



1. Policemen try to drag a shopkeeper out of a market at Chawkbazar in the capital to arrest him during a clash with blockade activists. 2. A policeman drags a demonstrator at Chawkbazar while another kicks him from behind. 3. Pedestrians walk with their hands raised as police ask them to do so following a clash between police and blockade supporters at Chawkbazar. 4. Police use teargas shells to disperse demonstrators. 5. Blockade activists try to free a fellow activist as police try to drag her onto a prison van. 6. BDR men at Tongi Railway Station escort containers heading for Chittagong. 7. A policeman shoots a rubber bullet at blockade activists in Malibagh in the capital.

6 secretaries transferred

No cabinet secy for over a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday transferred six secretaries and the post of the cabinet secretary still remains vacant for more than a month.

According to an establishment ministry circular, Defence Secretary Abu Md Maniruzzaman Khan was made establishment secretary, Fisheries and Livestock Secretary Kamrul Hasan replaced Khan.

CHT Affairs Secretary Sheikh AK Motaheer Hossain was made chairman of the National Board of Revenue as the former chairman AFM Solaiman Chowdhury went into retirement eight days ago.

Food and Disaster Management Secretary Ehsan-ul-Fattah replaced Health and Family Welfare Secretary AKM Jafar Ullah, who was transferred to the Economic Relation Division.

Secretary (officer on special duty) Mohammad Haider Ali was given the charge of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, said the circular.

China destroys Islamist camp; 18 killed

AFP, Beijing

China has destroyed an Islamist camp, killing 18 suspected terrorists and capturing 17 others in a region with large separatist ethnic and religious minorities, state media said yesterday.

One police officer was killed and another was injured during a gun battle with the suspects on Friday in the mountains of northwest Xinjiang region, a police spokeswoman told the official Xinhua news agency.

Ba Yan said the training camp was run by the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a group the United Nations classed as a terrorist organisation in 2002.

Police seized 22 hand grenades and more than 1,500 others that were still being made, as well as guns and other home-made explosives, Ba said.

The Uighurs, an overwhelmingly Muslim, Turkic-speaking people and the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang, are waging a virtually open rebellion against Chinese rule.

Some of the more extremist elements are fighting for an

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US and N Korea plan sanction talks: Seoul

REUTERS, Seoul

The United States and North Korea have tentatively agreed to meet later this month to discuss a crack-down on the North's finances that has stalled talks on curbing Pyongyang's nuclear plans, South Korea said yesterday.

At six-country nuclear talks last month in Beijing, North Korea said it would not scrap its atomic weapons programme until the United States ended its financial sanctions.

South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon said after meetings

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Move on to recruit 782 in education project on political ground

SURANJITH DEABNATH

The process is on to hurriedly recruit 782 pro-BNP-Jamaat people under the Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP) as beneficiaries in the education sector during the five years of the immediate past BNP-Jamaat government are manipulating the process.

Whereas all recruitment processes in the education sector usually involve written tests and viva voce, the recruitment for the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-funded seven-year project is being

conducted only through taking viva voce that began on December 27.

The SESDP is the follow-up project of five-year long Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) that ended on December 31, 2006. All the officers of the SESP project were also recruited through written test and viva voce.

The recruitment process in the SESDP will end by January 16, education ministry sources said.

A syndicate working in the education ministry, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and SESP project, who are conducting the recruitment pro-

cess, are out to complete the process before the next general election, as it would serve both 'financial and political interests'.

The financial interest is to take huge amount in bribes while the political interest is to involve the new recruits in the election-related duties at the upazila level.

For recruitment under the SESDP, dishonest officials of the education ministry and DSHE arranged circulation of two advertisements on November 11 and 20 putting some controversial conditions.

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Grand alliance to form vote resistance committees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance yesterday directed its leaders to form 'vote resistance committees' for every polling centre in a bid to resist 'illegal' polls on January 22.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jail at a press briefing at his Gulshan residence also said the grand alliance will announce its future agitation programmes from a grand rally at Paltan Maidan on January 10.

Sheikh Hasina, HM Ershad, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu and Mostafa Amir Faisal will address the rally, he told the briefing.

"There is no other alternative

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Polls must be held on schedule

Both acting CEC, four-party say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP-led four-party alliance yesterday reiterated that there is no alternative but to hold the upcoming polls on the scheduled date of January 22.

The acting chief election commissioner (CEC) echoed the same view while talking to the reporters.

"Even if all parties agree to hold the election after the stipulated 90 days for the caretaker government, the constitution cannot be changed," MK Anwar, former minister and vice president of BNP, said emerging from a meeting with the CEC and other ECs at the Election Commission (EC).

"How will you change the constitution?" acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman posed the

question when the reporters asked him whether the polls can be held after the fixed 90-day period of the caretaker government if all the parties agree.

