

# New CG urged to take steps for holding free, fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday expressed hope and optimism that the new caretaker government (CG) led by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed will take necessary steps for holding a free and fair parliamentary election and handing over power to the elected representatives.

Fema and Janipop, two non-government organisations that monitor election, yesterday expressed satisfaction at the postponement of "not-fully-participatory" election scheduled earlier on January 22 and hoped that the new caretaker government will hold election at the earliest possible time.

In a press release, they said reformation of the Election Commission (EC) and correction of the voter list are must.

They also urged the interim government to reshuffle civil and police administration and collect personal information of the candidates for presenting to the voters.

Hailing Dr Fakhruddin as the new CA at a meeting in the city yesterday, Bangladesh Manobadhikar Samonnoy Parishad (BMSF) leaders said a sense of relief returned to public life.

BMSF Chairman AHM Noman demanded abolition of caretaker government system and formation of Election Supervisory Council.

Meanwhile, leaders of Peshajibi

Samonnoy Parishad at a meeting on Friday expressed hope that the new caretaker government will restore political stability in the country.

They said the crisis is not over, yet the nation got rid of apprehended violence and worry resulting from the process of holding a one-sided election on January 22.

DrAMS Arefin Siddique presided over the meeting, where he said holding a free and fair election with participation of all political parties is the only way to resolve the existing crisis.

He also demanded a correct voter roll with voters' identity cards and introduction of transparent ballot box.

## Bangladeshi schoolboy shot dead by BSF

UNB, Panchagarh

Another victim of Friday's Indian BSF firing at Tentulia border died yesterday raising the death toll to two.

Yakub, 10, a student of class IV of Majhipara primary school and son of Abdul Motaleb of Padiagaj village, died on way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, police said.

BSF fire from across the border on Friday left Mobarak Ali, 30, dead on the spot and injured four others of Padiagaj village. Bullet wounded Shahidul, Ali and Shahabuddin are undergoing treatment in Tentulia Hospital.

Nayabari BSF company commandant AC Parmar at a flag meeting with his BDR counterpart Abdul Aziz at Sariatjot border yesterday regretted their unprovoked fire across the border resulting in death and injury to innocent people. Parmar assured against recurrence of such incident in future, BDR sources said.

## Arms factory unearthed in Cox's Bazar

UNB, Cox's Bazar

An illegal arms factory was unearthed at Natun bazar of Maheshkhali Island yesterday.

Police raided the factory and seized four guns, arms making materials and machinery. Factory owner Sarwar and his employees managed to escape sensing the police presence.

Police said they suspect guns made in the factory have been supplied to the terrorists and political thugs ahead of general election.

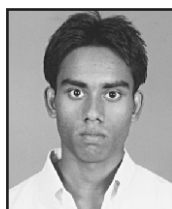
## BRDB test results postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) postponed the publication of the result of its written test for the post of upazila rural development officer, assistant rural development officer and accountant due on January 16.

BRDB at a press release yesterday said due to unavoidable circumstances the result of the written test held on Friday has been postponed.

## Appeal for help



says a press release.

Mashiur Rahman Mithu, 19, a student of Mirpur Bangla College, is now fighting for his life at Bangladesh Kidney Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

According to doctors, he needs better treatment immediately. But a huge amount is required for such treatment, which his father, a government employee with low income, could not afford.

He has appealed to generous people and different organisations to extend a helping hand to save his son's life.

Contributions can be sent to the following account: Nadira Dirluba Parul, Mudaraba Savings Account No. 7416, Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Tongi branch, Gazipur.

Interested persons can also call at 01721255463 and 01818439352 to contact his family.

## Chhatra Sangram back on DU campus

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Chhatra Sangram Parishad (CSP), an alliance of 14-party backed student organisations, yesterday returned to Dhaka University (DU) campus after around three months.

BNP-backed student organisation Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) drove out CSP leaders and activists and barred them from entering the campus and holding organisational activities since the caretaker government took over on October last.

The CSP imposed an indefinite student strike on the university campus from November 20 protesting JCD's attack on its leaders and activists on the campus on November 19 and demanding peaceful co-existence of all student bodies.

The alliance led by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) returned to the campus at a time when political activity is restricted due to emergency state in the country.

In the morning, leaders of the CSP-- BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon, General Secretary Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury Roton, Syed Iqbal Bablu, Ripon Poddar, Shariful Kabir Swapon, Rafiqul Islam Sujon and others-- went to the Modhu's Canteen.

At that time, JCD leaders were sitting at the Modhu in their table.

