

Weather

Dry weather likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur over the regions of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said yesterday.

It said day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The country's highest temperature yesterday was recorded at 39.2 degree Celsius at Bhola and the lowest 22.7 degrees at Srirangal and Hatiya.

The sun sets today at 6:15 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:47 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	37.2	25.5	68	44
Chittagong	32.3	23.4	85	83
Rajshahi	38.7	25.0	77	47
Khulna	38.7	24.5	74	44
Barisal	36.5	24.6	74	60
Sylhet	38.7	24.2	96	62
Cox's Bazar	33.8	23.4	75	77

Mid-aged man killed in Patuakhali

From Our Correspondent

PATUAKHALI, Apr 3: A mid-aged man was killed when his cousin hit him with a stick on head during a gambling at village Nizabad Gopaldi under Dashmina thana here early hour today.

Police and family sources said Jalal Ahmed, 40, received serious head injury when his cousin hit on his head with a stick as was trying to stop scuffle between two cousins over playing of card allegedly gambling at about 9 pm Friday.

They said Badsha and Nazir locked into scuffle at gambling at Jalal Ahmed's house.

DU Satirtha Sammilan mourns death of its members

Dhaka University Satirtha Sammilan (1958-62) at a meeting on Friday mourned the death of its two members — Aminul Islam Dolu, vice-president, Prime Insurance Company, and Manzur Ahmed, a paper merchant, reports UNB.

The condolence meeting, presided over by sports secretary and president of the Association ASM Shahjahan, was held at the Dhaka Officers' Club.

The members of the Sammilan that includes judges, civil servants, teachers, businessmen and other professionals attended the meeting.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) at Ganabhaban yesterday. — PID photo

PCP demands polls of hill district parishads

RANGAMATI, Apr 3: Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) today demonstrated in the town and held a rally demanding immediate handling over power to the Regional Council for administration of the Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

Speakers at the rally accused the government of keeping alive the problems of the region by not implementing the peace accord on different pleas.

They demanded that elections to the three hill district parishads be held instead of running the parishad by nominees of the ruling party.

PCP leaders Sajal Chakma and Mritanganga Khisa made a strong plea for withdrawal of army camps, return of lands to tribal owners and withdrawal of cases against tribal activists.

The rally was held at Petrol Pump, Banarupa, a venue prohibited for assembly or public meeting. Police did not obstruct holding of the rally.

Problems grip Bandarban District Jail

There are only 15 toilets and a sweeper for the prisoners.

Apart from this, the only kitchen of the jail is in dilapidated condition due to lack of repair.

When contacted, Jail Superintendent Ataur Rahman said he informed the higher authorities about the problems faced by the prisoners.

The accommodation problem also has turned acute, as 400 prisoners out of total 500, have been brought to the Bandarban District Jail from the Cox's Bazar District Jail, he added.

He also expressed concern over the question of security, as there is no boundary wall in front of the jail.

Mentioning some steps taken for the inmates of the jail, he said an adult education centre has been set up in the jail.

'PEAP will help prevent blindness'

By Staff Correspondent

The Rotary Club of Dhaka New City has undertaken a programme, People's Eye Awareness Programme (PEAP), with a view to improving eye health and preventing unnecessary blindness.

Introducing PEAP to a group of journalists at the National Museum yesterday Dr Rashid Hyder, designer of the programme, who also served as an ophthalmologist abroad, said, "The main idea of the programme is to create awareness among the population. Many people including well-educated ones lack basic knowledge on eye care."

He said, "There are no specific statistics available but it is estimated that more than one third of the blindness in third world countries are due to lack of proper eye care. Blindness and other complications can be avoided by simple knowledge."

Dr Hyder added, "PEAP's idea is to spread the basic education on eye care among the masses. I have developed a box (package) to enable a person who can read simple Bangla to follow its instructions. He can also spread the message."

Minister for Post & Telecommunications and Home Affairs Mohammad Nasim formally released the stamp at a simple ceremony.

Secretary in-charge of Ministry of Post & Telecommunications Nazmul Ahsan Chowdhury, Director General of Bangladesh Post Office Gasuddin Ahmed, Additional Director General MNA Khan and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The stamp and First Day Cover will be sold simultaneously from all Head Post Offices including GPOs of the country.

