

WEATHER
FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 24.7 L 17.3

MYMENSINGH
H 23.5 L 16.5

CHATTOGRAM
H 23.8 L 18.6

SYLHET
H 27.7 L 16.2

RAJSHAHI
H 23.5 L 14.5

RANGPUR
H 24.5 L 14.5

KHULNA
H 25.0 L 16.8

BARISHAL
H 25.3 L 15.7

COX'S BAZAR
H 25.8 L 18.3

Weather may remain mainly 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 mid night to morning. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:43pm and rises tomorrow at 6:41am.

Sound pollution falls on deaf ears

Khulna residents blame authorities' indifference for the menace

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Noise pollution has turned acute in Khulna city, as sound levels have gone beyond the permissible level at many points of the city, putting public health at risk.

Most vehicles plying the city's streets continue to use hydraulic horns, much to the dismay of residents. Vehicles -- buses, trucks, microbuses and auto-rickshaws -- use the horns excessively. Mills, factories and workshops keep adding to the noise pollution, due to the lack of any proper supervision.

Residents alleged that such menace is increasing due to indifference of the authorities concerned.

According to experts, sound pollution is the disturbing noise that has harmful impact on the activity of human or animal life. The source of ambient sound worldwide is mainly caused by machines and transportation systems, motor-vehicles engines and construction work.

According to the Noise Pollution (Control) Rules 2006, the acceptable sound level for the country is 50dB for daytime and 40dB for night in silent areas; 50dB for daytime and 45dB for night in residential areas; 60dB for daytime and 50dB for night in mixed areas (residential, commercial and industrial localities); 70dB for daytime and 60dB for night in commercial

areas, and 75dB for daytime and 70dB for night in industrial areas.

The decibel (abbreviated dB) is the unit used to measure intensity of a sound.

But as per the December 2018 report of Department of Environment, Khulna, most of the populous places in the city have crossed the allowed limit of 60dB. The noise level at Rupsha Traffic intersection was 70dB and Daulatpur, Sonadanga and Boyra bus stands stood at 73, 82 and 72 respectively.

Also, intersections like Gallamari (76dB), Notun Rasta (73dB), Shibbari (69dB), Royal (70dB), Khulna DC Office (69dB), Khulna Medical College Hospital (70dB), Abu Naser Hospital (69dB), Ad-din Hospital (70dB), Phultala (69dB), Phulbari Gate (68dB), Jora Gate (71dB), Khulna Power House (72dB) and Dakbangla (78dB) have crossed the durable limit.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), generally 60dB sound can make a person deaf temporarily and 100dB sound can cause complete deafness.

Azizur Rahman, a resident of Tutpara area, said sound pollution has reached an intolerable level in the city. "It's also affecting people's behaviour."

According to health experts, sound pollution causes high blood pressure, headache,

indigestion, ulcer, and also affects sleep. Anyone may become deaf for the time being if 100dB or more noise pollution occurs for half an hour or more in any place.

Dr Nurul Haque Fakir, an ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist, said prolonged noise can damage eardrums and may result in permanent hearing loss. Its physiological manifestations are irritability and nervousness, fatigue and lack of work efficiency, he added.

Cardiologist Bidhan Chandra Goswami, director of Abu Naser Specialised Hospital, said, "Sound pollution has an adverse impact on human body and may create serious complications for heart patients, children and pregnant women."

Noting that working in chaotic noise for a long period can cause complete deafness, he said children are being adversely affected by sound pollution since it stimulates their brains.

Mahfuzur Rahman Mukul, Khulna divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said sound exceeding the permissible limit is a punishable offence.

But no laws have yet been properly implemented in this regard. The traffic police and administration must work to bring the noise

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ROHINGYA CRISIS

Foreign minister seeks Vietnam's assistance

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh is committed to the voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees to their homeland as soon as Myanmar creates a conducive environment for their safe return.

He was talking to Quoc Dzung, Vietnamese deputy minister of foreign affairs and special envoy to the prime minister, at the foreign ministry.

The minister requested Vietnam to play an active role to get Asean more involved in Rohingya issue and promote dialogue among its members with Myanmar, for early resolution of the crisis.

Dzung pledged US\$50,000 in humanitarian assistance from the Vietnam government for the Rohingya, and another US\$50,000 for World Food Programme in Bangladesh.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CLIMATE PROJECTS

No irregularities will be accepted, says environment minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin yesterday called upon the relevant government bodies to implement the climate change projects appropriately through ensuring transparency and accountability.

The minister made the call while speaking at a views exchange meeting with the officials of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT) at its office in the capital's Mohakhali area, according to a press release.

"Our initiatives to combat the climate change risks have already been appreciated around the world. And we have started to deal with the risks with our own funds; BCCT is a result of that endeavour," Shahab Uddin said at the meeting.

The relevant ministries should closely monitor the climate change projects, which are funded by the BCCT, so that they are implemented properly, he added.

