Army starts election duty today

parliamentary seats, as 154 candidates have been elected unopposed since they were the lone candidates in their constituencies.

Commission (EC), army personnel will remain deployed at different important spots in district, upazila and metropolitan areas. The decision came from a high-profile meet-

ing on December 20. The EC convened the meeting attended by top officials of security agencies, Armed Forces Division (AFD), deputy commissioners, and superintendents of police.

Along with the army, navy personnel will work in different coastal areas as per the decision of the meeting.

Meanwhile, army personnel have been seen at different districts since December 20. EC officials said army men might have arrived in different districts for winter exercise, not for election

Two days after that meeting, the EC sent a letter

to the AFD regarding deployment of armed forces personnel. In the letter, the EC mentioned that the army

would help ensure safe traffic movement on roads and highways in addition to maintaining law and order during the elections.

The Daily Star: "We have prepared a draft on how many armed forces personnel and law enforcers will be deployed. We have sent the draft to the Election Commission for vetting. After getting circular in this regard."

plan for armed forces personnel, and law enforcers," he added.

Secretariat confirmed that they had received the draft on Tuesday evening. Contacted, an Election Commissioner told

The Daily Star: "As today (Wednesday) is pubic holiday, we have not seen the home ministry's letter. We will be able to tell about it tomorrow (today)."

But the sources in the EC said around 50,000 armed forces personnel might be deployed in the

Returning officers in coordination with the AFD officials would finalise the deployment plan, the sources added. Meanwhile, the EC has installed eight closed

circuit (CC) cameras inside and outside the EC Secretariat buildings as part of strengthening its security.

Additional security men have been deployed

OBSTRUCTION TO DEC 29 MARCH

Khaleda threatens govt with dire consequences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night warned the government of dire consequences if it obstructed the opposition's march towards Dhaka.

She claimed that the opposition's "march for democracy" on Sunday would be a peaceful programme.

"I would like to tell the government that if you are brave then do not obstruct me or the programme," she said while exchanging greetings with the Christian community at her Gulshan office on Christmas Day.

Pointing to the 154 MPs elected unopposed, Khaleda, who heads the BNP-led 18party combine, said, "Let the government elect the rest of the MPs like the unopposed ones. You [voters] don't need to go to the polling centres and thus waste your time and patience.

"Let them [govt] win in all 300 seats. This will not bring any benefit for them."

Referring to Awami League leaders' wealth statements submitted to the Election Commission, the BNP chief said those amounts were just a small portion of their

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

AL aloof, alone

a proper election. For example, in five out of six seats in Dinajpur (one seat is already uncontested), the AL's main opposition is the Workers Party. In the last three elections, the Workers Party bagged a total of about 1,500 votes in all these seats together.

The AL becomes even more isolated at home as 154 candidates, more than half the seats in the House, of this one-sided election are already elected, without even one vote cast. There were no other candidates. And voters did not need to walk up to the polling stations.

This has made the AL even more isolated from its voters. With the BNP remaining outside the race, half the voters find no place in the political process. And half of the remaining voters do not need to vote to 'elect' their MPs as

Bangalees being so electrifyingly political, they love to vote because it is the only opportunity they get to have some say in state affairs.

In the international arena the situation is no All countries except India have already made

they have already crossed through the line is a non-sense election that does not enjoy wonder on what level their governments would engage with the new government if formed through such a farcical election. This will have grave implications for the country's development.

> And the AL, the oldest political party of the country with a long tradition of struggle for own mien.

The party that was led by great men like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman today looks like any other party, miles removed from democratic values.

Witnesses

Though justice seekers and campaigners of war crimes trial have been demanding a law for the protection of witnesses and victims, no such

International rights watchdog Human Rights Watch on Tuesday urged Bangladeshi authorities to urgently set up an effective mechanism to protect witnesses in the war

a neutral office, under the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) registrar, tasked specifically with protection and support services to witnesses

When contacted, SM Aktaruzzaman, superintend of police (SP) of Pirojpur, said that they already had taken steps to protect people of Zianagar, including the witnesses.

