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## First session of 12th JS on January 30

### Confusion over opposition remains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 12th parliament goes into its maiden session on January 30 although it is not yet clear about who will sit on the opposition benches.

The session will start at 3:00pm, said the Parliament Secretariat in a press release yesterday.

According to an expert, the main challenge for the parliament will be formation of an effective opposition party, which will ensure accountability of the government.

In the January 7 election, out of 299 seats, the Awami League won 223, Jatiya Party II, Bangladesh Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and Bangladesh Kalyan Party one each, and independents 62 seats.

JP candidates won the 11 from 26 constituencies from which the AL withdrew their candidates after a seat-sharing deal between the two parties.

On the other hand, 58 out of 62

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**A man selling Herons in broad daylight on the 300 feet road in the capital's Purbachal area. According to the Wildlife (Conservation) Act- 2012, killing, poaching, selling, and possessing any wildlife is a punishable offence. The photo was taken recently.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## BCL leader lands in jail over rape of two women

### Fifth grader violated by schoolteacher in Ctg

STAR REPORT

A Bagerhat court yesterday sent a local Chhatra League leader to jail in a case over raping two women. The accused is Md Shakil Sardar, 25, president of Fakirhat Sadar Union Chhatra League in Fakirhat upazila.

Quoting the victims in Bagerhat, police said the two women, aged 23 and 21, along with their two male friends went to visit the Rampal thermal power plant and Khan Jahan Ali shrine in Bagerhat on Saturday night.

On their way back home on two motorcycles, Shakil along with his friend Mehdi Hasan intercepted them at Jaria Chowmaha of Fakirhat around 12:10am on Sunday.

Shakil and Mehdi beat up the two male friends and drove them out at knifepoint. Then they took the two women to two shops nearby and raped them, said police.

Around an hour later, the two took the women to an adjacent primary school and raped them again before releasing them.

Later, one of the two male friends of the victims called 999, the national emergency helpline, and sought help from police.

Police on Sunday morning rushed to one of the victims' home in Fakirhat and found the duo. They were sent a Khulna hospital for medical tests, said Md Ashraf Alam,

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## Five richest men doubled fortunes since 2020

AFP, Davos



The world's wealthiest five men have more than doubled their fortune since 2020, the charity Oxfam said yesterday, calling on nations to resist the ultra-rich's influence over tax policy.

A report from the charity, published as the global elite hobnob at the World Economic Forum in Davos this week, said their wealth rose from \$405 billion in 2020 to \$869 billion last year.

It also said despite the growth in the fortunes of the five - IVMH chief Bernard Arnault, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, investor Warren Buffet, Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison and Tesla CEO Elon Musk - 5 billion people have gotten poorer over the same period, reports Al Jazeera online.

Billionaires are today \$3.3 trillion richer than they were in 2020, despite many crises devastating the world's economy since this decade began, including the Covid pandemic, Oxfam said.

"We cannot continue with these levels of obscene inequality," Amitabh Behar, the interim director of Oxfam International, told AFP. He said it showed that "capitalism is at the service of the super rich".

With riches among the world's wealthiest increasing the way they are, he predicted that within a decade the world will see its first "trillionaire".

Oxfam's yearly report on inequality worldwide is traditionally released just before the Davos forum opened yesterday in the Swiss Alpine resort of the same name.

## Mercury drops in south too

### Lowest 9 degrees Celsius recorded in Barishal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mild cold sweeping over Madaripur, Gopalganj, Dinajpur, Barishal and Bhola districts has been disrupting people's lives for days.

Besides, foggy weather has been affecting the air, river and road traffic in many places.

According to Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the country's lowest temperature was recorded at 9 degrees Celsius in Barishal yesterday while in Dinajpur it was 9.5 degrees, Gopalganj 9.8 degrees, and Madaripur 10 degrees.

The sun was visible in the capital only for a short while and the lowest temperature was 14.8 degrees.

Meteorologist Khondokar Hafizur Rahman said there would be less fog next week, and the direct sunlight may lower the temperatures.

Besides, it may rain on January 18 and 19, which will clear the fog, he added.

## Gaza deaths top 24,000

Israel pounds the enclave as UN chief calls for immediate ceasefire

AGENCIES

The death toll from the Israeli offensive in Gaza has topped 24,000, the enclave's health ministry said yesterday, as the occupying force kept pounding the Palestinian territory for the 10th day.

Deadly violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and along Israel's border with Lebanon as well as strikes by US forces and Iran-backed Yemeni rebels in the Red Sea have raised fears of an escalation beyond the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday called for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip.

