

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 28.5 L 16.7	H 27.4 L 14.0	H 28.8 L 16.5	H 27.9 L 15.5	H 27.0 L 13.6	H 27.3 L 13.6	H 27.6 L 15.8	H 28.3 L 14.0	H 28.0 L 17.0

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 24 hours till 6:00pm, UNB said quoting the Met office. Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night till morning. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:11pm and rises on Wednesday at 6:27am.

'POLITICAL' CASES
Issue directives for release of party men: Oikyafront to EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

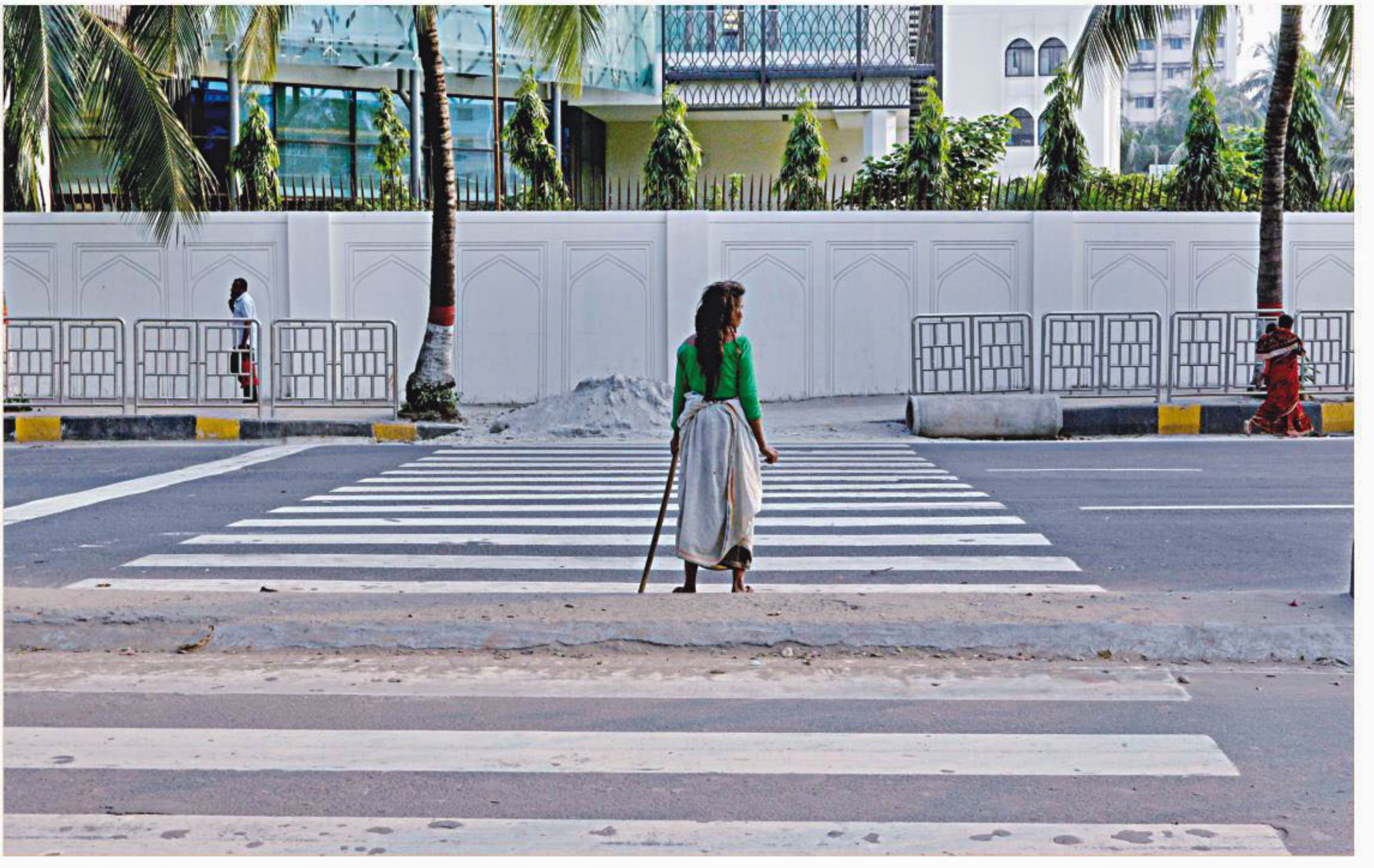
Jatiya Oikyafront yesterday demanded that the Election Commission issue directives to the home ministry to release all leaders and activists of different parties arrested in "political" cases.

