

WEATHER
FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 26.8
L 15.6

MYMENSINGH
H 27.5
L 12.2

CHITTAGONG
H 26.0
L 20.8

SYLHET
H 27.5
L 15.8

RAJSHAHI
H 24.5
L 13.3

RANGPUR
H 27.0
L 12.8

KHULNA
H 25.5
L 14.5

BARISAL
H 25.6
L 14.9

COX'S BAZAR
H 23.8
L 21.0

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at a few places over Chittagong division and light rain at one or two places over Sylhet, Barisal and Khulna divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today, says the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:23pm and rises tomorrow at 06:42am. Highest and lowest temperatures recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:



Putting their lives in peril, two labourers sit on top of the moving truck. What is alarming is that one of the duo is talking over the phone oblivious to the fact that he might fall if the vehicle makes a sudden stop. The photo was taken from Rupnagar area in the capital's Mirpur yesterday.

Economic growth to sustain

Says FBCCI president, adding irregularities in credit management, Rohingya issue to keep economy under pressure

UNB, Dhaka

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) president Md Shafiu Islam yesterday said defying all odds country's GDP will continue to grow in 2018.

Irregularities in credit management in banking sector, Rohingya influx and the floods in the last year will continue its pressure on economy, he added.

He said the internal economy was under pressure due to floods in different parts of the country and Rohingya influx in 2017.

Nearly one million Rohingyas are now living in Bangladesh with 655,000 new arrivals since August 25, 2017.

The apex trade body leader said the works of the mega projects undertaken by the government are gaining momentum.

"If these mega projects are implemented, these will be shining example of the development of Bangladesh. We are satisfied with the government activities."

Mohiuddin said many new entrepreneurs have emerged and there is visible progress in establishment of special economic zones.

"These are good signs. We need better energy supply and improved transportation system. These areas need to be addressed in this year."

Referring to the construction work of Padma Multipurpose Bridge, FBCCI President hoped, "A new horizon in communication system will be opened through the inauguration of the bridge."

Mohiuddin said since the businesses are dependent on Chittagong port heavily, developing an alternative port or augmenting its efficiency and activities is a big challenge.

FBCCI witnessed instability in terms of prices of a number of products including rice, which created problem for consumers in 2017, the president added.

8,000 babies born on New Year's Day in Bangladesh Says Unicef

BSS, Dhaka

Approximately 8,370 babies were expected to be born in Bangladesh on New Year's Day, said a Unicef report.

The babies will account for 2.17 percent of the estimated 385,793 babies to be born globally yesterday. According to the report, India will have 69,070 new faces on the same day while Pakistan 14,910.

The report, however, said, "While many babies will survive, some will not make it

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Lower courts get judges to speed up trials

Appointment of 166 approved by president, further recruitment underway; aim is to reduce backlog of 27.5 lakh cases

ASHUTOSH SARKER

A total of 166 new judges for the lower courts are likely to be appointed this month, sources in the law ministry and Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC) said.

The process for recruitment of another 143 is also underway, the commission sources added.

The government has initiated the process of recruiting the new judges in a bid to reduce existing backlog of cases as 27.5 lakh lawsuits remain pending with the lower courts across the country.

Besides, over 400 posts of lower court judges, including some district judges, are now vacant, hampering the judicial functions, the sources said.

The BJSC had selected a total of 207 candidates through examinations and recommended appointing them as lower court judges in March last year.

After receiving the recommendation from the commission, the law ministry sent the details of the candidates to the home ministry for police verification.

The home ministry performed the task and subsequently sent the police verification report of 166 candidates among the selected 207 to the law ministry.

The ministry then forwarded their details to the Prime Minister's Office for facilitating the presidential approval.

The president finalised the appointments of 166 candidates last week and sent them to the law ministry, which will now send proposals regarding posting to the Supreme Court.

After receiving the opinion from the Supreme Court, the law ministry will issue a gazette notification on their appointment and posting.

All these processes might be finished by this month, sources in the law ministry and BJSC said.

The process started in March last year through issuing recruitment circular.

Meanwhile, the BJSC also held viva voce of 632 candidates on December 22 who had qualified in the written test held between July 30 and August 9 last year.

Fire destroys 50 Dhaka shanties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 shanties were burnt in a fire at Karwan Bazar railway slum in the capital yesterday.

The fire originated at the slum around 12:25pm, said fire officials. On information, four fire fighting units doused the blaze around 1:20pm. No casualty was reported.