The meeting between the four-member delegation led by MK Anwar and the acting CEC and other ECs lasted for about one and half hours. EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarker was also present in the meeting.

"As per the constitution, there is no scope to go to the Supreme Court for seeking time or deferring the election as per the constitution," the acting CEC told The Daily Star while leaving his office.

Asked whether the January 22 poll would be acceptable amid the boycott of the major political

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BSF kills 2, abducts 1

STAR REPORT

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead two Bangladeshi cattle traders on Benapole border early yesterday and abducted another from Telipara border in Tentulia upazila on Sunday night.

Those killed in BSF firing are Mosharrar Hossain, 38, and Islamuddin, 30.

BDR and police said the Indian border guards of Barnabaria camp opened fire on the two cattle traders while they were returning home from India through the border at about 5:00am. Both died instantly, according to the UNB.

Sources said the BSF personnel fired 20 to 30 rounds of bullet to create panic among the local people and took away the bodies. They did not return the bodies as of 5:00pm yesterday.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reported that the Indian border troops picked up Mohammad Abdur Rahim, 35, son of

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15 injured in BCL-JCD clash

RU CORRESPONDENT

A clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) left 15 activists of both student bodies injured at Kishorehaat under Mohonpur upazila yesterday afternoon.

The injured were admitted to Mohonpur Upazila Health Complex and other local clinics, local sources said.

Mohonpur police and witnesses said the clash was triggered by a comedy act performed at Kishorehaat Degree College where local unit of BCL was holding an inauguration ceremony of a coaching centre. JCD activists attacked the performer, BCL activist Shamsul, and vandalised the stage as he cracked a political joke offending JCD and its parent organisation BNP.

Soon after the incident, a number of BCL activists rushed to the spot and locked in a clash with JCD that injured the 15.

India hopes for lasting treaty with Pakistan

AFP, REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday he hoped India and Pakistan would eventually be able to sign a long-term peace treaty.

"I earnestly hope that relations between our two countries become so friendly that we can generate an atmosphere of trust between each other and that the two nations are able to agree on a treaty of peace,

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Prayer Timing		
January 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		



A mother with her baby waits in front of the Dhaka Central Jail gate as hundreds gather there to meet their loved ones arrested ahead of and during the grand alliance's blockade.

23 militants killed in Baghdad

Two GIs slain

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi security forces have killed 23 militants in Baghdad in a series of raids and firefights since Sunday, the defence ministry said.

Another two militants were killed in the northern restive city of Mosul and one in Ramadi, the Sunni insurgent stronghold in western Al-Anbar province, the ministry said in a Monday statement, which offered little detail.

"Iraqi forces chased terrorists in

different operations during the last 24 hours and killed 23 terrorists and arrested four others" in Baghdad, it said.

Insurgents have killed another two US soldiers in Iraq, taking the military's losses since the March 2003 invasion to 3,005, the military said Monday.

One soldier died of wounds during combat operations in Salaheddin province Sunday, it said in a statement.

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Burned driver struggles for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A CNG autorickshaw driver is struggling for life at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with severe burn injuries as his autorickshaw was set on fire yesterday by picketers during the blockade programme enforced by the grand alliance.

Abdul Halim, 40, the lone breadwinner of his family of five, was headed towards Jatrabari after dropping off a passenger at Mirpur 10 at around 1:00pm when a group of pro-blockade activists stopped his vehicle near Senpara area and

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Cold claims 15 more lives

STAR REPORT

At least 15 people died across the country yesterday as the prevailing cold wave worsened in some parts of the country. At least 133 people have died so far due to the cold wave.

The met office said temperature fell by one to four degrees (Celsius) in Rajshahi division indicating that the second spell of the cold wave has set in. Besides Rajshahi division, temperature has also plummeted in other regions of the country including Tangail, Faridpur, Chuadanga and Jessore. This spell may continue for another five to seven days, Met office sources said.

"The condition for which the

temperature was rising has shifted towards the east. So, this spell of cold may prevail for another five to seven days," said Sadequul Alam, the on-duty forecasting officer. The cold wave may return to the capital in a couple of days, he added.

The weathermen said in their forecast that dense fog may occur at night especially near rivers.

The lowest temperature, 7.6 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Ishwardi while the highest, 25 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Cox's Bazar. The lowest temperature in the capital was 12.2 degrees Celsius.

According to sources from different areas of the country, chilly weather continued to cause

immense sufferings to the poor. Elderly people and children of poor families are suffering the most, as the government could not provide warm clothes to all of them.

Our Comilla correspondent reports at least three people died due to the cold wave in Nangalkot and Daudkandi upazilas early yesterday.

They died of respiratory and cold related diseases, Daudkandi Upazila Health Complex sources said. Nine people with cold related diseases and six with pneumonia have been admitted to the health complex during the last two days. But unofficial sources claimed the actual figures are 30 and 15.

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