

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bang! Bang! Where is the detective?

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Great Detectives

The murders took place in broad daylight. No gun or knife, and victims died swiftly of heart attack in broad daylight. The police were baffled. It took the genius of ace detective Bomkesh to discover that the assassin used a tiny poison-laden dart that was released from the bell of his bicycle. Lodging itself at the heart, the dart caused instant death.

Today I might be skeptical, but when I was ten, Bomkesh Bokshi - created by writer Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay - was the best detective in the world.

Kuasha (Bangla for Fog) was another childhood favourite. Its author Kazi Anwar Hussein introduced me to a world of technology that included robots, lasers, and assorted devices that would make Bond envious.

Then there was dacoit Bonhur who took from the rich and gave to the poor while solving mysteries along the way. Romena Afaz's hero skilfully stayed a step ahead of pursuing policemen.

Later on, I started reading English detective stories, starting with Enid Blyton and graduating to Sherlock Holmes.

But we parted ways - detectives and I - when I reached adolescence. It was kids' stuff, I decided, and I was a serious reader.

It was only after several decades that my passion for detective stories was rekindled.

How? Reading several allegedly great contemporary novels had left me disappointed and frustrated. How to pick the next book? I decided I would read the first page and only if it grabbed me would I commit to the book. The very first book I tried this way was in

the library's shelf of new books. It was an adventure of Los Angeles Police Detective Harry Bosch (author: Michael Connelly) and I stayed up all night reading it.

The hard-boiled and cynical Bosch was also a jazz aficionado and a contrast from Kuasha and Bomkesh (but I, too, was older and arguably wiser.) Bosch worked patiently, discovering and linking clues, often angering his bosses with his obstinacy.

More recently, after reading the Millennium Trilogy (including *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*) by Stieg Larssen, I have acquired a taste for Scandinavian mysteries. They are darker in tone - the crimes are more ruthless, for example - than usual mystery stories. The Swedish detective Inspector Wallander, created by Henning Mankell has become a favourite.

What makes a good mystery? The ending is crucial, of course. It has to make sense and, one hopes, contain a surprise. The villain must be someone we have already met in the story. The setting is very important. Descriptions of place and atmosphere should make me want to visit the location.

And the detective?

I can identify with detectives who suffer from human weaknesses like the rest of us. They can occasionally take a beating from the villain, or make a big mistake. Solving a mystery then becomes a joint effort, a puzzle working my brain.

Most critics do not consider detective stories in the same league as more serious literature. I beg to differ.

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No repair of Boubazar Road for eight years

HELEMUL ALAM

It is quite a common scene on Boubazar Road on the capital's fringe that a number of auto-rickshaws are always lining on its either side. They are neither calling for any passengers nor are stuck in a traffic jam but waiting to be repaired.

About 50 auto-rickshaws ply the two-kilometre road connecting the Jurain Crossing in the capital and Baraitala in Narayanganj's Shyampur every day. But half of the vehicles always remain out of order due to potholes and a thick layer of mud on the road, which has been left without any repair for eight years.

The road is so muddy that vehicles frequently break down here, said Mohammad Mozammel, driver of an auto-rickshaw, who was repairing a broken wheel by the road. "More dangerous are the bare stones hidden under the mud," he said.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the tarred-surface had worn away and a lot of potholes had been created all over the road. It gets waterlogged even after a light rain and becomes almost unusable for pedestrians and vehicles.

The road, which is an important bypass for a huge traffic from Dhaka to Narayanganj, was constructed in 2004. It has not been repaired once since then.

The auto-rickshaw driver Mozammel said his vehicle broke down twice in the last two days, costing him Tk 1,200 to repair it when he earned only Tk 600 within that time.

Local businessmen claim that they had been incurring loss due to the shabby condition of the road. Around 1,000 businessmen having shops on the two sides of the road are the worst sufferers. Their sales have fallen by

a huge margin and cost for goods transport has almost doubled.

Billal Hossain, owner of Shihab Store, a department shop by the road, said he suffered a loss of around Tk 5,000 ten days ago when a rickshaw-van carrying goods for his shop overturned after stumbling on a pothole.

He said 70 percent of their sales had dropped over the last one year due to the rundown road as customers did not want to come there. "We could sell goods worth Tk 30,000 every day. The daily sale now has dropped to Tk 5,000," he said.

Mohammad Selim Reza, a member of Shyampur Union Parishad, said a huge project was necessary to repair the road and it was not possible for the UP to carry out the work. "We have requested the local lawmaker several times to repair the road. She has given us assurance of renovating it soon," he said.

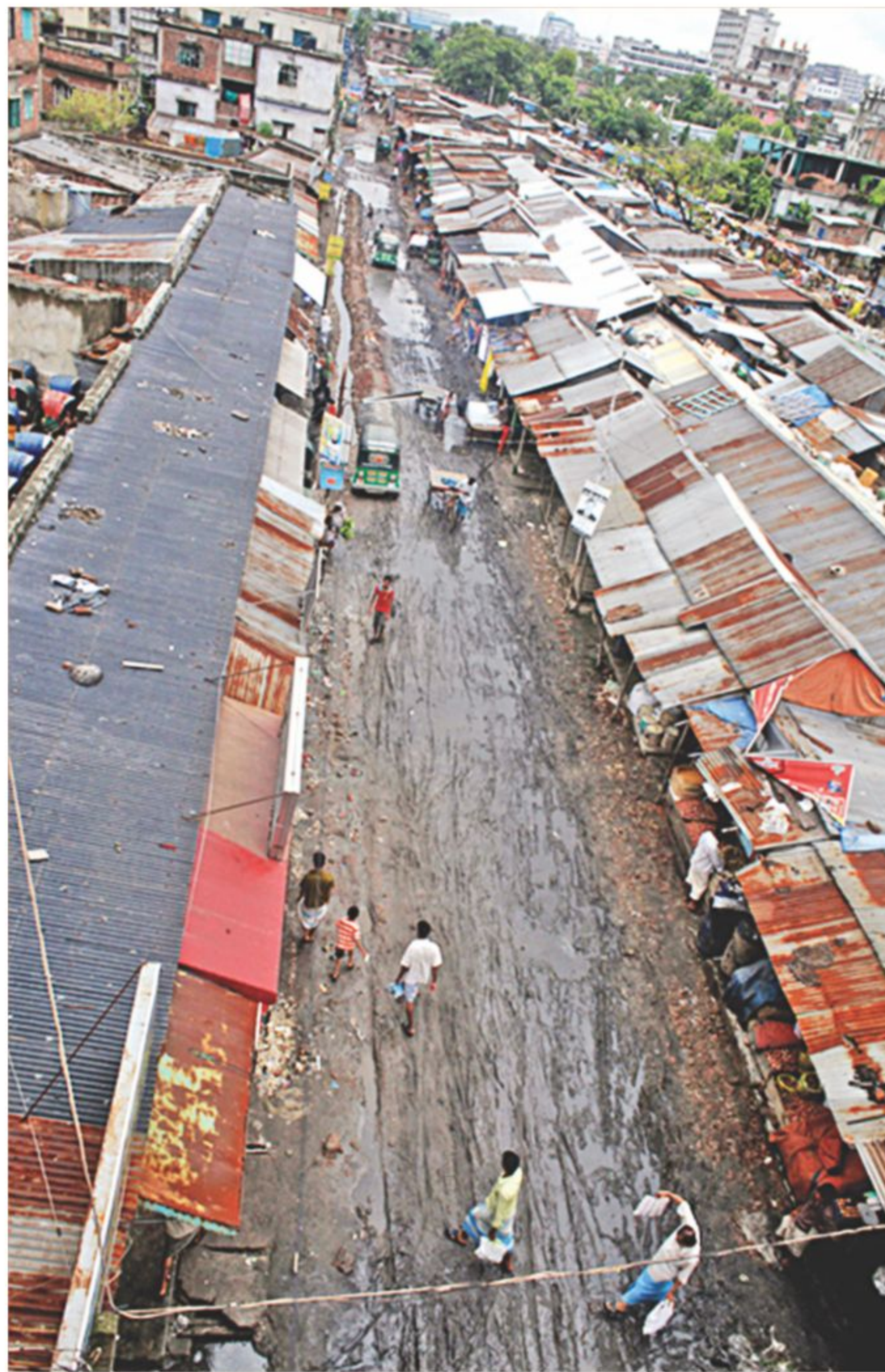
Poor drainage system and a lack of maintenance have multiplied the suffering of people.

