

News

Weather

Thick fog forecast

Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Rajshahi division and weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins of the country during the morning, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature 29.7 recorded yesterday degree Celsius at Sitakunda and the lowest 11.0 degree at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:24 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:42 am.

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

City/Town	Temperatur in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	27.0	14.7	66	61
Chittagong	28.5	13.8	90	74
Rajshahi	25.5	13.5	84	68
Khulna	27.6	12.6	76	62
Barisal	27.5	12.0	81	80
Sylhet	27.0	14.5	67	67
Cox's Bazar	29.2	16.0	51	74

JS body for action

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The committee found that Dr Emdad was involved in corruption including garbing money from various projects and the salary of an employee who died earlier and giving undue opportunity to some officials at the BLRI.

It also found that about Tk seven crore funds provided by the World Bank for an Agriculture Research Management Project remained unutilised for long and was returned due to his "negligence".

The meeting also discussed progress in implementation of the Forth Fisheries Project and asked the officials concerned to implement it properly. It also emphasised preparing unutilised water bodies for fish cultivation

to meet the country's increasing demand.

The meeting also formed another three-member sub-committee to find out the irregularities in implementation of the Fourth Fisheries Project. The meeting also focused on the National Fisheries Policy.

The meeting was attended by committee members Syed Rafiqul Haq, A K Fazlul Haq, Kamrun Nahar Titul, Mozammel Hossain, Dr. Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Fazlul Haque and Shamsuzzoha Khan.

State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Prof Abdul Quddus attended the meeting on special invitation. High officials of the ministry and the Parliament Secretariat were also present.

Italian plastic surgery team in city

A nine-member plastic surgery team led by noted surgeon Dr. Paulo Morselli of Interplast, an Italian association of plastic surgeons have arrived in the city to conduct plastic surgery on poor patients free of cost, reports BSS.

The team consists of six doctors including a Bangladeshi surgeon Dr. Sharif Hasan and three nurses. The team will also impart training on plastic surgery to local doctors during their visit.

The activities of Interplast team is being coordinated by Dr. S N Sen, Professor of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Prof Sen told BSS that during its two-week stay in Bangladesh the team will operate upon 30 to 40 patients at DMCH.

The team will also conduct free plastic surgery at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Two killed at Cox's Bazar: Public block road

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 1: Scores of angry people set up barricades for about two hours this morning the death of two people in an accident, reports BSS.

Police said the accident occurred at about 8 am when a Cox's Bazar-bound coach S. Alam knocked down bicycle riders Kamrul Islam, 20, and Firoz, 22, on the Marine Drive Road. They said that Kamrul died on the spot while Firoz died on this way to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

Police restored communication two hours later.

They seized the coach and filed a case. But the driver and helper of the coach fled.

Neurologist dead

Eminent neurologist Major General (ret'd) Siraj Zinnat died of cardiac arrest at his Baridhara residence yesterday afternoon. He was 72, reports UNB.

Dr Zinnat left behind his wife, two sons, mother and a host of relatives, colleagues and admirers to mourn his death.

He will be buried at Banani graveyard after arrival of his two sons from abroad, family sources said.

His body was kept at the Combined Military Hospital.



Obituary

Abdullah Md Saqi, computer and graphics businessman died yesterday, says a press release.

Saqi is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

He is the son of late Abdul Majid of Tutatuli village in Narsingdi district.

Saqi completed his education in Public Administration in 1980.

His qulkhawani will be held after Asr prayers on January 4 at E-2/2 Postal Officer Colony at Motijheel, the release added.

New DG of BWDB

A K M Halimur Rahman has taken over as Director General of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) recently, says a press release.

After obtaining engineering degree from the BUET in 1965, Rahman joined the then EPWAPDA as an Asstt. Engineer in 1966. He was born in a famous Muslim family in Mymensingh in 1944.

Business bodies

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businessman and his son Faisal Morshed Khan, the managing director of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Limited," the statement said.

"It only deepens the widespread public apprehension that no one is safe from the arbitrary application of PSA, causing deprivation of liberty and humiliation," it added.

Students begin classes without new textbooks

NCTB non-chalant, says books 'may' be available by month end

Students across the country began the new academic year yesterday without new textbooks from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, reports UNB.

Despite having made no major progress in printing textbooks for the new academic session, the Board till maintains that students will get their books within this month.

"We are optimistic that the primary school students will get books within next week while the secondary students between January 15 and 21," Tapan Kanti Chowdhury, Chairman of the NCTB, told UNB.

Elaborating on how hard he and his officials are working day and night, he said that the books should be ready no later than by the end of this month.

Many printers involved in printing the books in previous years scuttled the optimism.

"The so-called printing presses of Beximco, who are to print the books, haven't even procured enough paper for a lion's share of the books. How they will complete printing all the books on time?" questioned a publisher, wishing to remain

anonymous.

The publisher-cum-printer also said that Beximco presses have a capacity to print three lakh books, but their order is for three crore items.

Those printers and publishers who are not involved in printing of books this year after one of their top leaders was arrested in a textbook scandal during the caretaker government in 1996, asked what action will now be taken against those now involved in the present scandal.

They said that even if the printing is completed by end of January, it will still be one month behind schedule. "We wait to see what action the government takes for the delayed delivery," they said.

"Punitive actions will definitely be taken against the concerned firms. But right now we are busy to ensure that the books are delivered to students on time. We will go for action after the books reach the students," Tapan Chowdhury said.

The chief of the NCTB which is dubbed by many printers and publishers as "the corruption house," said that the books will

reach the districts adjoining Dhaka earlier. For distant districts it will take some time more, he said.

The printers point out to differences in the chairman's statements made at different times about the books. Though printing is yet to be completed, they allege that NCTB plans to send books first to the districts of ministers and stalwarts.

Quoting NCTB, Saleh Matin, Director General of the Directorate of Primary Education, however, told UNB that the primary school books, which are distributed free of cost, have already been sent to different districts.

The books will be sent to the upazilas from the districts. But, sources said, it will take time since books will only be sent to the upazilas after all books of all five classes of the primary school reach the districts. This will take time.

Concerned people said that the major debacle in printing school textbooks took place following "nepotism" on the part of authorities concerned. The NCTB gave out the major orders for printing to three presses of

Beximco.

The three printing presses are to print 4.07 crore books for primary level and 2.51 crore pieces for secondary level. Orders for 1.55 crore pieces of primary school books went to 105 other printing presses in the capital city.

A total of Tk 78 crore is involved in printing books for classes six to ten. All the secondary books are almost new since NCTB went for massive correction and changes from last year's syllabus. The cost of printing school books for primary schools is Tk 14 crore.

As the printing presses of the Beximco failed repeatedly in meeting deadlines, a fresh order for printing 1.45 crore pieces was made out to 105 other presses in the city which are already busy printing their original orders.

Many printers who have worked in previous years said that it is not clear whether the latest order was made out from the share of the three Beximco presses or whether fresh orders were placed.

Aborigine team calls on Kalpa Ranjan Chakma

A delegation of National Aborigine Council met with CHT Affairs Minister Kalpa Ranjan Chakma at his office yesterday, reports UNB.

Lauding the government steps and programmes for the minority groups, including aborigines, the delegation members urged the minister to expedite the implementation of the government programmes.

The minister assured the delegation that he would properly perform his duty to ameliorate the lot of the aborigines, said a handout.

Council President and its General Secretary were present.

Foreign secretary

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Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury till April 30, 2007.

It was learnt that government was actively considering two names for appointment as foreign secretary. They are Syed Muazzem Ali, who was also envoy to Iran and Dr. Toufiq Ali, who was the country's first ambassador to the Netherlands.

However, many believe that Sami could be retained as the foreign secretary on an extended contract to maintain sort of status quo before the elections.

That he has been successfully handling the affairs of the foreign ministry and enjoying the confidence of the prime minister would be in his favour, they say.

Peaceful welcome

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proper documents were produced, police said.

Another spot for celebration was Dhaka University campus. A large number of people, mostly youths, started gathering at the TSC (Teachers Students Centre) since the evening, ignoring a large number of police and BNCC personnel deployed there to maintain order.

DU Vice-Chancellor and the Proctor were seen at the TSC at about midnight. While joining the celebrations, the VC also asked the law enforcers to guard against any untoward incident.

Police did not allow any motorised vehicle inside the campus and were seen intercepting outsiders.

Police escorted some females when they went to the campus at about 1am for New Year celebration. Police also asked them not to stay on the campus for long. No untoward incident took place.

Police and riot police equipped with water cannons were seen patrolling different streets in the city and on the outskirts.

Police said they held over 100 youths and seized more than 30 vehicles in the city for plying without proper documents.

Shahidul Islam is the principal accused in the case while contractor Hasan is the alleged mastermind.

All the accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- were present at the court during the cross-examination yesterday.

Special public prosecutors A B M Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Mahub Ahmed appeared for the state while Advocate Mosarraf Hossain Kajol and M A Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam appeared for the accused.

The murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's court, Dhaka was earlier stayed by an order of the Supreme Court. The order will remain valid till disposal of the rape case.



BNP city convener Sadek Hossain Khoka leading a colourful procession in the city brought out yesterday to mark the founding anniversary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

Cracker blasts mark JCD rally

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aggravated leaders and activists.

The meeting, convened at the advice of the BNP chairperson, the leaders asked the agitating JCD men call off its rally to avoid confrontation, saying that Khaleda Zia had agreed to sit with them to sort out the issue.

One of the rebel JCD leaders told the reporters that they had called off the rally upon assurance that the new committee would be dissolved soon and a fresh body would be formed.

"We have been waiting at the residence of the BNP secretary general from 2-00pm today as party chief may call us at any time to sit for negotiation," city's south unit President Sagor Ahmed told The Daily Star by telephone at about 6-30 last evening.

Later, Khoka and Aman attended the Mukhtangan rally at the instruction of Khaleda Zia. BNP standing committee member Abdul Matin Chowdhury was seen watching the rally from a building at Paltan crossing.

Witnesses said most of the participants of the rally were non-student and equipped with firearms and bombs.

Several armed squads were deployed around the gathering to resist any attack from the rival faction. Many cadres backed by the Pintu-Laltu faction were seen guarding the rally sitting in microbuses and jeeps, and on motorcycles.

Addressing the rally, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP asked the JCD activists to forget all differences and launch massive student movement against the government. "All should give

priority to party interest instead of petty personal or individual interest," he told the rally.

Amanullah Aman said that a mass upsurge like the 1990 is awaiting the Awami League government and hoped that Pintu and Laltu would lead that upsurge.

Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in his speech said government agents under the banner of JCD letting lose terrorism and obstructing the new committee. He said city JCD leader Sagor Ahmed was an accused of Dr Milon murder case and accused him as government agent.

Expressing his allegiance to the leadership of Khaleda Zia, Pintu said, "I love Khaleda Zia more than my life, my mother and my organisation."

He vowed to resist the government's agents at any cost and carry forward the sojourn of JCD.

Laltu alleged that the miscreants and terrorists tried to foil the rally through resorting violence, but the activists made the programme a complete success braving bombing and firing of gunshots.

Later, a colourful procession paraded Paltan, Press Club and Kakrail roads and ended at 29 Minto Road.

Earlier, as part of the founding anniversary programmes, a group JCD activists led by Pintu and Laltu placed wreath at the mazaar of late President Ziaur Rahman at about 9-30am.

Police personnel were deployed in and around the mazaar area to avert any untoward incident. However, several hand bombs were exploded

around the mazaar when the Pintu faction placed wreath.

BNP's student affairs secretary and former DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman was present during the mazaar visit. Sources said Aman went there against his will and at the dictate of Khaleda.

Witnesses said the new committee's president and general secretary as well as their supporters completed the mazaar programme quickly apprehending attack by the rivals.

The Pintu-Laltu faction could not hoist party and national flags at the JCD central office at Nayapaltan as the rival faction continued to occupy the premises.

The rival faction also foiled an attempt by the new committee loyalists to take possession of the party's central office on Sunday night.

The rival faction that comprising leaders and activists of the party's units at Dhaka University, city South and North, Jagannath College and other educational institutions hoisted party and national flags at the central office at 6-01am yesterday, sources said.

The anti-Pintu-Laltu group visited Zia's mazaar of Zia at about 1-30pm and placed wreath and offered fatha.

Leaders and activists also brought out colourful processions at Dhaka University campus, Jagannath College and other campuses and chanted slogans against the new committee and demanded immediate cancellation of the committee led by Pintu and Laltu.

Shazneen Case: IO cross-examined

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report.

