

ANTI-CORRUPTION WEEK KICKS OFF

Only 300 audit reports discussed in PAC since 1973

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said over 1000 audit reports were prepared by the office of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) since its inception in 1973, but only 300 of them were discussed in the public accounts committee (PAC) of the parliament.

Over 700 audit reports are kept lying in the PAC, they said, urging the government, particularly the parliament, to scrutinise the reports and take immediate steps in this connection.

Titled 'The role of supreme audit institution in preventing corruption', the roundtable was organised at the inaugural function of Anti-Corruption Week that kicked off in the city yesterday.

Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (PROGATI), a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), launched the week at a city hotel with a view to raising awareness and identifying opportunities to curb corruption in the country.

Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid inaugurated the week which comprises a series of events, including roundtables,

on different themes relevant to promoting anti-corruption initiatives.

Taking part in the roundtable, M Hafizuddin Khan, former CAG and adviser to a caretaker government, said, "Over 700 audit reports are lying pending with the PAC. Even there is no mechanism to know the fates of the reports that were scrutinised or discussed in public accounts oversight body."

He suggested making the PAC effective for smooth functioning of CAG.

"Unless the PAC is made effective, the CAG's office will not be able to function as a watchdog agency and thus corruption will not be prevented," he said, adding that firm political commitment is a must to curb corruption.

The speakers put emphasis on close collaboration between supreme audit institution, civil society, media and other oversight agencies in order to contain corruption.

Inaugurating the roundtable as the chief guest, Speaker Advocate Hamid said transparency and accountability need to be ensured in the public sectors for the sustainable economic development.

"Corruption is a global

problem and it exists in all the countries -- greater or smaller, developed or developing -- across the world. It is such a menace that increases injustice and poverty, prevents development and undermines democracy and governance," he said, adding that Bangladesh has no choice but to reduce corruption.

The Speaker further said that the CAG is one of the few agencies which has comprehensive reach across multifarious government departments, agencies and bodies.

Parliament has to depend on the agencies about the facts and finding of the financial irregularities, Advocate Hamid said stressing the need for capacity building of audit offices and coordination between PAC and CAG.

"As part of our promise to ensure transparency and accountability in the public sector, we have formed all parliamentary committees, including PAC, in the first session of the parliament," he added.

Mentioning that Bangladesh has made progress in raising awareness and combating corruption, US Ambassador James F Moriarty said the government has a responsibility to

combat corruption using institutions to effectively monitor, investigate and report corrupt activities.

He said apart from weakening democratic institutions and harming weakest and vulnerable members of the society, corruption takes a bite out of the gross domestic product (GDP).

"Government efforts alone, however, are not enough," the US envoy said, adding that fight against corruption requires the commitment and support of the civil society, business, media and informed public.

Comptroller and Auditor General Ahmed Ataul Hakeem said the CAG's office, country's supreme audit institution, was set up in 1973 and since then little has been reformed in the field of human resources, administrative power and other areas, though the workload of the office has increased significantly.

Constitutionally, CAG office is independent, but in practice it has to struggle in many areas with various departments, he said, urging the government as well as the parliament to make the CAG's proposal as audit law.

Apart from strengthening CAG, the role of auditees, parliament and media is also important to prevent corruption, he added.

"The office of CAG should be headed by an appropriate person and run by the efficient people," he suggested.

Some of the participants suggested making the audit reports public by posting them on the website or sharing with media.

Prof Dr Riazur Rahman Chowdhury of AIS department at Dhaka University presented a keynote paper, while Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President Farooq Sobhan moderated the roundtable.

David A Pottebaum, chief of party of PROGATI project, also spoke.



Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen visits a classroom after inaugurating a new technical school of UCEP at Jatrabari in the city yesterday.

UCEP opens new technical school

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme (UCEP) opened a new technical school at Jatrabari in the city yesterday. Inaugurating the UCEP-Jatrabari Technical School, Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen said the UCEP schools are creating opportunities for a decent and comfortable life for the underprivileged children by turning them into skilled manpower.

This skilled workforce is contributing to the development of the industrial sector of the country, he said.

The ambassador also stressed the need to introduce vocational training courses at the secondary level schools to help develop the technical sector.