"We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. To ensure sufficient aid gets to where it is needed. To facilitate the release of the hostages. To tamp down the flames of wider war because the longer the conflict in Gaza continues, the greater the risk of escalation and miscalculation," Guterres said at a press briefing in New York.

According to the United Nations aid groups, the Israeli offensive on Gaza has created a humanitarian catastrophe for the 2.4 million people in the besieged strip and reduced much of the territory to rubble.

The health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza reported more than 132 "martyrs" overnight in "intense" Israeli bombardment across Gaza.

The Hamas government media office said two hospitals, a girls' school and "dozens" of homes were hit.

Hospitals in Gaza have been hit repeatedly since the war erupted, and the World Health Organization (WHO) says most of them are no longer functioning.

AFPTV footage showed smoke billowing over Khan Yunis, southern Gaza's main city,

as explosions could be heard from nearby Rafah, on the territory's southern border with Egypt.

The Israeli army said its forces had struck "two terrorists loading weapons into a vehicle" in Khan Yunis and raided "a Hamas command centre" there and seized weapons.

In central Israel, which has been largely spared the current violence, a suspected car ramming attack yesterday killed one woman and injured at least 12 other people, police said, announcing the arrest of two Palestinian men.

- » 132 Palestinians killed in 24 hours
- » China urges larger-scale Gaza peace conference
- » Communications remain severed for fourth day in the Palestinian enclave

Since October 7, Israel is carrying out a relentless military campaign that has killed at least 24,100 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry.

The UN says more than three months of fighting have displaced roughly 85 percent of the territory's population, crowded into shelters and struggling to get food, water, fuel and medical care.

Echoing earlier warnings of a fast-approaching famine, UN agencies said in a joint statement that "a fundamental step change in the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza is urgently needed".

## 'India was and is on our side'

Says foreign minister about continuation of democracy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India stood by Bangladesh to ensure the continuation of democracy in the country when there were conspiracies to thwart the 12th national election, said Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud.

"There were conspiracies to thwart the 2014 elections, but India was on our side. Also, there were efforts to make the 2018 elections controversial and questionable. India was and is now on our side...you know the position of India this year too for our democratic continuation."

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### Correction

In our report headlined "7,902 killed on the roads in 2023", published on page 12 yesterday, we inadvertently mentioned Nur Mohammad Majumder to be the joint secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division.

In fact he is the chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and an additional secretary. We have corrected the information in the online version of the story. We regret the error.

## RED SEA TENSIONS

## Houthi fired missile at US warship

US military says projectile was shot down; Qatar pauses sending tankers through the sea

AFP, Washington

The US military said Sunday its forces shot down a cruise missile fired at an American destroyer warship from Houthi controlled areas of Yemen.

The attack appears to be the first against a US destroyer amid a growing number of missile and drone strikes or attempted strikes by the Houthis, on what they deem Israeli-linked shipping on the key Red Sea trade route.

"On January 14 at approximately 4:45 pm (Sanaa time) an anti-ship cruise missile was fired from Iranian-backed Houthi militant areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon (DDG 58), which was operating in the Southern Red Sea," the United States Central Command said in a statement.

"The missile was shot down in vicinity of the coast of Hodeida by US fighter aircraft," according to CENTCOM. "There were no injuries or damage reported."

Asked yesterday whether Britain would take part in more air strikes against the Houthis, British defence minister Grant Schapps said "let's wait and see what happens... freedom of navigation is an international right that must be protected".

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) agency has received a report that the port side of a vessel was hit from above by a missile 95 nautical miles southeast of Yemen's Aden, it said in an advisory note yesterday.



Smoke billowing over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment yesterday. This photograph was taken from Rafah, a Palestinian town close to the Egypt border.

PHOTO: AFP

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## PROBING S ALAM

## SC extends status quo till Feb 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday deferred for three weeks the hearing on whether the authorities concerned will probe allegations against the owner of S Alam Group over amassing properties abroad without Bangladesh Bank's permission.

A four-member Appellate Division bench, led by the chief justice, extended the chamber judge's status quo order until February 5.

Ajmalul Hossain, senior counsel for S Alam Group owner Mohammed Saiful Alam, yesterday argued that the High Court cannot issue a suo motu rule asking for a probe based on a newspaper report.

The suo motu (voluntary) rule was issued after The Daily Star on August 4 last year ran a report titled "S Alam's Aladdin's Lamp".

SC lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman had brought the report to the court's notice, following which the HC issued the suo motu rule.