"Any irregularity regarding the projects' implementation will not be tolerated," said the minister.

He also urged the BCCT officials to be more attentive and responsible to their duties.

Habibun Nahar, deputy minister for environment, forest and climate change; Abdullah Al Mohsin Chowdhury, secretary to the ministry; Dipak Kanti Paul, managing director of BCCT, among others, also spoke at the programme.

Dr Kamal back from Singapore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikyafront Convener and Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain returned home from Thailand yesterday.

Dr Kamal along with his wife Hameeda Hossain reached Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport by a Thai Airways flight around 12:30pm, Gonoforum central leader Rafiqul Islam Pathik told The Daily Star.

He said their party president went to Thailand from Singapore after receiving treatment at Mount Elizabeth Hospital there.

On January 19, Dr Kamal and his wife went to Singapore for medical purposes.

Pathik said Dr Kamal Hossain was supposed to return home early Monday, but it was deferred for some unavoidable reasons.

Unpaid workers block CEPZ entrance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Several hundred workers of a garment factory yesterday blockaded the main entrance of Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ), demanding payment of arrears.

The workers of Peninsula Garments Ltd, located in Sector 1 of CEPZ, gathered in the area around 10am and continued their demonstration for almost two hours.

MA Mannan, a member of parliament from Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, is the chairman of Peninsula Garments Ltd, which is a concern of Sunman Group of Companies.

While speaking with The Daily Star, EPZ Police Station's Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nurul Huda said the factory had been closed nine months ago and one month's salary, bonus and others benefits worth Tk 10 crore of around 1,500 workers have remained unpaid.

The workers gathered in CEPZ area yesterday morning as the factory authorities had assured around seven hundred workers of paying off their dues, but none received any payment, the OC added.

At around 10am, police and different

government bodies including Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) held a meeting with the factory's Managing Director Belayet Hossain, who assured that the arrears will be cleared by February 28.

The agitating workers later brought out a procession and marched for about 11 kilometres towards Chattogram Press Club in Kotwali area.

A number of workers said some of them have already found new jobs in other factories, but most others are still unemployed.

Many of them had to take leave of absence from their current jobs so they could come to CEPZ for collecting their dues, while many others came from different districts including Barishal, Rangpur, Gopalganj and Dhaka -- where they had to relocate to after the factory was closed.

Shahinur Khatun, with her 6-month-old daughter in her arms, said she worked at the factory for seven years. "I came from Dhaka since they had promised us to pay off all our money. But now they have delayed the date again. This is the third time this has happened."

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Demanding arrears, workers of Peninsula Garments Ltd bring out a procession in the port city yesterday. The photo was taken in Bandar area.

PHOTO: STAR

KU develops salinity-tolerant fruits for coastal areas

A CORRESPONDENT, KU

Researchers at Khulna University are claiming to have developed salinity-tolerant varieties of fruits, raising the prospects for fruit production in the country's coastal areas.

The experiment has reached its final stage and farmers will be able to cultivate these new varieties within the next three years, said the researchers.

The fruits include: guava, jackfruit, sapodilla (sofeda), plum, hog plum (amra), and pomelo (batabilebu).

Researchers at Germplasm Center of Agrotechnology at Khulna University have worked on this experiment for eight years.

"The new breeds will be fit for cultivating in both salinity-prone coastal areas and other areas," said Dr Md Abdul Mannan, professor of Agrotechnology at KU and director of the project.

Existing varieties of the fruits are not suitable for cultivation in the coastal area.

Generally, they are unable to endure the climate and extreme salinity of the region. As a result, fruit production has dropped in those areas, he said.

Moreover, climate and salinity severely affect the taste of those varieties. The new varieties have been developed keeping these two factors in mind. In one hand, it will increase production, and on the other hand, the taste will be improved, said the professor.

"These new varieties will benefit the farmers. But they will have to wait for two to three years as we need to finish the final stages of the experiment," he added.

The experiment is being conducted under a project titled 'Evaluation of fruit germplasm available in the south-west region of Bangladesh on the basis of physio-chemical characteristics and genetics variabilities by random amplified polymorphic DNA analysis' since 2010.



The new variety of pomelo (batabilebu).

MISAPPROPRIATION OF Tk 15CR Three Rupali Bank high-ups summoned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned three top officials of Rupali Bank Ltd to appear before it on February 13, who were exempted from charges in a corruption case over misappropriation of Tk 15 core from the bank.

The three Rupali Bank officials are: its General Manager SM Atiqur Rahman, Deputy General Manager Mohammad Ali and Senior Principal Officer Md Abdus Samad Sarkar.

The court also issued a rule asking them to explain why they should not be tried in the case.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Takukder and Justice KM Hafizul Alam came up with the

order and rule on a suo moto (voluntary) move, while hearing an appeal filed by Everest Holding and Technologies Ltd's Managing Director AHM Bahauddin, who was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment by a lower court in the same case.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on September 16, 2012 against Rupali Bank officials Atiqur, Mohammad Ali and Abdus Samad; along with Abu Borhan Chowdhury and Bahauddin, chairman and managing director respectively of Everest Holding and Technologies Ltd -- on

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Khasruzzaman's death anniv today

CITY DESK

Today is the sixth death anniversary of Dr Khasruzzaman Chowdhury, a recipient of Swadhinata Padak.

Khasruzzaman, a member of the erstwhile CSP cadre, organised freedom fighters during the Liberation War in Netrakona, where he was serving as the sub-divisional officer, said a press release.

He later joined the home ministry of the Mujibnagar government as deputy secretary. After independence, he was appointed deputy commissioner of Mymensingh.

He was also secretary to the Unesco Bangladesh Commission, while serving as deputy secretary of education ministry.

He obtained his master's degree from Harvard University, and his PhD in economics from Syracuse University. He authored textbooks of economics and wrote in Bangla and English journals. He also published books on short stories, poetry, rhyme, humour and travel.

A book, titled "The Turbulent 1971: My diary", by him will be published this year.

HC again summons Jamuna Bank MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday again summoned Shafiqul Alam, managing director of Jamuna Bank, to appear before it on February 12 and explain his inaction to comply with a 2017 directive.

The bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das also ordered the officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station to arrest and produce Shafiqul on February 12 if he does not appear on his own.

According to the case statement, one Talebur Rahman opened a Mudaraba Term Deposit Receipt [MTDR], a profit bearing account, with Jamuna Bank's Nawabpur branch in 2005. The deposit matured after five years.

Talebur gave the power of attorney to AIM Hasanul Mujib [the petitioner] for drawing the deposited money from the bank, said the petitioner's lawyer Barrister ABM Altaf Hossain.

"When Mujib went to the bank, they refused to release the money," said the lawyer, adding, Mujib later knocked the doors of Bangladesh Bank (BB), but could not get the

money released.

He then filed a writ petition in this connection against the authorities concerned of the central bank and Jamuna Bank.

On February 2017, the HC directed Jamuna Bank to pay Tk 51 lakh [the deposit money] to Mujib in 30 days.

The apex court also upheld the HC verdict, but the bank did not release the money.

As the respondents did not act upon the court's order, on January 24 last year, HC issued a contempt of court rule against BB governor, the finance secretary, Jamuna Bank MD and three others in this connection.

A year later, on January 22, Mujib again filed another petition with the court, and the same bench summoned Shafiqul to appear on January 29 [yesterday]. Shafiqul was absent.

During hearing yesterday, Shafiqul's lawyer Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan yesterday told the bench that his client could not appear before it as he is currently travelling abroad on an official trip.

"This is a blatant violation of the court order and contempt of court," Barrister Altaf said.

Three killed, two hurt in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least three persons were killed and two injured in separate road accidents in the last two days.

In Chattogram, two youths were killed after their motor-bike was hit by a truck in Chandanaish upazila of Chattogram, reports our correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Saiful Islam Rocky, 21, and Hamid Hasan Mishkat, 21, said Alauddin Talukdar, assistant sub-inspector of Chattogram Medical College Hospital police outpost.

The accident took place in Dewanhat area in the upazila around 10:30pm, killing Rocky on the spot.

Mishkat succumbed to his injuries early yesterday while undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital, the police official added.

Meanwhile, in Narail, a three-wheeler driver was killed and two others were injured as the vehicle collided head-on with a battery-run easy-bike in Kalia upazila yesterday, reports BSS.

The deceased was identified as Israfil Sarder, 30, said Alomgir Kabir, officer-in-charge of Naragati Police Station.

The OC, quoting locals, said the accident took place in Mulsree area on Kalia-Gopalganj road around noon.

Israfil died on the spot, added the OC.

A case was filed in this connection.

Pacific Jeans to provide free eye care to workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Pacific Jeans Group started providing intensive eye care services to the workers of its four factories at free of cost.

The country's pioneering premium jeans manufacturer and leading exporter has partnered with Australia-based non-profit public health organisation Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF) to implement FHF's ongoing project titled "Empowering Garment Workers through Uptake of Eye Care Services".

The initiative aims at creating a sustainable solution for eye problems among 26,000 workers of the group's four factories.

Pacific Jeans Director Syed M Tanvir and Fred Hollows Foundation Country Manager Dr Zareen Khair signed an agreement in this regard at a brief ceremony held at the auditorium of NHT Fashions Ltd yesterday.

Under the project, vision detection corners have already been installed in the factories so that workers can self-screen for visual impairment and be referred to factories' respective medical centres, which have been equipped and renovated for basic eye care, said FHF Project Officer Nafiz



Mahmood Ayon, adding that 80 female coordinators and 16 medical staff have been trained in the matter.

Patients with diagnosed refractive error will be provided with free spectacles through a cost-sharing mechanism between the two signees, while cataract surgeries, if necessary, will also be conducted free of cost, he informed.

Tanvir assured that they will stay committed to the two-year project and continue it later on.