Aynal Haque, worker at a rickshaw garage, who had been living in the slum for 40 years, lost everything in the fire. "My family was at work at the time of fire. We had furniture, some gold ornaments and Tk 17,000 in the room. But when we returned, everything turned into ashes," he said. Another fire victim Samoni Begum's room was just few yards away from the place where the fire originated. She was in the room with her two toddlers when the fire was burning the shanties. "I left the room hurriedly with my babies to save our lives. But I could not save any of my belongings. All were burnt before my eyes," Samoni said.

The fire might have originated from electric short-circuit or from gas stove, fire officials suspected.

AUG 15 ATTACK PLAN "Neo JMB" leader held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday claimed to have arrested a top leader of "Neo JMB" who allegedly supplied bombs for carrying out an attack on the crowd paying homage to Bangabandhu on National Mourning Day at Dhanmondi 32 in the capital last year.

Mamun, 21, was arrested during a raid in House Building area under sector-7 in the capital's Uttara around 7:30pm on Sunday.

He was hiding in the city possibly to carry out a massive attack, said counterterrorism officials.

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UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTION

'Restoring' democracy Don't panic BNP's resolution

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said "restoring" democracy, installing a pro-people government and forcing the government to hold an acceptable national elections are the major challenges for their party in 2018.

He, however, said their party still wants to hold talks with the government over the 11th parliamentary elections.

"We've long been talking about dialogues. No problem, we think, can be resolved without talks. But, the government has taken a position to hold the polls... without a dialogue only to cement one-party rule. People won't accept it."

Fakhrul came up with the remarks while talking to reporters after placing wreaths at BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's grave along with leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), marking its 39th founding anniversary.

He said people think a credible and neutral election is not possible without a non-party election-time neutral government.

The BNP leader said their party thinks 2018 will be a year of people and victory of democracy, and people will make it happen.

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AGENCIES

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP has no reason to be worried about the next general elections as it will be held in a fair and credible manner.

"I'm strongly hopeful that the election will be held at the right time and BNP's fear and uncertainty about it will also be removed. A fair, neutral and inclusive election will be held in a congenial atmosphere," he said.

Quader, also the general secretary of Awami League (AL), came up with the remarks while talking to reporters at the Secretariat, reports UNB.

He also hoped that a meaningful election will be held with participation of all registered political parties.

The minister also thinks BNP will not make the same mistake again by not joining the 11th parliamentary polls. "They [BNP] are now coming up with big demands as part of their efforts to realise something from the government. But I can confidently say that BNP will come to the next polls for the sake of its existence."

Asked whether the government is going to cooperate with

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Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad flanked by leaders and activists leads a procession marking the 32nd founding anniversary of the party. The photo was taken near Jatiya Press Club yesterday.



Demanding wage commission for workers of the jute mills, Jatiya Sramik Federation brings out a procession in the capital yesterday. The photo was taken in front of Jatiya Press Club.

Road accident toll rises by one-fourth in 2017

4,284 killed, 9,112 injured last year, says NCPSRR

UNB, Dhaka

At least 4,284 people, including 516 women and 539 children, were killed and 9,112 others injured in 3,472 road accidents across the country in 2017, said a survey report yesterday.

The accidents took place across the country between January 1 and December 31.

The National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR), a non-government organisation, revealed the information in its yearly survey and observation report 2017.

The report was prepared on the basis of news published in 22 national dailies, 10 regional newspapers and eight online news portals and news agencies. According to the report, the year 2016 saw 2,998 road accidents killing 3,412 people, including 470 women and 453 children, and injuring 8,572 others.

This means, the number of accidents increased

by 15.82 percent while death toll increased by 25.56 percent in 2017 compared to that of 2016. But, the number of road accidents came down in 2017 compared to 2015, the report added.

NCPSRR mentioned nine main reasons for the accidents and casualties: reckless driving, plying of three-wheeler and motorbike, carrying passengers and goods in locally-made mechanised small vehicles, overloading and overtaking violating laws, not following traffic rules and regulation properly on long routes, long-time driving without break, huge risky turning points and dilapidated roads, non-enforcement of law to stop plying of unfit vehicles, and finally employing unskilled drivers.

Ashis Kumar Dey, general secretary of the national committee, said lack of proper supervision and people's awareness were the major reasons behind the high number of road crashes.

Bus-covered van collision kills 5 in Bogra

Six die in four days

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and 30 others injured after a bus collided head-on with a covered van on Bogra-Dhaka highway in Shahjahanpur thana of Bogra yesterday, reports UNB.

Three of the dead were Mithila, 20, daughter of Masud of Ulipur village of Sherpur upazila, Mahi Khatun, 23, daughter of Altaf Hossain of Baroduari village, and Saju, 34, son of Sirajul Islam of Dhangora village of Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj.

The accident left the covered van driver dead on the spot, said Officer-in-Charge of Shahjahanpur Police Station Zia Latiful Islam. Among the injured, four died