

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA	22.3	11.9	MYMENSINGH	21.9	8.3	CHATTOGRAM	22.2	10.6	SYLHET	22.6	12.3	RAJSHAH	22.0	5.8	RANGPUR	21.0	7.2	KHULNA	22.1	8.0	BARISHAL	22.2	6.5	COX'S BAZAR	21.6	14.0
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Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, UNB reports quoting the Met office. Severe cold wave is sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Kurigram & Chuadanga. Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Mymensingh, Dhaka & Barishal divisions. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:21pm and rises tomorrow at 6:40am.

235 Madaripur polling centres 'vulnerable': DC

Claims administration ready to tackle any untoward incident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Madaripur district administration has identified 235 polling centres that are "vulnerable", out of 376 in three constituencies in the district.

Deputy Commissioner of Madaripur, Md Wahidul Islam, said that the administration had taken all necessary steps to tackle any untoward incident at the polling centres today.

More than 1,000 law enforcers, including police and Rapid Action Battalion personnel, are set to be deployed with army personnel as striking force to keep the situation under control, he told The Daily Star.

Besides, the chief judicial magistrate will be there to hold summary trial and 19 executive magistrates will operate mobile courts if election-related offences occur during polls, Wahidul said.

Referring to allegations by the BNP and independent candidate of Madaripur-2 constituency, against police of arresting their supporters and activists, the deputy commissioner said arrests had been made on specific allegations.

The deputy commissioner also claimed that actions had

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There is a restriction on emptying a water body for fishing since it damages fish habitats. But every winter (dry season), people do it in the haors of Sylhet in the absence of monitoring. The photos were taken in Telikhali area of Companyganj upazila last week.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR



Cold wave likely on election day

UNB, Dhaka

Countrymen may have to experience the cold spell, as the nation goes into the 11th national election today.

Heavy to moderate cold wave with dense fog is sweeping over the country, according to a met office bulletin issued yesterday.

Severe cold wave is sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Kurigram and Chuadanga.

It might continue till January 4 next year, the Met office bulletin added.

Meanwhile, mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Mymensingh, Dhaka and Barishal divisions and the rest part of Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions. The cold wave is also sweeping over the regions of Sandwip, Sitakunda, Rangamati, Cumilla, Feni, Sreemangal and it may continue, added the Met office bulletin.

The lowest temperature 5.2 degree Celsius was recorded in Rajbari of Kurigram district.

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

Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night to morning.

CMP commissioner assures voters of peaceful atmosphere

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Md Mahabubor Rahman yesterday assured voters of the port city of peaceful atmosphere on election day.

"It is the duty of law enforcers to ensure security and safety of voting area, polling centre and voters... We have taken adequate security measures so that the voters can cast their votes without fear and return home safely," said the CMP chief.

"Some 6,500 policemen will be deployed in four entire and three partial constituencies in the city to tackle any situation on the voting day," said Mahabubor.

He came up with the information while addressing a press briefing at CMP headquarters, in the city's Dampara area, about CMP's prepara-

tions for the 11th parliamentary election.

CMP has ensured security for the minority voters so that they can go to polling centres without any kind of hassle and cast their votes for the candidates of their choice, he said.

He also said motivational campaigns were carried out in the minority community areas to inspire them to go to the polling centres without fear.

Warning against any kind of violence, the CMP chief said they are ready to face any kind of situation during election day.

The CMP commissioner informed that 200 polling stations were identified as "important" where seven armed police personnel and ansar men will be deployed while 10 additional members of the ansar will assist the armed personnel.

The CMP commissioner informed that eight teams of Armed Police Battalion have been working in the field while eight more will work on election day to maintain law and order situation, along with police.

Besides, members of Bomb Disposal, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and Quick Response Team will be kept

standby to tackle any situation, he said.

Apart from the police, members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Bangladesh Army have been working in the city to ensure security, he said.

CMP Additional Commissioners (Crime and Operations) Amena Begum, (Traffic) Kusum Dewan and high-ranking officials of the CMP were present at the press conference.

USAID to support agricultural productivity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aiming to boost agricultural productivity of small farmers, USAID Agricultural Value Chains (AVC) project is providing support to train local service providers on agricultural machineries.

Although number of farmers using mechanised agricultural tools is increasing day by day, many are still struggling as they lack the knowledge and services required for repair and maintenance of the machines, leading to low productivity and income, a statement of the USAID said.

To address this problem, USAID's Agricultural Value Chains (AVC) Project provided support to local private sector industry experts: Metal Agro, and ACI Machinery, to train a network of Local Service Providers (LSPs) on agro machinery maintenance and repair, the release added.

The LSPs turned into entrepreneurs and own agro machineries, render maintenance and repair services to farmers on a fee-for-service basis, and also enhance the farmers' knowledge in this regard.

Under the project, 429 LSPs have been trained, who are helping farmers improve machine management and attain cost efficiencies.



Ahead of the election, Border Guard Bangladesh personnel have begun patrolling streets of the city. A contingent of the paramilitary force took position in front of BNP candidate for Dhaka-8 Mirza Abbas' Shahjahanpur residence around 12:45pm yesterday.