"Whereas a police station is usually manned by just 26 police personnel, we have deployed 124 personnel in Zianagar," he told The Daily Star. In addition to the police station in Zianagar,

four police camps had been set up and patrols, raids and search operations were being carried out regularly by Rapid Action Battalion and Border Guard Bangladesh personnel to apprehend listed miscreants, said the SP.

Around one hundred suspected criminals including about 70 Jamaat-Shibir activists have so far been arrested in connection with violence committed in the protests against Sayedee's trial and verdict, he added.

at least half a dozen murders, hacking and arson in Balipara, Sayeedkhali and Chandipur of Zianagar since Sayedee's trial began.

ARREST OF VOIP GANG

37 foreigners hid info of their stay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 37 foreigners, who had been arrested with a huge quantity of illegal VoIP equipment on Sunday night, had been living illegally in the rented house in the capital's Uttara.

As per rule, a landlord must report to the local police authority about a foreign tenant, mentioning the purpose of his visit and the duration of stay.

The landlord also must submit details of a foreign tenant's passport to the authority, Khandaker Rezaul Hasan, OC of Uttara Pashchim Police Station, said yesterday. "But the owner of the six-storey house at

sector 12 did not submit papers of 32 Taiwanese and five Chinese tenants to us," he said. The foreigners had been living in the

house for the last one and a half years. Latifunnesa Shamsuddin is the owner of the house and her manager Faruque

Hossain used to communicate with the tenants from the owner's side. Earlier, a case was filed against the arrested foreigners for running VoIP business illegally. On Tuesday, a Dhaka court placed them on a two-day remand in

connection with the case. Both Latifunnesa and Faruque are accused in the case and they are also on the

run, said police. Rab-1 sources said the foreigners used to

pay Tk 2.75 lakh a month as house rent for the six-storey building, and one of their vehicles, which were seized during the drive on Sunday, had no valid documents.

The foreigners preferred to go out only in their vehicles and local people seldom got the opportunity to see them in broad daylight, said several neighbours.

During the raid, the law enforcers also seized 37 passports from the spot. However, the Rab team did not find passports of 14

among the 37 foreigners. Kismat Hayat, commanding officer of Rab 1, yesterday said the foreigners came to the country as tourists and extended their

stay several times. However, it was not clear how they managed to get extension of their visas from the immigration office, he said.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Six cannons

stay.

FROM PAGE 16

Zhou insisted his cannons would not have caused any harm and civil police in Xingyang, Henan, central China, confirmed he had not broken any laws.

Each costing 100 yuan (around £10), Zhou deployed the cannons to protect his home when he became insecure, according

to ECNS. But a local official said they did not plan on demolishing the house and insisted this would not be done until an agreement had

been reached. The community is being relocated, and just 34 of 340 households are allowed to

Some of those moved on said they had been offered compensation and resettlement. Others claimed they did not have a paper agreement.

One 85-year-old resident, Feng Baosen, said his house was demolished two months ago without his knowledge.

Feng claimed the government gave them 4,000 yuan (£400) and did not concern

themselves with the relocation. The government said all demolitions

were agreed to by residents.

unopposed. The rest half have no choice and see their endorsement. Many of the diplomats no real reasons to vote. So we are going to have a parliament totally

unrepresentative.

Now they know they don't even have that right.

better.

it known that they have no reasons to consider Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Abdul this election a free, fair and participatory one. Hamid Khan Bhashani and Bangabandhu The US, EC and the Commonwealth have declared they will not send any election observ-Diplomats of all western countries feel it

democracy, has also become isolated from its



Bayzid, driver and owner of a bus, at the burn unit of DMCH yesterday. Criminals torched his bus, which was requisitioned by police, at Bangla Motor intersection Tuesday night. He jumped out of the burning vehicle but landed on his face. He cannot speak now. The wife of Abu Mia, right, feeding him at the burn unit yesterday as the trucker is all bandaged and it is too painful for him to move his arms. Criminals on Tuesday night torched his cattle-laden truck at Sitakunda, Chittagong, killing seven cows and injuring his helper too. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

How could they do it?