Resident leaders and activists of the CSP also returned to the dormitories.



PHOTO: PID

Newly appointed Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed stands in solemn silence after placing wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar yesterday.

## Saudi bus crash kills 23 pilgrims

AFP, Dubai

At least 23 Muslim pilgrims returning from the Muslim holy city of Mecca were killed in a bus crash in Saudi Arabia near the border with the United Arab Emirates, press reports said yesterday. The dead pilgrims, 22 from Kyrgyzstan and a Syrian, died when their bus collided Friday with two other buses near the Batha crossing point into the UAE, Al-Itihad newspaper reported. Twenty-five

people were also injured.

Poor visibility was blamed for the accident, said the UAE's English-language Gulf News, quoting a police official in the Emirates.

It was the first incident to blight an otherwise accident-free hajj in Mecca, in contrast with other years, which have seen deadly stampedes and other tragedies.

The worst incident was in the holy city of Mina in July 1990, when

1,426 mostly Asian pilgrims perished in a tunnel after the ventilation system broke down.

Nearly 2.4 million people flocked to holy sites in Saudi Arabia this year to perform the hajj, which ended early January, including more than 1.6 million from outside the kingdom.

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, which all able-bodied Muslims must undertake once in a lifetime if they have the means.

## Pakistanis protest 2006 US airstrike

AP, Khar

Thousands of protesters yesterday chanted "Death to America" and burned effigies of President Bush on the first anniversary of a US airstrike that witnesses said killed 13 villagers.

US-forces stationed in Afghanistan fired missiles on two homes in the village of Damadola in the Bajur tribal region a year ago. Bajur is located near Afghanistan's Kunar province, where remnants of al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgents often target Afghan and US-led coalition forces.

Sahibzada Haroon Rashid, a former lawmaker from the influential Jamaat-e-Islami party, told Saturday's rally of around 10,000 people near Damadola that they would continue their holy war against America and its "puppet ruler" President Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

"America killed our 13 innocent people, we will not forgive them for it," he said.

Sardar Khan, another leader from Jamaat-e-Islami the country's best-organized religious party urged the people to support all those who are fighting American forces in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Some survivors of the attack also attended the rally.

The attack sparked protests across the country, prompting Pakistan a key ally of the United States in its war on terror to lodge a protest with Washington.

AP, Padiyapelella

Air force helicopters yesterday started evacuating dozens of sick and wounded people from the central tea growing region where landslides have killed at least 17 people, officials said.

Thousands of others, some wailing at the loss of their homes and uncertain future, waited on high grounds adjoining the area's main road to be air lifted after local administration asked residents to leave.

"We have been told to leave," said Kumara Samarakoon, who ran a provision store. "Not all will go, but there is fear" of more landslides.

The landslides triggered by heavy rains damaged at least 1,600 homes, leaving an estimated 9,000 to 16,000 people homeless across 15 villages near Nuwara Eliya, a mountainous region in central Sri Lanka known for its lush tea gardens, the Defence Ministry said.

"Our forces have redoubled efforts and we have rescued dozens of people," military spokesman, Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe said in the capital, Colombo.

Samarasinghe said the army had deployed military helicopters along with 100 soldiers to search

for those feared trapped by the landslides, which were triggered Friday following heavy rains. It was unclear how many people were believed buried.

An official at the Disaster Management Ministry said the latest body count stood at 17 and that 15 villagers were missing.

"Seven homes have gone completely under mud," said Namal Rambukpotha. "We have not been able to reach those homes yet."

In the farming village of Padiyapelella, about 1,000 residents took shelter in the local school when the mud slide threatened to damage their homes Friday.

After spending the night there, most of them left the school Saturday for a safer location, trekking along slippery, rock-strewn paths. One man was seen carrying his old mother, who was too weak to walk. Women clutched their children while men carried whatever belongings they could take out of their abandoned homes.

They headed to a main road on higher ground where two air force helicopters evacuated a first group of 36 sick and wounded, said police officer AM Jayawardena.



PHOTO: STAR

Taslimur Rahman speaks at a seminar on 'Implementation of Bangladesh Labour Law - 2006 and the responsibilities of employers, trade unions and workers to ensure certain rights' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Justice Naimuddin Ahmed and on his left is Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust organised the seminar.

## First test tube baby gives birth in UK

AFP, London

The world's first test tube baby has given birth herself in Britain after conceiving naturally, the Sun newspaper reported Saturday.

Louise Brown, 28, was photographed with a carry cot outside her home in Bristol, western England, and an unnamed friend told the paper that she and husband Wesley Mullinder, 37, were "over the moon".

