

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 28.0 L 12.6	MYMENSINGH H 26.6 L 08.8	CHATTOGRAM H 30.3 L 14.3	SYLHET H 26.5 L 12.8	RAJSHAHI H 22.0 L 05.8	RANGPUR H 25.0 L 10.0	KHULNA H 26.0 L 10.0	BARISHAL H 27.8 L 09.7	COX'S BAZAR H 27.4 L 14.6
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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 said quoting the Met office. Severe cold wave is sweeping over Panchagarh district. Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Mymensingh divisions and parts of Rangpur division. **The sun sets in the capital**



A LACKLUSTRE NEW YEAR'S EVE... While the rest of the world was ready to welcome the New Year in festivity, residents of Dhaka had restrictions on celebrations and security checks to look forward to. Sometimes December 31 is duller than a typical day in the city as shown by the absence of a crowd at the otherwise busy Bashundhara Shopping Complex and an almost traffic-free Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, ORCHID SHAKMA

President, PM greet nation on New Year's eve

BSS, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted people of the country on the eve of New Year.

In a message, the president wished happiness and welfare for all in 2019.

Hamid said though the celebration of Bengali New Year has merged with the national culture, the New Year (in Gregorian calendar) influences all because of the widespread use of the calendar in daily activities.

The president said New Year brings in new hopes in social, political, economic and cultural areas. He hoped that the country would march forward towards new possibilities, sharing sorrows and happiness of the past year.

"Let the pledge of the New Year be marching forward towards development and prosperity on the basis of past achievements and successes," he said.

Meanwhile, in a separate message, the prime minister said, "The outgoing 2018

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NAT'L POLLS: KHULNA

EVM seat sees significantly lower turnout than others

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The numbers from Sunday's parliamentary polls in Khulna indicate that voters turned out in droves to exercise their rights, with the exception of the one constituency where electronic voting took place.

In Khulna-2 (Sadar-Sonadanga), where Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) were used in all polling centres, voter turnout was recorded at 49.4 percent, while in all five other constituencies of the district, the number ranged between 74 and 85 percent.

Awami League's dominance was clear in the district, with two out of the six candidates of the party securing over 90 percent of the votes cast, and three others securing 80 percent or more.

In Khulna-2, a total of 1,45,320 votes were cast out of 2,94,116 in 157 centres. No vote was invalidated in this seat, as all of them were cast electronically.

AL candidate Sheikh Salaudhin Jewel got 1,12,200 votes (77.21 percent) while his nearest rival BNP candidate Nazrul Islam Monju bagged 27,379 votes (18.84 percent). Interestingly, Monju had got 1,08,956

votes in the mayoral election for the city corporation on May 14, 2018.

As per the primary data sheet of returning officer (RO), 82.33 percent of total votes was cast in Khulna-1 (Batiaghata-Dacope). A total of 2,13,587 votes were cast, of which 1,399 was invalid.

AL candidate Panchanon Biswas bagged 1,72,152 votes (81.13 percent) while his rival, BNP candidate Amir Ezaz Khan, got 28,322 votes (13.35 percent).

Some newspapers had reported that the final tally of votes was 22,000 more than the total number of voters in Khulna-1. However, RO Md Helal Hossain denied such allegations, and said it was a rumour. He also gave official data to journalists yesterday.

KHULNA-3

Total votes cast in the constituency was 2,26,281, which is 73.96 percent of total registered voters. Of the votes cast, AL candidate Begum Monnujan Sufian bagged 1,34,806 (81.33 percent) votes, while BNP candidate Rokibul Islam Bokul got 23,606 (14.24 percent). A total of 1,616 votes were invalidated.

KHULNA-4

Total votes cast in the constituency was 2,47,464, which, converted to percentage, stands at 79.70. Of those, AL candidate Abus Salam Murshedi bagged 2,23,311 (90.88 percent) votes, while his BNP counterpart Azizul Bari Helal received 14,187 that (5.77 percent) of the total votes cast. The number of votes declared invalid in the seat was 1,753.

KHULNA-5

In this constituency, 2,72,033 votes were cast, that is 78.97 percent of the total number of voters in the seat. AL candidate Narayan Chandra Chanda got 2,31,717 votes (85.84 percent), while his rival candidate Jamaat-Islami leader Mia Golam Porwer got 32,959 (12.21 percent) votes. Some 2,101 votes were annulled.

KHULNA-6

The number of votes cast in the constituency was 3,11,460, or 85.04 of the total. Of these, AL candidate Akhteruzzaman got 2,84,349 votes (92.04 percent) compared to his nearest contestant, Jamaat's Abul Kalam Azad's 19,257 (6.24 percent). The constituency also saw 2,921 votes being void.

Two BCL men hacked 'over polls day dispute'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two members of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured in the port city yesterday after they were attacked with sharp weapons by their rival BCL men over an alleged altercation at a polling centre the day before.

One of the injured, Mohammad Hassan, 19, a class XI student at Omar Gani MES College, said he and Hasan Murad, 35, came under attack in Ambagan Samaj Kalyan Colony area around 4:00pm yesterday.

On Sunday, followers of former BCL leader Saiful Islam Limon had an altercation with them at a polling centre in Tiger Pass area, said Hassan, who is a follower of Jhautala ward Councillor Mohammad Hossain Hiron.

Limon's men, in retaliation, attacked and injured them yesterday, he also claimed.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (SI) Alauddin Talukdar at Chattogram Medical College Hospital police outpost confirmed that the injured were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

However, SI Bodruddoza of Khulshi Police Station said no such assault between two BCL groups took place yesterday. Rather, "two individuals were injured when two groups of youths clashed over a cricket match," the SI claimed.

No complaint was filed with the police station in this connection till filing of this report around 6:30pm.

Mukabbir, one of the fortunate few

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Gonoforum leader Mukabbir Khan, who had initially quit the election race but was called back later, has become one of the luckiest few to win outside the Awami League-led alliance.

He contested from Sylhet-2 (Bishwanath and Osmaninagar) and faced the grand alliance's Yahya Chowdhury, a Jatiya Party leader, and two other strong independent candidates.

Mukabbir came out victorious with 69,420 votes while his nearest rival Muhibur Rahman, an independent candidate, bagged 30,449. JP's Yahya secured 18,032 votes.

The Gonoforum presidium member is an expatriate businessman living in the UK. He came to Bangladesh only to contest the national election.

When Jatiya Oikyafront nominated missing BNP leader Ilias Ali's wife Tahsina Rushdir Luna, he gave up his election hope and left for the UK. However, Luna lost her candidacy following a High Court order. Oikyafront then called back Mukabbir and gave support to him.

Following a writ petition by JP

leader Yahya, the HC cancelled her nomination on December 13 on the charge of hiding information in her affidavit. She failed to regain her candidacy even after an appeal.

Mukabbir contested with Gonoforum's electoral symbol "Rising Sun".

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, he called himself a lucky man. "I am happy to win through people's votes. At the same time, I feel bad for the overall results as Oikyafront lost."

Mukabbir said he has been in politics for 40 years. "I was involved with Chhatra League and then Awami League. When Gonotantik Forum was formed, I was its UK unit's member secretary. Now I'm a presidium member of Gonoforum."

Asked about how he got back to the electoral race, he said, "I left the country with a broken heart after not getting Oikyafront's nomination but when Dr Kamal Hossain called me and gave me the opportunity, I felt lucky. I worked hard for a few days to win people's hearts."

According to him, the main factor for his win is Dr Kamal's bold

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Govt mulls parks in all upazilas

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The government is planning to establish parks in every upazila across the country, given the shrinking options of healthy entertainment for children.

