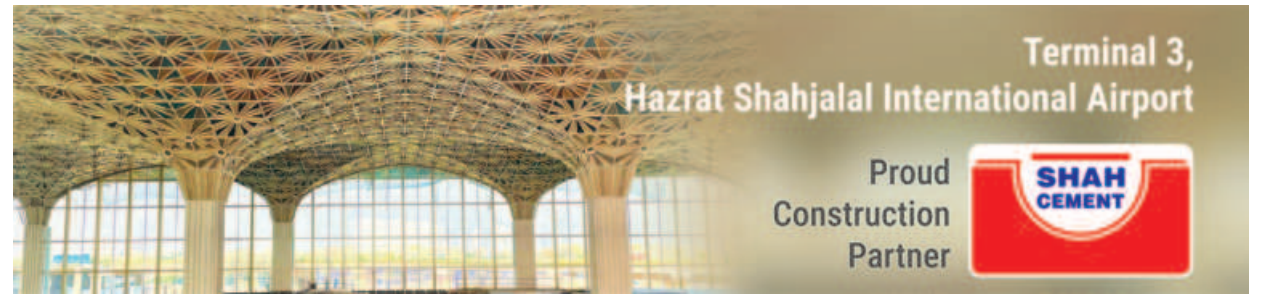




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## Intra-party feuds will be dealt with a firm hand

Quader tells party leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday asked the party leaders and activists not to engage in any kind of conflict among themselves over the election results.

Addressing a joint meeting of the AL central executive council and advisory council at the party office on Bangabandhu Avenue, he warned the leaders of stern organisational action if they do not comply with the directive, said three leaders who were present at the meeting.

The directive comes at a time when the party is concerned over post-election clashes between the supporters of the AL nominees and the party leaders who ran as independents.

The central leaders, who are tasked with stopping the intra-party clashes, are talking to district and upazila unit leaders about the matter, said several

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

One of the nine trucks, which had fallen into the Padma after a ferry capsized yesterday, being lifted with a crane. Story on page 2.

## PROTESTING PARLIAMENT SESSION

# BNP may call hartal or lay siege to JS

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP plans to observe protest programmes like hartal or lay siege to the parliament building on the first day of the parliamentary session of the new government as part of the movement for its one-point demand.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin is scheduled to convene the first session of the 12th parliament on January 30, which the BNP labelled an "illegal parliament" because of a "staged election".

Although the party has not observed any programme since January 7, it wants to return to peaceful and systematic movement, as per the decision of the virtual meeting of the party's standing committee members on Tuesday night.

"The party office and party chairperson's offices were opened. The leaders have started coming out from their hideouts. We are making plans to return to regular political programmes," one of the leaders told The Daily Star after the meeting on the condition of anonymity.

The party is expecting a boost in numbers as it is hopeful that its incarcerated leaders and activists will be let out on bail. Since its October 28 grand rally, more than 25,000 of its leaders and activists are in jail.

A few standing committee members said that the party should hold a rally in Dhaka immediately to pave the way

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## Traders promise to cut rice prices

Food minister says drives against hoarders begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rice traders and mill owners yesterday promised to reduce prices after Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder said legal action would be taken against them if they do not cut rice prices within the next four days.

The minister, during a meeting with rice mill owners, wholesalers, retailers and their representatives at the Directorate General of Food office, said when the government was busy with the election, the price of rice went up by Tk 6 a kg over four days.

"Now you reduce the prices the same way you increased the prices abnormally then. If not, we will take strict action according to the law because this price increase is completely unreasonable. There is no reason for the price increase during the Aman [harvest] season."

He said if the rice price did not decrease, imports would be encouraged. "I have prepared a file for zero duty imports and sent it to the prime minister. We will import as needed if the prime minister approves," he said.

The prices of BR-28, Pajam, Gutti and aromatic rice were supposed to decrease after Aman harvest. Instead, the prices went up by Tk 2-8 per kg over the last 10 days in kitchen markets of Dhaka.

The prices of miniket and najirshail rice have also soared over the last three days.

Millers claimed that the price of paddy has gone up due to high production costs and the wholesalers said they have no other option but to source rice at higher prices.

The minister said, "We cannot accept the argument of the traders for the rice price hike. They increased the price of rice abnormally during the formation of the government."

"Unscrupulous traders are hoarding rice. Some traders want to make a big profit. If they don't have a conscience, if they don't have integrity, it's a big problem," he said.

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## Iran hits 'terrorist bases' in Pakistan

2 children killed; Islamabad recalls ambassador from Tehran, blocks Iran's envoy's return

AFP, ISLAMABAD

Pakistan recalled its ambassador from Iran yesterday and blocked Tehran's envoy from returning to Islamabad after an Iranian air strike killed two children in the west of the country a day earlier.

