



PHOTO: STAR

Reaching out for warmth... with the bone-chilling wind pushing down the mercury, a group of slum children sit around a fire yesterday to ward off cold.

# Cold wave claims nine in Pabna, Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A cold wave swept across the country's northwestern region for the second time this winter, leaving nine people killed over the last 24 hours. Of the nine, two died in Nilphamari and the rest in Pabna, raising the number of cold wave-inflicted deaths to 27 so far. In Pabna Abdus Salam, 35, of Padma Char, Rokeya, 55, of Baranadia village, Firoz Khatun of Habashpur, Farzan Bewa, 60, of Kaligachi, Achiya Khatun, 80, Jahanara Bewa, 71, and Malek of Radhanagar died yesterday. The district administration, however, did not confirm the deaths. Overcast condition and chilly wind has made life miserable across Pabna. Earlier on Monday, according to UNB, six people died in Thakurgaon as the cold wave continued to wreak havoc. The victims were identified as Zafar Mia, 50, of Baraipara, Mohram Ali, 40, of Khoksabari, Nazim Uddin, 50, of Baraipara, Jamir Uddin, 65, Chakiron Bibi, 60, and Abdullah Khalifa, 50 of Polashbari in Paura

area. Meanwhile, the lowest temperature in the country was recorded at 9 degrees Celsius yesterday in Chuadanga and Ishwardi. The capital also felt the chill yesterday, with the mercury dipping to 12 degrees Celsius. The Met Office yesterday forecasted thick fog over the northern parts of the country, especially over the river basin, for the next 36 hours. Temperature in the next 36 hours is also expected to fall slightly. The Met Office also forecasted a cold wave to sweep across Jessore, Satkhira and Srimangal.

## New on-arrival forex ceiling

UNB, Dhaka  
Bangladesh Bank cut down the permissible limits of holding undeclared foreign currencies to US\$3,000 on arrival of any individual in the country trying to cool an overheated foreign-exchange market at home.

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## Gun grips loosened

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government, which imposed a restriction on issuance of new licences for firearms, has decided to relax the restriction and issue licence to people of certain categories. It has also relaxed the process of transferring a licence or changing its type, subject to proper investigation on whether the applicants really need firearms. Sources at the home ministry said that a decision has been taken to issue firearms licence to the people having the rank and status of a minister, secretary to the government or a major general, and those who pay a minimum of Tk two lakh as income tax per year. People in those categories will get licence when they apply for it. Earlier, the government stopped issuing new licence, as several thousand licences had been issued against fake addresses in the past. Sources said the government has instructed the department concerned to verify the authenticity of the addresses given by the applicants, the applicants' financial status, and whether they need firearms. Officials said the government has also relaxed the rules of transfer. As per the new provisions, a person having a licence can transfer it if she or he is not physically fit to operate

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# Sarbahara leader dies during army interrogation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leader of the outlawed Sarbahara Party, who was arrested by members of the joint forces, died of 'heart attack' during interrogation at Ataikola, Pabna. Nasir Uddin, 35, was arrested by a team of the joint forces at Ataikola for suspected involvement in criminal activities. Our Pabna correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested Nasir from a wedding party at a

village in Sathya Monday evening. He was later taken to Ataikola to identify the body of a slaughtered young man. Nasir identified the dead as Nayan of Salgari of Pabna town. He also said Nayan, a member of his gang, was killed as per his instruction. Nasir collapsed after making the confessional statement, according to the local witnesses. Police and army men rushed him to the Pabna Sadar Hospital where

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# 'Bangladesh is my university'

UNB, Dhaka

"Bangladesh is my university and I am regularly learning from her," said Zanele Mbeki, the visiting First Lady of South Africa, impressed at success of some innovative ventures over here. "Bangladesh is way ahead in ensuring availability of resources and providing infrastructural facilities," she said appreciating the political role of the government to make micro-credit operations meaningful. Zanele Mbeki was talking to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia when she called on her at the PMO here yesterday afternoon. The South African First Lady, who is visiting Bangladesh for the

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks with visiting First Lady of South Africa Zanele Mbeki yesterday when the latter called on her at the PM's Office. Zanele Mbeki is on her fourth visit to Bangladesh.

# EC talks tough on troublemakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has asked the returning officers to act tough against those who would violate election laws and the code of conduct in the coming Union Parishad polls. As no-one has been designated to look into such violations that resulted in wholesale infractions in the local body polls, the EC at a meeting Monday designated the Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) and the Returning Officers (RO) to monitor such breaches in their respective areas. Chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed at his office, the meeting reviewed reports from the press and the EC's own channels and decided to form a monitoring team comprising the

UNO and election officials in each upazila. "The team has been empowered to take legal actions against the law breakers," Election Commission Secretary S M Zakaria told a group of reporters after the meeting. He added that any aggrieved party could also file petition with the team. Earlier, the EC urged all concerned to maintain the 22-point code of conduct with the provision of a highest seven-year imprisonment and fine or both for violation of the codes in the polls beginning on January 25 and running through March 16. Monday's meeting also discussed the single nomination papers against each of the posts in Barabari Union Parishad in Sadar

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# Commuters sweat over transport crunch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city may look fresher with rickshaws off some major thoroughfares and 20,000 two-stroke three-wheelers phased out, but commuters are facing a hard time for lack of proper public transport. Officials in the traffic department claim that the sufferings of the commuters are temporary and once meters are installed on CNG-run auto-rickshaws in a month and new modes of transportation introduced to revised routes, the situation will improve.

But sources pointed out that for a lack of proper plan and comprehensive policy to deal with the situation, commuters, especially on low income, are suffering the most. Travelling on the east-west routes of the city on public transports is not only expensive but also troublesome. For female passengers, it is even more difficult. The authorities have reinforced north-south routes without considering the plight of the east-west travellers. To make matters worse, buses, taxicabs, three-wheelers and other

modes of public transport have all started charging passengers higher within hours of the January 5 government decision to increase fuel prices. Bus fare could go further up. The Bangladesh Road Transport Association and the Dhaka Road Transport Association on Sunday demanded a 40 per cent hike in bus fare. They also submitted a memorandum to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) chairman yesterday.

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# Govt softens stance on NGO foreign guests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has backtracked from its earlier decision of making it compulsory for the non-government organisations (NGOs) to seek its permission before inviting foreigners. In a fresh order, the NGO Affairs Bureau yesterday said the NGOs would only require to provide a list of the names of the foreign delegates and their detailed programmes to the bureau, when they (foreigners) come to Bangladesh on an invitation of any NGO. Earlier, the NGO bureau in a letter to the chief executives of different NGOs asked them to obtain permission before inviting foreigners. The directive came under criti

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PHOTO: STAR

Top-ranking leaders of the Workers Party of Bangladesh lead a procession in the city yesterday to protest fuel-price hike, persecution on minorities and move to export gas.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 8		5-27 pm
Jan 9	6-43 am	

Prayer Timings		
Jan 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-50	4-05
Maghrib	5-33	5-38
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation