



YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 34.6 L 23.7

MYMENSINGH H 30.0 L 20.5

CHITTAGONG H 32.0 L 22.4

SYLHET H 31.0 L 21.0

RAJSHAHI H 33.5 L 19.5

RANGPUR H 31.5 L 20.0

KHULNA H 33.7 L 23.0

BARISAL H 34.5 L 23.6

COX'S BAZAR H 31.2 L 21.7

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty/squally wind is likely to occur at Sylhet division and at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal & Chittagong divisions with hails at isolated places in next 24 hours till 6pm today, said the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:08pm and rises tomorrow at 06:06am. Highest and lowest temperatures recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

CHALLENGING KHALEDA'S BAIL Govt, ACC file leave-to-appeal petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed two separate leave-to-appeal petitions with the Supreme Court challenging the High Court order that granted bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

The attorney general's office and the ACC both submitted the petitions also seeking extension of the SC order that stayed the HC's bail order till Sunday.

Citing the petition filed by the government, Deputy Attorney General Ekramul Haque Tutul told The Daily Star that the lower court has found Khaleda guilty of misappropriating the money and it sentenced her to five years' imprisonment considering her old age, sickness and social status.

Therefore, there is no scope for granting bail to Khaleda Zia on these grounds, he said.

DAG Tutul also said the full bench of the Appellate Division of the SC will hold hearing on the leave-to-appeal petition on Sunday.

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It's to keep her away from anti-govt movement

Fakhrul tells Ctg rally about Khaleda's conviction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday at a rally in Chittagong said party Chairperson Khaleda Zia was convicted in a "false" case with an ill motive to keep her away from the anti-government movement.

"We are not conducting movement for assuming power," he said, adding that they were trying to "uphold democracy" in the country through movement.

The rally was jointly organised by three Chittagong BNP units—city, north and south district—in front of the city unit's office at Nasiman Bhaban, demanding release of Khaleda.

"We have been urging the government to take initiative for holding a fair election under a neutral government. But they are not interested in any dialogue with political parties in this regard," said Fakhrul.

Senior party leaders Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Mirza Abbas, Abdul Moin Khan, and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury addressed the rally with city unit president Shahadat Hossain in the chair.



The name Dhaka has become a synonym for dust and allergies. The residents of this metropolis grapple with this menace almost all year long, except for a few months during the monsoon, with the hope that they would be relieved of the dust-related respiratory problems in the coming year. Years go by. But the situation only worsens without any visible initiative taken by the authorities. The photos of a dusty road in Kajla area near Jatrabari in the capital was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dusty Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM

Momena Begum and her mother Tahera Khatun were anxiously waiting outside a doctor's chamber at a private hospital in the capital.

A resident of Hajiribagh area, Tahera has been suffering from dust allergy for the last five years. Her condition deteriorates during dry seasons.

She also suffers from repertory problems due to the excessive dust caused by the dryness in the air.

"It has become common in our family. My brother and I are also facing the same problems due to air pollution," Momena told this correspondent.

Like Momena, many of the city dwellers are also suffering from various forms of diseases caused by dust and air pollution.

It is almost impossible to pinpoint the main reasons behind Dhaka's deadly dust problems as there are so many.

Dry weather, waning greenery, unplanned heavy construction works are just a handful of them.

In addition, digging of roads for installing utility lines, uncovered construction materials lying on or beside the roads, transporting those materials in open trucks, using of stone crushers in the open and poor conditions of the roads continue to add to the already polluted air.

Every year, during dry season, the capital gets blanketed by a layer of dust.

Many of its key arteries including Rokeya Sarani, Banasree, Mirpur, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Mazar road, Gabtoli, Mirpur Beribadh Road and Rayer Bazar witness massive dust pollution.

Commuters in those areas have complained of unbearable dust pollution. They said the air remains thick with dust due to various ongoing "development works" such as unplanned digging and construction.

Also, many of the locals in those areas alleged that the works are being done without spraying any water to minimise the dust.

According to a statistics of the Department of Environment (DoE),

Dhaka's air quality index (AQI) on December 5 last year was 247, which is very unhealthy.

According to DoE, 0-50 is good, 51-100 is moderate, 101-150 cautionary, 151-200 unhealthy, 201-300 very unhealthy and 301-500 is severely unhealthy.