At present, the new school of UCEP has accommodation for 440 students in two shifts and has six departments -- welding and fabrication, plumbing and pipefitting, machinist, electronic technology, industrial electronics and electronic control and refrigeration and air conditioning.

UCEP Executive Director Brig Gen (ret'd) Aftab Uddin Ahmed said the school will open four more departments in the next academic session.

The UCEP is also going to provide financial support to their students who passed the Secondary School Certificate examinations and got enrolled in the polytechnic institutes.

Chairman of UCEP Board of Governors Ubaidur Rob also spoke.

Sirajul Islam, chairperson of UCEP resource development committee, and Parveen Mahmud, vice chairman of the board of governors, were present at the inaugural ceremony.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 38th death anniversary of Khan Shaheb M Osman Ali, a member of the legislative assembly of the then undivided Bengal, editor of the monthly Sabuj Bangla and a Language Movement veteran, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence 'Baitul Aman' in Narayanganj after Zohr prayers today. Quarkhwani, discussion and milad will also be held at Jamakandi Osmania High School and Sayedenana Mohammader Rasullullah Deen-E-Markaz orphanage in Joypurhat.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Kazi Golam Mahboob

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

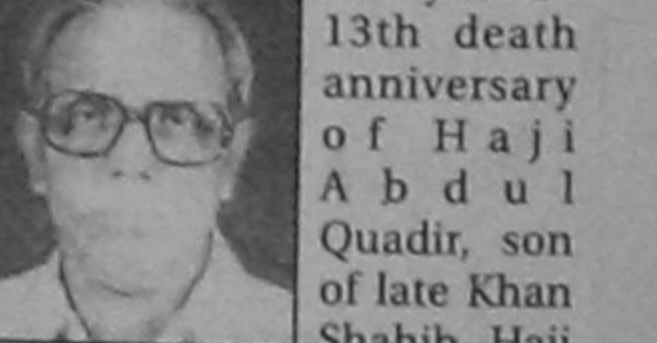


Today is the 3rd death anniversary of Kazi Golam Mahboob, a Language Movement veteran and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association, says a press release.

On the occasion, Kazi Golam Mahboob Foundation will hold a doa mahfil at his mazar at Gourmadi in Barisal.

Haji Abdul Quadir

METRO DESK



Today is the 13th death anniversary of Haji Abdul Quadir, son of late Khan Shahib Haji Emdad Ali of Zinzira, Keraniganj, Dhaka, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at his Gulzarbagh residence in Zinzira after Asr prayers on March 21. Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

'No possibility of attack on English schools'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Huq yesterday ruled out the possibility of any attack on English medium schools and said it is nothing but a rumour.

"It's a rumour as no school received any letter or anything else containing threat of attack. Some people have spread it in the air to create panic," said the DMP commissioner while talking to The Daily Star.

Shahidul Huq held a meeting with the representatives of different English medium schools yesterday at DMP headquarters following the rumour.

Sources said a total of 188 representatives from around 90 English medium schools joined the meeting and sought security assurance from the law enforcement agencies.

"I've called the meeting to interact with them on the issue after teachers, students and their guardians expressed concern apprehending such happening," said the DMP commissioner.

"During the meeting, we provided them with the psychological support and security tips along with the assurance of increasing police vigilance," he said.

"The joint commissioners and deputy commissioners from all the zones will hold meeting with all the general educational institutions gradually," he added.

Teachers, students and their guardians of city's different English medium schools are concerned hearing the recent rumour of attack on schools.

PM's support for families of 25 more army officers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sent delegations to hand over cheques for Tk 10 lakh each to the families of 25 more army officers killed in the February 25 mutiny at the Pikhana BDR headquarters.

The delegation included cabinet ministers, State Ministers, lawmakers and high officials of the PM's Office. They handed over the financial assistance and PM's personal letter of condolences

to the bereaved families.

Foreign minister Dipu Moni and her State Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday visited residences of eight of the 25 families and handed over cheques to them, said a foreign ministry press release.

Another delegation led by State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnojan Sufian visited the house of slain BDR Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed and handed over two cheques worth Tk 5 lakh each to Shakil's son, Rakim Ahmed, and daughter Akila Raida Ahmed.