Apprehension remains

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The local unit of Awami League claims that BNP and its allies are using Rohingyas in their campaigns. "Rohingyas have been seen in the processions of BNP candidates," said Jahangir Kabir Chowdhury, the party's Ukhia Upazila unit general secretary.

He said they (Rohingyas) may cause problems during the election, a claim turned down by BNP leaders.

Sarwar Jahan Chowdhury, BNP's Ukhia Upazila unit chief, claimed that the ruling party is using the Rohingyas in many ways. "They may even try to mobilise the Rohingyas on voting day [today] and use them against their rivals," he said.

THE SMELL OF MONEY, AND BLOOD

Rohingyas are using the election season to earn some extra cash. But their involvement in the election process may lead to unrest, locals fear.

Advocate Ayachur Rahman, general secretary of Save Cox's Bazar Movement, said a number of Rohingyas, who came to Bangladesh during 1978-79, had managed to enlist themselves as voters.

"Those Rohingyas and the new arrivals might get involved in the election and sabotage the polling booths," he

said.

"Rohingyas have been ordered not to leave the camps from 7pm of December 29 to 8am of December 31," said Cox's Bazar Returning Officer and Deputy Commissioner Md Kamal Hossain.

During this period, NGO workers and volunteers will also be barred from entering or leaving the camps in cars. However, they will be allowed to use cars to deliver food and emergency medical help.

Many locals say they feel the EC embargo should have been longer.

"This short-time ban has given Rohingyas the opportunity to take part in polls campaigns. We fear that they can cause large-scale violence," said Gafur, also general secretary of Rohingya Repatriation Committee.

Meanwhile, law enforcement and security agencies are on alert.

Cox's Bazar police chief AKM Iqbal Hossain has said the law enforcement agencies have been cautiously taking position around Rohingya camps in Ukhia and Teknaf while police, Rapid Action Battalion, Border Guard Bangladesh, and Ansar members are patrolling the sites.

"It [the EC order] is to make sure that nobody can use the Rohingyas for political mileage or to cause disorder," said Deputy Commissioner Kamal.

PANCHAGARH-2 AL candidate's wife Nilufar Jahan dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Nilufar Jahan, wife of Awami League lawmaker Nurul Islam Sujon, died at a Dhaka hospital yesterday, aged 58.

Sujon is contesting from Panchagarh-2 in today's general election.

Nilufar left behind her husband, a son and two daughters to mourn her death.

With pneumonia, she was admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital on December 23, family sources said.

The next day, she was transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as her condition deteriorated.

On December 28, she was admitted to Dhaka's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University where she had been on life support.

She will be buried at her family graveyard in Moidandighi village of Boda upazila in Panchagarh.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed profound shock at the death of Nilufar Jahan, reports BSS.

In a condolence message, the premier prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family.



UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION BAF contingent leaves for Mali

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) is going to replace its contingent at the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Mali.

A total of 110 air force members -- including four female officers -- left Dhaka for Mali by UN chartered aircraft yesterday to this end, an Inter Services Public Relation (ISPR) release said yesterday.

Group Captain Md Mamanur Rashid will lead the contingent of Bangladesh Air Force, which is going to be deployed in Mali, the release added.

Bangladesh Air Force has achieved reputation and glory by performing their duties in mitigating conflict with efficiency, professionalism and sincerity in Mali.

In addition, special munajat was offered prior to their departure for Mali at the departure lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, seeking excellence of the contingent in future.

Senior air force officers were present at the airport during the departure.

Meanwhile, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat briefed the contingent members on December 24.

He also took part in a special munajat for success of the mission, added the release of Inter Services Public Relation.

Man killed over property dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A man was killed yesterday by his neighbour at Mohishpur village of Dharmapasha upazila in Sunamganj yesterday morning over property dispute, alleged family members.

The deceased was identified as Saiful Islam, 40, son of Sona Miah of the village, said Ejajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dharmapasha Police Station.

Meanwhile, police also arrested one Mister Miah, 35, and his wife Rojina Begum, of the same village, in this connection.

There has been a long-standing dispute between the two families over property, family sources said.

In the morning, Saiful and Mister locked into an altercation. At one point, Mister hit Saiful on the head, leaving him critically injured.

Saiful was rescued by villagers and rushed to a local hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

Filing of a case in this regard was underway, the police official said.

Mashrafe's wife stands by cop's widow

UNB, Narail

Sumona Haque, wife of national cricket captain and Awami League candidate in Narail-2 Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, yesterday donated Tk 1 lakh for medical treatment of the wife of a recently-deceased police officer.

Sumona met Rabeya, wife of SI Md Moniruzzaman, and her newborn daughter at Sadar Hospital.

The police officer died of heart attack while performing duty on December 27. Meanwhile, Superintendent of Narail Police Jasim Uddin donated Tk 70,000, and Tk 10,000 on behalf of the deputy commissioner.

