

NDI, IRI won't watch Jan 22 elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US-based election watchdogs National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI) yesterday suspended plans to send their delegations for the January 22 parliamentary elections as all of the major parties are not participating in it.

"The NDI and IRI have concluded that an international observer mission would be unable to make a positive contribution to the process because all of the major parties are not participating in the elections," they said in a joint statement.

The statement said the NDI and IRI are also concerned about the impact the current political environment might have on the ability of international observers to safely and effectively observe the elections.

Earlier on January 6, the European Union also said its

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## 6 killed in 'shootouts'

STAR REPORT

Four underground operatives and two listed criminals were killed in "shootouts" with the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Khulna, Pabna and Joypurhat early yesterday.

The outlaws, Mohammad Hemayet Ali Khan alias Hemayet Master, 32, Mohammad Rafique Islam alias Rabique Khandaker, 32, Mizanur Rahman, 27, and Mohammad Selim Shaikh, 30, belonged to Biplobi communist party (BCP). They were killed in Padmabali area under Rupsha upazila of Khulna district.

Rab identified the listed criminals as Babu Malik alias Doctor Babu, 35, chief of infamous "Babu Bahini", and Mitu alias Shibu, 32. Babu was killed in Pabna, while Mitu in Joypurhat.

Our Staff correspondent from Khulna reported that, Rab personnel, on a tip-off, raided a house in Padmabali area at around 4:00am where the BCP cadres were planning to launch an attack on Rupsha

Upazila Press Club.

Sensing the presence of the Rab men, the outlaws opened fire, prompting the members of the elite force to retaliate.

According to a Rab press release, the four BCP cadres received bullets during the "shootout" and died instantly. Both sides traded about 80 rounds of bullet during the encounter that continued for 40 minutes, the press release added.

One foreign-made gun, one shutter gun, four cartridges and three bullets of G-3 rifle were recovered from the spot.

Rab sources said Hemayet Master was the second-in-command of the underground outfit. He was wanted in 20 criminal cases, including eight, for murder.

The slain outlaw, Mizanur Rahman, was directly involved in the murder of Pluitala Sadar Union Parishad chairman Molla Abul Kasem in 1998.

Bodies of the four outlaws were lying in the morgue of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) as of 5:30pm yesterday.

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Govt officials' avoiding poll duty a violation of discipline

Says EC secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government officials who have expressed concern over their security and said that they might not perform election duties on January 22, have violated government discipline, Election Commission (EC) Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarker said yesterday.

"They [concerned government officials] have violated the government service rules, if they said so", the EC secretary told the reporters after a meeting with the officials of the state-run utility agencies. "They do not have any option to say so," he added.

The respective ministries will observe in this regard, he said adding "This is not our concern now." Necessary steps have been taken to ensure their (government

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Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seizes improvised iron casings for making grenades and a huge amount of explosives from a JMB den at Badda in the capital yesterday. The photo was taken from Rab Headquarters. Inset: The two JMB militants arrested at Badda.



A section of the huge crowd at the Awami League-led alliance's grand rally held at Paltan Maidan in the capital yesterday.

## Bush to send 20,000 more troops to Iraq

AP, Washington

President Bush will tell the nation Wednesday night he will send more than 20,000 additional American forces to Iraq, acknowledging that it had been a mistake earlier not to have more American and Iraqi troops fighting the war, a senior administration official said.

Seeking support for a retooled strategy to win support for the unpopular war, the president also will acknowledge that the rules of engagement were flawed, White House counselor Dan Bartlett said.

Even before Bush's speaks,

Democrats were laying plans to register their opposition to the troop buildup. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (news, bio, voting record) pledged to hold a vote on the increase, trying to isolate Bush on his handling of the war. In the Senate, Democrat Edward M. Kennedy has sponsored legislation to require Bush to get congressional approval before sending more troops to Iraq.

For a little over 20 minutes Wednesday night, Bush is to explain why a gradual buildup of about 20,000 additional U.S. troops, along with other steps

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## STAY ON CANDIDATE'S DISCLOSURE Legal steps sought against petitioner for falsification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three lawyers yesterday applied to the Supreme Court (SC) for drawings proceedings against Abu Safa who made false declarations to obtain a stay order on making public vital information about election candidates by the Election Commission (EC).

The lawyers said although Abu Safa obtained the stay order stating that he would participate in the upcoming election from Chittagong-3 constituency, in reality he did not even file his nomination.

The three lawyers—advocates Abdul Momen Chowdhury, KM

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## BGMEA places recommendations to CA for saving apparel industry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) yesterday placed a seven-point recommendation to the President and Chief Adviser (CA) Tajuddin Ahmed for saving the highest foreign currency earner—the apparel industry.

In the backdrop of continued volatile political situation in the country, a five-member delegation led by SM Fazlul Hoque, president of BGMEA, called on President and CA Tajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon

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## Bimstec meet postponed for political situations in Bangladesh, Nepal

MD HASAN

The second summit of Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), an economic bloc of seven south and southeast Asian countries, has been postponed due to volatile political situations in two member states including Bangladesh.

The meeting, which was to be hosted by India on February 8 next, has been delayed due to the political instability in Bangladesh and Nepal governments.

## Cold claims 4 more lives

STAR REPORT

Biting cold yesterday claimed four more lives raising the death toll to 152 while the met office forecast the cold wave would continue for at least a couple of more days.

Our

Khulna correspondent reported the cold wave claimed two lives in Bagerhat during the last 24 hours.

BSS reported at least two children died of cold and cold related diseases and 200 more were hospitalised after being attack with cold related diseases in Gaibandha.

The lowest temperature, 7.3 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Jessore yesterday. The cold wave also swept across Tangail, Chuadanga, Satkhira, Faridpur,

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## Prayer Timing

January 11

Azan

Jamaat

Fajr 5:30

6:05

Zohr 12:45

1:15

Asr 4:00

4:15

Maghrib 5:36

5:40

Esha 7:00

7:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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## Garment workers' unrest in Tejgaon triggers a traffic jam on Tongi Diversion Road in Dhaka yesterday. The photo was taken from Moghbazar level crossing.

PHOTO: STAR

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## 4 high officials transferred

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government yesterday transferred four top officials as part of its ongoing administrative reshuffle ahead of the national election scheduled for January 22.

According to a handout, Agriculture Secretary M Abdul Aziz has been made member of the

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Editor: MAHFUZ ANAM-Published by the Editor from Transcraft Ltd., 229 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208 on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd. 52 Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Tel: 8124944, 8124955, 8124966, Fax: 8125155, 8126154, GPO Box No: 3257, www.dailystarnews.com, E-mail: dseditor@gonet.com, dsrepor-