"It's what they've always wanted," the friend added.

In 1978, Brown was the first baby ever born to parents who had undergone in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment.

Her father and mother, John and Lesley, had tried for a baby for nine years before turning to the new technique, pioneered by gynaecologist Patrick Steptoe and Cambridge University physiologist Robert Edwards, the Sun said.

The couple also had a second test-tube baby -- daughter Natalie, 23, who became the first ever IVF baby to give birth herself in 1999.

More than a million children have been born using IVF.

## 50,000 Malaysians displaced in second wave of flooding

AFP, Ayer Hitam

Severe flooding in Malaysia's south has forced more than 50,000 people to flee their homes, officials said yesterday.

"Our latest figure shows that 50,172 people have been evacuated so far," said Che Moin Umar, chief of the Crisis and Disaster Management Directorate.

The new figures are more than double the 20,051 evacuees reported late Friday, as a second wave of flooding struck the region.

"It is a lot more today because the rain has not stopped and the volume is also quite high," Che Moin told AFP.

"According to weather reports we expect more rain and more evacuations to take place over the next two days, until Monday."

Hundreds of people were already sheltering in flood evacuation centres in Johor after the first round of flooding had hit late last month, forcing 90,000 to evacuate their homes at the peak of the crisis.

Since then, rains have hit the country's north and its eastern states on Borneo island.

Che Moin said there were no fatalities in the second flooding and the worst hit areas were in Johor state.

The state opened 208 flood relief centres on high ground to provide shelter to residents from 11,557 families evacuated from their homes, he said.

## FIRE IN CITY SLUM

# Victims spend night under open sky

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The victims of Friday's fire incident in which about 200 shanties were reduced to ashes near the FDC in the city have passed their day and night in inhuman condition.

The fire ripped through the Ramna slum at around 4:00pm on Friday, rendering about 1000 people homeless. They are now crying for food, shelter and warm clothes as they have lost everything in the fire.

"I along with my four daughters spent the whole night under open sky amid biting cold," said Mintoo Hawlader, a victim, in tear-choked voice yesterday.

Mintoo, the only bread-winner

for the poverty-stricken family of six and earns Tk 90 a day, doesn't know when and how he would be able to manage a shelter for his family.

"My family have neither a single blanket nor enough food," he said. Although several organisations have brought food and clothes for them, but outsiders have taken those away, the fire victims said.

Water used by the fire fighters to distinguish the blaze remains stagnant in the slum area, adding to the plights of the victims.

Dwellers of neighboring slums came to the victims' aid yesterday by collecting money to buy foods for them.

## 3 die in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed and two others injured in separate road accidents in Sirajganj and Patuakhali yesterday.

Our correspondent in Sirajganj reports: Two people were killed and two others injured when a fish-laden truck skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Panchilia Bazar yesterday morning.

Fish traders Kamol Hawlader, 32, and Ganesh Hawlader, 22, died on the spot. They hailed from Savar in Dhaka.

The accident took place on Dhaka-Natore highway at around 6:30am as the driver lost control of the Natore-bound truck while giving side to another vehicle amid dense fog, sources said.

The injured were admitted to Sadar hospital in the town.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Sadar hospital morgue. A case was filed with Solonga police station.

Our correspondent in Patuakhali adds: An eight-year-old boy was killed when a speeding motorcycle knocked him down on Patuakhali-Kuakata road in the morning.

Reazul, son of Asadur of Ghatkhali, was crossing the road when the two-wheeler hit him at around 10:30am. He was rushed to Amtali upazila health complex where he succumbed to his injuries at 3:00pm.

The motorcycle rider, Zulhas, was also injured seriously as he fell to the ground during the accident. He is now undergoing to Patuakhali General Hospital.



## Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather will remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may also occur at places over the river basins during late night to early morning, said Met Office.