FROM PAGE 1

between her sobs.

Partha Shankar Paul, resident physician of the burn unit, said 14 percent of Faizul's body was seriously burnt. The injuries were on his face, hip and legs.

Khalil was killed instantly while the driver of the bus Bayzid was also burnt.

Seeing the vehicle on fire, Bayzid jumped out the driver's window and hurt his mouth from the fall, rendering him unable to speak.

His family told The Daily Star that Bayzid was the breadwinner of his family of six. He bought the bus last year, putting in all his life's savings along some loans. It looked like his bus would have to be written off.

Meanwhile, relatives of the deceased constable In the arson attack, traffic constable Ferdous Ferdous Khalil took the body to his village in Gaibandha yesterday after a namaj-e-janaza at the Rajarbagh Police Lines.

Khalil's brother-in-law Abdul Jalil said, "I don't know how his wife and children will look at Khalil's horribly charred body when I, a physi-

cian, cannot look at it."

arson attacks died yesterday at DMCH.

The deceased were trucker Nazrul Islam, who got burned when his vehicle was set on fire in Gazipur on Monday, and trucker Shahinur Rahman and his helper Mazidul, who suffered burns when their vehicle was set ablaze in Sirajganj on Saturday.

Mazidul's sister Sumi Begum said her brother had a lifelong dream of becoming a driver one day "but that dream will never come true".

Shahinur Rahman, who suffered 70 percent Meanwhile, three people burned in earlier burns, died around 11:30pm last night. "I want to see my wife and my parents now as I don't have

much time," he was saying throughout the day. His family had started fro Dhaka from

Tuesday night. He has 25 percent of his body

Erdogan govt in trouble

FROM PAGE 16

follow suit. It marks the first time Erdogan has faced such a challenge from a minister in his own Justice and Development Party (AKP).

"I am stepping down as minister and lawmaker," Bayraktar told the private NTV television. "I believe the prime minister should also resign."

Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan and Interior Minister Muammer Guler also announced they were quitting yesterday.

The sons of both ministers are among the two dozen people who have been charged as part of a wide-ranging bribery and corruption probe that has ensnared close government allies and top businessmen.

Those caught up in the police raids are suspected of numerous offences including accepting and facilitating bribes for development projects and securing construction permits for protected areas in exchange for money.

Erdogan, who has led Turkey since 2002 as the head of a conservative Islamic-leaning government, has described the probe as "a smear campaign" to undermine Turkey's ambitions to become a major political and economic power.

Erdogan's critics accuse him of seeking to protect his cronies.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), called Erdogan a "dictator". "In this country, everything is controlled by

what comes out of a dictator's mouth.... They want to drag the country into the darkness of 19th century," Kilicdaroglu said. "Turkey needs clean politics and a clean soci-

ety." In a televised speech yesterday, Erdogan did

not comment on the ministers' resignations. Instead, he again blamed the probe on "a conspiracy" and "international powers" and insisted

the AKP had a clear record. cal fault-lines lie throughout the country. Observers say the investigation has exposed a

rift between Erdogan and former ally Fethullah Gulen, a Muslim cleric who lives in the United States and whose movement wields considerable

The damaging probe also comes ahead of crucial local elections in March and presidential elections in August. Bayraktar said the vast majority of construc-

influence in Turkey's police and judiciary.

tion projects mentioned in the investigation were carried out with the premier's approval. "It's the prime minister's natural right to work

with or remove whichever minister he would like

to," he told NTV in a live broadcast. "But I don't accept any pressure to resign over an operation involving bribery and corruption... because a big majority of construction plans in the investigation dossier were carried out with the

The television network then cut the live feed in a move that immediately raised a stir on Twitter, with critics slamming it as censorship.

approval of the prime minister."

