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## Cold spell likely to linger on

### Day temperature rises slightly

**STAR REPORT**

After weeks of cold waves, the temperature, particularly during the daytime, marked a rise yesterday as early morning rains in parts of the country helped dissipate the dense fog that had been blanketing the nation.

"Day temperatures are likely to remain warmer, with night temperatures falling slightly across the country," said AKM Nazmul Haque, meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"People who have been bearing the brunt of the chilling cold waves will start to get some respite in the coming days," Nazmul added.

He said rainfall in parts of the country on Wednesday and Thursday cleared the dense fog that had spread from Delhi to the southern region of Bangladesh.

However, moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and light

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A group of homeless children sitting on a footpath near Khulna railway station. Underprivileged people, especially the children and elderly, are suffering the most amid the cold spell. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Road crashes claim nine more lives

**STAR REPORT**

At least nine people were killed and 12 others were injured in separate road accidents in five districts yesterday.

In Faridpur, at least four people were killed and six others were injured when a bus collided with a human haulier on the Dhaka-Khulna Highway in Bhanga upazila's Kharkhandi area around 7:30pm.

Among the deceased are Mehedi Matubbar, 25, of Aruakandi village, Hafijul Islam, 40, of Nowakanda village under Bhanga upazila and Sirajul Islam, 35, of Madhukhali upazila, reports our district correspondent.

The identities of the remaining victims could not be ascertained immediately.

Six people with injuries were admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur.

Quoting locals, Abu Sayed Md Khairul Anam, officer-in-charge of Bhanga Highway Police Station, said, "The accident took place when a Dhaka-bound bus of Shohag Paribahan hit a human haulier in Kharkhandi area. Four people died on the spot and another six were injured."

In Moulvibazar, two people were killed and six others injured as a bus hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Sadar upazila.

The deceased are Abbas Mia, 70, and Madhu Mia, 65, of Sherpur Sadar upazila.

KM Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge

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## US rules out notion of not recognising new AL govt

**UNB, Dhaka**

The US has brushed aside the speculation that it will not recognise Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's fourth straight term in office.

At a regular briefing at the US Department of State in Washington DC on Thursday, a journalist asked, "So, when you say that the election results in Bangladesh were not credible, free, or fair, does this imply that the US will not recognise Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's fourth straight term?"

In reply, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said, "No, no." Miller said they are now encouraging the Bangladesh government to transparently probe the reports of violence to hold perpetrators accountable. "We all urge all parties to reject political violence."

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## Rice prices yet to cool despite govt warnings

**SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS**

The price of rice has not gone down in Dhaka's kitchen markets despite government warnings of legal action against traders.

The retail price of all varieties of rice increased by Tk 2-8 a kg in the last two weeks, dealing a blow to the people already burdened with the higher prices of essentials.

In the wholesale markets, the price fell up to Tk 1 per kg in the last two days, but there was no impact on the retail markets.

Traders say it would take at least a week for the price to go down at the retail level.

On January 17, rice traders and mill owners promised to reduce prices after Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder set a four-day deadline to cut prices.

They made the promise during a meeting with the minister at the Directorate General of Food office in the capital.

The Daily Star yesterday went to Kochukhet, Karwan Bazar, Mohammadpur, Mirpur-II Kacha Bazar, Ibrahimpur, Shewrapara, and Kazipara

kitchen markets and found prices of all varieties of rice were high.

Mohammad Munna, a resident of the Mohammadpur area, said he has been paying an extra Tk 7 to buy a kg of miniket variety of rice over the last two weeks. A kg of miniket that cost Tk 65, now costs Tk 72.

"It means I am paying an additional Tk 14 for two kg of rice, which I need for my five-member family. The extra Tk 420 a month is becoming a burden," he told The Daily Star at Mohammadpur Krishi Market.

Munna, who works at a butcher shop and earns Tk 700 daily, said, "If only the rice price increased, it would not affect us. But prices of almost all daily essentials have gone up."

Like Munna, the hike has hit low and fixed-income people hard.

Alamgir Hossain, manager of M/S Shuchona Rice Agency at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, accused the big traders of hoarding most of the rice.

"If they [big traders] cannot be controlled, it will be impossible for the government to bring down the rice price," he opined.