"The government realises the necessity of having parks in upazilas as playgrounds are vanishing due to rapid urbanisation. A policy is already in place and actions will be taken soon," Housing and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain told this correspondent in November.

"Parks are crucial for physical and mental development of children, so we will take prompt steps in this regard. We may not be able to establish parks in all the upazilas at a time but we will pick one and gradually cover the rest," Mosharraf said.

Akhter Hossain, additional secretary to the ministry, said, "The issue was ignored earlier as the schools in the upazilas had playgrounds. But to keep pace with urbanisation, many schools and colleges are mushrooming with no playgrounds."

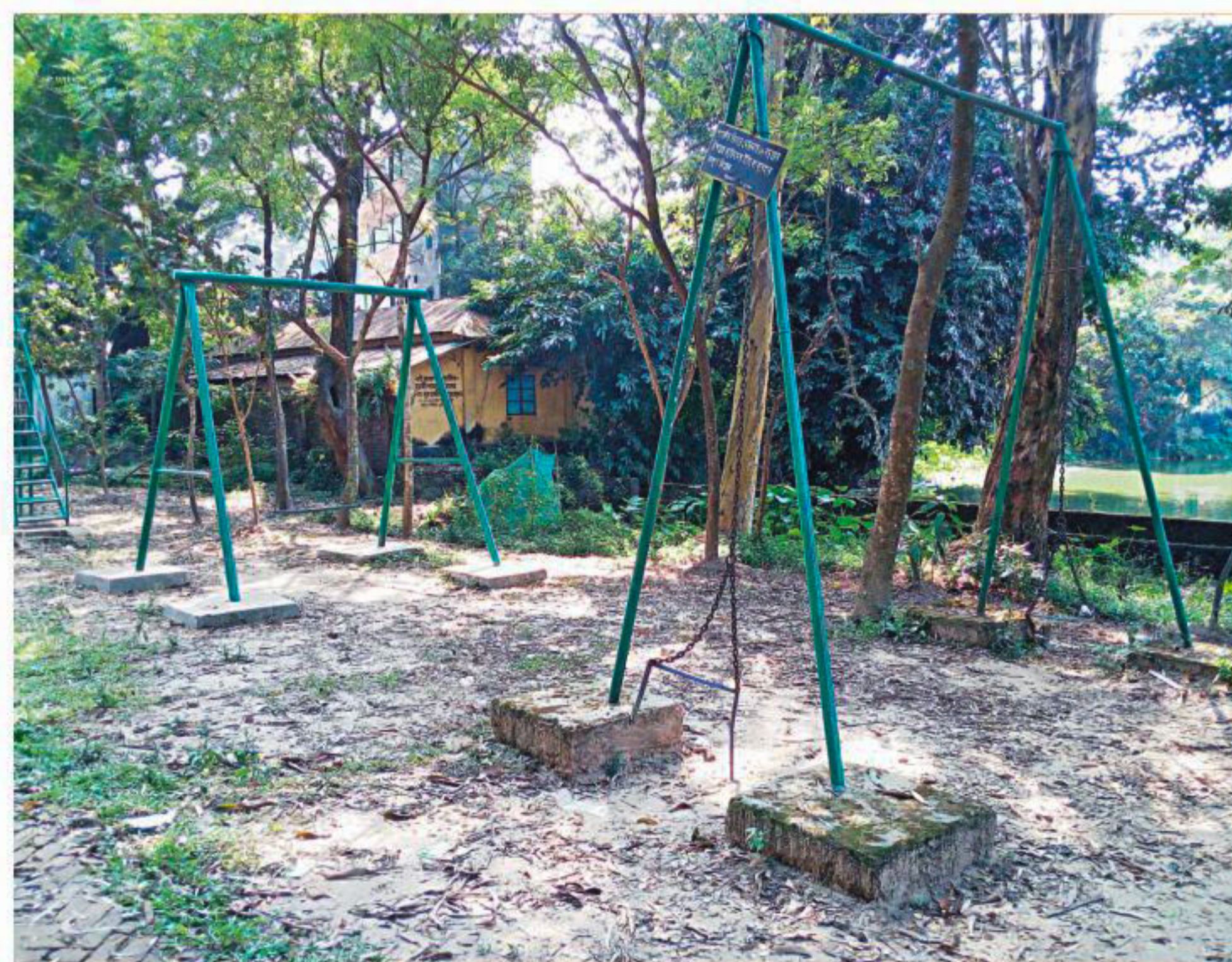
NO PARK IN 14 CTG UPAZILAS

Only one of the 15 upazilas in Chattogram has a children's park, and that too has been in a dilapidated state for a long time, according to locals. As a result, children are being deprived of healthy entertainment, they added.

Sheikh Fakhruddin Kabir Chowdhury, former mayor of Banskhali Municipality, said there was an eco-park in his upazila, but no park for children.

"As there is no park, children usually pass their leisure playing video games, gossiping or playing on the streets, which is dangerous," he said, adding that there is also a scarcity of playgrounds in the upazila.

Mahbubul Alam Chowdhury, chairman of Hathazari Upazila Parishad, he had built a



The lone children's park in Patiya upazila is in an awful state for years.

PHOTO: STAR

small park as there was no park for children in his upazila.

Abdur Rahman, assistant professor of psychology at Chittagong University, said amusement is a basic need of children and parks are necessary in this regard.

"When there is no park or playground, all they [children] do is sit home and play video games or watch television. This deprives them of social interaction and puts them under risk of obesity," he added.

Premier University Vice-Chancellor Prof Anupam Sen echoed him.

The lone park in Patiya upazila has been in shambles with broken rides for years. Locals alleged that Chattogram Zila Parishad, responsible for its maintenance, once appointed a caretaker but did not supervise the situation later.

Patiya Municipality Mayor Harun-ur-Rashid said his demand for reinstatement of rides in the park had been unheeded.

Asked, MA Salam, chairman of the parishad, said the rides were repaired earlier but they broke down again. "We will repair those immediately and eventually give the park a facelift."

