



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry over the country today. Moderate fog may occur over the river basins and coastal belt and light fog elsewhere of the country during early morning, Met Office said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. Met office added.

Country's highest temperature 28.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and the lowest 8.9 degree at Srirongal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:32 pm and rises on Tuesday at 6:44 am.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.8	11.7	64	49
Chittagong	28.5	13.0	72	66
Rajshahi	25.5	09.4	82	55
Khulna	26.7	12.0	85	71
Barisal	26.3	11.4	86	79
Sylhet	27.0	13.9	83	58
Cox's Bazar	28.3	15.5	73	62

PM to open workshop on arsenic today

UNB, Dhaka

A three-day International Workshop on Arsenic Mitigation in Bangladesh begins today at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the capital.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is expected to inaugurate the workshop at 11.30 am.

Organised by LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry, the workshop will focus on reaching a consensus on the technical issues that offer the best possible ways of combating arsenic problem.

Arsenic experts from across the globe will come up with concrete multi-sectoral findings to enable the government to effectively tackle the problem.

CU stalemate

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Ahmed Khan. CUTA president Iftakhar Uddin Chowdhury presided.

Earlier, the association brought out a silent procession from the Central Shaheed Minar premises at around 2.30pm.

Meanwhile, different student organisations took out separate processions in the city yesterday demanding an immediate end to stalemate in the university.

The General Students' Oikya Parishad (GSOP) brought out a silent procession from Shola Shahar Railway Station at 8.30am and held a rally at the local press club premises.

Presided over by Ziaur Rahman, the rally was addressed by Jenifer Fouji, ANM Shahriar and Nihar Ranjan Das.

At the rally, the speakers blamed the authority for the deadlock and said the students have lost their valuable academic years due to stalemate.

They also submitted a memorandum to the Chancellor through DC, demanding steps to solve the stalemate.

They announced fresh programmes to press home their demand — resumption of classes.

The programmes include formation of a human chain at the GEC crossing on January 20.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) also organised a rally at the local press club premises at 11.00 am to press for the same demand.

Prize-giving ceremony.

The annual sports and prize giving ceremony of BAF Shaheen English Medium School will be held. Air Commodore Zahed Kuddus, AOC, BAF Base Basrah & Chairman of the school will be the chief guest. Venue: School premises. Time: 9.00am.

Discussion meeting

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry will organise a discussion on 'Industrial Sector & Environment Protection, Environment and Forest Minister Shahjahan Siraj will be the chief guest. Venue: FBCCI auditorium. Time: 3.00pm.

Seminar

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) will organise a seminar on 'Managing your Time'. Venue: ICAB auditorium, 100 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Time: 4.00pm.

General meeting

A general meeting of the preparatory committee of the national convention on 'Crime against Humanity' will be held. Venue: CIRDP auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

Meeting

The Dhaka Union of Journalists, Mukto Kontho Unit will hold a meeting demanding payment of arrears of salaries of the journalists and employees of the MuktoKontho. Venue: Road-2 Dhanmondi(in front of the Beximco Corporate House). Time: 12.00 noon.

Workshop

The inaugural function of the two-day workshop on Integrated workplanning organised jointly by the Directorate of Health and UN AIDS will be held. Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain will be the chief guest. Venue: BRAC Centre Inn, Mohakhali. Time: 9.00am.

White Paper

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more files are being scrutinised. Besides, necessary documents are also being collected.

Another official said some bureaucrats including junior officials are voluntarily helping sorting out documents. Different divisions, departments and directorates are also sending files of corruption to the cell.

A senior minister told The Daily Star yesterday that some top AL leaders who were ministers made huge amounts of money through corruption and they had left clear evidence of that in files.

The AL ministers continued their corrupt practices till the last day of their tenure and a number of them might face serious trouble because there are clear instances and documents of their corrupt practices, he said. However, he wanted not to be named.

"They looted money in such a way as if that was their last chance and they would not stay in Bangladesh," he added.

Meantime, the Bureau of Anti-Corruption has already filed a total of 18 cases against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and seven former ministers and about 40 retired and incumbent bureaucrats.

The seven include former food minister Amir Hossain Amu, former T&T and home minister Mohammad

More changes

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To official notification yesterday. Textile Secretary Helaluddin Khan has been transferred as secretary of the newly established Ministry for Expatriate Welfare, Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Aminur Rahman has been made acting secretary of the textile ministry.

Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Finance BMM Mazharul Haq has been transferred to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief as its secretary in-charge. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Khawaza Abdur Rahman has been made acting secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The contract of Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Dr Mazharul Karim has been extended for one more year with effect from January 11.

Special Super of the Special Branch of Police Mohammad Shamsul Islam has been placed as director at the Prime Minister's Office on deputation.

Barapukuria

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Meanwhile, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday, the first day of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's visit to Bangladesh, for construction of the power plant at Barapukuria with two 125 MW units. Officials concerned hoped that signing of the MoU would expedite the process of implementing the project.

Petrobangla sources referred to their study on distribution of Barapukuria coal in 'an alternative local market'. Experts however say marketing of such a huge quantity in local market would be 'very difficult' as it would have to be a 'short term marketing plan.'

"As soon as the power project begins operation, we will have to sell to PDB two thirds of the total production of coal," said an official of Barapukuria Coal Mine Co. Ltd.

According to him, export of coal is also not possible due to the same reason. Petrobangla is also considering the possibility of another use of coal, which is less costly than use of gas cylinder or fuel wood, sources said.

The participants in the four technical sessions yesterday included Debdut Ghosh Thakur, Chief Reporter of Anandabazar Patrika of Kolkata, who presented a paper on the role of watchdogs; Dr K C Saha from West Bengal, who presented a paper on groundwater arsenic contamination and human sufferings; David Christiani who presented a paper on skin cancer; Dr Alan Smith, an eminent epidemiologist from California University, USA and Dr D N Guha Majumder from Kolkata.

Use rain, surface water

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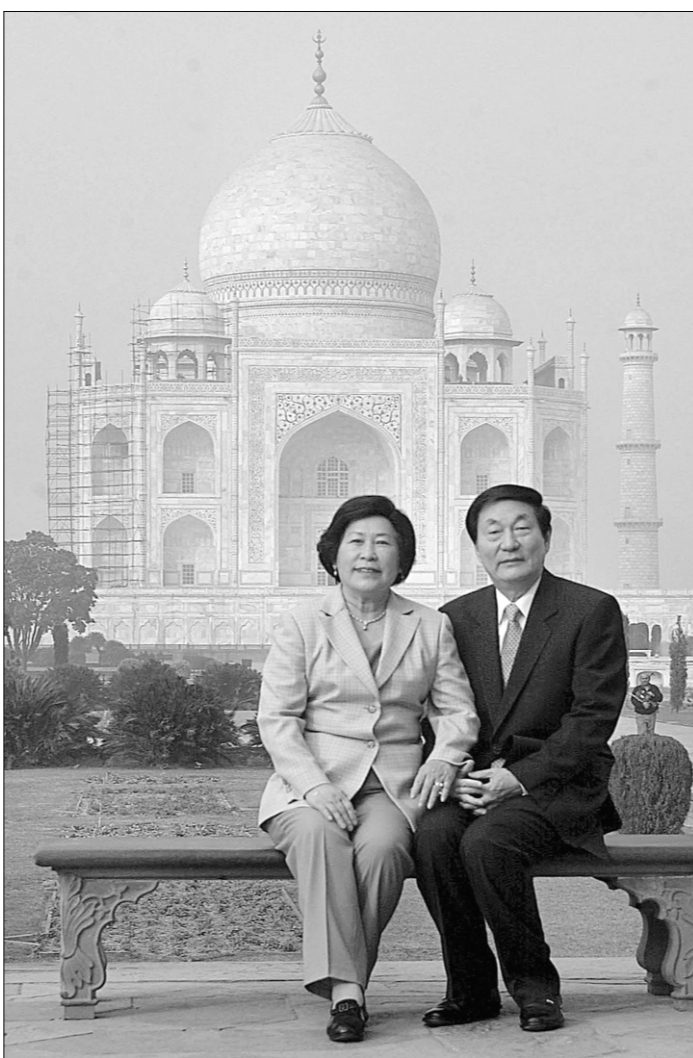
Special studies should be done on arsenic contamination in the food chain and its impact on food production, it said.

"Considering the severity and magnitude of the enormous human tragedy, the efforts so far made are still too slow," Prof Mahmudur Rahman, Coordinator of Dhaka Community Hospital, read out from the declaration.

Mahfuz Anam expressed serious concern at the slow progress of arsenic mitigation activities and suggested setting up of a 'special body' at the Prime Minister's Office to look into the arsenic problem exclusively.

"Lets us wake up and go into little more action," Anam told the gathering.

The declaration also noted that there is no known treatment for arsenic patients and urged experts to develop an acceptable treatment and management system for thou-



Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji (R) and his wife Lao An pose for photographers in front of the Taj Mahal in Agra yesterday. Zhu is on the first of an official six-day visit to India, thought to be crucial in shaping the current phase of Indo-Pakistan relations.

White Paper

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Nasim, former housing and public works minister Mosharraf Hossain, former state minister for power Rafiqul Islam, former state minister for jute AK Faizul Haq, former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury and former deputy minister for LGRD and cooperatives Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

The others include Election Commissioner Shafiqul Rahman, Secretary Mahfuzul Haq, Comptroller and Auditor General Syed Yusuf Hossain, Chairman of the Public Service Commission Mostafa Chowdhury, former principal secretary DR SA Samad, former secretary Jagannath Dey and former Air Force Chief Jamaluddin Ahmed.

Sources said the Bureau will file some more corruption cases against AL ministers very soon.

They said the Bureau is currently investigating alleged corruption by Sheikh Hasina and a number of former ministers including Zillur Rahman, Abdus Samad Azad, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, SAMS Kibria, Anwar Hossain Manju, ASHK Saqib, Abdul Mannan, ASM Abdur Rab, Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Muzammel Hossain, Obaidul Qader, Abdul Khaleque and Abu Syed.

Injured Laxmipur BCL leader dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League yesterday evening brought out a procession in the city carrying the body of Laxmipur BCL leader Iqbal Bahar Biplob.

Biplob, 20, general secretary of BCL Datta Para College unit, was injured in an attack by BNP activists on Thursday.

Fatally injured Iqbal was sent to the Laxmipur Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated. He died at the DMCH at about 1.30 pm yesterday.

Terrorism: 5 BCL, JCD men held at Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Five leaders and activists of Chhatra League and BNP-backed Chhatra Dal were arrested from different parts of the town yesterday on various charges, including terrorism.

Police said they arrested BCL district unit general secretary Sharifuddin Pradhan and Edward University College unit president Mokhtar Hossain from Chhatiani Chandman.

They also arrested JCD district unit organising secretary Shafiqul Islam Shafiq and activists Shahjahan Ali and Moslemuddin from near Bani Movie House.

A tense situation was prevailing as both the BCL and JCD took out separate processions and held rallies in the town last night demanding release of their arrested leaders and workers.

Graft case Nasim granted anticipatory bail

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to former Home and Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim for three months or until submission of police report in a graft case.

A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice AK Badrul Haq and Mamotajuddin Ahmed issued the bail order after hearing the petitioner's counsel, Barrister M Amrullah Islam.

Nasim was sued in a criminal case filed by the Bureau of Anti-Corruption on charge of corruption for awarding a contract to WorldTel for installing three lakh digital tele-phones "without any tender" during the past Awami League rule.

Deputy Attorney General Golam Kibria opposed the petition on behalf of the government.

The prayer for anticipatory bail was filed for Nasim on January 9.

South Asian water policy

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vened" in the upstream regions by building structures without considering the water sharing issue.

"This has politicized the water issue between the two neighbours though it is a natural resource," he noted.

Moudud Ahmed said Nepal has the largest source of fresh water in the region and a comprehensive regional water management could help solve the water crisis in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

He said Bangladesh should formulate a comprehensive national water policy.

Indigenous ideas could be used to tackle many of the water-related problems. "We have many indigenous ways to solve problems like arsenic contamination without going for big projects or huge investment," Syed Marghub Murshed urged the media to play a greater role in mitigating water-related problems including pollution of water. He praised FEJB and WWFJ for their role in this regard.

Environment Secretary Sabihuddin Ahmed said many regional issues remained unresolved due to the "over jealous" approach of countries which were not willing to look into the basic requirements of their neighbours downstream.

"If we could follow the globally accepted recommendations of Agenda 21, many of the confusions and debates over appropriate use of water could be resolved," he said.

Gourishankar Ghosh said South Asia could overcome its poverty only if politicians could understand the role of water considering it a "natural resource and not an economic commodity."

The Indian water expert cautioned against "too much politicisation" of water issues and said the people should be brought into the centre of the water management process to solve many of the problems.