Other recipients are the families of Brig Gen Abdul Bari, Col Mujibul Haque, Col Kudrat-e-Elahi Rahman Sahfiq, Col Anisuzzaman, Col Moshir Rahman, Col Akhtar Hossain, Col Shamsul Arefin Ahmed, Col Badrul Huda, Col Kazi Muazzem, Col Rejalul Kabir, Col Nafiz Uddin Ahmed, Col Kazi Eradaul Haque, Col BM Zahid Hossain, Lt Col Abu Musa, Mohammad, Ayub Kaiser, Lt Col Shamsul Azam, Lt Col Enayatul Haque, Lt Col Golam Kibria, Lt Col Niamatullah, Maj Humayun Kabir Sarker, Maj Azharul Islam, Maj Mahmudul Hasan, Maj Mustafa Asaduzzaman, Maj Rafiqul Islam and Maj ASM Mamunur Rahman.

The PM's delegations spent some time with the bemoaned family members and expressed their condolences to them.

MCCI for right policy

FROM PAGE 16

the premier on addressing the recession problems.

Former presidents of MCCI Latifur Rahman, Samson H Chowdhury, Syed Manzur Elahi, Laila Rahman Kabir, Mahubul Jamil, also former adviser to the caretaker government, and Adviser to MCCI Committee CK Hyder, among others, were present during the meeting.

The MCCI chief said the government should not bring under the cash incentive package to the businesses those who are making profit, but to the really affected businesses.

Suggesting that the government form a contingency plan and fund, Chowdhury urged the government to reschedule the bank term loans and reduce the bank interest rate.

He told The Daily Star the MCCI also suggested that the government give opportunity to whiten black money paying relevant taxes and 5 percent extra penalty tax only for the cause of recession.

"We always oppose the process of whitening the black money, but this time we did not oppose it only because of recession. We need a lot of investment for creation of jobs," Chowdhury said.

During a long meeting with the prime minister the MCCI chief recommended that the government gear up the regional trade, especially with India to narrow the trade gap with it.

He also suggested reducing the corporate tax and widening the tax-holiday as a tool to encourage more investments.

problem of power and energy, the government should immediately take measures for extracting coal from Barapukuria and Fulbari coalmines, Choudhury quoted the proceedings of the meeting.

"We have also suggested setting up nuclear power plants to address the problem of power," he said.

The prime minister gave a patient hearing to the problems presented by the business leaders and assured them for extending all cooperation in removing every problem, said the MCCI boss.

Choudhury quoted the PM as saying when Awami League came to power in 1996, total power generation was only 1,600 megawatts, which was increased by the AL government up to 4,300 MW.

Water supply runs dry

FROM PAGE 1

"I have no other family member except my husband. He takes care of son when I come to fetch water. But he went to office in the morning," Selina said.

Like Kohinor and Selina, several hundred people including women and children of Senpara Parbata gather at the main road in the area to fetch water from the water lorries of both DCC and Wasa every day. Thousands of people in the area are not getting water from the Wasa supply line in last two months.

Many residents have to bring water from other areas to meet their everyday necessities. DCC and Wasa distribute water three times a day but the supply is too little to meet the needs of huge number of people in the area.

"I walked about one kilometre to fetch a pitcher of water but I have failed to collect water from the lorries

because of huge gathering," said Jesmin Begum who waited for an hour from 9:00am to collect water.

Many residents of Senpara Parbata and Manipur, especially the poor, depend on the supply of lorries. But people, who are comparatively rich and do not like to face hassle for collecting water, prefer to buy water from Wasa and other sources or bring water from other areas.

Murtaza, owner of a five-storey building, said they have to buy water everyday but most of the days they do not get water from Wasa due to its huge demand.

"To buy a small lorry of water from Wasa, we usually have to wait for 10 days," she said, adding that they also buy water from other persons as well.