Dr Kamal Hossain-led Jatiya Oikyafront placed the demand in a letter sent to Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda. The alliance's media coordinator Latiful Bari Hamim submitted the letter signed by its Chief Coordinator Mostafa Mohsin Montu.

In the letter, Oikyafront said no one can be arrested for political reasons after the announcement of valid candidates. "Especially no candidate should be harassed," it said.

Chief Election Commissioner is requested to issue directives for the release of all leaders and activists detained in political cases for the sake of holding the election in a fair and credible manner, the letter reads.

A total of 2,279 nomination papers were declared invalid while 786 others were announced invalid by the returning officers during Sunday's scrutiny.



SENSE AND SENSIBILITY...

A homeless, and apparently mentally imbalanced woman chooses the zebra crossing to get on the other side of the road near Hotel Intercontinental in Dhaka, but the same good sense did not dawn on this able-bodied young man who takes a risky shortcut to do the same at Farmgate. The photos were taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Allocate 20pc of nat'l budget to education
Quota reformists urge all parties

DU CORRESPONDENT

In their manifesto prepared ahead of the upcoming national election, quota reformists yesterday urged all political parties to allocate 20 percent of national budget to the education sector and ensure jobs for youths on the basis of merit soon after graduation once they come to power.

Leaders of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, the platform that spearheaded the quota reform movement, came up with the demands at a programme titled "Tarunyer Ishtehar Bhabna" (thoughts of youths regarding manifesto).

A total of 45 demands were placed that include bringing a logical reformation to the existing quota system in class-III and class-IV government jobs and raising the age ceiling to 35 from 30 for entering public service.

Their other demands include ensuring employment for youths on the basis of qualification, providing proper training to create entrepreneurs, holding public university admission tests centrally, forming a special cell to prevent question leak, shutting down evening courses at public universities and allocating 10 percent of university budgets to research.

They were supposed to hold the programme at the Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of Dhaka University but later held it outside the auditorium as the university authorities withdrew permission for holding the programme just before it was about to begin.

Speaking at the programme, Nurul Haq Nur, joint convener of the platform, said they would send their demands in writing to all registered political parties.

"Initially we handed it over to Awami League, BNP and Oikyafront," he said.

Convener of the platform, Hasan Al Mamun, said they have prepared the manifesto in light of youths' demands to build a hunger- and poverty-free, democratic country.

A 23-member delegation led by Nurul Haq Nur handed over a copy of their demands to AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader and another 18-member delegation led by joint convener Faruk Hasan handed over a copy to BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

On October 4, the government scrapped the existing quota system in direct recruitment of Class-I and Class-II government jobs, autonomous/semi-autonomous institutions and various corporations in face of protests.

DEATHS CAUSED BY GAS EXPLOSIONS
High Court questions authorities' inaction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why they should not be directed to take safety measures for preventing deaths caused by gas explosions throughout the country.

The court also asked the respondents to show causes why their inaction to take necessary steps should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries to power, energy and mineral resources ministry and Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, the latter's chairman, and chief inspector of the department of explosives have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader delivered the rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court (SC) lawyer Amit Das Gupta.

Earlier in the day, Amit submitted the petition seeking the HC order to take measures to prevent deaths in gas explosions.

Citing the petition, the petitioner told The Daily Star that accidents and deaths are happening in the country due to gas pipeline leaks and gas cylinder blasts.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, which issues permits for the use of gas cylinders, is responsible for preventing gas leaks and cylinder blasts, he said in the petition.

The commission, however, is reportedly not taking such measures and, therefore, their inaction in preventing the accidents is illegal, he added.

BNP questions Syed Ashraf's candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday raised questions over the validity of Awami League's former general secretary Syed Ashraf Islam's candidacy, claiming his nomination paper did not have his signature.

"Syed Ashraf is ill and undergoing treatment at a Thailand hospital, but his fingerprint and signature have been put in his nomination paper. How did those come about?" BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi asked.

"How is his [Ashraf's] nomination valid?" Rizvi said at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office in Dhaka.

"Ashraf's nomination paper has been granted by the Election Commission despite not having his signature," he claimed.

