



## INFLATION SOARS

Rate goes up by 0.20 percentage point to 7.35 percent in December

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## 'POLAR VORTEX' CRIPPLES US

Record-breaking cold freezes cities, shutting down schools, businesses

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## ETERNALLY ELVIS

Article focus on the rise and fall of the king on his birth anniversary

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Attackers of Hindus won't be spared  
Says PM, discusses with Hamid formation of new govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said massive drives would be conducted to arrest all those involved in the recent attacks on the Hindus.

Warning the culprits of stern action, she said, "None will be spared. A drive has been underway in Jessore since Monday night, and some culprits have been arrested."

The PM was speaking at a meeting with the leaders of the Awami League-led alliance at the Gono Bhaban last night.

Earlier, she had met President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban, and apprised him of the current political situation and the government measures for checking post-polls

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## Govt takes hardline

3 top BNP leaders held; 5 others picked up, freed later

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government launched a fresh crackdown on the BNP yesterday with law enforcers detaining three of its top leaders.

At least 35 central leaders of the main opposition party, including the three, are now behind bars.

Of them, five are standing committee members, three vice-chairmen, three advisers to the BNP chief, two joint secretary generals, two assistant joint secretary generals, two organising secretaries and 11 leaders of different ranks. They were arrested over the past two months.

Five of the detainees are lawmakers. Besides, most of the top leaders of various front bodies of the BNP, including Chhatra Dal, are in jail for the last three months.

Those detained yesterday are party Vice-chairperson Selima Rahman, Organising Secretary Fazlul Haque Milon and Khaleda's adviser Khandaker Mahbub Hossain.

Five others were also picked up but released later. They are Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque, lawmakers Harunur Rashid, Nazimuddin Ahmed and Ashrafuddin Nizan and Mahila Dal General Secretary

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PHOTO: STAR

With whatever they could take, this family like hundreds of other Hindu families had left their homes to flee BNP-Jamaat atrocities in Thakurgaon sadar upazila two days back. They were returning to their village yesterday on the administration's assurances of security. But fears and worries writ large on their faces tell of an ordeal yet to be over. Inset, the rubble of a Hindu family's house attacked early Monday in Kornai village of Dinajpur.



## UN chief calls for meaningful talks

Saddened by violence, poor participation in polls; US, Japan for fresh polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Censuring deadly violence centring the just-concluded elections in Bangladesh, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday called upon political parties to resume meaningful dialogue and urgently go for an inclusive political process.

The US, Australia and Japan also expressed concerns over the issue and suggested fresh polls to meet the people's expectation.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Ban Ki-moon said, "The UN will continue to support the country's democratic process in accordance with the principles of inclusiveness, non-violence, reconciliation and dialogue."

The UN chief expressed sadness at the loss of lives and violent incidents that marred the January 5 parliamentary polls, which were characterised by "polarisation and low participation".



Ban Ki-moon

"He [Ban] regrets that the parties did not reach the kind of agreements which could have produced a peaceful, all-inclusive election outcome," reads the statement.

He urged all sides to exercise restraint and ensure first and foremost a peaceful and conducive environment, where people can maintain their right to assembly and expression.

"Violence and attacks on people and property can never be acceptable," said the UN chief.

US STATE DEPARTMENT

The US has called for fresh polls in Bangladesh that reflect the will of the people, expressing strong concern over the just-concluded general elections, which it alleged was neither credible nor fair.

"We have been very clear about our strong concerns about the election and what we think the way forward should be. We

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## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Why Hindus always under assault?

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Bangladesh's Hindu community once again is under grievous assault.

In the aftermath of the recent general elections, hundreds of Hindus have fled their homes in such regions as Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Lalmonirhat, Rajshahi, Jessore and Chittagong.

Once again, there is an eerie reminder of the trauma the Bangalee nation, especially its Hindu segment, faced in the course of the War of Liberation when the occupation Pakistan army and its local collaborators went after the proponents of Bangalee nationalism.

A very large-scale exodus of Hindus took place at the time of the partition of India in August 1947, when for understandable reasons it became a question of the survival of the community in a country fashioned out of a so-called two-nation theory.

