



**B4** Blockade hits tourism business in Sundarbans



**P11** Nahida's journey to the top



**P7** China's carrier passes through Taiwan Strait



**P3** Fined, evicted yet in business

## Hasina doubts if JP will stay in the race

Drops hints while talking to colleagues after cabinet meet

BAHARAM KHAN and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed doubt whether the main opposition Jatiya Party would keep its word and stay in the electoral race.

The Awami League president also reiterated that "party independents" would be running to make the election more participatory, sources said.

After the cabinet meeting yesterday, the premier had an unscheduled discussion with her colleagues on AL leaders running as independents and the main opposition in parliament.

According to the four ministers The Daily Star spoke to after the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, some senior ministers drew Hasina's attention to JP's stance on polls and the "AL independents".

The PM then said there is no guarantee what JP will do in the upcoming election.

Hasina said JP dropped Raushan Ershad, her son Rahgir Al Mahi Ershad (Saad Ershad), and Mashiur Rahman Ranga from the race and no

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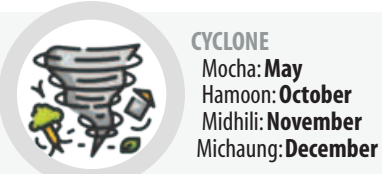
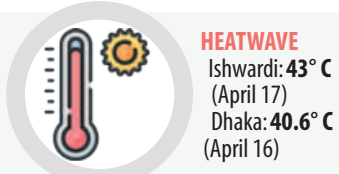
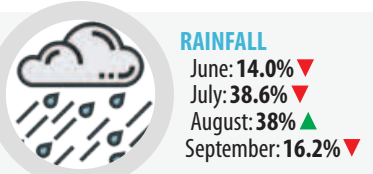
**The Awami League president also reiterated that "AL independents" would be running to make the election more participatory.**



Apparently teens run across the rail lines in Nakhalpara area of Dhaka's Tejgaon yesterday even though two trains are passing the area at speed. Many put their lives at risk this way every day just to save a few moments.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Caught up in extreme weather events



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Sudden temperature drops in winter, sweltering and frequent heatwaves in summer, poor rainfall during monsoon, and four cyclones marked this year, and the experts blame it on climate change.

Heatwaves swept over the country for 62 days – 24 days in April, 22 days in May, and 16 days in June, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department data.

Dhaka recorded the highest temperature in 58 years, 40.6 degrees Celsius, on April 16. The very next day, the people of Ishwardi endured a temperature of 43 degrees Celsius, the highest in the country this year.

The country witnessed the

effects of four cyclones – Mocha in May, Hamoon in October, Midhili in November, and Michaung in December.

Experts said erratic weather patterns have become a major concern for Bangladesh, one of the worst climate change-affected countries.

"Extremes are changing in frequency and intensity due to global warming," said Prof AKM Saiful Islam, one of the lead authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment report.

"Although it is difficult to link individual extremes or with one year's data to long-term climate change, it is evident that we have seen extreme and rare events in this

decade as an early sign of climate change," he told The Daily Star.

In a recent report, the World Weather Attribution, an international coalition of scientists, said the April heatwave in Southeast Asia was a once-in-200-year event and without the human caused climate change it would have been "virtually impossible".

Bazlur Rashid Khan, a meteorologist at the BMD, said, "We observed that temperatures were above 36 degrees Celsius almost nationwide for more than 15 days at a stretch. We also saw that in winter temperature drops were sudden and by a large margin. This has a multifaceted impact on lives

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## Onion prices soar despite sufficient supply

Says BTTC report; experts say price spiral illogical

SUKANTA HALDER

The prices of onion have shot up despite adequate supply, according to a Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) report – laying bare the extent of market manipulation by a section of dishonest traders.

For instance, in the first five months of the fiscal year, onion imports were up 77.8 percent year-on-year to about 5.3 lakh tonnes, the report showed.

Local onion production in the last fiscal year that wrapped up on June 30 was 25.5 lakh tonnes.

"Considering local production and imports, there is likely to be oversupply in the market," BTTC said in the report released on December 10.

As of November 30, Bangladesh market received 30.8 lakh tonnes of onions from local and foreign sources this year, the report said.

The annual demand for onion in Bangladesh is 27-28 lakh tonne, 65-70 percent of which is met through local production.

"There is no reason for the unusual increase in onion prices in Bangladesh," said Selim Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University.

Onion prices in Bangladesh almost doubled overnight after India announced an onion export ban on Friday until March 31 next year.

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## POLITICAL VIOLENCE 59 more BNP-Jamaat men jailed in 5 cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 59 leaders and activists of BNP-Jamaat and their front organisations were yesterday sentenced to different jail terms in five cases filed between January 2012 and November 2018 over political violence in Dhaka.

With this, at least 674 BNP-Jamaat men have been jailed since November 7 this year in 36 cases filed on charges of illegal gatherings on the streets, rioting, damaging properties, arson attacks on vehicles, vandalism, and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Tejgaon Police Station in March 2013, 10 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were each given 30 months' rigorous imprisonment by a Dhaka court yesterday.

Jubo Dal's former president Saiful Alam Nirob and former ward councillor of Dhaka City Corporation Md Anwaruzzaman are among the convicts.

They were the only two of the 10 convicts present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md

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## Khaleda taken to CCU, then back to cabin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, currently undergoing treatment at Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, was brought back to the cabin tonight from the Coronary Care Unit (CCU).

AZM Zahid Hossain, a member of a medical board formed for the former prime minister, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

Earlier, around 6:30pm, she was transferred to the Coronary Care Unit (CCU) from the cabin.

On October 26, a three-member team of US doctors made an emergency intervention on Khaleda Zia for her liver cirrhosis.

She was transferred to the CCU based on the recommendations of her medical board, according to Zahid, also a personal physician of Khaleda.



People queue up behind a TCB truck to buy essentials at subsidised prices near Dhanmondi's Abahani ground yesterday. Some 300 buyers were lucky enough to have tokens for purchasing commodities, including onions, soybean oil, pulses, and potatoes. Many others left empty-handed.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## India SC backs govt decision to revoke J&K's special status

Orders local polls by Sept 30; Modi hails verdict; Pakistan rejects ruling

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday upheld a 2019 decision by the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to revoke special status for the state of Jammu and Kashmir and set a deadline of September 30 next year for local polls to be held.

India's only Muslim-majority region, Jammu and Kashmir has been at the heart of more than 75 years of animosity with neighbouring Pakistan since the birth of the two nations in 1947 at independence from colonial rule by Britain.

The unanimous order by a panel of five judges followed more than a dozen petitions challenging the removal of Article 370 of the constitution and a subsequent decision to split the region into two federally administered territories – Jammu and Kashmir, and the Buddhist territory of Ladakh.

It sets the stage for elections in Jammu and Kashmir, which was more closely integrated with India after the government's move, taken in line with a longstanding promise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Modi called the judgement "a beacon of hope, a promise of a brighter future".

Pakistan's caretaker government rejected the verdict.

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