HC rejects challenge against appointment of CEC, 4 deputies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Writ filed challenging legality of using EVMs

The High Court yesterday rejected a writ petition that challenged the legality of the appointment of chief election commissioner and four other election commissioners.

The bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashraf Kamal rejected the petition considering that it was not moved properly.

There is no legal bar on CEC KM Nurul Huda and four other election commissioners to discharge their duties and to conduct the December 30 election following the HC order, Deputy Attorney General Ekramul Haque Tutul told The Daily Star.

During yesterday's hearing, he told the court that the petition was moved intentionally to impede the upcoming general election.

The CEC and election commissioners were appointed on February 6 last year, but the writ petitioner has challenged their appointment after a long delay with a mala fide [in bad faith] intention, the deputy attorney general argued.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Delwar Hossain filed the petition with the HC on November 25. He also sought a directive from the HC upon the government to cancel appointments of the election commissioners to constitute a fresh EC and a stay on the process for holding the election.

Advocate Yousuf Ali appeared for the petitioner.

EVM

Meanwhile, SC lawyer Eunus Ali Akond yesterday filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of EC's decision to use electronic voting machines (EVMs) in six constituencies. He sought HC directives upon the authorities concerned not to use EVM.

Eunus told The Daily Star that the HC may hear the petition today.

The EC has decided to use EVM in Dhaka-6 and-13, Chattogram-9, Rangpur-3, Khulna-2 and Satkhira-2 in the parliamentary election.

In another development, the HC yesterday summarily rejected a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partho seeking its directives upon the EC for using EVM at his (Bhola-1) constituency.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali passed the order, saying the use of EVMs is a policy decision of the EC; the HC cannot interfere with the decision, Deputy Attorney General Alamin Sarker told The Daily Star.

Petitioner's lawyer advocate Ahsanul Karim said his client has not yet instructed him to move any appeal before the Appellate Division challenging the HC order.

Ninth-grader kills herself in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ninth-grade student of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College (VNSC) killed herself yesterday, allegedly after school authorities summoned her guardians and scolded her for adopting unfair means at the school's annual exam.

School authorities called in her parents to the school's Bailey Road campus and told them that the girl used a cell phone to cheat in her exam, the victim's father told journalists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday. She would be barred from sitting in this year's annual tests and would also be issued a transfer certificate, school authorities said, according to him.

The girl's parents tried to persuade the school

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks to a woman with physical disability during a programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

Policy being formulated to ensure govt jobs for special-needs people: PM

STAR REPORT

Though the government has abolished the quota system in first class public service, it is preparing a policy for persons with disabilities as well as ethnic and underprivileged groups so that they can easily get government jobs, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

"There was a movement against the quota system, and again there was a series of movements a few days later. That is why we had to abolish the system; this is true. But, now we're preparing a policy wherein there'll be a priority for persons with disabilities, as well as ethnic and underprivi-

leged groups," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a function marking the 27th International and 20th National Day of Persons with Disabilities at Bangladesh International Conference Centre, reports UNB.

The theme for the day this year is "Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

She urged the affluent section of society to come forward to ensure the welfare of people with disabilities. The government is determined to ensure basic rights of disabled individuals, Hasina added.

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Check quality of water sold in plastic bottles immediately
HC to BSTI and law enforcement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to immediately check the quality of water sold in plastic bottles and other containers across the country.

Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and law enforcing agencies have been asked to examine the water and submit the test reports to the HC in 15 days.

In response to a writ petition, the HC asked the respondents to take necessary steps to stop supplying and selling water in unauthorised bottles, containers and other means.

The court also issued a rule asking them to explain why they should not be directed to ensure the supply of safe drinking water through authorised means and why their failure to this effect should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries to the ministries of food and health, director general of the department of health services, director general of BSTI, inspector general of police, director general of Rapid Action Battalion and managing director of Wasa have been made respondents to the rule, petitioners' lawyer Advocate Md JR Khan Robin told The Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al Jalil came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Shammi Akhter seeking necessary order on the respondents.

Citing the petition, Advocate Robin told The Daily Star that a total of 287 factories are authorised to produce plastic bottles, jars and other containers used for selling and supplying drinking water across the country.

Over 3,000 factories are producing plastic bottles and containers which are being used for supplying unsafe water, he added.



Residents of Purba Dolairpar gather at a WASA pump to collect fresh water after they started getting smelly water at home. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN