

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 29.6 L 19.8	MYMENSINGH H 28.5 L 16.6	CHATTOGRAM H 29.5 L 17.5	SYLHET H 28.8 L 16.1	RAJSHAHI H 29.2 L 14.4	RANGPUR H 26.0 L 15.0	KHULNA H 31.5 L 19.8	BARISHAL H 30.5 L 19.6	COX'S BAZAR H 28.5 L 18.2
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Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in next 24 hours till 6pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. **The sun sets in the capital today at 5:57pm and rises tomorrow at 6:28am.**



A pedestrian passes a road where tannery workers are burning leather waste, causing severe air pollution. A recent study says that air pollution shortens an average Bangladeshi's life by 1.87 years. The photo was taken yesterday at Kalunagar in the capital's Hazaribagh area. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Dhaka's air quality remains unhealthy

'5th worst' in the world yesterday

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka ranked fifth yesterday in the AirVisual Index of cities around the world with the worst air quality.

In the real-time air quality ranking, Dhaka scored 164 yesterday and classified as "unhealthy", according to AirVisual.

On Tuesday, Dhaka remained on top of the air quality index for some time, scoring 361, and was classified as "hazardous".

Bangladesh, one of the most densely-populated countries in the world, has been struggling with air pollution for a while, and Dhaka continuously ranks among the world's most polluted cities.

Many environmental experts blamed the pollution on construction of metro rail and other major projects. They also identified brick kilns, vehicles run on fuel containing higher levels of sulphur, as well as construction work as primary sources of air pollution.

On February 9, green activists, including Poribesh Bachao Andolan (Poba) and Nagorik Odhikar Sangrakkhan Forum, voiced deep concerns that around 90 percent of Dhaka residents are affected by serious dust pollution and urged the authorities concerned to take effective measures.

They also said the intensity of dust pollution rises during winter due to road digging and delayed disposal of wastes, causing various respiratory, allergy and skin diseases.

The High Court has ordered the director general of Department of Environment (DoE) to take steps to conduct mobile court drives twice a week against those responsible for air pollution in the city.

A new study that uses data from the Global Burden of Disease Project has found that ambient air pollution shortens an average Bangladeshi's life by 1.87 years.

The study also suggested that better air quality could lead to a significant extension of human lifespan around the world.

Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that worldwide seven million people die every year from exposure to such pollution with most deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries, mainly in Africa and Asia.

US environmental experts developed the Air Quality Index (AQI) which is divided into six categories, indicating increasing levels of health concern.

An AQI value over 300 represents hazardous air quality, and below 50 the air quality is good.

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BCL yet to form full central committee

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) is yet to announce a full-fledged central committee, even though nine months have passed since the pro-Awami League student organisation held its last council.

As a result, BCL is going to contest the March 11 Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) polls, without a full committee, said its top leaders.

BCL held its last national council on May 11-12 last year, without electing new leadership. The DU council was held on April 29, and councils of Dhaka south and north units took place on April 25-26 last year.

On July 31, Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina nominated Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon as president and Golam Rabbani as general secretary.

The same day, the PM declared a two-member committee of DU and Dhaka north and south units. Later, BCL central president and general secretary promised to announce a full-fledged committee by December 2018.

As per Article 11 (Kha and Ga) of BCL constitution, the tenure of the central executive body is two years, and council should be held within this period, otherwise the executive body will become defunct.

However, the committee may extend for three months in case of any special or emergency circumstances,

which must be approved through extended meetings.

The tenure of district units is one year, according to the constitution. As such, the current two-member central committee has already passed a quarter of its tenure.

There has always been a tradition of forming a full-fledged central committee first, followed by committees of other units. But the absence of a full executive body is hampering BCL activities to a large extent.

Besides, some leaders of other units could get promotion if the central committee was announced, said unit leaders and activists.

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NTMC will soon be able to block anti-govt propaganda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC) will soon be able to block and filter anti-government propaganda and other content to be used for criminal activities on the internet.

Officials at NTMC yesterday said a "Content Blocking and Filtering System" is now being implemented.

The NTMC made the disclosure during the visit of Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and chiefs of different law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

NTMC, which began its operation on January 1, 2017, has been monitoring all telecommunication service providers round the clock. Besides, work is on to implement Integrated Lawful Interception

System (ILIS), the officials added.

NTMC, with the help of Facebook authorities, has closed 1,479 fake Facebook IDs, including 752 which were operating under the name of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and 141 used for militant activities.

It also shut down 54 websites used to spread fake news and military, 288 fake Facebook pages, and 28 fake Facebook groups.

A meeting with the home minister and chiefs of law enforcement and intelligence agencies was also held where Director of NTMC Brig Gen Ziaul Ahsan put forward a set of demands.

The minister also said a proposal for setting up a central data hub in NTMC will be implemented following approval from the prime minister.

Fourth phase of upazila polls on March 31: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced the fourth phase of Upazila Parishad polls schedule, setting March 31 as voting day.

EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed disclosed the schedule at a briefing at Nirbachan Bhabna in Dhaka.

As per the schedule, last date for nomination submission is March 4. Nominations will be scrutinised on March 6 and last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 13.

This year upazila elections will be held in five phases.