Security beefed up in capital to prevent post-polls violence

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Md Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday said special security measures have been taken in the capital to prevent any sort of post-election violence.

"We have a challenge to ensure so that there's no post-election violence in the capital... We've already taken security measures which will continue till January 2," he said while talking to reporters at the DMP headquarters.

The DMP chief said they have already instructed all concerned to take special security arrangements so that supporters of winning candidates cannot issue threats or carry out any attack directly or indirectly on others. "Stern action will be taken if anyone is found to be involved in such threat or attack."

He said there was widespread post-election violence in 2001. "Police will take instant action if any kind of incident like torturing, violence and threat occurs," he said.

Asaduzzaman said they will not tolerate any incident which hampers public security. "Policemen remained in the field to ensure security of the people, their property and the state."

SunEdison challenges cancellation of Solar Park project

UNB, Dhaka

As the government has cancelled the 200MW Teknaf Solar Park project following SunEdison's failure to implement it as per schedule, the executing agency has moved to the International Court of Arbitration, challenging the government's decision.

Sources at the power division said SunEdison had been assigned with the task to implement the 200MW grid-tied solar park, the country's first-ever large-scale renewable energy project, which was scheduled to end by July 2018.

"But SunEdison could not make any substantial progress in its implementation. That is why the government in April issued a 'notice' to the firm, intending to terminate the agreement," said Mohammad Alauddin, a joint secretary of the power division.

Replying to the government, SunEdison sent a "notice of dispute" as well as a legal notice in July, to settle the issue through arbitration as per 19(b) of Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), said officials of state-owned Power Development Board (PDB).

The officials of PDB responded to the notices and now the issue remains pending with the International Court of Arbitration.

As agreed, PDB was supposed to purchase electricity at 17 cents (equivalent to Tk 13.26) per unit from the solar park.

The government had estimated to buy approximately

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