Three years later, in 1950, communal riots led to a newer group of Hindus leaving what was then East Pakistan and making their way to neighbouring West Bengal in India.

In 1964, through the instigation of the Ayub-Monem clique in Pakistan, more Hindus left East Pakistan. The crisis was contained only when a secular Bangalee political leadership, among whom was the future Bangabandhu, put up a determined resistance against communalism and succeeded in containing what might have become a conflagration.

In 1971, the Pakistan army went with a vengeance

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## Fresh attacks on Hindus in north

Panic prevails among victims of post-polls attacks also in other areas

STAR REPORT

Fresh attacks were launched on houses and businesses of Hindus in several northern districts over the last two days, despite law enforcers' drives against post-polls and communal violence.

Jamaat-BNP men vandalised more than a hundred shops belonging to Hindus at Sonahar bazaar in Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh on Monday afternoon.

Six police constables, who had been on duty there, were also beaten by the activists and confined to a shop for four hours till joint forces rescued them around 9:00pm.

Of the injured cops, Swapan Kumar was admitted to Debiganj Upazila Health Complex.

The Hindus in several other villages of the upazila, including Moidanarhat, Santipur, Prodhanpara and Alamnagar, are also living in fear of attacks, locals say.

In Rajshahi, Jamaat activists hurled a bomb on the house of Asit Kumar Ghosh, a leader of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council last night.

However, none was hurt in the blast.

Earlier, the council had demanded police vigilance at all the nine upazilas of the district in the wake of violence against minorities.

In another incident, the activists of BNP and Jamaat destroyed two houses and five shops of Hindus in Kuptola union of Gaibandha and injured five persons Monday night.

In Lalmonirhat, Harendra Nath Roy, 62, caretaker of a temple in Shafinagar, along with his family members was confined to a house for two hours from 9:00pm on Monday.

Contacted yesterday morning, Harendra Nath just kept crying, without saying a single word.

Over a hundred Hindu families in Shafinagar as well as Senpara village have been under threat of Jamaat-Shibir attacks since Sunday's national election.

Hardly any Hindu male stays home at night while many women and children have

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MORE STORY, PHOTOS ON PAGE 2

## STOP THIS POLITICS



Second-grader Anik will have to live without the left eye, thanks to a crude bomb explosion in the port city's Kattali area on the election day. Inset, human haulier driver Mitul, burned in a petrol bomb blast on Monday night, lies at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.



## 2 more burnt to death

Truck driver, vegetable trader victims of bomb attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A potato trader and a pick-up driver were killed yesterday in petrol bomb attacks on their way to Dhaka.

The trader was burnt alive as unidentified criminals hurled a petrol bomb at a potato-laden truck at Horgati of Sirajganj district on Dhaka-Bogra highway last night. The driver and helper of the truck sustained injuries, said Ali Farid Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station.

The identities of the dead and the injured could not be known immediately.

The pick-up driver, Shah Alam, 35, was killed around 12:30am yesterday when he was coming to Dhaka from Chittagong along with his helper Al Amin, 32.

Pickets made the attack on the vehicle when they reached Feni sadar, said Syed Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Mohipal Highway Police Station.

The vehicle went up in flames. As Alam and Amin jumped out, the driver got himself crushed under the wheels.

Doctors at Feni Sadar Hospital later declared Alam dead. Amin, who was also taken to the hospital by police, has been undergoing treatment for burn injuries.

Meanwhile, the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) has been busy accommodating victims of political violence over the first week of this year.

Since January 1, as many as 15 people, including police and Ansar men and a presiding officer, have been admitted

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## 18-party hartal extended till 6pm today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party opposition combine yesterday extended its countrywide 48-hour hartal till 6:00pm today demanding cancellation of national polls results, release of its leaders and protesting killing of opposition men on the polling day.

Along with the hartal, the indefinite blockade of roads, rail and waterways, in force since January 1, will continue, BNP's Vice-chairman Selima Rahman told a press briefing at her Gulshan residence around 5:30pm.

The shutdown has been extended by 12 hours also to protest the arrests of some central BNP leaders and "violence through state-sponsored terrorism", she added.

Within half an hour after the press briefing ended, detectives picked up Selima at her residence.

Speaking at the press conference, Selima blasted the prime minister for the

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