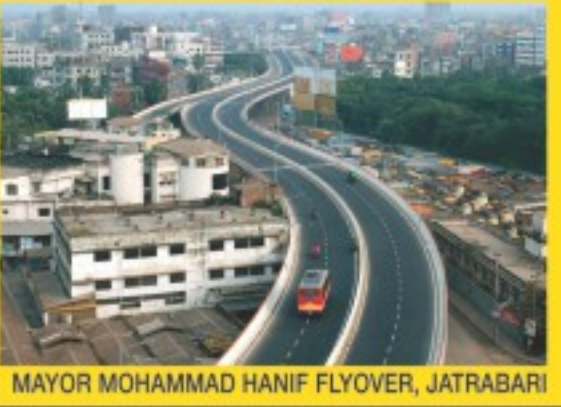


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People defy blockade

Despite fear of violence, large number of vehicles seen on city streets

STAR REPORT

Fed up with long blockades that wreaked havoc on people's lives and livelihood for the last one month, people have lately been defying the political programmes despite fear of violence.

A large number of vehicles plied the streets of Dhaka and other major cities yesterday, the second day of 83-hour blockade enforced by the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

Many businesses, offices and roadside shops were seen open in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Barisal, Khulna and Sylhet cities, report our district correspondents.

As the number of vehicles including minibuses, CNG-run auto-rickshaws and private cars, increased on the capital's streets, some areas even saw traffic congestion in the evening.

Train and launch services on all routes remained normal

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Opposition-called blockade supporters yesterday dug up a trench at Goreya on Gaibandha-Palashbari road, severing road communications between Gaibandha and other districts.

Mexico busts gang preying on migrants

5 Bangladeshi victims rescued

AFP, Mexico City

Authorities said Saturday that they broke up a trafficking ring that brought foreigners, mostly Asians, into Mexico intent on smuggling them into the United States.

Prosecutors said they detained seven Mexicans and three Bangladeshis accused of moving the migrants to Mexico's northern border with the United States at a huge cost and in grim conditions.

The migrants came from places like India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, as well as Iran and Somalia, officials said.

The ring was based in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Commonwealth too opts not to send polls observers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the European Union, the Commonwealth too decides not to send observers for the 10th parliamentary elections.

In a letter to the Election Commission yesterday, the intergovernmental organisation said it would not send any observer as the atmosphere for a participatory and inclusive election was missing, EC sources said.

The letter signed by Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalash Sharma was sent following a report submitted by a special

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

AL, 11 PARTIES IN POLLS None discloses manifesto yet

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League and 11 other parties contesting the January 5 parliamentary polls have yet to come up with electoral pledges apparently due to lack of interest in wooing voters in the one-sided election.

The AL may need some more days to unveil its electoral manifesto, which was drafted reiterating its promises to establish good governance and corruption-free administration, insiders say.

It had unveiled the electoral pledges 'A Charter for Change' on December 12, 17 days before the December 29, 2008 parliamentary election contested by all major political parties.

The election's drafted manifesto was submitted to AL chief Sheikh Hasina on

Saturday for her consent, the insiders said, adding that a slogan for the manifesto was yet to be finalised.

The AL Central Working Committee, the highest decision-making body of the party, would endorse the manifesto and then it would be made public, they said.

AL presidium member Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin and advisory council member Mashiur Rahman and some experts have drafted the manifesto.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin said the manifesto focuses on fulfilling the unfulfilled promises. "Our main target to move the country forward and our vision of 2021 still exist," he added.

AL allies Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

DB TO PROBE GOPIBAGH 6-MURDER Cops yet to find killers' motive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An entire day had passed since criminals posing as house guests killed six people inside a spiritual leader's home in Gopibagh but police have no leads, no motive and no arrest to show for.

All they know is Lutfar Rahman Faruque, the pir, who was one of the victims, preached a radical version of Islam.

Jahangir Hossain Matabbar, deputy commissioner of Detective Branch of Police, told The Daily Star that they were looking into whether religious extremists had a hand in the killing. He said differences between religious schools of thought could be a reason behind the murders.

In one of his books, Lutfar described activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and followers of Tablighi Jamaat as 'Ya'j'uj and Ma'j'uj, which, according to a source, were two disbelieving tribes from among the sons of Adam who used to spread mischief on earth.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Genes shape political views!

MAIL ONLINE

Biology may not be destiny but it does shape who we vote for.

A new study has found that our political attitudes are hard-wired into our DNA, with 56 percent of each belief influenced by our genes.

Individual experiences, upbringing and other social influences explain the remaining variation in our left or right-wing orientation, according to the study.

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PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

The hurriedly finished Bahadderhat flyover in Chittagong was opened in October but people could only use it for two weeks before the authorities had to close it to redo the expansion joints. The flyover is still closed and work is still going on, inset, even though two months have passed.



TOMORROW'S RALLY IN DHAKA Hefajat to wait for govt permission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefajat-e-Islam, an Islamist platform, said it was hopeful of getting permission from the government at the last minute for a rally in the capital's Motijheel Shapla Chattar tomorrow, aimed at pressing home its 13-point demand.

According to Hefajat high-ups, this is the best time to compel the government, now entangled in political mess over the upcoming general election, to meet their demands, including punishing some bloggers for what they said was insulting Islam and scrapping the national women policy 2011.

The rally is also intended to put pressure on the government to refrain from holding the January 5 polls boycotted by the BNP-led opposition, they said.

Party sources, however, said the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) had already told them that they would not be given permission for a rally before January 5. Rab asked Hefajat to hold the rally after the election.

Hefajat had been given permission hours before it held its May 5 rally at the same venue. Leaders of the party think the same thing may happen this time.

"We are hopeful as it is a democratic government and so

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you think Jatiya Party leaders are making contradictory statements deliberately on their participation in general election to confuse people?

Yes

84%

No

16%

TOTAL VOTES: 105

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think it was justified for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to blame the main opposition BNP's polls boycott for the 154 candidates' uncontested election to the 10th parliament?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT
www.thedailystar.net

PRAYER TIMING

December 23

Fajr	Azan	Jamaat
5:25	5:25	6:00
Zohr	12:45	1-15
Asr	3:45	4-00
Maghrib	5:24	5-27
Esha	7:00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



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