Asked about regular cleaning of the gutters, the UP member said they did not have the capacity to do it regularly, and therefore they did it every six months.

A nearby canal used to play a major role for receding of rainwater, but it has been so narrowed down over the years that it now causes waterlogging on the road, he said, adding that the canal should be excavated on an urgent basis to save the road.

Sanjida Khanam, lawmaker of the area (Dhaka-4), told The Daily Star that a tender had been floated to repair the road and the Tk 1.05 crore works would begin soon.

The repair work, however, is yet to begin.



The tarred Boubazar Road has turned virtually into a clay path with a lot of potholes and a thick layer of mud due to lack of maintenance and repair. Connecting the capital with Shyampur union of Narayanganj, the two-kilometre road was constructed in 2004 and has been left unrepaired for eight years. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TAMIM SAMSHED

Rab wants to work as a riverine force too

BSS, Dhaka

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), an elite force, has sought to form a well-equipped riverine battalion to secure mainland waters and southern coastlines as criminal gangs appeared to have gained extra strength for robbery.

"Works are underway to prepare a proposal (for the government approval) to form a full-fledged riverine battalion with capacity to conduct raids in remote areas using waterways," Rab's Director General Mukhlesur Rahman told the news agency.

He said Rab sought to form the battalion to be equipped with fast moving boats and ships so that they could conduct raids at remotest channels in coastlines and particularly inside the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, in quickest possible time.

Rahman said crimes-prone riverine areas such as the Sundarbans, Bagherhat,

Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna, Chittagon and Barisal as well as the areas under the Rab-6 and Rab-7 would be the jurisdiction of the specialised battalion.

"Formation of the battalion in the Rab will also help us carry out emergency evacuations during cyclones in the coastlines," he said.

The Rab move came a month after authorities called out navy and air force to join coastguard and police to carry out a massive security clampdown in the Sundarbans and adjoining coastlines as robbers kidnap fishermen for ransom.

Home Minister Shahara Khatun has recently said the ministry has decided to form a marine police unit to check various crimes including extortion and robberies in waterways and check indiscriminate movement of oil tankers on the river routes in the night.

NEWS IN brief

10 injured as BCL rivals clash in Bangla College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 people were injured after two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League Mirpur Bangla College unit in the capital clashed over establishing supremacy in a dormitory last night.

One of the injured, Arafat, 22, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the rest received first-aid from nearby clinics, said the college sources.

Witnesses said the hour-long clash ensued around 11:00pm after a few residential students were ousted from Abul Kashem Hostel.

The factions used sharp weapons during the clash. Afterwards, police brought the situation under control, said Officer-in-Charge Khalilur Rahman of

Mahila Parishad for new laws to stop repression against women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), a women's human rights organisation, underscored the need for new laws to prevent new forms of repression against the women in the country.

"Women are facing new sorts of harassments regularly. They have to face mobile and cyber terrorism," said BMP President Ayesha Khanam yesterday.

She said this at a two-day training on paralegal issues at Jatiya Mahila Sangstha's training room organised by Central Legal Aid Sub Committee of BMP, said a press release.

BMP General Secretary Maleka Banu, and Assistant General Secretary Masuda Rehana Begum,

Joint meeting of AL, associated bodies today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A joint meeting between ruling Awami League and all of its associated and like-minded bodies will be held today to discuss the country's current socio-economic, political and organisational matters.

The meeting will be held at the official residence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Gono Bhaban at 5:00pm.

The presidents and general secretaries of the associated and like-minded bodies have been invited to join the meeting to be chaired by Sheikh Hasina, also the president of Awami League.

AL deputy office secretary Mrinal Kanti Das said the associated bodies would be directed to make people aware through their respective bodies across the country about the main opposition BNP's anti

Two commit 'suicide' in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman and a college student allegedly committed suicide in Mohakhali and Kafrul of the capital yesterday.