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**Traders say it would take at least a week for the price to go down at the retail level.**

## ETHNIC VIOLENCE

### 5 civilians killed in Manipur

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi**

Fresh ethnic violence has killed five civilians in two districts of the north eastern Indian state of Manipur, senior police officials said.

"Four persons were killed in an attack by armed miscreants in Bishnupur district on Thursday afternoon. We have managed to recover all the bodies and sent them to Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal for post-mortem and other formalities," Meghachandra Singh, Bishnupur district Superintendent of Police said.

The four killed when they were reportedly tilling a farm. The incident triggered protests in several parts of Imphal Valley, he said.

In a separate incident earlier on Thursday, a gunfight broke out between armed village volunteers at Kangchup in Imphal west district resulting in the death of a 23-year-old man.

All the five belonged to the majority Meitei community of Manipur.

Thursday's incidents came a day after two police personnel were killed and six people injured in an attack by armed militants in Tengnoupal.

## PAKISTAN-IRAN STANDOFF

### Both sides eye to dial down tensions

#### Pak FM talks to his Iranian counterpart, says Islamabad wants to build trust

**AGENCIES**

Pakistan expressed its willingness to work with Iran on "all issues" in a call between their foreign ministers yesterday after both countries exchanged drone and missile strikes on militant bases on each other's territory.

The tit-for-tat strikes by the two countries are the highest-profile cross-border intrusions in recent years and have raised alarm about wider instability in the Middle East since Israel launched an offensive on Gaza on Oct 7.

However, both sides have already signalled a desire to cool tensions, although they have had a history of rocky relations.

A statement from Pakistan's foreign office said Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani had spoken to his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amirabdollahian, yesterday, a day after Pakistan carried out strikes in Iran.

Iran said Thursday's strikes killed nine people in a border village on its territory, including four children. Pakistan said the Iranian attack on Tuesday killed two children.

"Foreign Minister Jilani expressed Pakistan's readiness to work with Iran on all issues based on spirit of mutual trust and cooperation," the statement said. "He underscored the need for closer cooperation on security issues."

- Pakistan's civil, military leaders meet to review security
- UN chief urges maximum restraint by both countries
- Biden says clash shows Iran is not well-liked in the region

## Japan's 'Moon Sniper' lands but 'losing power'

**AFP, Tokyo**

Japan became yesterday the fifth nation to achieve a "soft landing" on the Moon, but its space agency said that the craft's solar cells were not generating power.

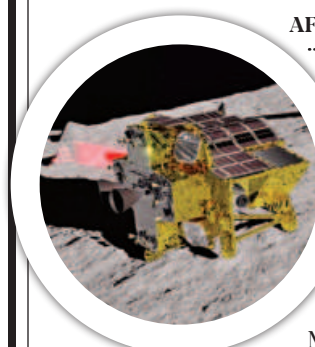
With the Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), Japan followed the United States, the Soviet Union, China and most recently India in achieving the feat.

JAXA confirmed that the SLIM "landed on the Moon at 00:20am on January 20, 2024 (Japan Time). Communication has been established since landing."

"However, the solar cells are not generating power and data acquisition from the lunar surface is given priority," it added.

"The SLIM is operated with on-board batteries. The data acquired on landing is stored in the spacecraft, and we are currently working to maximise the scientific results by first transmitting this data back to Earth," said JAXA official Hitoshi Kuminaka.

Japan's mission is one of a string of new projects launched in recent years on the back of renewed interest in Earth's natural satellite.



Chattogram Challengers' Najibullah Zadran is hugged by Shahadat Hossain as Sylhet Strikers skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza trudges back following the former's winning stroke in the second match on the opening day of the Bangladesh Premier League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## BPL 10 off to a promising start

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) jolted to a start yesterday after a muted build-up, pulling in a decent crowd for a double-header at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur on the weekend.

The final few days before the tournament were marred by talks of off-field issues such as the implementation of a revenue-sharing model with the franchisees and the tentativeness of the teams about declaring their captains.

But after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president and Youth and Sports minister Nazmul Hassan Papon declared the tournament open in a watered-down ceremony, cricket took centre stage.

Durdanto Dhaka skipper Mosaddek Hossain

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