Bangladesh Postal Department yesterday released a commemorative postage stamp to mark the 70th birth anniversary of internationally acclaimed architect Dr Fazlur Rahman Khan. — PID photo



With the onset of summer only a few days away, the midday heat is already too much to bear. These female day labourers and tokais, seen in the picture, take a respite from their daily chores for a siesta to while away their midday blues. The picture was taken from Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Owner of NWFP newspaper held on charges of drug trafficking

By Syed Talat Hussain

Lahore, Apr 3: The Army-backed Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan Friday arrested the editor-in-chief and owner of a daily, Frontier Post, on charges of drug-trafficking raising huge and cries from his family that it was an assault on press freedom.

Afridi who runs what was once one of Pakistan leading English newspapers, the first from the North Western Frontier to have made a mark at the national level, was arrested outside a five star hotel in the provincial capital early in the morning when he was sitting in his Mercedes Benz along with two of his gunmen and 20 kg of hashish was seized from his possession. The Anti-Narcotics Force, whose operations are managed and run practically by the Armed Forces, was quick to make the point that it was not a politically motivated action.

The army is totally out of politics and it is not a political-driven case. We have been observing Afridi for some time and this time we acted on a tip-off that he was about to smuggle drugs abroad, we caught him

red-handed," director of the ANF Punjab headquarters, Brigadier Riazullah Khan told a press conference.

He also said that Afridi then told the ANF about 620 kg hashish which was recovered from a truck in Faisalabad.

The accused's son, however contested the claim in a press statement, saying "in the presence of so many traffickers and carriers in this country no sane person will run the risk of carrying drugs himself." He also denied the ANF claim that on his father's information a bigger quantity of hashish was recovered from a vehicle in Faisalabad.

The Frontier Post which for the last two years or so has been under financial strain was established in the late eighties and soon became a reputable newspaper attracting Pakistan's leading names in journalism to work for it. It has had a tradition of being fiercely independent though question marks have always hung on the sources of its funding.

China to step up efforts to prevent geological disasters

BEIJING, Apr 3: China is to step up efforts to prevent geological disasters such as landslides and mud-rock flows which threaten thousands of villages and places, the China Daily reported today, says AFP.

Officials have been urged to draw up local and national control plans and pinpoint areas of potential disaster, the paper said, quoting a senior official with the ministry of land and resources.

More than 10,000 villages as well as 400 countries and cities are threatened by landslides, collapse and mud flows, Li Lierong, director of the ministry's geological department said.

Serious risk of earth subsidence exists in 46 large and medium cities across the country, he added.

Already more than 1,000 people are killed annually as a result of geological disasters, he said, highlighting that early warning systems can save lives.

Some 2,400 people escaped death from 48 large landslides and mud-rock flows last summer thanks to advance warnings.

The public is also being called on to be extra vigilant in vulnerable areas, which include the southwestern and northwestern regions where particular geological conditions occur.

A new system of regulations was being worked out under the principles of "prevention first, evasion and control combined," Li told the English-language daily.

Commemorative stamp on Fazlur Rahman Khan

Bangladesh Post Office issued a commemorative postage stamp valued Tk 4 denomination on the occasion of the birth anniversary of world famous architect Dr Fazlur Rahman Khan, reports UNB.

A First Day Cover valued at Tk 6 was issued and a special canceller was also used.

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Mohammad Zahurul Islam Tipu, chairman of Zia Academy just released from jail, handing over a bouquet to BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at a reception for BNP leaders at her 29 Minto Road official residence.

AIADMK calls upon Jayalalitha to drop support for BJP govt

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: India's ruling coalition faced possible collapse today after a key ally party called upon its leader to withdraw her support for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, reports AFP.

The regional AIADMK party urged its party chief Jayalalitha Jayaram to "forge a new alliance and take appropriate decisions in the national interest in tune with the changing political scenario."

The United News of India said the appeal was made at a party meeting in the southern city of Madras, which Jayalalitha was scheduled to address shortly.

The AIADMK commands a crucial 18 members in India's 545-seat hung parliament and Vajpayee's year-old coalition could fall if they switch their allegiance and join hands with the opposition.

The Hindu nationalist-led coalition, which took office in March last year, has a wafer-thin majority in parliament.

The prime minister declared Friday that his government would continue in office even if the AIADMK withdrew from the alliance, but few analysts agree.

30 hurt in clash between rivals in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Apr 3: A bloody clash by rival groups of villagers over the lease of Karimpur Bazar in sadar thana today left 30 people injured, reports UNB.