In addition, Dhaka was 17th in the list of 25 most air polluted cities among 1,600 cities in 91 countries across the world, according to a 2014 report of World Health Organization (WHO).

According to another report of WHO, published in 2016, some 3 million deaths a year worldwide are linked with exposure to outdoor air pollution.

"Exposure to toxic air and dust pollution can cause diseases like asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, nasal allergy and rhinitis," said Dr Kazi S Bennoor, assistant professor of respiratory medicine at National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital (NIDCH).

Tahashin Alam Choudhury, a doctor at Anwer Khan Modern Hospital, said since November last year, patients with asthma,

dust allergy and cold have increased at the hospital and it will continue till March.

Although doctors advise commuters to use face masks while outside, but it does not help much.

Dr Bennoor of NIDCH said cloth masks do not protect much against dust.

An N-95 mask, used by doctors in ICU, offers a better protection. As they are costlier, people do not use them much.

Air pollution also increases the risks of acute respiratory infections.

It can affect children alarmingly as lead affects the brain of a child and leaves a permanent damage, said Dr Bennoor.

Dr Flavia Bustreo, assistant director general at WHO, said, "Air pollution also takes a toll on pregnant women."

At the same time, Dr Bennoor added, "The oxygen that a pregnant woman inhales also affects the unborn child, which can result in a premature birth or in some cases can even kill the child in womb."

A prolong exposure to dusty air may lead to lung cancer or interstitial lung disease

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Participants at a consultation titled, "Technology Mediated Violence against Women in Bangladesh", organised by ARTICLE 19, at a hotel in the capital yesterday. Speakers demanded greater protection for women in cyberspace. Tahmina Rahman presented keynote speech. Saraban Tahura Zaman, a researcher of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust; Ambica Roy, coordinator of Child Rights Unit at Ain o Salish Kendra; and Nasimun Ara Haque Minu, president of Bangladesh Female Journalists' Association, spoke.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Thailand keen on rly, maritime links

The country's prime minister says after meeting Bangladesh foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT,
From Bangkok

Thailand is keen on establishing maritime and tri-nation railway connectivity as well as assisting Bangladesh in enhancing its maritime capabilities.

Thailand Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha yesterday expressed his country's interest while stressing the need for a heightened trade and investment cooperation with Bangladesh.

Gen Prayut made the comments as he spoke with journalists from The Daily Star and four TV channels from Bangladesh at Bangkok's Thai Ku Fah Building, the Government House of Thailand, yesterday morning following his meeting with visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali.

During the meeting, the Thai

prime minister instantaneously asked his office to examine the possibility of a proposal to establish a tri-nation railway network connecting Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand, said meeting sources, adding that the proposal was recently made at the recent meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos of Switzerland.

"We are a neighbour of Bangladesh. Although we don't have a land boundary, but we are maritime neighbours. With having our expertise in maritime resources, we are ready to assist Bangladesh in exploring maritime resources and capabilities. We are eager to cooperate [with] Bangladesh in the economic front to elevate our ties for the benefit of the two countries and the peoples," Gen Prayut said.

While making an offer to establish coastal shipping connectivity

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RAJSHAHI WAR CRIMES ACCUSED ICT sets Apr 12 for pressing charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday set April 12 for the prosecution to press charge, if any, against a Rajshahi man against whom a case was filed over his alleged war crimes during the Liberation War in 1971.

Yesterday, on the date that was set previously for filing a report in the case, the tribunal accepted Prosecutor Zahid Imam's prayer for one month's time to prepare formal charge in the case.

The accused, Puthia resident Jamaat-e-Islami activist Abdus Samad Musa, 61, is now in jail. He was arrested on January 24 last year.

The investigation agency of the tribunal on January 14 completed probe into the case and said to have found evidence against Musa over wartime crimes.

Musa was "involved" in the killings of 15 people, abduction and torture of 21 people and looting and arson in Puthia and Durgapur upazilas of the district, the agency said.

Musa went into hiding, most probably in India, after the war. He returned to Bangladesh after the political change-over in 1975, it said.

A senior investigator said Musa tried to conceal his real age and even gave false information about his children's age in a bid to evade the war crime allegations.

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