

WEATHER
FORECASTYESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURESDHAKA
H 26.8 L 13.2MYMENSINGH
H 25.5 L 11.8CHATTOGRAM
H 26.6 L 15.6SYLHET
H 27.4 L 12.5RAJSHAHI
H 26.0 L 10.5RANGPUR
H 26.5 L 10.3KHULNA
H 27.0 L 11.5BARISAL
H 26.5 L 10.0COX'S BAZAR
H 28.0 L 16.7

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6pm today. Light to moderate fog may occur at places during late night to morning, Met Office said, reports UNB. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:28pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.

Schoolgirl
raped in
Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sixth-grader was allegedly raped by a youth in the capital's Turag area on Monday night.

The 12-year-old girl was sent to One-stop Crisis Centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital for forensic tests. Sources at the hospital said they found evidence of rape.

The youth, on a motorbike, intercepted the girl on her way home from a nearby relative's house around 8pm. He forcibly took her to a deserted alley and raped her, victim's father told The Daily Star.

He said her daughter could not identify the youth. "But from the description she gave, we're suspecting that he is son of a local landlord," he said, adding that he is also a drug addict.

Abdul Motalib, sub-inspector of Turag Police Station, said police are trying to arrest the suspect.

The girl used to live with his grandmother in Shariatpur. She arrived in Dhaka two weeks ago.



A train squeezes through a vegetable market that has almost occupied the rail tracks in Jurain of Old Dhaka, while people of various ages position themselves on the exterior of the locomotive. The vendors apparently return and set up their shops along the tracks every time they are evicted, moving their belongings barely out of the way moments before the train arrives.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Nazmul Huda
denied bailSC chamber judge sends his petition to full bench
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A chamber judge of the Supreme Court yesterday refused to grant bail to former minister Nazmul Huda in a bribery case in which he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment by the High Court.

Huda, who was sent to prison after he surrendered to a Dhaka court on January 6, moved a leave-to-appeal petition before the apex court chamber judge yesterday, seeking bail.

But Justice Md Nuruzzaman sent the petition to its full bench, denying him bail.

Justice Nuruzzaman also fixed January 13 for hearing the matter at the full bench, Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan, lawyer for the Anti-Corruption Commission, told The Daily Star.

Huda, chairman of Bangladesh National Alliance (BNA), was defeated in the December 30 national election. He was a candidate from Dhaka-17.

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Road crashes kill
nine in a day

Accident causes long tailback in Tangail

STAR REPORT

Nine people were killed and two others injured in road accidents in six districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Tangail, a truck was killed and his helper injured when their truck crashed into another truck parked beside Bangabandhu Bridge link road in Soratol area of Kalihati upazila.

Locals said the accident took place early in the morning when there was dense fog.

Mohendra Sarkar, 45, from Kathaltoly village in Kaliakoir upazila of Gazipur, died on the spot, said Mosharaf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge East Police Station.

His helper Razib, 25, from the same upazila, was taken to Tangail General Hospital, he said.

The moving truck also got damaged in the incident.

The accident caused a long tailback on both sides of the

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'Participatory does not equate to fair'

Did not change stance on polls, says Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukder yesterday said he did not change his stance and reiterated that participatory polls does not necessarily equate to a fair election.

He made the remarks in a written statement to clear his stance regarding "confusion" over his comments at a programme organised to thank Election Commission (EC) officials on January 3.

At the programme, Mahbub said that the EC has held a participatory election and that created confusion.

"Several reporters asked me whether I changed my stance. So, it is necessary to clear the confusion," he said.

"On December 17, 2018, I said a

participatory election means all political parties participate in the polls. That has no connection with a free and fair election. A participatory election is a primary achievement. The main concern is whether the election is held acceptably and credibly," Mahbub said.

"If the election is not held in an acceptable and credible manner, there will be no benefit even if it is participatory," Mahbub said.

"I didn't say anything about the credibility and acceptance of the national election at the [January 3] programme. Reporters asked me how the election was. I had earlier said ask your conscience and you will get the answer; I am still saying that," he said.

"I have not changed my stance," he claimed.

"The programme on January 3 was a ceremony to give thanks. It is considered civil to thank someone with a favourable comment. It is improper to analyse my speech of thanks politically," Mahbub said.

This is the first time the election commissioner faced the media officially after the December 30 election.

Ahead of the election, Mahbub had alleged that there is no level playing field for the polls. He issued a written statement on December 17, in which he said fairness was still absent and the words "level playing field" had become meaningless.

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GRAFT CASE AGAINST MOUDUD
Hearing deferred to
January 14

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday deferred till January 14 hearing of the corruption case filed against former law minister Moudud Ahmed during the tenure of the last caretaker government.

Judge Sheikh Golam Mahbub of the Special Judge's Court-6 of Dhaka passed the order, after Moudud's lawyer Abdur Rezaq Khan could not complete cross-examining the complainant, deputy assistant director Shariful Haque Siddiqui of the Anti-corruption Commission.

Earlier on June 21, 2017, the same court framed charge against the BNP leader in the case.

On September 16, 2007, the ACC filed the case against Moudud with Gulshan Police Station, on charges of amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and withholding information about his assets.

The first information report (FIR) of the case said Moudud showed movable and immovable properties worth over Tk 13.23 crore in his account of wealth submitted to the ACC on July 23, 2007.



President Abdul Hamid at a doa mahfil for Syed Ashraf Islam at Officers' Club Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Blessings sought
for Syed Ashraf

President attends doa mahfil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With heavy hearts, colleagues and well-wishers yesterday sought blessings for the departed soul of noted politician Syed Ashraf Islam.

President Abdul Hamid, former and current members of the cabinet, and lawmakers, among others, participated in a doa mahfil after Asr prayers at Officers' Club in Dhaka.

After prayers, Abdul Hamid expressed his sympathy to the bereaved family members of Ashraf, former Awami League general secretary and public administration minister.

Ashraf, son of Syed Nazrul Islam who was the acting president of the Mujibnagar government, died at Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok on January 3. He had been suffering from lung cancer.

Ashraf's younger brother Syed Manzurul Islam thanked the organisers of the event. Among others, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Education Minister Dipu Moni were present at the programme.

10-TRUCK ARMS HAUL CASE
HC bench refuses to hear
death reference and appeals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday refused to hear the death reference and appeals in the sensational 10-truck arms haul case in which 14 people, including former ministers, were sentenced to death.

The bench of Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha and Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam dropped the death reference and appeals from its hearing list and sent them to the chief justice for a decision, Deputy Attorney General Bashir Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He said the HC bench made the death reference and appeals "out of list" as Justice Bhabani Prasad Singha was a metropolitan sessions judge in Chattogram from January 18, 2009 to May 23, 2010 and he passed some interlocutory orders in the 10-truck arms haul case during the period. Justice

Singha feels that he should not deal with the case now, DAG Bashir Ahmed said.

If a lower court sentences any person to death in a case, its judgment is examined by the HC through hearing arguments for confirmation of the death sentence. The case documents and judgment reach as death reference to the HC from the lower court in seven days after the latter delivers the verdict.

Twelve of the 14 death row convicts in the case have filed separate appeals with the HC challenging the trial court verdict against them.

On January 30, 2014, the Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 handed down death penalty to 14 people, including former minister and Jamaat Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami and former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar of BNP, for smuggling 10 truckloads of firearms in 2004.

Climate confce
opens in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to sharing research-based solutions to impacts of climate change, a four-day international conference opened yesterday at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in Dhaka, said a press release.

GOBESHONA, an environment research wing of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at IUB organised the conference for the fifth time.

Experts and researchers from the government, NGOs, INGOs, donors and partner organisations participated in the inaugural ceremony.

Dr Saleemul Huq, director of ICCCAD, welcomed guests and gave an overview of the conference.

A "Science Policy Dialogue Day" will be held on the fourth day.

WINTER CLOTHES

Local products losing market

UNB, Dhaka

At the onset of this winter, Kohinoor Begum visited the capital's New Market to buy a jacket for her granddaughter, but found it hard to find one within her budget.

"We checked the local brands first, but didn't find anything we liked within our budget," she recalled.

Kohinoor ended up buying a Chinese-made jacket for Tk 1,600. "The quality of our local product is not impressive," she noted with a hint of disappointment.

"I'm disappointed that our local markets are dominated by foreign brands," she added.

Higher prices and lack of variety in locally-produced winter clothes are encouraging many Bangladeshi customers to go for Chinese and Indian goods that are relatively cheaper and come in attractive designs.

Markets popular with shoppers from middle-class income group in Dhaka's Bangabazar, Gulistan, Motijheel, New Market and Shantinagar were seen flooded with Chinese and Indian products.

Traders say they can hardly make any profit from local products.

At Dhaka's Polwel Super Market, a hub of

imported apparel business, Chinese jackets and sweaters are sold at Tk 1,500 to Tk 5,000. "They're affordable and have good designs," says Shaheedul Hasan, owner of Golden Gallery.

Khadija Rahman, chief designer of Aarong's Taaga Man brand, said their target group is the middle class. "Production quantity is one of the reasons why our prices are higher. We also try to produce better quality products than China and India," she says.

Outmaneuvered by the Chinese, many local producers have started targeting lower-middle income customers. Swapna Mia, proprietor of Fashion Way and AI Fashion House Limited, says they manufacture jackets and sweaters costing between Tk 300 and Tk 900 for the local market. "It's because we cannot compete with Chinese and Indian technologies," he says.

Many local sellers are going with the tide. "We're selling only foreign winter clothes," says Mohammad Sirajul Islam, owner of Friendship Fashion at Bangabazar.

But, Sirajul says, local brands can still make a turnaround. "They have to come up with new items and designs or they risk losing more market share," he warned.



Newly-elected lawmaker from Chandpur-4 and former president of Jatiya Press Club Muhammad Shafiqur Rahman, centre, being accorded a reception at the press club yesterday. From left, Press Club General Secretary Farida Yasmin, President Saiful Alam; BFUJ President Molla Jalal and Press Club Treasurer Shyamal Dutta.