



**Awami League-led 14-party grand alliance forms a human chain from Gabtoli to Jatrabari in the city yesterday to press home the demand for immediate trial of the war criminals and resist any plot to foil the war crimes trial. (Story on Page 1)**

PHOTO: STAR

## C'wealth Day today

METRO DESK

Commonwealth Day will be observed today in a befitting manner.

In a message, Head of the Commonwealth, Queen Elizabeth II, said one of the great benefits of today's technology-based world is the range of opportunities it offers to understand and appreciate how others live, said a press release.

"Connecting Cultures, our Commonwealth theme this year [2012], encourages us to consider the special opportunities we have, as members of this unique gathering of nations, to celebrate an extraordinary cultural tapestry that reflects our many individual and collective identities. The Commonwealth treasures and respects this wealth of diversity," she said.

She added, "Connecting cultures is more, however, than observing others and the ways in which they express themselves. This year, our Commonwealth focus seeks to explore how we can share and strengthen the bond of Commonwealth citizenship we already enjoy by using our cultural connections to help bring us even closer together, as family and friends across the globe."

Commonwealth Day is the annual celebration of the Commonwealth of Nations held on the second Monday in March, and marked by a multi-faith service in Westminster Abbey, normally attended by Queen Elizabeth II with the Commonwealth secretary-general and high commissioners of Commonwealth member states in London.

Fifty four states are today members of the Commonwealth. Bangladesh joined the body in 1972.

## Road, riverine transport network virtually collapses

PANKAJ KARMAKAR and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The road and riverine transport network between Dhaka and different districts of the country virtually collapsed yesterday, the day before the BNP's grand rally.

Bus services of long distance journeys and inside the capital remained almost suspended since morning. Owners feared vehicular damage due to political unrest and were also trying to stop police from requisitioning vehicles.

The counters of nearly all bus operators in the city, including Hanif, Shyamoli, Sohag, SR and S Alam Paribahan were seen shuttered or partially shuttered all day.

"None of our buses have either entered or left the city since yesterday morning," said Hanif Paribahan General Manager Samad Mondol, citing security concerns as the reason behind the suspension of services.

With no pre-announcement of the bus service stoppage, passengers in their hundreds were trapped for hours at different bus terminals.

A passenger, Nayon Moni, 25, was even found in tears at Sayedabad bus terminal. "My grandmother is on her deathbed in my village home at Comilla. But I have no way to reach her. I have been waiting here for three hours without any sight of a bus," she said.

Passengers at Gabtoli bus terminal were found bargaining with CNG-run auto-rickshaws and taxicabs to reach Savar or Nobinagar, hoping to board a bus from there. Though Bangladesh Road Transport

Corporation buses, plying long distance routes, remained off the roads, some of them ran services inside the city.

Most bus operators had their vehicles garaged, some from fear of police requisition while others did so under the directives of transport leaders.

Mohammad Javed, the driver of a bus plying on the Gulistan-Uttara route, said transport leaders had directed him not to work from Saturday to Monday and assured him that he would be paid some money as compensation.

Conditions were the same with launch services. Launch services between Dhaka and the country's southern districts remained suspended under the directives of the district administration, claimed some launch owners.

But leaders of the launch owners association claimed that they had stopped the services due to what they called a passenger crisis.

Allegations arose against a section of ruling party riverine transport workers for barring launches from anchoring at Sadarghat launch terminal and assaulting some launch staff who tried to anchor there.

Zakaria Sheikh, master of Sundarban-8, alleged that these workers became aggressive and even tried to attack them, terming them "Razakars" and BNP men, when they tried to anchor.

The arriving launches had to anchor in mid-river or at Postogola, Shyambazar and Swarighat.

## 45 houses, 5 factories gutted in city fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 45 makeshift houses and five factories were gutted in a fire early yesterday in the capital's Lalbagh.

According to Fire Service and Civil Defence officials, the fire broke out at Shahid Nagar around 4:35am. On information, five fire-fighting units rushed to the spot and doused the fire in three hours. No casualty was reported.

Abdul Halim, deputy assistant director of Fire Service, Dhaka range, told The Daily Star that the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a nail polish factory and spread to adjacent leather factories and makeshift houses.

He said the fire spread fast due to the numerous chemicals stocked at Yunus Nail Polish.

"Owners of these small factories use illegal electricity connections and low grade wires which easily short circuit," Abdul Halim said.

Meanwhile, another fire broke out at the warehouse of Nabisco Biscuit Factory located in the city's Tejgaon yesterday afternoon. A fire-fighting unit doused the hour-long fire that started around 1:30pm. The fire destroyed few plastic sacks.

## Concern over mass arrests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organisation, yesterday expressed grave concern over the mass arrests and countrywide search by the law-enforcers ahead of the opposition's scheduled grand rally in the city today.

Rapid Action Battalion and police personnel arrested more than 3,000 people on Saturday in the name of averting disorder and subversive activities in the country centering on the BNP rally, said ASK, in a press release, referring to the media reports.

Many people were punished by mobile courts, intensifying the sufferings of the common people, the release added.

# Mojaheed asked Chhatra Sangha men to join Al Badr in '71

## Prosecution tells war crimes tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed had called upon members of Islami Chhatra Sangha, a pro-Jamaat student body in 1971, to join Al Badr during the Liberation War, the prosecution told the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday.

As a commander of Al Badr, he also visited its training camps at different parts of the country, said prosecutor Mukhlesur Rahman, reading the charges against the Jamaat leader at the court.

Al Badr, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani occupation army, went on to commit murders, rapes, robberies, and arsons, and collaborate with the Pakistani soldiers in carrying out atrocities during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the prosecutor said.

Jamaat Secretary General Mojaheed

is facing 34 charges of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War. He was produced before the court for yesterday's proceedings.

Following the court proceedings yesterday, prosecutor Mukhlesur Rahman told journalists that Mojaheed was also involved in a mass murder in Faridpur in 1971.

The prosecutor yesterday began reading out the formal charges before the three-member tribunal set up to deal with crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

He finished reading 23 pages out of the 109-page formal charge submitted earlier.

However, the tribunal headed by its Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq adjourned the hearing till March 20. The adjournment came following frequent requests from Mojaheed's defence

counsel who said they were not prepared for the hearing because they could not go through all the documents provided by the prosecution, some of the documents were missing and many were illegible.

After yesterday's proceedings began at 10:36am, Munshi Ahsan Kabir, a defence counsel of Mojaheed, came up with a few petitions requesting the court to direct the prosecution to provide them with some missing documents and legible copies of certain documents.

The counsel also petitioned for a further adjournment as he introduced newly appointed defence counsel Nazrul Islam.

Prosecutor Mukhlesur Rahman read out the formal charges. The defence, however, continued their mild protests.

The prosecution will continue reading the formal charges on March 20.

# SHELTECH

চব্বিশ পেরিয়ে ২৫-এ

আজ ১২ মার্চ ২০১২

## শেল্টেক্-এর জন্মদিন।

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## WEATHER TODAY

### No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

**The sun sets in the capital at 6:06pm today and rises at 6:09am tomorrow.**

Country's highest temperature 35.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 13.2 degrees Celsius at Rangpur and Sayedpur.

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	33.5: 20.0	28 26
Chittagong	33.5: 21.0	66 39
Rajshahi	32.5: 15.8	29 36
Rangpur	30.5: 13.2	35 39
Khulna	33.3: 21.5	45 61
Barisal	33.0: 20.5	73 54
Sylhet	34.2: 19.9	57 33
Cox's Bazar	34.4: 21.4	67 56

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