The first phase of the election will be held on March 10, second phase on March 18, and third phase on March 24.

EC officials said they were planning to hold the fifth phase of election on June 18.

The first upazila polls were held in 1985.

Seeing the world through legends' eyes

Biographies and memoirs inspire booklovers

MATHEWS CHIRAN

In the journey of life, whenever people seek motivation to move ahead, they try to draw inspiration from those who are considered unprecedented in their own fields.

Biographies and autobiographies are a great way of getting to know more about visionary leaders and changemakers, and learning from their life stories.

This year's Ekushey book fair is offering booklovers the opportunity to see the world through these legends' eyes by reading books about their lives.

"A biography or memoir of a visionary is written from their real-life experiences. Their struggles and stories of how they overcame those hurdles help readers find inspiration when they go through difficult times in their own lives," said Puspita Islam, a master's student at Bangladesh University of Business and Technology. She bought Nelson Mandela's "A Long Walk to Freedom."

There are many fans of this literary form.

Some enjoy reading about political leaders, while others admire entrepreneurs and changemakers.

Niloy Rahman, a private job holder who was looking for a biography of Steve Jobs said, "I have read autobiographies of different political leaders, now I want to know more about visionaries from other fields."

Not only are adults getting a taste of this genre, children are also becoming familiar with it. Different publishers have biographies that cater to children.

Rabindranath Tagore's "Chelebela" and Golam Khurshid's "Choto Boro Sobar Michael Madhusudan Dutt" are from Oboshor publication and "Archimedes Theke Einstein" by Khorshida Khatun is from Student Ways publication.

Because of the demand for biographies, publishers have brought out translated books for readers. These include, Katherine Frank's "Indira", Fidel Castro's "My Life: A Spoken Autobiography" translated by Hasan Bayzid, and "I Am Malala" translated



A reader browses biographies and memoirs in a book stall.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Transparency of Judiciary: Journos' access to courtroom must

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday said journalists' access to the courtrooms has to be ensured to maintain transparency of the judiciary.

"I had attended a seminar at Ankara in Turkey, where it was being discussed that journalists will be allowed to enter courtrooms for transparency of judiciary. It is now internationally established that journalists' access to court premises and courtrooms should be ensured," he said.

The chief justice was speaking to reporters after inaugurating the renovated media room for Law Reporters Forum on the Supreme Court Bar Association premises.

Syed Mahmud Hossain hoped that the renovated media room will help reporters in discharging their professional duties on the Supreme Court premises.

SC Registrar General Dr Md Zakir Hossain, SCBA President Advocate Zainul Abedin, Additional Attorney General Momtaz Uddin Fakir, Senior Advocate AM Aminuddin, SC officials, LRF leaders and members were present at the inauguration ceremony.

Four youths arrested for selling 'fake' question papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested four youths for their involvement in selling "fake question papers" of the ongoing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations and scamming people with promise of altering exam results.

A team of Detective Branch (DB) arrested the four in front of a hotel in Dhaka's Fakirapool area on Tuesday, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (North), told The Daily Star.

The arrestees are: Abdullah Fahim (20), Shamim Ahmed (19), Nobin Ali (22) and a 17-year-old. A laptop, four mobile phones were also seized from their possession.

The information was disclosed at a press briefing at DMP Media Centre on Minto Road yesterday.

Of the detained, Fahim was arrested by Rab for the same offence last year, but again he got involved with the unlawful trade, said the DB official.

"Fahim had been doing this for a long time. He would tell people that he had access to leaked question papers of SSC exams, job tests and entry exams for medical colleges and universities," Mashiur Rahman said.

The gang members are all connected through social media; they used to create messenger groups three to four months prior to public exams, law enforcers claimed.

"First they provide suggestions, model questions and earn the confidence of examinees and their parents. Prior to the exam, they promised original question papers in exchange

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Graft Case: Six former bank officials sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six former officials of Bangladesh Krishi Bank Limited were sent to jail yesterday in connection with a graft case.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after cancelling their bail petitions.

The accused are Jubayer Manjur, former chief regional manager (Dhaka) of Bangladesh Krishi Bank Ltd; ABM Aatur Rahman, former deputy manager and branch manager of the bank's corporate branch in Banani; AKM Mosharrif Hossain, former deputy manager of the corporate branch; Monwara Begum, former assistant general manager of corporate branch, Md Sanullah, former senior chief officer of the corporate branch, and Engineer Shahidul Islam, former senior chief officer (divisional office) of Bangladesh Krishi Bank Ltd.

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Reserved Seats for Women: Newly elected MPs sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly elected MPs to the seats reserved for women were sworn in yesterday.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury administered the oath-taking ceremony at Jatiya Sangsad.

The speaker administered the oath to 43 MPs from Awami League, one MP from Workers Party and one independent MP.

Later she administered oath to four MPs from Jatiya Party separately.

Acting Secretary of Jatiya Sangsad Golam Kibria conducted the oath-taking ceremony.

The MPs also signed in the oath book.

They are likely to join the ongoing maiden session of the parliament on February 24. The first session was adjourned on Tuesday till 4:45pm on February 24.

On Sunday, the Election Commission published an official gazette with the names of the elected candidates for the parliamentary seats reserved for women.