



YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 35.2 L 27.2

MYMENSINGH H 35.4 L 25.4

CHITTAGONG H 34.9 L 25.0

SYLHET H 35.3 L 26.5

RAJSHAHI H 34.5 L 26.0

RANGPUR H 34.0 L 25.0

KHULNA H 35.2 L 27.5

BARISAL H 35.2 L 27.2

COX'S BAZAR H 34.2 L 24.6

Light to moderate rain/thundershowers with temporary gusty wind may occur at a few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over southern part of Bangladesh in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today. UNB said quoting the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 06:00pm and rises tomorrow at 5:46am.

Polls should be held under non-party govt

Speakers tell Shujan roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The upcoming parliamentary election should be held under a non-partisan government because previous elections under partisan governments were not credible, discussants said at a roundtable yesterday. They also said the Election Commission (EC) should not hastily introduce the electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the national polls before it is extensively introduced to the voters.

Civil society platform Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) arranged the roundtable on "Amendment of the Representation of People Order (RPO) and Fair Election" at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The discussants -- including former bureaucrats, professors, governance campaigners and lawyers -- said institutional reform in different government bodies is required for ensuring credible polls due in December.

Addressing the roundtable, Shujan President M Hafizuddin Khan criticised the EC for sending a proposal hurriedly to the government to change the RPO of 1972 for allowing it to use EVMs in the upcoming polls.

The EC is working like a "rocket" to include EVM system in the RPO, he said.

Many countries, including the US, have not yet started using it. Many nations also suspended the system after using it, since they think it was not suitable, he said, adding that most Bangladeshis do not know about it properly.

"So, why the rush?" he questioned. Also a former adviser to a caretaker government, Hafizuddin Khan said, "We have to accept that previous elections under political governments were not held in fair manners."

"Our only demand should be election under a non-partisan government," he added.

Former Cabinet Secretary Ali Imam Majumdar said fair election does not depend only on government's will.

However, if the government wants it can turn state actors -- like police, BGB and other state servants, which have possibility to appear as "villain" during elections -- into "friends" overnight, he said.

Gono Forum Executive President Subrata Chowdhury said if political parties really want, they can sit together and reach a consensus in seven days, he said.

Prof CR Abrar of International Relations department of Dhaka University said

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Suhrawardy Udyan open to all parties

Says Quader

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said all registered political parties will get permission to hold programmes at Suhrawardy Udyan following the prime minister's directive.

"Our national election steering committee's first meeting was held at Gono Bhaban yesterday (Saturday). Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked me to inform the police commissioner to keep Suhrawardy Udyan open to all parties for meetings and rallies," he said.

He further said, "I've given the police commissioner a directive today (Sunday) in this regard.

There's no necessity to hold rallies blocking roads at Paltan or in front of Jatiya Press Club. Suhrawardy Udyan will remain open, and police will permit those who will seek permission."

He was addressing the 22nd National Council of the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said though the government had no objection, police denied permission to some political parties to hold their programmes on security concerns.

"The prime minister has clearly instructed the police to permit the registered political parties to hold programmes at Suhrawardy Udyan."

Infrastructure being upgraded for faster economic growth: PM

Two bridges on Teesta, Titas rivers inaugurated

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is improving the road network across the country to advance Bangladesh economically.

She said this while inaugurating two bridges on the Teesta and Titas rivers in Rangpur and Brahmanbaria respectively, through video-conference.

"A better communication system will improve peoples' economic condition," she said, while opening the two bridges from her Gono Bhaban residence, joined by officials and cross sections of people on the other ends at Gangachara of Rangpur and Bancharampur of Brahmanbaria.

Sheikh Hasina said that contemporary history suggests that the people enjoy the benefits of development "when Awami League comes to power".

Local Government Minister Engineer Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and senior secretary of the ministry Jafar Ahmed Khan also spoke at the event, conducted by the PM's principal secretary Nozibur Rahman.

State Minister for LGRD Moshirur Rahman Ranga and State Minister for Social Welfare Nuruzzaman Ahmed were present, among others, at Rangpur end while former state minister ABM Tajul Islam and local parliament members were present on the Brahmanbaria end of the video conference.

The 850-metre bridge on the Teesta links Gangachara Upazila with Lalmonirhat and costs Taka 123 crore, while the 771-metre bridge in Brahmanbaria connects Bancharampur with Homna and Muradnagar upazilas, and was built at a cost of Taka 99.86 crore.

Both the bridges were named after Sheikh Hasina in recognition of her constant efforts for construction of the bridges and development of the area.

Sheikh Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reconstructed about 300 bridges destroyed by Pakistani army during the Liberation War, and rebuilt 250 dilapidated roads.

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This photo, taken recently at the Bangla Motor intersection, sums up the overall scenario of the 'model traffic corridor': while cars have stopped behind the zebra crossing, a bus treads on it. Pedestrians, meanwhile, continue to walk outside the marking behind the traffic sergeant's back. Motorbikes carrying three people, without helmets, pass through.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DMP'S 'MODEL TRAFFIC CORRIDOR'

Improvements visible, but still a long way to go

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) pilot project to bring traffic discipline to Dhaka streets has seen some success in its first two weeks, but a lot still remains to be done.

In an initiative titled "model traffic corridor", DMP selected a seven kilometre stretch of thoroughfare passing right through the heart of the city -- from Jahangir Gate to Gulistan Zero Point -- and decided to enforce traffic rules strictly on this corridor. Based on the experiences of a month-long exercise, DMP would extend the project to other major roads of the city.

DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia announced the project -- taken as per the direction of the Prime Minister's Office -- on September 4, to be carried out in association with the two Dhaka city corporations.

The activities under the project include erecting 4.5 feet high strong fences; making the pedestrians use zebra crossings, underpasses and foot over-bridges; keeping foot over-bridges and underpasses clean; assigning designated bus stops and ensuring that buses only stop there, improving use of traffic signals and making bus drivers follow traffic rules.

After the first 10 days of the initiative, field traffic officers say they managed to bring some discipline among bus drivers and passengers but a lot more cooperation from drivers and pedestrians are needed to fully bring the chaotic situation on one of the busiest roads in the city under control.

While visiting different intersections of the route, it was seen that bus drivers and pedestrians followed traffic rules in some areas, and did not in other parts.

Most people crossing the Sonargaon intersection were seen using zebra crossings, while many also waited for buses at the designated bus stop in the area.

"People are using zebra crossings. We tell

them to wait at the designated bus stop. Some people listen and some don't," said Traffic Inspector of Tejgaon zone Anwar Kabir, who was on duty at the intersection.

At Shahbagh, the situation was a tad challenging.

"I have to stop buses or motorcycles if they break traffic rules, and fine them after checking necessary papers. If suddenly pedestrians start jaywalking, it becomes difficult to look after both simultaneously," said Traffic Sergeant of Shahbagh zone Sadi Ali Sayed.

Traffic police also said punishing pedestrians for violating traffic laws is not their duty. Magistrates can punish the pedestrians for jaywalking through mobile courts.

Pedestrians also have mixed opinions on using zebra crossings, foot over-bridges or underpasses.

From Jahangir Gate to Zero Point, there are 13 foot-bridges and one underpass. Besides, there are zebra crossings, many of them painted recently, at most intersections on the route.

However, from Shahbagh to the Matsya Bhaban intersection there are no zebra crossings, and people were seen running across the street amidst traffic to get to the other side.

"I prefer zebra crossing to foot-bridge while crossing the road, as it saves time and is not as physically taxing," said Jamshed, who was waiting for a bus at a designated spot in Karwan Bazar.

However, one of the reasons not all pedestrians are taking traffic rules in stride is bad habits formed over years and lack of awareness.

"When I see people cross the road without using the zebra crossing or stand at an undesignated spot for bus, I do the same," said Jamiul Alam, a private job holder.

Near Shahbagh, a sexagenarian woman from Gazipur was seen waiting for bus away from the designated spot. When asked, she said, "I do not know anything about the bus stop."

It is also true that some designated bus stops are not convenient at all for drivers and passengers. In front of BSMMU at Shahbagh, the bus stop is occupied by parked cars, and local vendors, while a part of the road is under construction. The situation at Paltan and Gulistan Zero Point were similar.

According to Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba), these transgressions are in violation of sections 66, 67, 68, 72, 77 and 80 of DMP Ordinance. The organisation says on its website that on average one pedestrian dies or is injured every day because of reckless driving in the city.

DMP has recently designated 121 bus stops in the city, and has issued directive to keep doors of buses shut while travelling between stops.

From Jahangir Gate to Shahbagh, bus drivers were seen keeping the doors closed from stop to stop, but that practice changed from Shahbagh to Zero Point.

"We keep the door shut before arriving at the next stop, but in Gulistan area it is not possible due to the crowd. People want to get on the bus from undesignated spots," said Md Babu, driver of a Bihongo Paribahan bus.

Bus helper Karim, who was stuck in traffic jam near Matsya Bhaban, said, "Standing all day at the bus' door is tiring, and opening the door from stoppage to stoppage is even more exhausting. Besides, if the doors are closed there is little ventilation; I keep the door open to let air in."

Some staff buses and BRTC buses were also seen keeping their doors open while on the road.

The other oft-seen traffic violation is motorbikes with their riders and passengers not wearing helmets, and sometimes three people on a bike. Although more bike riders and their passengers are using helmets than before, a significant number of them are still violating the rules.

Talking over the phone, Additional Commissioner of DMP Mir Rezaul Alam

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receives the land documents of historic Rose Garden palace from the heirs of its last owner at Gono Bhaban yesterday. The mansion was the birthplace of the Awami League, and the government bought it for Tk 331.7 crore.

PHOTO: BSS

FARMERS BANK Another scam involving Chisty's son unearthed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scam-hit Farmers Bank's Tangail Branch was inaugurated on July 24 last year and on that day it set off its journey with a suspicious transaction done by a paper-only organisation owned by Rashedul Haque Chisty, son of the Bank's former audit committee chairman Mahabubul Haque Chisty.

About Tk 4 crore was transferred from the bank's Bakshiganj Branch in Jamalpur to a current account of RCL Plastic Industries owned by Rashedul. The account was opened with the Tangail branch on that day.

In its enquiry, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has unearthed suspicious transaction of about Tk 9.28 crore by Rashedul with the help of bank officials.

Yesterday, ACC filed a case with Tangail Model Police Station and arrested Ferdous Jubayet Islam Bhuiyan,

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