The body of Tandra Rani Dey, 25, wife of Jewel Halder, an employee of a private television channel, was found hanging from a ceiling fan at her residence in Mohakhali.

Meanwhile, college student Mahfuza Anam Mita, 18, allegedly committed suicide at her residence in Kafrul area on Thursday night.

The victim was daughter of Mehedi Hasan, warrent officer of Air Force, and a second year student of

Girl's body hanging from tree found in Chapainawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police recovered the body of a girl hanging by the neck from a tree in a mango orchard at Mirerchara village of sadar upazila in Chapainawabganj yesterday.

Police and the villagers suspect that the deceased Motori Khatun, 19, daughter of Mohammad Alauddin of the village, was raped before being murdered and hung from the tree.

The body, bearing several marks of injury, was sent to the sadar hospital morgue for autopsy while the victim's father Alauddin filed a case against



PM to speak at UNGA on Sept 27

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will attend the 67th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, beginning on September 21.

She is expected to leave for New York on September 23 and address the UNGA on September 27.

Hasina will also speak at several other UN events, said officials.

Besides, sources said the officials were working to make appointments of the prime minister with important heads of state and government for bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the UNGA.

Hasina may also address the expatriate Bangladeshi community in New York.

Meanwhile, sources in New York told The Daily Star that the US-Chapter of Awami League began hectic preparations to accord a reception to the prime minister at the JFK International Airport.

Main opposition BNP plans to stage a demonstration near the hotel where Hasina will be staying during her visit to the USA.

UAE offers amnesty to irregular foreign workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Irregular foreign workers, including Bangladeshis, in United Arab Emirates (UAE) can return home by paying a small amount of money due to a recent unofficial amnesty granted by the Gulf nation.

Generally irregular foreign workers are arrested and imprisoned for overstaying their visas or changing jobs without maintaining proper residency documents.

"The irregular workers would have to pay the immigration authorities only 320 Dirham to get a travel pass from the Bangladesh missions in order to leave the country," said Bangladesh's Consul General in Dubai Dr Abu Zafar over phone yesterday.

One Dirham is approximately Tk 22.32.

If irregular foreign workers do not take advantage of the amnesty, they will be fined as much as 20 Dirhams for each day they illegally stay in UAE, said Zafar.

There are workers who have been irregular for over one year and they will have to pay a huge fine if they do not take advantage of the amnesty while there is time available, he said.

The authorities there, however, have not mentioned when the amnesty period would end, he added.

The oil-rich Gulf nation, which is heavily dependent on foreign workers, thinks it now has too many illegal migrants and so took such a decision that has been in effect for the past several weeks but has clarified only recently through a local media, he said.

There was, however, no official declaration about the amnesty, the diplomat said.

"I would encourage Bangladeshi workers in the Emirates to take advantage of the facility, because otherwise the fine will be very high," Abu Zafar said.

Asked if the Bangladeshi workers are taking up the opportunity, he said around 150 to 200 workers were visiting the consulate office in Dubai every day to attain travel permits.

According to the consulate, there are an estimated one million Bangladeshi workers in the UAE. It, however, could not say for sure the number of irregular ones.

UAE has tightened visas for Bangladeshi workers for the past one month. It is also maintaining a strict policy for Bangladeshis changing their jobs from one company to another, Bangladesh Ambassador to UAE Nazmul Quanine told The Daily Star last week.

Authorities in that country told him that they found irregularities in the foreign labour recruitment and too many migrants were irregular.

"Therefore, they needed to rectify the sector," Quanine said.



Temperature may rise

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at one or two places over the country, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may rise slightly 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

The sun sets in the capital tomorrow at 6:09pm and rises tomorrow at 5:43am.

Country's highest temperature 37.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.6 degrees at Jessore and Ishurdi.

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	35.2	25.5	64	62
Chittagong	32.8	26.4	81	84
Rajshahi	34.6	25.0	82	70
Rangpur	35.2	25.5	63	67
Khulna	33.7	25.0	82	80
Barisal	34.4	25.0	63	78
Sylhet	37.2	26.5	70	72