Of the injured, Abu Kalam, Idris Member, Abdul Kader and Zakaria were rushed to Dhaka with spear injuries. Eight others, also with spear injuries, were admitted to Narsingdi hospital.

Two shops and 11 houses were ransacked and looted during the clash that began at 7 am.

Residents and police said Shaheed Mia and Idris Member took part in the auction for lease of Karimpur Bazar on March 18. Shahid Mia won the bid, but rivalry among the bidders continued.

The clash ensued when supporters of Shahid Mia allegedly attacked the supporters of Idris Member who suffered most in the bout.

Hasina greeted for winning UNESCO peace award

Different organisations yesterday felicitated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for winning UNESCO's 1998 Houphouet-Boigny Peace Award, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Mohila Awami League said the award is a recognition of the prime minister's political far-sightedness and wisdom as a statesperson.

Leaders of Mohila Awami League Begum Ivy Rahman and Whip Professor Khaleda Khanam said UNESCO's international peace award has boosted the country's image abroad.

Bangabandhu Juba Parishad greeted the prime minister on this occasion and expressed the hope that under her leadership the pace of economic and social development in Bangladesh would be accelerated. Leaders of the parishad also wished her good health and long life.

Prime Minister's Adviser on Liberation War Affairs and Establishment Ministry Khondoker Asaduzzaman also congratulated Sheikh Hasina on winning the Houphouet-Boigny peace award.

In his statement, the prime minister's adviser said the prestige and glory of the nation had been enhanced in the world community with the winning of award.

Congratulating the prime minister on winning the award vice-president of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Yussuf Abdullah Harun said international recognition of the efforts of Sheikh Hasina for bringing peace in the hill tracts has brightened the image of Bangladesh abroad.

Muktijoddha Sanghati Parishad also congratulated the prime minister on winning the peace award.

Taliban celebrate third anniversary of Omar's rule

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: Afghanistan's Taliban religious army celebrated the third anniversary of the day their reclusive leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, declared himself the leader of the Muslim faithful worldwide, a private news agency reported Saturday, reports AP.

The celebration held Friday in the Taliban headquarters in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar included 1,000 religious clerics, all of whom pledged their loyalty to Omar as Amir-ul-Momineen or leader of the Islamic faithful.

The title of Amir-ul-Momineen declares Omar leader not only of Muslims in Afghanistan, but of Muslims worldwide, although few outside of Omar's homeland accept him as their leader.

In a message to mark the anniversary, Omar vowed to wage a "decisive struggle... against the enemies of the Islamic system in the country," the private News Network International reported in neighbouring Pakistan.

Omar's Taliban soldiers have imposed a harsh brand of Islamic law in the 90 per cent of Afghanistan they control.

Their version of Islam has banned women from working, girls from going to school, forces men to wear beards, a head covering and pray in the mosque. It also forces women to wear the all-enveloping burqa that clothes them from head to foot.

Music is banned in Taliban territory as are movies and television.

According to the Taliban's radio Shariat broadcast Saturday the ruling Taliban council showered Omar with praise for his military achievements.

The Taliban threw out the

government of Burhanuddin Rabbani from Kabul in September 1996. Since then the Taliban have consolidated their control over most of the country and brought an end to the relentless rocketing that devastated Kabul during Rabbani's rule.

Rabbani and his ousted military chief Ahmed Shah Masood head a northern-based alliance that controls about 10 per cent of Afghanistan. This alliance is battling the Taliban on several fronts.

The opposition alliance also has said that it will not accept Omar as the leader of any future government in Afghanistan.

Deaths condoled

Bangladesh Public Relations Association yesterday expressed profound shock at the demise of its founder general secretary and veteran journalist Zahurul Islam, reports BSS.

"He has an unforgettable contribution to establish and promote the public relations as a modern and prestigious profession in Bangladesh," president of the organisation MA Khaleque Bhuiyan and general secretary Mohammad Tarekul Gader Mirza in a statement said.

They prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

The association leader's also condoled the death of Mohammad Ali, another founder member of the organisation and senior vice president of National Credit Bank Limited.

Although he was known more as a banker at the fag end of his career, Ali was a renowned public relations personality and journalist.



