

Dhaka Day by Day

Best-seller Binge at Boi Mela

by Rashed Mahmud Titumir

We may not have world-class writers but we surely have popular ones. And there is no better place than the Ekushey book fair to measure their popularity. Once again, Humayun Ahmed, novelist and playwright is leading the race with a wide margin, though his triumph is not being confirmed by the Bangla Academy as it used to do. This year the academy has decided not to announce the best-seller.

However, Ahmed's novel, *Jakhan Glache Dube Panchamir Chand* is easily considered to be on top of the best sellers' list at the Boi Mela. It is learnt that his other two fictions, *Chhayabithi* and *Majharbhat* are also in the race.

Most importantly, what he writes, his readers, without a few exceptions, are frantic about getting hold of. The university-professor-turned novelist has written a book on Quantum Chemistry, on which he did his doctoral thesis. It is known that his readers are crazy to be a proud possessor of one of his copies, without bothering if it is a novel or an academic work.

Imdadul Haq Milon and Taslima Nasreen are neck to neck in the competition. The publishers inform that one day he surpasses her and the other day she reverses the sale trend.

"Indeed, that kind of fair competition is what we are looking for," says Sumon, a student of Sociology. "Safur Rahman should learn how the market operates from them," he adds jokingly.

Hassan Jahidi Tapan, a publisher of Taslima informs that Taslima's *Chhoto Chhoto Dukkho* is selling like hot dogs, while her two books — *Ei Kosto Zhenpe Jiban Debo Mepe* and *Dukkhahati* are also very popular.

Asked to comment why her books get so favourable a response from the readers, the young publisher says: "There are two types of readers she is favourite with. The first type consists of women between 25 years to 30 years of age who want to see depicted in novels the cruel attitude of their male counterpart. The other one is the teenagers, whose adolescent impulses find a ready response to the sexual over tones with which her books are replete. Probably she keeps it in mind while writing her scripts."

"And recent controversies surrounding her also add winds into the sail of her popularity," adds the young owner of Perol Publishers.

Imdadul Haq Milon, along with the actors in his recent BTV drama serial *Rupnagar* is signing autographs on books authored by him and bought by his fans at a stall named *Binodon*.

Three of his books have arrived at the fair this year. *Eto Je Arhar Bhalobasha*, on which the ongoing BTV drama serial is based upon is in high demand. His other best-sellers are — *Shei*

Bideshinti and *Lokti Rajakar Chhilo*.

Humayun Azad, a professor of the Department of Bangla at the University of Dhaka and a bit controversial essayist has appeared at the fair with a novel *Chhappanno hajar borgomail*, which has created much enthusiasm among the readers.

"Don't forget he is controversial too", reminds Nazrul, a student of Dhaka University.

Asif Nazrul's — who is a journalist-turned teacher at the Faculty of Law, DU — two arrivals in the fair are also near to the record sale. His two novels: *Pap and Composer* *Jubok* enjoy a high demand among the teens.

Unsurprisingly,

following the trend of past years, the books of essay witness a slump. Badruddin Umar's two books: *Bangladesher Durniti*, *Santrash O Noirajya* and *Bangladesher Ganotantrik Shatratanttra* are receiving some attention from a section of readers.

According to booksellers, professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury's *Banglaer Joy Parajoy* has a good market even in this recessionary trend.

If someone wants to talk about the heritage of book fair, the bottom-line is the crowd of poets. Like the world trend in poetry, the same is happening in Bangladesh.

However, a collection of poems by late poet Abul Hasan and Helal Hafiz's poetry card have been doing well, according to book stalls.

"There are always two trends in literature — popular and serious", says Moynul Ahsan Saber, a Philip's award recipient for literature. "As elsewhere in the world, Saber says, there is no standard to measure the quality of literary works". However, he points out that there are some standards.

"I don't know whether the top best-sellers fit into it", continues Saber. "But I did not hear that literary critics had ever rated those very highly".

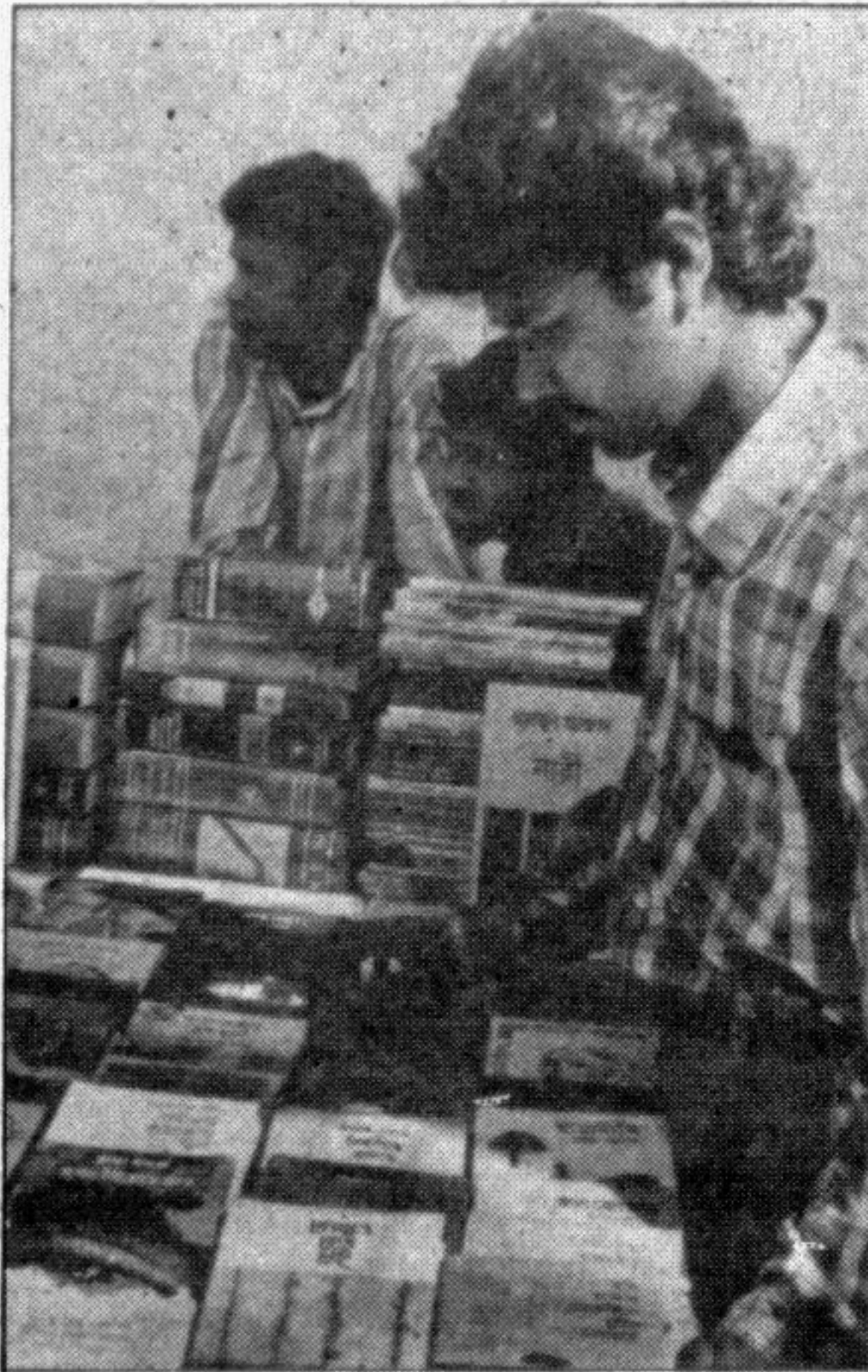
In response to a question, Saber terms the recent trend as "entertainment literature".

When asked to elaborate, he says, "The principal objective of the writers have now shifted in favour of satisfying the readers."

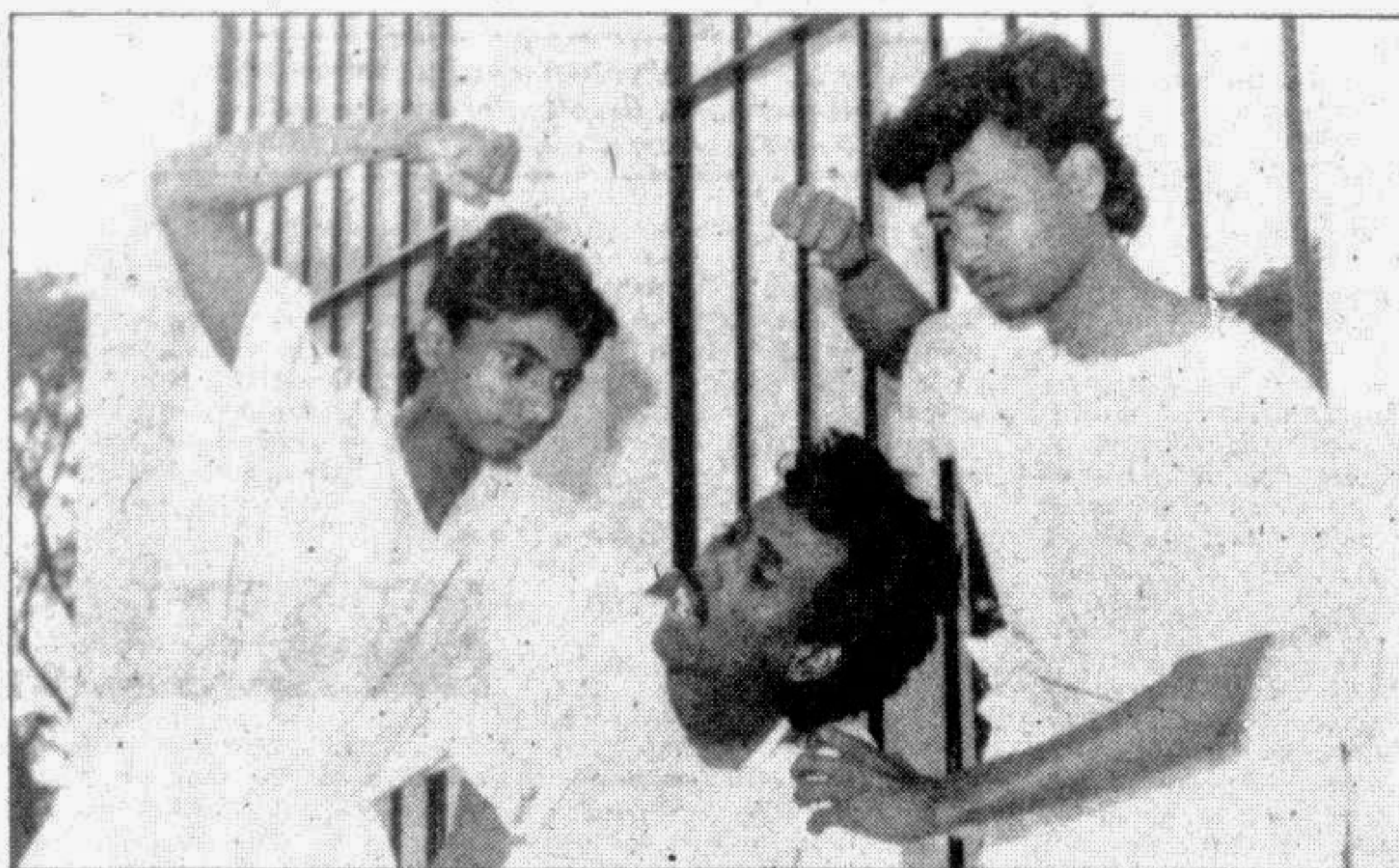
"The authors start writing, keeping in mind the psychology of the readers and try to cater to their immediate need depending on the age groups they belong to".

"I don't consider it as a book fair. It's a wholesale market. Here we come to sell our products, forgetting our moral obligation and commitment to society," says Saleh Shams, a young publisher.

"This is an era of populism," says professor Harun Rashid of Philosophy Department, DU. "And so it happens in the case of the best-sellers", concludes professor Harun.



Those books are everywhere. — Star photo



A sequence of a play *Pretatta* staged at the Central Shaheed Minar in connection with Amar Ekushey programmes. The Sammitito Sangskritik Jote organised the staging. — Star photo

Sircar tells Jatiya Sangsad

Taka 245.74 crore uplift plan for educational institutions

The government has undertaken a plan to construct, reconstruct and repair some 3,721 educational institutions during the current 1993-94 fiscal year, reports UNB.

The cost of the development plan has been estimated at 245 crore 74 lakh and 62,000 taka. Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar said this in Parliament yesterday.

He was responding to Prof. Rafiqul Islam Mia of Awami League during the question hour.

The plan will cover 526 colleges, 1512 secondary schools, 137 girls high schools, 508 madrasahs and 1038 government primary schools.

Replying to Sharfuddin Khasru (JP), the Education Minister said some 3,958 low-cost schools will be constructed in places where there are no educational institutions at present.

There are 200 registered non-government kindergarten schools across the country of which 66 are in Dhaka city, Sircar told Mohiuddin Ahmed

of Awami League.

The Education Minister told Parliament that 1,68,97,783 children in the country are eligible to go to primary school.

Replying to a question from Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury (JP), the minister said according to a survey, conducted in 1993, 83 per cent of the school-age children got admitted to schools in 1998.

Some 189 teachers of Dhaka University were staying abroad on leave till June last year, told Sircar in Parliament.

Responding to Maulana Habibur Rahman (Jamaat), the Minister said the university authorities would issue letters to the teachers who were over-staying and not joining their jobs.

At present, the number of teachers of Dhaka University is 1,182.

Replying to Shah Hadiuzzaman (AL), Sircar said 81 students (boys and girls) went abroad for studies with scholarship in 1993.

Some 0.52 per cent of the

country's population is disabled, according to 1986 census of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Social Welfare Minister Tariqul Islam stated this in Parliament while replying to Kazi Abdur Rashid of Awami League.

Of the disabled, 26.90 per cent is blind, 28 per cent lame, 10.80 per cent mentally retarded, 15.90 per cent deaf and dumb, 3.60 per cent lepers and 14.80 per cent handicapped due to old age.

In reply to Abdul Awal Mia (AL), the Social Welfare Minister said some 1,778 vagabonds were rehabilitated during the period from July 1, 1991 to December 31, 1993.

Of them, 997 are males and 781 females, he added.

Tk 60cr sanctioned for Barind project

RAJSHAHI, Feb 14: The government has sanctioned Tk 60 crore during the current financial year for smooth functioning of the on-going second phase of the project under Barind Multipurpose Development Authority, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, adequate irrigation facilities have been brought to over one lakh sixty one thousand acres of land in 25 thanas in the districts of Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj during the current season for increasing food production.

Under the project, a total of 1693 deep tubewells have been sunk, while 557 water distribution channels and forty kilometres pucca road constructed and 200 ponds have been re-excavated during the current fiscal year. Besides, over 12 lakh

saplings were planted in the project area during this period. Crops worth Tk 160 crore are expected to be produced in the project area during the current year.

The second phase of the Barind project which began in 1991 with an estimated cost of Tk 350 crore is expected to be completed by next year.

Biswas takes after with orphans

President Abdur Rahman Biswas joined an after party with the orphans, physically and mentally retarded persons at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports UNB.

During the party the President talked with them and enquired about their well-being.

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The Book Binding Owners' Association staged a procession demanding a ban on import of Bengali books printed abroad in the city yesterday. — Star photo



BPDB's International Tender Notice

বিদ্যুৎ বিল নিয়মিত পরিশোধ করুন

International Sealed Tenders are hereby invited by the Bangladesh Power Development Board for Procurement of spare parts for the following Power Stations. The source of financing will be Cash Foreign Exchange.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Name of Stores	Cost of Tender Document	Submission of Tender Dt. & Time	Opening of Date & Time
1.	Pur-408/94	Spare Parts for Baghabari Gas Turbine Power Station.	Tk. 300/-	22.3.94 Time 11:00 am	22.3.94 Time 11:30 am
2.	Pur-448/93	Spare Parts for Bheramara Power Station.	Tk. 500/-	23.3.94 Time 11:00 am	23.3.94 Time 11:30 am

A complete set of Tender Document including detailed specification, terms & conditions may be sold to the interested eligible bidders against a written application to the undersigned on payment of Taka (Non-refundable) as mentioned above against each tender in the shape of Bank Draft/Pay Order favouring Director of Purchase, PDB, Dhaka. The bidding documents will be available from 12.2.1994.

All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Bond in the Prescribed Bid Format @ 2% of the Total Bid Price from a scheduled bank of Bangladesh in accordance with instructions to the Bidders. Tender will be received up to 11:00 am and will be opened at 11:30 am in presence of the Bidder or their representative, if any.

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Weather

No change in temperature

By Staff Correspondent

Dry weather, with a fair sky is likely to prevail over Bangladesh during the next 24 hours commencing from 6 am today (Tuesday).

The Met Office forecasts, night temperature may remain nearly unchanged across the country during the period.

The country's highest temperature of 30.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Teknaf and the lowest of 7.8 degrees Celsius was recorded in Srimangol yesterday.

The sun sets today at 5.54 pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 6.31 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperatures and relative humidity recorded in some major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/ Towns	Temperatures in degrees Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	27.5	13.0	52	43
Chittagong	28.8	14.9	57	47
Rajshahi	26.3	11.4	75	53
Khulna	28.3	13.5	77	71
Barisal	28.5	13.5	70	
Sylhet	27.2	13.2		
Dinajpur	25.5	10.7		
Cox's Bazar	29.5	17.5	58	54