

## 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 IRI and NDI 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Court rejects Ershad's petition against surrender

Hears the issue on Jan 17  
COURT CORRESPONDENT

Defence lawyers of Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday submitted a petition for withdrawal of the order issued by the trial court on January 4 regarding his (Ershad) surrender to it in connection with a case involving Japanese boat purchase.

Judge Mohammad Amirul Islam of the First Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court had asked the former president to surrender within January 17 to serve out his sentence delivered by the High Court (HC) on December 14 last year.

Advocate Sheikh Mohammad Serajul Islam submitted the petition saying that Ershad had earlier been in custody for three years, one month and 23 days before his conviction delivered by the trial

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## VANDALISM AT SC Kamal, Amir, Roka, others get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Prominent lawyers Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir Ul Islam, Barrister Rokaunuddin Mahmud and nine others yesterday obtained bail in a criminal case filed for vandalising on the Supreme Court (SC) premises on November 30 last year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shafique Anwar granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 20,000 each with two guarantors after Dr Kamal and others along with their lawyers appeared before

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

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		

# 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 Padmabil 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 Padmabil 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 "shoot-out" 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 Pluttala Sadar Union Parishad chairman Molla Abul Kashem in 1998.

Bodies of the four outlaws were lying in the morgue of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH)

as of 5:30pm yesterday.

According to our Pabna correspondent, Babu Malik was killed in an encounter with Rab at Jhobjhabia village under Failjana Union of Chatmoher upazila.

Being informed, a team of Rab-12 set out for Jhobjhabia village where Babu Malik and his accomplices were holding a meeting.

When the Rab team reached the spot, the members of the gang opened fire, forcing the Rab men to retaliate.

Rab sources said Babu Malik was shot during the encounter and died on the spot, while his cohorts managed to flee.

A gun and some bullets were recovered from the spot. Rab said Babu was accused in at least 12 cases, including eight, for murder.

In Joypurhat, listed criminal Mitu was killed during a "shootout" between Rab and his accomplices in Sheikhpara area of Joypurhat Municipality at around 12:30am.

Rab sources said Mitu was shot

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



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

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

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three lawyers yesterday applied to the Supreme Court (SC) for drawing 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

Zabir and Zahurul Islam--also sought for taking legal steps against Safa.

In May 2005, they won a legal battle to make the EC obtain and publicise eight types of vital information of election candidates in order to help voters take informed decision before casting their votes.

On December 19 last year, Safa obtained the stay order on the plea that he would participate in the election, but he only studied up to class eight, and if this information is made public, he would not get a "fair" chance to win in the election.

Pro-BNP lawyers Barrister Omar Sadaat and Barrister Azmalul

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## 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) Iajuddin 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 Fazul Hoque, president of BGMEA, called on President and CA Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday afternoon

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## 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, a commerce ministry official said yesterday.

The ambassadors and chiefs of mission of Bimstec member states at a meeting in Nepal on January 5 postponed the summit for at least six months, commerce ministry sources said.

The meeting decided to hold the summit sometime between July and December this year, they added.

Meanwhile, the bloc canceled at least two deadlines on holding the technical committee meetings as well, on request from Bangladesh and Nepal governments.

The caretaker government

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## 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,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## 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

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

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

expected to include pumping \$1 billion into Iraq's economy, is the answer for a more than 31/2-year-old war that has only gotten deadlier with no end in sight.

Bartlett did a round of interviews on television morning shows to set the stage for the president's address.

"A vast majority of the American people are not satisfied with the progress in Iraq," Bartlett said. "President Bush is in their camp. He's not satisfied, he's going to say the strategy was not working, he's going to tell them specifically how

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

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