one day lead all to the path of truth.

Golam Mostafa, who claimed himself to be Lutfar's relative, told The Daily Star that he was inside the house when the incident happened.

"I was watching television in another room. All of a sudden some armed men entered the room and tied me up," he said.

Law enforcers later rescued him and took him with them for quizzing.

Shamsuzzaman, who owns a printing press next to the building where the murder took place, told this correspondent that he heard the scream of a woman around 6:15pm.

"We sensed something was wrong and informed the police," he said.

Seven people, six from the ground floor and one from the third floor of the building have been detained

onsuspicion of involvement in the murders.

One of the detainees was identified as Chowdhury Zahir Uddin Mohammad.

Shirin, owner of the second-floor flat, said the family rented the single-unit flat three months ago for Tk24,000 a month.

Neighbours said the family preferred to remain secluded from others and didn't talk much with the neighbours.

# Body of UK doctor who died in Syria going to Beirut: ICRC

AFP, Damascus  
 The body of Abbas Khan, the British doctor who died in a Syrian jail, was to be taken to Beirut yesterday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

In the Lebanese capital, the remains of the 32-year-old orthopaedic surgeon would be handed over to the British embassy.

"The body will be handed over to the ICRC at a Damascus hospital and then taken to Beirut," spokesman Simon Schorno told AFP early Saturday.

Khan's body was due at the frontier with Lebanon at midday (1000 GMT), where it would be transferred to another ICRC team.

## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI) ANNOUNCEMENT

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Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED) - II Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services from firms to undertake a **Baseline Survey for Estimating Socioeconomic Benefits of Renewable Energy Technology (RET) Systems in Bangladesh** (Package No.: S-16). The firms those meet the following criteria are encouraged to participate:

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