

WEATHER
FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 27.4 L 16.6

MYMENSINGH
H 25.0 L 13.8

CHATTOGRAM
H 26.0 L 14.8

SYLHET
H 26.7 L 14.4

RAJSHAH
H 24.5 L 09.6

RANGPUR
H 25.6 L 11.6

KHULNA
H 26.0 L 12.4

BARISHAL
H 25.8 L 11.3

COX'S BAZAR
H 26.1 L 15.4

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country 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



Kalurghat Bridge over Karnaphuli river is in a sorry state. Built in the 1930s, the run-down bridge is now dotted with potholes while its metal fencing and pedestrian decks have worn out in places, risking the possibility of a serious accident. Though candidates have pledged to construct a new bridge, if elected, locals remain skeptical. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Bridge on the river Karnaphuli

Ctg-8 voters demand new overpass at Kalurghat

MD ABBAS, back from Boalkhali

Constructing a new bridge over Karnaphuli river in Kalurghat area has remained a major demand of voters of Chattogram-8 constituency (Boalkhali).

They said elections come and go, candidates make pledges of building a new bridge if elected, but their demand remains unmet.

The existing Kalurghat bridge over the river was built in 1930 for rail communication. Later, considering sufferings of people, it was modified with decking and carpeting and turned into a rail and road-bridge in the '60s.

But it has been lying in a dilapidated state for a long time. A serious accident is just a matter of time on the run-down bridge, said locals.

They said hundreds of vehicles, plying the bridge, are facing difficulties every day, as the deck and iron fencing on its both sides have become worn-out and numerous potholes developed on it, giving way to mishaps.

As a result, long tailbacks on both sides of the bridge -- which links the port city with south Chattogram -- have become a common scenario.

So, come election time, a new bridge becomes the top priority among prospective voters in the constituency.

With that in mind, almost all the candidates have pledged to build the bridge

immediately, if elected in the December 30 election.

Locals, however, expressed doubt over the candidates' commitments.

On Monday, this correspondent visited several areas of the constituency (Boalkhali and parts of Chandgaon). People were not much enthusiastic about the election.

"Elections come and go but our fate remains the same," said Dulal Miah, a resident of Gomdandi union in the upazila. "Once elected, they don't bother to visit the area and forget about us," he alleged.

When asked about pledges made by candidates to construct the bridge, Anupam Nath of Pashchim Gomdandi said, "Many [candidates] have made the same promise, but nothing happened. We are not relying on their words any more."

Moulana Ahmad Hossain of the upazila echoed him. "We're not even sure how things will turn out on voting day," he added.

CAMPAIGN SCENARIO

Meanwhile, posters and banners of AL-led grand alliance candidate Mainuddin Khan Badal were seen everywhere in the constituency while that of other candidates including BNP's Abu Sufian was a rare sight.

Supporters of Badal, also executive president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, had set up election camps in almost every major areas but no such camp of

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RANGPUR-3

Ershad's campaign yet to pick up on home ground

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and KONGKON KARMAKER, from Rangpur

With only few days remaining for national election, supporters of HM Ershad, nominated by Awami League-led grand alliance, are still waiting for funds to conduct campaign.

On the other hand, his opponent Rita Rahman, nominated by Jatiya Oikyafront, is busy electioneering in Rangpur-3 constituency.

HM Ershad, president of Jatiya Party (JP), was elected as lawmaker from Rangpur-3 constituency in 1991, 2008 and 2014.

However, due to lack of pre-election activities and publicity, JP's position has become weak in Rangpur-3, Ershad's hometown and his stronghold in previous elections.

The constituency includes Rangpur Sadar upazila and wards 9 through 33

of Rangpur City Corporation.

These correspondents visited the Rangpur City Awami League and Jatiya Party offices in the city yesterday but could not find any party men there.

On the other hand, BNP activists were seen busily putting up posters throughout the city, seeking votes for Rita Rahman.

Only a few posters of Ershad were spotted at places.

Fifty-five year old Moshir Rahman, a resident of Rangpur city, said that he and many others have been voting for Ershad since 1991, but did not see any benefit.