The opening session was followed by a technical session on Third World Water Forum: Vision, Participation and Media Role. It discussed reporting on water issues; role of government, civil society and media; sustainable water management; water and sanitation; indigenous knowledge and practice etc.

Journalists Elizabeth Roxas from the Philippines, Mangal Man Shakya from Nepal, Gunasekara from Sri Lanka, Nava Thakuria from India, Syed Fahim Munaim from Bangladesh, Dr Mahfuzul Haque of environment ministry, Dr Atiq A Rahman and SH Faruque of water resources ministry also spoke at the technical session.

US team assures

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Also a successful trade negotiator for Africa, McDermott said he does not feel that USTDA would not affect Bangladesh's competitiveness with African apparels.

He said Bangladesh is a country of enormous potential and her moderate democracy and treatment to women could make her a model for many other developing country.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Mary Ann Peters praised Bangladesh's graduation from an aid-dependent country to a trade-dependent one.

BGMEA President Kutubuddin gave an overview of Bangladesh's apparel export and the hardships they now face due to global economic downturn that followed the September 11 incidents.

The apparel accounts for 76 per cent of total exports from Bangladesh. But its exports to USA marked a significant decline, resulting in closure of some 1300 units and job cut of 300,000 workers, he told the US congressmen.

He referred to the USTDA 2000, which reduced competitiveness of Bangladesh's apparels in the US market.

An immediate duty -and quota-free market access to the US is the only way for Bangladesh exports to survive, he said, urging the congressmen to play the expected role to get it done for Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hoped that the visiting US congressmen would support Bangladesh in attaining duty-and-quota-free access of garment exports to America to offset a downturn in the trade.

She expressed optimism when the US team made a courtesy call on the prime minister at her office yesterday afternoon after visiting some factories.

Informing the delegation about her government policies on empowering women in development, the prime minister said RMG is one of

the major export items for Bangladesh, which also contributed to a "silent social revolution."

She apprised them of the adverse effect on garment industry, which seriously hamper the social wellbeing of the poor women who are losing jobs because of a "sharp decline in our export of garments to the US."

The prime minister urged the two congressmen to be very supportive in creating the right image of Bangladesh in the United States as now they have had an opportunity to see the country.

Hartal protesting arrest of Haji Selim observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A half-day hartal called by different organisations of the Awami League was observed yesterday in the city's Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar and Hajariabagh areas to protest the arrest of former AL lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim.

Detective Branch police arrested Selim from the Zia International Airport on Saturday morning and sent him to jail after the court turned down his prayer for bail.

All the units of the AL, Jubo League, Chhatra League, Secchasebok League and Mohila Awami League under the Lalbagh thana jointly called the hartal.

Most of the shops and markets in the locality remained closed till 12:00 noon and vehicles remained mostly off roads during the hartal hour.

However, life was normal in Hajariabagh area during the hartal.

A businessman in Begum Bazar said the hartal was enforced in the strongholds of Hazi Selim sprawling from Begum Bazar to Showarighat, but the areas under control of BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu were free of any hartal disturbances.

Roads renamed

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renamed Humayun Bashir Mother Care Centre and the local park under ward No. 16 named after former commissioner late Yusuf Ullah.

The roads and installations named and renamed unanimously at a general meeting of the city ward commissioners with Mayor Mohammad Hanif in the chair.

The meeting also adopted a motion of condolence for the death of Shaikhat Al Miter, commissioner of ward No. 12, who was gunned down by unidentified goons, death of Alhaj Rafatun Nesa, mother of Tariq Ullah, a ward commissioner, and death of former ward commissioner Khaled Imam, also gunned down on the night of December 31.

The meeting also discussed different development activities of the DCC.

Among others, Chief Executive Officer AZM Shafiqul Islam, Acting Secretary Fazle Elahi and divisional heads were present at the meeting.

BNP men

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was launched yesterday morning.

The attackers ransacked six more houses in the colony and attacked a brickfield owned by Polish, leaving eight people injured.

The injured are Shahidul Islam, manager of the brickfield, Atar Miah, 40, Kalam, 45, Idris, 28, Khalil, 32, Siddique, 30, Munuja, 30, Shilpi, 28, and Asma, 14.

The BNP cadres also ransacked a phone-fax office of one Shahjahan Miah, supporter of Polish.

Sramik League leader Polish was arrested and sent to jail after a clash between the supporters of Polish and Masud.

Besides, a group of agitated youths led by Masud's brother put up barricades on the Dhaka-Narayanganj road at 9am yesterday and damaged three BRTC buses.

