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Tigers face Lanka in 1st Test today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket team take on Sri Lanka in the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur today with all eyes firmly fixed on one man.

Surviving the variations of Muttiah Muralidaran over two innings would be the key for the Tigers to survive and they might get some help from the Mirpur pitch. It is said that some grass has been left on the wicket to give it more life and it is also a bid to stop the pitch from becoming really slow as the days go by.

While the Test will be a real battle between the record-breaking spinner and the Tigers' batsmen, some suggest

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Battle of Barisal in Mohammadpur

WASIM BIN HABIB and
NAJMU ALAM NOBIN

Two youth leaders from Barisal seem to be leading in the race for Dhaka-13 where the image and electoral symbol of the party they belong to could set them apart.

Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance candidate and chairman of the AL's youth front Awami Jubo League Jahangir Kabir Nanak and BNP-led four-party alliance nominee and General Secretary of BNP's youth wing Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal seem to be ahead of the other five candidates in the race.

Alal was elected lawmaker from Barisal-2 in the last parliamentary elections. Nanak is running for the first time to become an MP.

DHAKA-13



Nanak



Alal

The Dhaka-13 constituency, Mohammadpur and Adabar, was earlier a part of Dhaka-9 where BNP leader Khandaker Mahub Uddin Ahmed was

elected in 2001.

Alal with electoral symbol sheaf of paddy and Nanak with boat will be battling to get the most of the 2,83,142 votes in the constituency, locals feel. Bangladesh Kalyan Party Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim is also contesting with the wrist watch electoral symbol.

Talking to The Daily Star many voters of the area said the candidates of the major two alliances are not locals and for that the party symbols could be a major factor.

Muniruzzaman Chowdhury, a resident of Shahjahan Road in Mohammadpur, concurred saying, "The main contest will be between Awami

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Taliban threaten to kill Pak girls if they attend schools

AFP, Islamabad

Taliban extremists in Pakistan's troubled northwest Swat valley have banned girls from attending school, threatening to kill any female students, officials said yesterday.

The threat was delivered this week by local Taliban commander Shah Durrani in an address carried on an illegally-run radio station in the area, local officials told AFP.

"You have until January 15 to stop sending your girls to schools. If you do not pay any heed to this warning, we will kill such girls," one official quoted the commander as saying.

"We also warn schools not to enrol any female students; otherwise, their buildings will be blown up."

The mountainous Swat valley was until last year a popular tourist destination featuring Pakistan's only ski resort.

But the region has been turned into a battleground since radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah, who has links to Pakistan's Taliban movement, launched a violent campaign for the introduction of Islamic Sharia law in the valley.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

3 Indian ships in Bangladesh waters

Navy alerts them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After last month's tension with Myanmar over maritime boundary, an oil and gas survey ship accompanied by two warships of India has entered Bangladesh's maritime boundary.

Navy sources said the three ships were spotted at 180 degrees from "Fairway Buoy" at 210 miles south in the Bay of Bengal from Mongla Port yesterday morning.

Bangladesh Navy

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

KIBRIA KILLING Grenade casing seized as case evidence

UNB, Habiganj

Police seized a steel casing of grenade from the district town as evidence in the Kibria killing case on Wednesday night.

CID police raided a shop, Harun Traders, at Chowdhury Bazar in the town and seized the casing.

The law enforcers conducted the drive as per the statement of Badrul Alam Mizan, who was arrested earlier in Kibria murder case, police said.

Mizan hurled grenade at the AL rally at Baidyer Bazar of the district on January 27, 2005 that killed Kibria and four others, police said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Voter list gets more kudos

BSS, Dhaka

A nationwide independent audit of the country's new digital voter list has concluded that all names on the roll are of legitimate voters and nearly all eligible voters are on the list.

The survey, conducted by Washington-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), found a "high degree of accuracy" in compilation of the voter list.

This first-ever computerised voter list contains photographs of more than 80 million voters and took 11 months to compile. The audit found no 'ghost voters' on the list, according to a UNDP press release issued yesterday.

The audit consisted of two nationwide surveys sampling nearly 17,000 individuals of voting age across the country.

The new electoral roll was designed by Bangladesh Election

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Textbook printing in limbo on paper dearth

SURANJITH DEABNATH

Secondary school students are unlikely to get fresh textbooks at the beginning of their academic session as publishers and printing houses will not be able to print books in time due to shortage of paper.

Sources said there is an acute crisis of paper now because of heavy use of paper by the Election Commission (EC) and the candidates of the parliamentary polls to print 8.11 crore ballot papers and a huge amount of posters ahead of the election.

Besides, all 76 textbooks of classes VI to X will have to be printed newly this time due to intro-

duction of creative question (CG) method from the next academic session. Usually 30 percent old books are being used every year but those books could not be used again because of the new system, said a source of the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB).

For these reasons, the NCTB officials and owners of the printing houses fear that students would have to wait two to three months for getting all textbooks in the market. As such the guardians may have to buy textbooks at three to four times higher than the actual price at the beginning of the session.

The NCTB usually collects paper from

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Xmas prayers for honest candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Christmas was celebrated across the country yesterday with special prayers seeking blessings for honest candidates to win in the upcoming election so that they can work for peace, prosperity and welfare of the countrymen.

The Christian community of the country celebrated their biggest religious festival yesterday, the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, among different festivities as elsewhere in the world.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Devotees listen to the Christmas service at a church in Kakrail in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Army personnel conduct a thorough search at Paltan Maidan in the capital with sniffer dogs yesterday as Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina is to address a grand election rally there today. Hasina will wrap up the party's election campaign for the December 29 polls at Lal Dighi Maidan in Chittagong tomorrow.

PHOTO: STAR

Bomb found in Khulna AL leader's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered a powerful bomb from the residence of a ward level leader of Khulna city Awami League yesterday morning.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-6 raided the house of HM Abdus Samad, vice-president of AL ward no 30 unit, at Chanmari under Khulna Sadar Police Station at around 7:30am and recovered the bomb.

The elite force could not arrest Samad as he fled the scene, getting information

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

18 Tamil Tigers killed in fresh Lankan fighting

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military beat back a Tamil Tiger counter-offensive in the island's north, killing at least 18 guerrillas, the defence ministry said yesterday.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) mounted the offensive outside their besieged political capital of Kilinochchi on Wednesday, the ministry said.

"Well prepared troops engaged the advancing terrorists with armour, tanks, artillery and infantry causing heavy damage," the ministry said in a statement.

It said 18 rebels were killed and another 34 wounded, but did not give details of casualties on the government side.

Military officials said war planes also carried out bombing missions against Tiger defences of Kilinochchi on Christmas day Thursday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

On Wednesday Lankan security forces killed at least 20 Tamil Tiger rebels who were defending their political capital of Kilinochchi in the island's north, the defence ministry said.

Troops captured the village of Sinna Paranthan, northwest of Kilinochchi, from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the ministry said.

"Over 20 LTTE terrorists were killed and many injured during the confrontations," it said in a statement. "Troops have

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Gas bidding decision left for new govt

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government now shifts the matter of taking decision on the third-round international bidding for gas blocks to the next elected government although it had invited tender with a vigorous move to award the contracts within its tenure.

According to official sources, some critical issues and a possibility of future litigation have finally prompted the interim government's policymakers to think of passing the buck.

The sources said despite high urgency, none of the top policymakers of the interim government did want to take the responsibility of awarding contract of hydrocarbon exploration to foreign companies on the basis of a bidding process that appeared controversial.

The energy ministry

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Prayer Timing		
December 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation