

## WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA 19.5 | L 17.1 MYMENSINGH 18.6 | L 18.0 CHATTOGRAM 27.9 | L 20.5 SYLHET 18.0 | L 16.4 RAJSHAHI 16.4 | L 15.4 RANGPUR 17.7 | L 15.6 KHULNA 19.4 | L 18.0 BARISHAL 21.0 | L 18.0 COX'S BAZAR 27.8 | L 21.0

Light to moderate rain/thundershower is likely at many places over Chattogram and Sylhet divisions; at a few places over Barishal, Mymensingh & Dhaka divisions and at one or two places over Khulna, Rangpur & Rajshahi divisions in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night to morning. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:15pm and rises tomorrow at 6:30am.

## NAT'L POLLS HC questions EC's decision to let 25 Jamaat men contest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Election Commission (EC) to dispose of, in three working days, the application filed for cancellation of candidacies of 25 Jamaat-e-Islami men in the December 30 general election.

The court also issued a rule asking the EC and government to explain in four weeks why the EC's decision to allow the 25 candidates to contest the election despite the cancellation of their party's registration should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court also asked the EC and government to show causes why the commission should not be directed to cancel their candidacies, Deputy Attorney General Alamin Sarker told The Daily Star.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Mohammad Ali delivered the order and rule following a writ petition filed by representatives of Bangladesh Tariqat Federation and Amra Muktijoddhar Sontan, seeking cancellation of the commission's decision to allow leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami to contest the polls.

Barrister Tania Amir appeared for the writ petitioners.

The petitioners had submitted an application to the EC on Monday, to cancel candidacies of the Jamaat men.

On October 28 this year, the EC issued a gazette notification, scrapping the registration of Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

The HC in a landmark verdict on August 1, 2013, had declared illegal Jamaat's registration with the EC. The commission the same year had suspended the registration.

Jamaat then filed the appeal with the apex court challenging the HC verdict, which is pending with the SC now.



Dhaka finally feels winter in the third week of December as two days of drizzling sent the temperature plummeting. In a cocoon of warm clothing, a child was seen on a rickshaw on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## EC indifferent to attacks on opposition candidates: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday expressed concern over Election Commission's (EC) "inaction" in addressing rampant violation of electoral codes and harassment of opposition parties' candidates.

Issuing a press statement, TIB urged the EC to take effective and visible measures immediately in order to ensure a level playing field for all political parties in the election.

It also called upon the law enforcement agencies to play a neutral role and earn people's trust.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, in the statement, said the EC's failure to put a stop to attacks and harassment -- through filing cases and intimidation -- on the opposition party leaders and activists as well as its indifference in this regard has turned into a matter of concern.

"The opposition parties are not only being oppressed by the ruling party [Awami League] men, they are also facing discriminatory behaviour from law enforcement agencies," he said, citing news reports.

The TIB chief also alleged that the EC is responsible for the law enforcement agencies' failure to play a neutral role ahead of the election.

"Apart from making some empty promises, the Election Commission is yet to set an example of creating a level playing field, which is very embarrassing," he said in the statement.

Criticising the EC's decision to limit live broadcast from inside the polling centres, the anti-corruption campaigner said that live broadcast was allowed in some previous polls.

He also termed the ban on using mobile phones at the polling centres a "sign of weakness" of the EC and a self-contradictory stance.

## Eminent citizens dismayed by EC's performance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) was not performing in line with its constitutional duty, and that it has created scope for tainting the process of the upcoming polls.

They pointed at the EC's inadequate steps to deal with pre-election violent incidents and said this could lead to a questionable election on December 30 and post-election crisis.

The observations came from a seminar organised by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), an organisation working for good governance, at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies auditorium in the capital.

The seminar, on "The Challenges of

Electoral Integrity in Bangladesh", is part of CGS' series of events on the polls, featuring experts from various fields including good governance campaigners, political and security analysts, and former diplomats.

Referring to challenges for a peaceful election, Barrister Manzoor Hasan, executive director of Centre for Peace and Justice at Brac University, said the EC should equitably distribute 'space' to political parties so that voters can cast votes freely and fairly.

Presenting a paper on the topic, he said the EC itself becomes the 'interim government' prior to the election and it should take a pro-active role in running the administration.

Former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain said against complaints of violent inci-

dents, the EC could have applied article 91E of the Representation of the People Order-1972.

The article empowers the EC to cancel candidature of any candidate, upon finding involvement of them or their agent or any other person on their behalf in such incidents.

Sakhawat also said a big challenge before the incumbent government is to prove that an "unquestionable election" can be held under an elected government and with continuation of the parliament.

"This is the time to establish it," he said, adding if such thing does not happen then "we have to go back to square one."

Addressing the event as guest of honour, former adviser to caretaker

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The Bangladesh team poses with medals and the national flag at the 20th International Robot Olympiad in The Philippines, after winning one gold, one "Technical" and two "Highly Commended" medals in their first outing at the contest yesterday. Team RoboTigers, comprising Quazi Mostahid Labib and Tafsiro Tahrim (of Chittagong Grammar School) and Mehr Mahmud (of Maple Leaf International School, Dhaka) clinched gold in the "Creative Category" junior group. An eight-member delegation from Bangladesh represented in the competition, along with nearly 800 participants from 14 other countries.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Saiful-Farida panel sweeps Jatiya Press Club election

UNB, Dhaka

The panel led by Saiful Alam of the daily Jugantar and Farida Yasmin of the daily Ittefaq swept the election of the executive committee of Jatiya Press Club held yesterday, bagging 13 posts out of 17.

Saiful Alam was elected president (621 votes) while Farida bagged the post of general secretary (569 votes), beating their nearest rivals Shawkat Mahmud (431 votes) and Ilias Khan (406 votes) respectively.

Senior journalist Omar Farroque was elected senior vice president (442 votes) while Azizul Islam Bhuiyan became the vice president with 554 votes.

The other office-bearers of the 17-member JPC executive committee are: Joint Secretaries Shahed Chowdhury (599 votes) and Mainul Alam (554 votes), and Treasurer Shaymal Dutta (593 votes). The ten executive members are Kuddus Afrad (515 votes), Shahsuddin Ahmed Charu (507 votes), Rezwani Haque Raza (484 votes), Shahnaz Begum (462 votes), Sanaul Haque (442 votes), Kalyan Saha (439 votes), Jahiduzzaman Farroque (429 votes), Syed Abdul Ahmed (417 votes), Bakhtiar Rana (401 votes) and Hasan Arefin (391 votes).

Earlier, voting was held from 9:00am to 5:00pm without any break.



Saiful Alam Farida Yasmin

## Barrister Mainul Hosein secures HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted six months' bail to Barrister Mainul Hosein in a case filed under Digital Security Act for defaming journalist Masuda Bhatti during a live television talk-show on October 16.

The bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Zafar Ahmed passed the order after hearing a petition filed by Mainul seeking bail in the case.

Following the HC order, Barrister Mainul will get released from jail, unless shown arrested in any other case, his lawyer Advocate Mashud Rana told The Daily Star.

On October 24, Sumona Akhter Lily, Awami League's youth and sports sub-committee member, filed the case against Mainul with Dhaka Cyber Tribunal Judge Ash-Shams Jagul Hussein under sections 25 (2) and 29 of the Digital Security Act.

Earlier, on October 22, detectives arrested the former caretaker government adviser in the capital in connection with the defamation case filed in Rangpur.

## Dipan murder case transferred to anti-terrorism tribunal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday transferred the Faisal Arefin Dipan murder case to Dhaka Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sarafuzzaman Ansari passed the order after scrutinising the case dockets and other relevant documents.

Earlier on November 15, Assistant Commissioner of Detective Branch (DB) Fazlur Rahman, also investigating officer of the case, submitted a charge sheet against eight members of banned militant outfit

## Responsibility not fulfilled just by expressing grief

**SSA rally urges authorities to ensure safety of minorities during election**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) and authorities concerned to ensure public security and protect the minorities from possible violence centring the upcoming national election.

They also criticised Jatiya Oikyafront for allowing 25 Jamaat-e-Islami men to vie in the election, and urged people to reject them.

Sammilito Samajik Andolon (SSA) organised the rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Speaking on the occasion, Pankaj Bhattacharya, president of Oikya Nap said, "We hope communal violence will not be incited, ethnic and religious minorities will not be forcibly evicted from their homes, and women will not be tortured. The EC has to pass this great exam... Responsibility can

not be fulfilled just by expressing grief or embarrassment. You [EC] have to perform your duties as the referee."

He also demanded that the EC, police and the government play their respective roles in ensuring public security.

Coming down heavily on Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), he said, "Relying on Jamaat, BNP wants to engage in pro-Pakistani politics. This has to stop."

He also demanded complete ban on Jamaat and other "religion-based" political parties.

The rally was conducted by Saleh Ahmed, general secretary of the platform. Advocate Parvez Hashem, international affairs secretary of SSA, read out an announcement at the event.

In the announcement, Hashem made a five-point call, including stopping use of religion in politics; saying no to terrorists,

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RAIN, THE GREAT EQUALISER... Electoral campaign posters, irrespective of the candidates' political allegiance, have been washed away in many parts of the capital in two days of rain. This photo taken in Kakrail on Monday, shows a web of strings left behind.

Will fulfill expectations of first-time voters: PM  
BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday pledged to fulfill the expectations of first-time voters and take the country forward by boosting their talents.

"We want to materialise the dream and expectations of the new voters ... and also want to take the country ahead by enhancing their talents," she said.

The prime minister made the statement while addressing rallies in Bandarban and Kishoreganj through video-conferencing from her residence Sudha Sadan in the capital's Dhanmondi.

She termed the youth of Bangladesh "very intelligent" and said, "...we commit to build a beautiful future for them."

Referring to her recent programme with the youths, "Let's Talk with Sheikh Hasina," she said, "I asked them about what kind of Bangladesh they want to see and how they want to develop the country if one of them became the prime minister."

The premier said that in its election manifesto, Awami League has given utmost importance to youths as they are the strength of the country.

Seeking vote for "boat" (Awami League's electoral symbol) in the upcoming national election, Sheikh Hasina said, "We earned independence by casting vote for boat."

The prime minister also said, "Bangladesh started its journey towards massive development when we assumed office in 1996 after 21 years."

"Development reaches the common people when the Awami League is elected," Sheikh Hasina added.