Abdul Berek, father of the deceased Masud, filed a murder case accusing 28 people yesterday morning.

Local MP Gias Uddin visited the spot this afternoon. Two platoons of police were deployed in the trouble spot and adjoining areas amid tensions running high.

Masud's body was buried yesterday afternoon.

Indo-Pak row

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December 13.

"China has neither any intention, nor shall it play any mediatory role between India and Pakistan," Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters in New Delhi.

But Singh said Zhu's visit showed that relations between the world's two most populous countries were in good shape.

"I am confident that there will be progress (in the relationship) during his visit," Singh said.

Zhu, in an interview with the Press Trust of India, said he would press New Delhi during his visit to revoke anti-dumping duties on more than 50 Chinese products. India and China have a standing border conflict dating from their brief border war in 1962.

New Delhi has also made Beijing unhappy by providing refuge to Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who fled his homeland after China crushed a failed uprising in 1959.

India is home to 100,000 Tibetan refugees, and the Dalai Lama's government in exile yesterday protested Zhu's visit to India.

Textbooks doctored

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There have been changes in the exercises of the essays as well.

"It was totally a distortion of history since president Ziaur Rahman did not call for joining the War of Independence on March 26 from the Kallurghat Radio Station. President Zia gave the announcement on March 27 on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," said a student.

"We have the right to know the genuine history and the truth, he continued.

Many guardians suggested that the truth be revealed to students without twists and distortion.

"No political party should skew the history and facts should always remain facts," one guardian said.

She said that whenever there was a changeover in the government, there was a factual change in the textbooks. The attempt to conceal facts would ultimately breed confusion among the young learners.

The changes were made without taking expert recommendations — a rule always followed in such initiatives.

Only a Dhaka University teacher was involved in the process of changes and no committee consisting of curriculum specialists was formed, the sources said.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) could not maintain the schedule to print and distribute textbooks due to the last-minute changes, sources in the printing industries said.

They said that now all books would be printed and distributed by January 15. Earlier, it was scheduled for the first week of January.

State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon earlier said, "We are hopeful that students would get textbooks by the first week of January."

This year, the NCTB will publish 4.73 crore books for the primary level and about 1.93 crore for the secondary level.

Bill to scrap PSA

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litne since some of the cases might have good ground. "We are aware that many notorious criminals have been charged under the PSA. If all cases are withdrawn or cancelled, those criminals would get away unpunished."

Home ministry sources said after the PSA came into effect on February 15, 2000, as many as 4,152 cases were filed under it till November 30 last. Police arrested 8,744 out of a total of 32,743 accused.

In 2,728 PSA cases, the police pressed charges against 18,472 accused. Some 1095 cases were disposed of after final reports were submitted by the police, clearing 4,172 accused of charges.

Verdict in 776 cases have been delivered in which 1148 persons were convicted in 416 cases while in the rest cases no-one was found guilty.

After the BNP-led four-party coalition government took office, it continued to apply the act although the BNP had pledged to repeal the PSA.

Between October 11 and January 6, some 284 cases were filed against 1492 persons under the PSA and 402 of the accused were arrested. Police pressed charges against 238 persons in 64 cases and gave final reports in 27 cases.

Of the 284 cases, 123 are under investigation while 64 are under trial.

Those who have already been convicted under the PSA will have to serve their conviction. However, as per Article 49 of the constitution, they may seek presidential pardon.

When the Awami League enacted the law, the BNP had had launched street protests and enforced a hartal to oppose it.

On January 10, former home minister Mohammad Nasim and former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury were sued under the PSA.

Use rain, surface water

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sands of patients in the country.

It also called for "full participation" of local communities and local government institutions in arsenic mitigation programmes.

More than 100 participants, including epidemiologists, hydrologists, geo-chemists, dermatologists, geologists, cancer specialists, biologists, environmentalists and medical practitioners from home and abroad took part in the conference.

The participants in the four technical sessions yesterday included Debdut Ghosh Thakur, Chief Reporter of Anandabazar Patrika of Kolkata, who presented a paper on the role of watchdogs; Dr K C Saha from West Bengal, who presented a paper on groundwater arsenic contamination and human sufferings; David Christiani who presented a paper on skin cancer; Dr Alan Smith, an eminent epidemiologist from California University, USA and Dr D N Guha Majumder from Kolkata.