She said her family members depend on the houses of their relatives to meet their

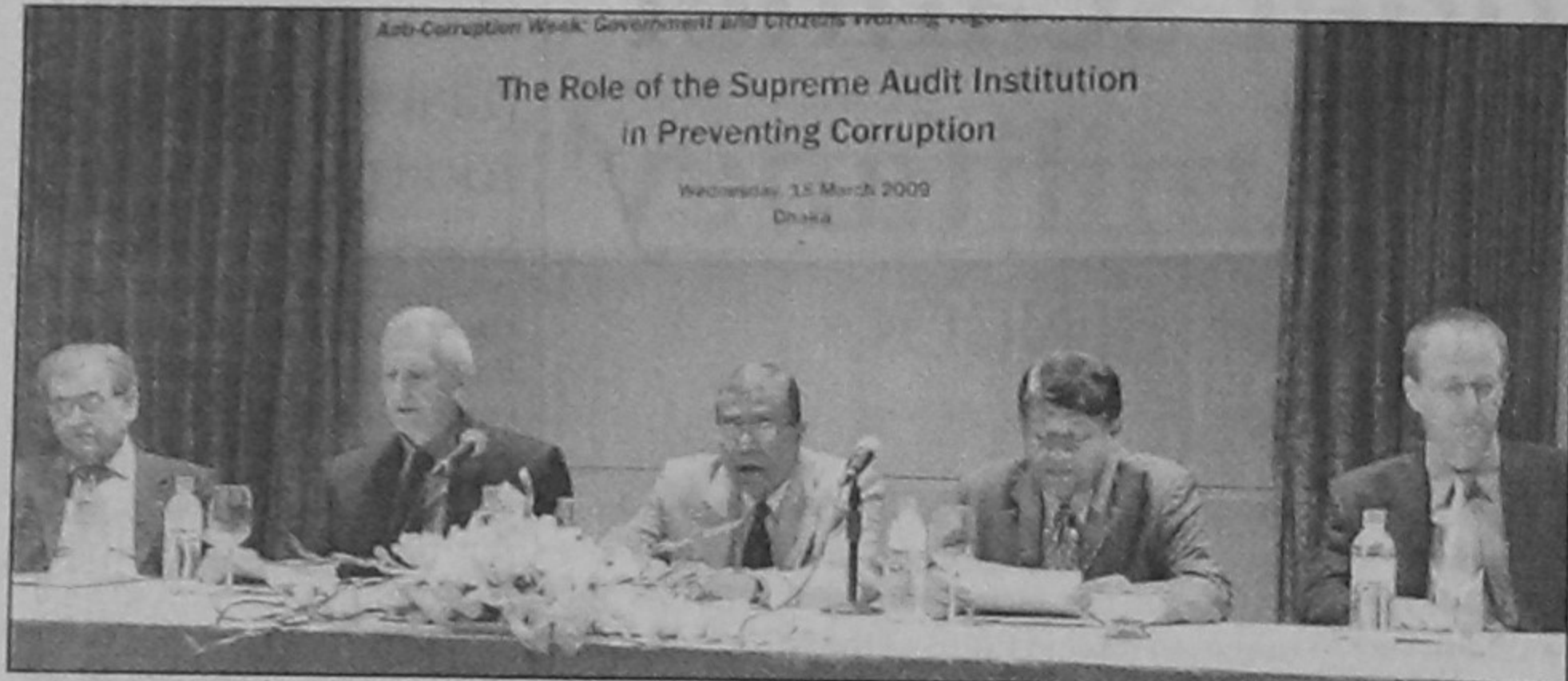
daily needs, including for taking bath and washing cloths.

Mohammad Shahjahan, site supervisor of Associate Engineers and Dealers that gets the work order for setting up another pump at Manipur-1, said residents of the areas will have to wait 26 days more to get rid of the water crisis.

He said they started their work to set up a pump near the existing pump on March 16 and the work will be completed by next 26 days.

He said the capacity of the pump would be 4,000 litres per minute and water problem of the area solved when the pump starts operation.

Mosharrat Hossain, pump operator of Manipur-1, said the capacity of the existing pump is 5,000 litres per minute but the capacity drops to 1,200 litres. And it is the main reason for the ongoing water crisis.



(From left) Farooq Sobhan, US Ambassador James F Moriarty, Speaker Abdul Hamid, Ahmed Ataul Hakeem and David A Pottebaum at the inaugural ceremony of the anti-corruption week at Westin Hotel in the city yesterday. PROGATI project of the USAID organised the event.

BR move to increase Subarna air-conditioned bogies backfires

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Crg

A decision of Bangladesh Railway (BR) to increase high-priced air-conditioned compartments reducing low-priced ones in Subarna Express, the country's most popular train service on

Chittagong-Dhaka route, backfired on the first day yesterday.

The BR Eastern Zone officials of the port city, however, hoped that the scenario would be changed very shortly and the new decision would be paid off.