The political tensions of the past days have hurt the already slowing Turkish economy, pushing the national currency to hover around record lows against the US dollar.

Erdogan, who has responded to the investigation by sacking dozens of police chiefs, is expected to reshuffle his cabinet shortly in light of the corruption controversy. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who called for the gov-

ernment's resignation as soon as the scandal

erupted, yesterday said the ministers' decision to quit came "too late". Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Istanbul since the scandal came out also calling on the government to step down.

Muslim cleric Gulen has denied being behind the controversial investigation. Gulenists were previously key backers of the AKP, helping it to win three elections in a row since 2002. Turkey's local elections on March 30 are now

an allegation of theft against him, Faruk added. Borna also suspected Kabir of committing the murder. She said her father told her in a phone conversation around 6:00pm on being seen as a key indicator of where the politi-

Naogaon yesterday afternoon.

An Awami League leader of Monirampur in Jessore was admitted to DMCH with burn injuries last night. Mehera Ali, 65, was attacked with a petrol bomb at his home in Monirampur

Aftab Ahmed murdered

Dhaka Medical College morgue said the

Ekushey Padak winning photo journalist had been strangled. Police and the victim's family members

suspect that his driver Kabir, who was

appointed on December 1 and could not be

traced after the body's recovery, might have killed him for money. Aftab, who had served the Bangla daily Ittefaq as chief photographer, saved Tk 1.5 lakh for a trip to India for treatment. According to the family, he had the whole

the driver took away after the killing. Aftab had been living alone in a flat on the second floor of a four-storey building at West Rampura.

amount or some portion with him, which

His daughter Afroz Ahmed Borna, assistant librarian of National University, lives in Gazipur with her family, and his son Monoar Ahmed Sagor in Jessore where he

Aftab used to have his dinner before 9:00pm, said his son-in-law ASMG Faruk. His dinner plate was seen untouched yesterday and that meant he might have been killed before his dinner time the day "He [Aftab] suffered a brain stroke and

had old-age complications. He was supposed to go to India today [yesterday] but he had lately deferred his visit to the first week of January." Driver Kabir used to stay in the attic of the building but a few days ago, his father-in-

law asked him to stay elsewhere on receiving

The deceased's part-time house help Nasima Begum told The Daily Star that Aftab's cell phone was switched off and the flat was locked from inside when she came

in the morning. "I repeatedly rang the doorbell at 8:30am but did not get any response."

She then went to the adjacent flat and peeped through a glass ventilator into Aftab's bedroom. "Everything in the room was scattered

and uncle was lying on the floor," Nasima She called Borna and informed her about

the situation. Around 10:00am, Rampura police recovered the body.

On information, officials of the Criminal Investigation Department also rushed to the spot and collected evidence. Ikramul Haque, tenant of the flat next to

Aftab's, said the television at Aftab's flat was on at high volume throughout the previous Kreepa Shindhu Bala, officer-in-charge of

Rampura Police Station, said police were searching for the driver. Meanwhile, the Jatiya Press Club expressed grief over the unexpected demise

of the veteran journalist and offered its condolences to the bereaved family. The body is now at the DMCH morgue. It will be buried at Azimpur graveyard today

on the arrival of his son from Jessore. A namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Press Club after zuhr prayers. Hailing from Mohipur village in Rangpur, Aftab joined as a photographer of daily Ittefaq in 1962. He captured some

images of the 1971 Liberation War and Bangabandhu Sheikh Majibur Rahman. He was awarded Ekushey Padak in 2006. Tuesday that he had had an altercation with On December 16, 2010, miscreants took Kabirthat day but did not tell her of the issue. away his award and other valuables from his

According to officials of the Election

An official of home ministry yesterday told

the nod from the commission, we will issue a "In the draft, we have also drawn up a working

A senior assistant secretary of the EC thereforthelast couple of weeks.

step has yet been taken by the government.

crimes trials. The body suggested Bangladesh to establish

during pretrial, trial, and post-trial stages.

Alleged Jamaat-BNP men have perpetrated