Iranian news agency Mehrnews said the "missile and drone" attack targeted the Jaish al-Adl group's headquarters in Pakistan, calling it "another decisive step taken by Iran in response to the aggression against the security of our country".

The raid came late on Tuesday after Tehran also launched attacks in Iraq and Syria against what it called "anti-Iranian terrorist groups".

Pakistan denounced the strike, near the nations' shared border.

"Last night's unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran is a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations," spokeswoman Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement yesterday.

The foreign ministry recalled its ambassador from Tehran and said Iran's envoy - currently on a visit home - would not be allowed to return to Islamabad.

Tehran's top diplomat insisted his country's armed forces had

targeted "Iranian terrorist group" Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan.

"None of the nationals of the friendly and brotherly country of Pakistan were targeted by Iranian missiles and drones," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

**Iran had earlier launched missile attacks on "spy headquarters" and "terrorist" targets in Syria, and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.**

Formed in 2012, Jaish al-Adl is blacklisted by Iran as a terrorist group and has carried out several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years.

The Iranian foreign ministry said Amir-Abdollahian spoke with his Pakistani counterpart Jalil Abbas Jilan yesterday, stressing that "Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity are of great concern".

## Washington keen to work closely with Dhaka

Haas tells journos after meeting foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Washington is looking forward to work closely with Bangladesh to advance the mutual interests, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas said yesterday after his first meeting with newly appointed Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud.

"I had a meeting today [yesterday] so that we could talk about future of our relations and how we work together on the issues of mutual interests such as climate change, expanding business opportunities, and Rohingya," Haas told reporters after the meeting at the foreign ministry.

The meeting, which lasted for about an hour, is significant given that the US was critical of the government for elections. Washington and its allies said Bangladesh's national polls in 2014 and 2018 were mired with irregularities.

In May last year, Washington also announced a visa policy saying that those undermining democratic elections in

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## Israel escalates Gaza strikes

Says Hamas-run govt; Jordanian army's field hospital in Khan Younis badly damaged

AGENCIES

Israel stepped up strikes on the south of Gaza yesterday, ahead of the expected delivery of medicines for hostages in exchange for humanitarian aid under a newly brokered deal.

Air strikes and artillery fire targeted Khan Younis throughout the night, said an AFP correspondent in the southern Gaza Strip's biggest city. "It was the most difficult and intense night in Khan Younis since the start of the war," said Gaza's Hamas-run government.

The Jordanian army's military field hospital in Khan Younis was badly damaged. A hospital staff member was injured and would be flown back to Jordan for treatment while a patient was hit with shrapnel, the army said in a statement.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli strikes killed seven people near two refugee camps. Israeli forces also detained at least 85 Palestinians in the latest round of raids across the territory, according to the Palestinian Wafa news agency.

At least 24,448 Palestinians, about 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, have been killed in Israeli bombardments and ground assaults, according to the Gaza health ministry's latest figures. Some 163 Palestinians were killed and 350 wounded in 24 hours, the ministry added.

- Death toll in enclave rises to 24,448
- Offensive displaces 85pc of Gaza's 2.4m people
- Israeli strikes kill 7 Palestinians in West Bank

## Dubai building tallest residential clocktower

CNN ONLINE

Dubai is set to add another towering figure to its skyline.

The Aeternitas Tower, officially unveiled at a launch event last week, will be the world's tallest residential clocktower at a staggering 450 metres (1,476 feet) tall - more than four times the height of London's Big Ben, and just 22 metres (72 feet) short of the world's tallest residential building, the Central Park Tower in New York City.

Set to become the world's second-tallest clock tower (after the Makkah Clock Royal Tower in Mecca, Saudi Arabia), Aeternitas Tower is the result of a partnership between Dubai-based real estate developer London Gate and Swiss luxury watch manufacturer Franck Muller.

London Gate purchased the plot of land in Dubai Marina, which already had the beginnings of an unfinished 106-storey structure - and knew that the tower's monumental size needed a striking facade, said Tom Hill, media relations coordinator for the developer.



Displaced Palestinians prepare food as they take shelter inside a building damaged during Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Child kidnapped, killed by cousin for ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A four-year-old was found murdered after being kidnapped for ransom in Pabna Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

The victim, Md Salman, son of Mohammad Hashem of Sadullapur Alokchar village, had gone missing on Monday.

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Ataikula Police Station, said the father Mohammad Hashem the next day got a phone call from an unknown number demanding Tk 10 lakh ransom.

The family contacted the police, who picked up Faisal, the child's cousin who used to live in the same house, that night and interrogated him.

"Faisal confessed to killing Salman," OC Mizanur said, adding that as per Faisal's statement, police recovered Salman's body from a trunk in their house after he was strangled to death.

He added that Faisal, 25, who owns a computer shop in Ataikula bazar, was in debt of Tk 10 lakh, which he lost to online gambling.

As he could not manage the money, he kidnapped his cousin and demanded ransom from the family.