The train left Chittagong Railway Station at 7:07am, seven minutes delay from schedule, with 267 out of the 495 AC 'Snigdha' seats being empty and all the 360 non-AC 'Shuvan' seats filled with passengers.

Sources said the BR authorities took the decision about two weeks ago to increase the AC bogies to nine from the previous four ones and decrease the non-AC bogies to six from 10 with a view to raising earnings of the beleaguered sector.

The fare of Snigdha class is Tk 380, while Shuvan is Tk 165. Because of its cheaper rate, comfortable journey and non-stop service, there has been a craze and high demand among common and middle-class passengers to travel by the train. The tickets espe-

cially of the Shuvan class were often sold out well in advance.

Passengers travelling the train yesterday expressed their displeasure over the railway's new decision, saying that it would serve no good for the common passengers.

"The AC service of Subarna never received its expected feedback in the past when usually half of those seats remain vacant, the BR's decision to increase further the AC seats is amazing and bore no logic," some passengers told The Daily Star at the railway station prior to departure of the train.

When contacted, Divisional Railway Manager Ibrahim Khalilullah said occupancy ratio (nearly half) of the AC seats on the first day after the new decision was quite satisfactory and believed that it would increase further in the coming summer.

"Let's wait and see whether our new decision proves to be feasible and popular or not. Depending on the public response in future, we may take another decision," he added.

Mystery shrouds death of schoolboy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery shrouds the death of a student of an English medium school who died after falling from the rooftop of a building at Gulshan in the city on Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Syed Mohaiminul Bari, a student of O Level at Sunny Dale International English Medium School at Dhanmondi.

Gulshan police on information recovered the body at 11:30pm on Tuesday night from United Hospital at Gulshan and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Morgue for autopsy yesterday.

Following the filing of a murder case by the deceased's father Mobinul Bari with Gulshan Police Station, police arrested Sharmin Farhana, a student of class VIII at an English medium school at Gulshan and her mother Tarana Zaman yesterday.

They were produced before a Dhaka court with a petition for a seven-day remand but the court placed them on a one-day remand, police said.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Elias Ali Mollah of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star that at around 9:20pm Mohaiminul went to Farhana's place at Gulshan-2 and went upstairs leaving his driver Kashem in the car.

Around half an hour later, Mohaiminul fell from the rooftop of the six-storey building and Kashem rushed him to United Hospital at Gulshan where on duty doctors declared him dead.

Quoting the arrestees, IO Elias Ali said a few months back Farhana got acquainted with Mohaiminul at a function and he used to come to Farhana's place.

On that day, they were chatting at Farhana's drawing room. After a while, they went to the rooftop and later her mother also went there.

However, he could not ascertain the reason behind Mohaiminul's death or falling from the roof.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

PROGATI organises a roundtable on the role of media in anti-corruption reform efforts. Venue: Westin Hotel. Time: 9:30am.

Film screening

The premiere screening of Naroshundor, a short political thriller set in 1971, will be held. Venue: Shawkat Osman Auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Lecture

Dr Saimullah Khan will deliver a lecture on 'Tread after Iacan: A poetic introduction to the unconscious'. Venue: University of Liberal Arts campus. Time: 3:45pm.

Seminar on child labour

The ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO along with education and labour ministries jointly organise a seminar on mandate and role of key stakeholders in removing the barriers to education for child labours. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

FBCCI and the Netherlands embassy jointly organise a seminar on business to business promotion between the Netherlands and Bangladesh. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:00am.

View exchange meeting

Cab organises a view exchange meeting on Consumers Rights Ordinance 2008. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh organises a discussion on 'High level meeting on ensuring access to export markets'. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Amra Muktioddhar Santan organises a discussion on digital Bangladesh and its barriers. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gully or squally wind may occur at one or two places over Sylhet, Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia and Comilla, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:09pm today and rises at 6:03am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 35.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 15.4 degrees Celsius at Srirongal.

Highest and lowest 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	33.9	22.3	51	41
Chittagong	32.5	20.5	79	47
Rajshahi	35.0	20.4	47	40
Khulna	33.5	20.2	89	62
Barisal	33.6	19.8	89	68
Sylhet	35.0	20.1	52	57
Cox's Bazar	33.6	20.0	72	68