"We have not even seen him in the city much, so why will we vote for him?" he said, venting his frustration.

Contacted, SM Yeasir Ahmed, secretary of Jatiya Party in Rangpur metropolitan area, said campaign is

being hampered due to fund crisis, but they are trying to facilitate rallies and publicity as much as possible.

"I spoke to the party chairman four days ago, who is undergoing treatment in Singapore, and he assured me that funds will arrive soon. We are yet to receive any support," Yeasir added.

He further claimed that Awami League is not providing any support to JP men for electioneering.

Meanwhile, JP's senior leaders, including Co-chairman GM Quader, Secretary General Moshir Rahman Ranga and General Secretary of Rangpur unit SM Fakhar Uz-Zaman are busy electioneering in their respective constituencies.

Rejecting Yeasir's claims, Fakhar said that campaign in Rangpur-3 is going on just fine and there is coordination between AL and JP over electioneering in the area.

Asked about Ershad's absence ahead of polls, the party leaders said he is expected to arrive in Rangpur within a couple of days and take part in the campaign.

These correspondents also contacted Rezaul Karim Rezu, general secretary of Rangpur district AL.

Rezaul said that AL leaders and activists are campaigning for Ershad across the constituency.

Oikyafront candidate Rita Rahman and her supporters were spotted electioneering in the city on Monday and Tuesday, seeking votes for her.

President of Rangpur district BNP, Saiful Islam, said party leaders and activists are campaigning for her despite fear of harassment by rivals and law enforcers.

These correspondents spoke to

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SYLHET-1

AL, BNP candidates take jabs at each other at Christmas event



BNP candidate Khandakar Abdul Muktedir (sitting, second from right) talks to his AL counterpart Abdul Momen at the Presbyterian Church.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Rival candidates of Sylhet-1 constituency crossed paths yesterday morning, while celebrating Christmas at the Presbyterian Church in Nayasarak in Sylhet city.

But after jolly greetings and cake cutting, AL candidate AK Abdul Momen and BNP candidate Khandakar Abdul Muktedir engaged in a rather heated -- albeit civil -- conversation.

The BNP candidate was the first to reach to the church, followed shortly after by his AL counterpart.

After greeting each other, they sat on adjacent chairs and then cut the Christmas cake.

After a while, their conversation took an unfriendly turn, on the topic of the role of the ruling party activists and law enforcers during the electoral campaign.

When Momen asked Muktedir how his campaign was going on, Muktedir replied, "We are conducting campaign as well as handling the cases filed by your men."

Momen replied saying that the cases are being filed only against criminals. Meanwhile, as another BNP leader reached the spot, Momen greeted him. Muktedir quipped, "You just shook your hands with a criminal. He is an accused of one such case."

About the conversation, Muktedir later said, "Anyone can show fake harmony in front of the camera. They believe that all

political rivals are criminals; this behaviour is out of their fear of losing the election."

Momen said, "They attacked our electoral camps, wrecked vehicles, and attacked our activists; all we have done is informed the law enforcers, and police taking legal action. They are being anxious out of the fear of losing the polls, but we are trying hard to keep political harmony, without showing anger."

MOULVIBAZAR

It was a busy day for the candidates yesterday as not only they exchanged greetings with locals on the occasion of Christmas Day, but also campaigned in many areas, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Most candidates joined the congregations at Sreemangal Catholic Mission, Lakkhipur Mission at Kulaura upazila and Dimai Mission at Barlekha upazila.

Soon afterwards, they became busy campaigning.

While talking to locals, MM Shaheen, Awami League candidate for Moulvibazar-2 (Kulaura), said, "With your support, we will win."

Jatiya Oikyafront's Sultan Mohammad Monsur Ahmed said, "If elected MP, I will work for the constituency's development."

Samuel Hajong, a prospective voter at Sreemangal upazila, said, "We will vote for the candidate who will work for us."

BFUJ, DUJ

FROM PAGE 3

"The state and the government will have to shoulder the responsibility and take steps to curb such attacks," BPUJ President Molla

Zalal and Secretary General Shaban Mahmud, and DUJ President Abu Jafar Surjo and General Secretary Sohel Haider Chowdhury said in the statement.