He submitted the charge sheet in the murder case as an investigation officer. He had also filed a rape case before submitting the charge sheet in the murder case.

He said that he had started investigating the murder on order from higher authorities and submitted the charge sheet in the murder case. The Act for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, 1995 was in force when he submitted the charge sheet in the murder case.

Rahman said he along with some high police officials scrutinised the autopsy report, which he got before the rape case was filed. He said he was not assisted by any lawyer.

He also told the court that at the end of investigation in the murder case, he realised the necessity of filing of a rape case.

He said that before submitting the Memo of Evidence in the murder case to the CMM's Court, he reported to the higher authorities regarding filing of a rape

case. In the murder case, he recorded statements of 61 prosecution witnesses under Section 161 of the CrPc.

He could not remember whether the witnesses in the murder case and in the rape case were the same. The statements of prosecution witnesses in the murder case and in the rape case were not similar, he added.

Minu and Parvin were arrested in the murder case. They were later shown arrested in the rape case.

The former investigation officer of the murder case had earlier produced Minu and Parvin before court as witnesses. The court recorded their judicial statements under Section 164 of the CrPc, Rahman said.

He could not say where they were sent after recording their judicial statements.

After taking over charge of investigation of the murder case, he arrested Minu and Parvin from the house of Latifur Rahman, complainant in the murder case, and took them on

remand. He said they were sisters but did not know when they came to Latifur Rahman's house and what was their salary as maids.

He further told the court that only Minu gave judicial statement before the CMM's court, Dhaka when the two were produced. Parvin refused to give statement.

They were then taken on remand in the rape case.

He further said that husbands of Minu and Parvin were not produced at the CID office. During remand Minu and Parvin were not taken to the house of Latifur Rahman where the murder took place.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana on April 24, 1998 accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, who worked as a domestic help

Patients beat hospital employee to death

One arrested from Osmani Medical College Hospital in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 1: A class IV employee of the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital was beaten to death by agitated patients of the psychiatry ward Saturday night.

Police arrested Abdul Malik, a patient of the ward in this connection on the same night.

Sources inform that, Abdul Malik, a patient in the ward had been agitated for some reason since the afternoon on the day. He shouted several times and went on rampage damaging some chairs for delay in supply of meal in the noon. He also declined food at 6 pm Brother Babul Kanti Dass, a first year student in the Nursing Institute who was on duty at the Ward, then gave the patient a mild beating and tried to feed him. Malik in retaliation swooped on the hospital employee. Dass then called MLSS Abul Hossain Mithu and sweeper Kamal from the adjacent ward to help him. Seeing them together the other patients also became agitated.

Soon after, the panic stricken Babul Dass came out of the ward with Kamal. They locked the gate to the ward. MLSS Abul Hossain was trapped inside the ward where the patients beat him up

severely. He died on the spot.

Later, a case was lodged with the Sylhet Kotwali Police by ward master Hamdul Haque on behalf of the Hospital Administration. Babul Kanti Dass has been absconding since the incident.

Namaz-e-janaza of the deceased was held at the premises of the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) on Sunday afternoon.

Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital Employees Co-ordination Council began a 3-day mourning programme from Sunday and also demanded Babul's arrest within 7 days and for payment of compensation to the family of the deceased. The council further demanded strengthening of security measures in the hospital. There has been an acute shortage of manpower in the hospital since the Eid vacation. Most of the doctors and employees of all classes are yet to join duty causing a stalemate in hospital affairs.

Mithu's father Deen Mohammad was a guard in the hospital and his mother Imam Bibi is a retired Aya of the hospital as well.

Most launches

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Queen of Patuakhali, a passenger double-decker launch, reportedly sank three times, leaving scores dead. However, each time it was renamed immediately after being salvaged and allowed to ply again.

Ninety per cent of the passenger vessels do not carry life-saving appliances like buoys and lifejackets as required by law, sources say. Some don't even have fire extinguishers, navigation lights and foghorns on board, they add.

Existing rules also require each vessel to dock and check for cracks, visible or hidden, every two years and but these are hardly enforced.

According to sources in the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), most of the private vessels including passenger-carriers ply without valid documents and qualified personnel.

Inspection and annual surveys are virtually absent. Moreover, there is the bribe factor.