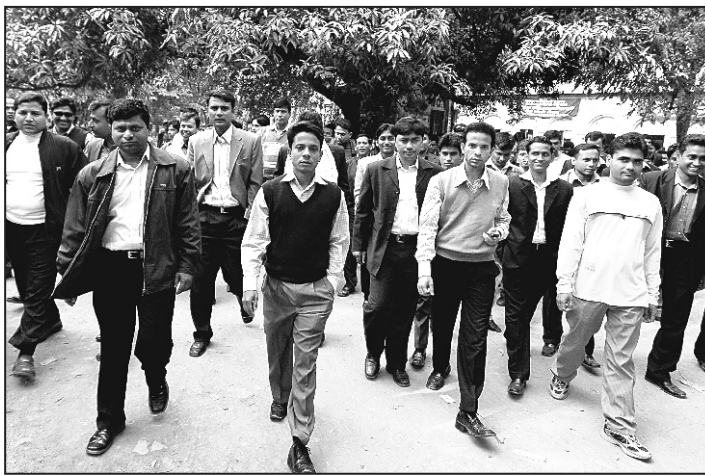
It said that night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 28.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 07.0 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:32pm today and rises at 6:44am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage	in celsius	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.5	12.6	65	60
Chittagong	28.4	13.4	74	62
Rajshahi	23.0	10.5	95	64
Khulna	24.6	12.5	90	67
Barisal	25.0	10.5	84	79
Sylhet	25.0	12.2	79	64
Cox's Bazar	28.0	14.4	60	64



Leaders and activists of two student organisations -- Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal, left, and Bangladesh Chhatra League, right, -- converge on Dhaka University campus near the Madhu's canteen separately yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bush's new plan in Iraq US defeat Says Iraqi al-Qaeda-linked group

REUTERS, Dubai

An Iraqi militant group linked to al-Qaeda dismissed President George W Bush's new strategy in Iraq as proof of a US defeat, an Internet statement said.

Bush said on Wednesday he was sending about 21,000 more American troops to Iraq when he announced his long-awaited new strategy in the Arab country racked by sectarian fighting.

"What we hear in the media about a so-called security plan in Baghdad and Bush's new strat-

egy, will not change anything. They are tasting the bitterness of defeat after announcing to limit their troops to Baghdad instead of all around Iraq," the so-called Islamic state in Iraq group said in the Web posting.

Iraqi Sunni militant groups announced in October the creation of what they described as an Islamic state in Iraq.

"We say that these announcements are a declaration of defeat and an attempt to escape from Iraq, to send more troops will not change anything in the battle. On

the contrary the crusaders will not win this battle, they instead spread targets for our Mujahideen (fighters)."

The United States has about 130,000 troops in Iraq now.

The authenticity of the statement could not be immediately verified.

Last week, the group urged its followers to confront a US-backed security plan in Baghdad announced by Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, saying it was an Iranian ploy to hit Sunni Muslims.

## 3 die in Kashmir village gunbattle

AFP, Srinagar

Two Islamic militants and a civilian were killed yesterday in a gun battle in Indian Kashmir, police said, a day after region's army chief vowed to intensify operations against rebels.

The three were killed in the village of Sumbal, near Bandipora town, 60km north of summer capital Srinagar.

"The area was sealed on information that militants were hiding there. As troops marched towards a house, militants opened fire that was returned," police officer Imtiaz Ahmed said.

He said a civilian trapped in the crossfire was also killed.

The gun battle came a day after India's army chief in Kashmir, lieutenant general AS Sekhon, said troops would step up counter-insurgency operations.

The insurgency, launched by militants in 1989 against Indian rule, has left more than 44,000 people dead by official count and double that tally according to the separatists.

Violence continues in Kashmir despite a slow-moving peace process launched in 2004 between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan aimed at settling all disputes between the neighbours, including over Kashmir.

Each country holds part of the Muslim-majority region and claims it in full.

## Laden not seen in Pakistan

Says Taliban leader

REUTERS, Dubai

A top Taliban leader in Pakistan said in remarks aired yesterday his group would protect and guard al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri if they turned up in tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

"I have not met Osama or Zawahiri and they did not come to our region. We hope to see them and if they show up in our area we will protect them with our bodies and souls," Mullah Mohammad Nazir told Al Jazeera television in remarks dubbed into Arabic.

US intelligence chief John Negroponte said on Thursday al-Qaeda leaders were holed up in a secure hide-out in Pakistan, but the government there says the United States has not given it any information about their presence in Pakistan.

Negroponte told the US Senate select committee on intelligence that Pakistan was the centre of an al-Qaeda web that radiated out to the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

Pakistani newspapers said last month Nazir had been appointed as Taliban chief in the country's tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

## Obituary

BSS, Gopalganj

Sri Shukhranjan, president of Gopalganj Lokonath Brahmachari Sangha, passed away due to a cardiac arrest yesterday at the age of 40.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Shukranjan was cremated at Gopalganj Grand Crematorium.

## Death anniversary



Bangladesh (ICAB), says a press release.

Abul Qasem, who was also a president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI), established his firm A Qasem & Co. in 1953, which is the oldest chartered accountant firm in the country.

He was also a member of the Senate of Dhaka University and the governing body of Viqarunnisa Noon School.