In another statement, they expressed concern over the formulation of policy for journalists during the polls by the Election Commission.

They urged the EC to reconsider its decision, saying, "The EC will be benefited if it moves away from its policy about [banning] the use of motorcycles by journalists and allowing reporters inside polling centres."



Hazera Begum carries some 40 to 50 tiffin carriers on a rickshaw, to New Market and Gausia Market in the capital. She serves food to employees of shops in the markets for Tk 50 per head, and brings back the containers after lunch every day. The photo was taken from Hazaribagh.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Arms trader' arrested with pistol, ammo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives arrested two persons, including an alleged arms trader, with a pistol and 200 bullets in Chattogram city's Bahaddarhat area early yesterday.

The arrestees are Mohiuddin Shiblu, 39, from Hathazari upazila; and Enamul 35, from Natore.

Abu Bakkar Siddique, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of the Detective Branch (port) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said they were arrested in a flat at Khatiber Hat.

"A German-made pistol, two magazines and 200 bullets were seized from their possession," said the ADC.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) (Port) of DB SM Mostain Hossain said Shiblu, a Dubai expatriate, runs a veil shop and his arms trade there.

"He tried to sell the firearm and ammunition to a criminal," said the DC.

ADC Bakkar said Shiblu collected the pistol from India and the arrestees were waiting to hand it over to a customer in exchange for Tk 6 lakh.

"We gleaned information about the buyer, whom we are still looking for," he said.

CHATTOGRAM-2

Race between uncle and nephew may split Maijbhandari vote bank

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Two members of the influential Maijbhandari family contesting the national polls in Chattogram-2 (Fatikchhari) may cause a split in the votes of supporters, according to locals.

Candidate of AL-led alliance Najibul Bashar Maijbhandari, chairman of Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, will see competition from his nephew Saifuddin Maijbhandari, a candidate of Islamic Front Bangladesh.

The constituency has seen a spate of violence ever since campaigning began, in one of which Saifuddin and his activists were attacked at Bhujpur Bazar. At least 12 activists

were injured in the attack.

Talking to The Daily Star, Saifuddin alleged that AL men attacked them. "Seeing massive support for me, Najibul feels threatened and wants me to quit the polls," said Saifuddin.

Locals say Najibul may face tough challenge from Saifuddin.

"Fatikchhari being a stronghold of the Maijbhandaris, Najibul had full support of the vote bank. But now, with Saifuddin in the race, there's another claim on the vote bank," said Md Akkas, a resident of Nazirhat area.

Hefajat-e-Islam also has a sizeable vote bank in the upazila, said Taher Miah of Bibirhat area. Majority of the votes from that camp may go against

Najibul due to Hefajat's ideological differences with the Maijbhandaris.

Jamaat-e-Islami also has some votes in the upazila, said locals, with some of them claiming that since the strength of both AL and BNP are almost same in Fatikchhari, both parties are trying to bag the Maijbhandari, Hefajat and Jamaat votes.

Contacted, Azim Uddin Muhury, general secretary of Fatikchhari upazila unit of AL, said they are standing behind Najibul as he is the candidate of AL-led grand alliance, and AL rebel candidate ATM Payarul Islam withdrew from the election race on Friday.

"Hefajat leaders told us that they

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Newlyweds killed in Nilphamari road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A newly-wed couple were killed as a motorbike they were riding was hit by a bus in Nilphamari yesterday.

The accident occurred on Nilphamari-Domar road at Polashbari Bazar while Ainul Huque, 24, and his wife Mazida Begum, 20, were returning home from a hospital in the town.

Ainul from Pashchim Horinchara village in Domar upazila and Mazida from Sonarai village in the same upazila got married several days ago.

When they reached Polashbari Bazar, a bus running on the wrong side of the road rammed the motorcycle, killing Ainul Huque on the spot.

Mazida succumbed to her injuries on way to Nilphamari Modernised Hospital.

After the accident, angry locals blocked the road for some time. The situation became normal when police rushed to the spot, said Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mominul Islam.