"We pay bribe and the surveys don't bother us," said a launch owner at Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday. "This is a common practice."

So, overloading of both passengers and goods goes unabated. The more passengers

the launches and steamers carry, especially during the Eid festivals, the more money the inspectors make.

Sources in the Launch Malik Samity said about 80 per cent of the vessels evade inspection bribing the surveyors who issue fitness certificate against each vessel.

According to official sources, major mishaps took place in Kirtankhola, Paira, Lohalia, Tetulia, Meghna, Sandhaya, S u g a n d h a , B i s k h a l i , Agunmukha, Kalabadar rivers in the last decade.

While the authorities have formed probe committees to look into each major accidents on the riverine routes, hardly has there been any punitive measures taken anywhere.

The offenders remain beyond the grips of law by striking underhand deals with the authorities, sources pointed out.

Azam Hassan Khan, an expert in marine safety who is also general manager of BIWTC, said, "Some of the main reasons why accidents occur could be overloading of vessels, vessels manned by unqualified people, absence of navigation lights, structural faults of the vessel and racing on the river, etc."

Fatwa illegal: HC

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It suggested introduction of Muslim Family Ordinance in the curriculums of madrassahs and schools and sermons during Friday prayers.

As a long-term measure, the court recommended "an unified education system and an enactment to control the freedom of religion subject to law, public order and morality within the scope of Article 41 (1) of the Constitution." It noted, "The state must define and enforce public morality. It must educate society".

The Bench directed the court office to send copies of the judgement to the ministries of Home, Law, Education and religious Affairs immediately.

A large number of women's rights activists including Maleka Begum and Barrister Tania Amir who was the amicus curie in the case were present in the court yesterday.

Meanwhile, Maulana Haji Azizul Islam who gave the fatwa

for hilla and five others are facing prosecution following steps taken by the district administration of Naogaon.

In November last year, Shahida was forced to go for hilla as dictated by the Maulana. He claimed to have overheard talak pronounced three times by Saiful during a family feud about a year and a half ago.

The Maulana arranged the forced marriage of Shahida with Saiful's cousin Shadidul when he was away from the village and subsequent divorce after a day. But Saiful refused to accept her.

The DC of Naogaon told the HC in an affidavit that Maulana Azizul Islam was arrested on December 6. Five others including the person who conducted the forced marriage are also in custody. At the initiative of local Union Parishad, Shahida and Saiful are now living together, the DC added.

Vajpayee warns against building temple at mosque site

NEW DELHI, Jan 1: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today said his government would not tolerate any illegal attempts to build a Hindu temple on the ruins of a historic mosque razed by Hindu fanatics in 1992, reports AFP.

The Press Trust of India quoted the prime minister as saying in a newspaper article written during his New Year holiday in the southern Indian state of Kerala, that a status quo on the Babri mosque would be strictly maintained.

"I wish to make it absolutely clear that the law will take its course should any organisation attempt to disturb the status quo. The government will not remain a silent spectator and adopt delaying tactics, as unfortunately happened eight years ago," he wrote.

The demolition of the 16th century Babri Mosque by thousands of Hindu fanatics in the northern town of Ayodhya eight years ago sparked nationwide Hindu-Muslim riots in which 2,000 people were killed.

It was the worst religious violence since the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent into Hindu-dominated India and Muslim-majority Pakistan and severely dented New Delhi's secular credentials.

The controversy over plans to build a Hindu temple on the

Babri ruins was revived in December when Prime Minister Vajpayee said the campaign was an expression of "national" sentiment and an "unfinished" task.

Vajpayee had to face a censure motion in parliament over his remarks on the temple campaign despite his argument that his remarks had been taken out of context.

However, his ruling BJP party managed to secure the support of its more secular coalition allies to easily win the day in the lower house although it was rapped on the knuckles in the upper house where the ruling alliance is in a minority.

However, the controversy over the issue has not died down as religious leaders have flayed the prime minister for disregarding the sentiments of minority communities.

Adding fuel to the fire was a recent statement by the powerful Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Forum) which has said it will unveil plans to build a grand temple at the site during the major Hindu pilgrimage of Kumbh Mela starting next week.

The VHP is closely allied to Vajpayee's party.

The prime minister, however, in his newspaper article on Monday, said a peaceful resolution of the issue was a national challenge.