The scorching heat has left many a farm labourer without any work in North Bengal. These labourers seen in the picture taken in Gopibagh yesterday are travelling from there in search of work. Some say that they will travel as far as Bikrampur or Narayanganj to find work. — Star photo

Pak scholars call for dialogue between Muslim, western states

ISLAMABAD, Apr 3: Pakistani scholars, speaking at a seminar on Wednesday, called for a dialogue between Muslim and western countries to prevent conflict, reports Reuters.

The call came from Senate (Upper House) chairman Wasim Sajjad, author Akbar S Ahmed and several other speakers at the seminar on Islam and the West, including US Ambassador to Pakistan William Milam.

Sajjad, who is a member of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League party, said Muslims and western countries led by the United States needed a dialogue to clear up what he called misconceptions between them.

"There are no real conflicts between Islam and the western world but only misconceptions, which have to be removed through dialogue," he said.

Sajjad said there was a stereo typing of Muslims in western countries and the same was true of Muslims about the west. "We have to realise that the world is shrinking. We have to live with each other. We have to understand each other."

Milam said he did not see that a conflict existed between Islam and the West.

"But I firmly believe that the confrontation — if indeed, there even is a confrontation — is not between Islam and the West but, rather, between liberal democracy in all of its many manifestations on the one hand and, on the other hand, political systems which condone or practice aggression against their neighbours or even against their own people."

It was an over-simplification to say that Islam was confronting a geographic and political unity of the West, Milam said.

"Let us admit that the world is a bit more complex than our slogans and buzz words sometimes make it out to be," he said.

Author Ahmed said there should be more awareness about Muslims in the West and about the West among Muslims.

He opposed the use of the world fundamentalist by the western media as a description of Orthodox Muslims and said this clouded the impression of Muslims.

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Killer virus continues to plague Malaysia

SEREMBAN, Malaysia, Apr 3: As dusk falls, a dozen housewives keep a silent vigil along the third floor corridor of a state hospital where dozens of pig farmers are afflicted with a mysterious killer virus, reports AP.

"I'm waiting for his eyes to open," said R Talemlaarsi, 35, who's been here since her husband fell into coma a week ago.

"The doctors say the virus has gone to his brain and it won't go away."

Two weeks have lapsed since health authorities detected a new virus which caused most of the recent deaths in an epidemic that has killed 85 people. And the virus shows no signs of going away.

"When the outbreak first started, it appeared under control. But now everything is different. Not now everything is different," said Dr Abdul Rahman, an outbreak specialist from the Malaysia's Ministry of Health.

We know very little about this new virus. We don't know how it's transmitted. The CDC experts are working on it," he told The Associated Press.

Scientists flown in from the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that many of the dead

suffered from a Hendra-like virus, which they fear is transmitted by direct contact with infected pigs.

Little is known about the Hendra virus, which was first detected in Australia, where it killed racehorses and three humans in 1994.

To help curb the epidemic, Malaysia has said it would destroy 1 million pigs, three times the initial number planned for. Soldiers dressed like astronauts have swept through the once-prosperous pig farming district of Bukit Pelandok and killed around 270,000 hogs so far.

When the outbreak first wreaked havoc in Malaysia months ago, health officials believed it was caused by Japanese encephalitis, which infects pigs and can be transmitted to humans through the bite of the Culex mosquito. But so far, only 18 of the deaths have been traced to the disease.

Both Hendra and Japanese encephalitis can cause inflammation of the brain, resulting in high fever, aches, eventual coma and death.

Pig farmers who've been spared the disease are facing other shocks. Their villages have been sealed off by police. Pork prices have plunged,

abattoirs closed and farms left abandoned.

A few pig farmers, desperate to recoup losses, have turned to stuffing live hogs in the trunks of their cars to avoid getting stopped at police road blocks. Illegal slaughter houses have sprung up.

State authorities in northern Malaysia are also studying how to deep-freeze pork so it can be sold when prices are restored. Even farmers in unaffected areas who used to sell 1,100 pigs daily were now selling between 300 and 400.

But pig breeder Tah Ep Pau, 35, isn't bothered by the slew of bad news.

"I'm lucky to be alive," said Tah, who's recovering from the virus which struck him 10 days ago. Seven hundred pigs on his farm had to be destroyed.

"Every family I knew had at least two members who came down with JE. My friend, his wife and child all died," he said, before shuffling off to chat with fellow villagers recovering in Ward 3A. "It's fated, that's what it is."

Opposition leader in Parliament Lim Kit Siang disingeringly. He says the national emergency was clearly precipitated by the government.