

MEGHNA, GUMTI BRIDGES

Repairs restart

Vehicles to use alternative route

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Vehicular movement on Meghna and Gumti bridges will remain suspended from today till February 22 due to repair works, and vehicles plying on Dhaka-Chittagong highway will have to use the alternative Dhaka-Brahmanbaria-Comilla-Chittagong highway.

Noor Muhammad Mazumder, deputy commissioner of Brahmanbaria, said police will be deployed on the highway to maintain law and order and also to establish smooth vehicular movement on the alternative Brahmanbaria-Maynamati highway.

In a meeting held at the deputy commissioner's office yesterday, it was decided that the highway will be kept free from entry of vehicles like human hauler, CNG-run auto-rickshaw, battery-run rickshaw and tractor.

Already posters and banners have been displayed on the highway to make people aware of the changes in vehicular movement.

Md Moniruzzaman, Brahmanbaria superintendent of police, and Jahidul Islam, additional superintendent, among others, were present at the meeting.

Anti-war criminal demos continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday detained two youths -- Rabiul and Tarek -- on suspicion of being Islami Chhatra Shibir activists from the Chittagong Press Club area, where a sit-in demanding death penalty for war criminals was ongoing.

Meanwhile, Sharif Chouhan, convener of Shamprodayikota Birodhi Torun Udjog, Chittagong, which initiated the sit-in, said they would follow programmes declared from the Shahbagh demonstrations.

Thousands of people thronged the sit-in for the 10th consecutive day, chanting slogans, singing patriotic and mass songs and reciting poems like previous days.

Our Rajshahi University correspondent reports: Police reinforcements were brought in on the RU campus yesterday against the backdrop of alleged threats by Shibir to attack the demonstrations over the demand at Tukitaki Chhattar.

Meanwhile, hundreds of teachers, students and staff continued processions, cultural programmes and rallies centring the "Gonomancha", the venue of the demonstrations, on the ninth day.

Our Bogra correspondent reports: A grand convention of freedom fighters will be held today at "Gonojagoron Mancha" in Shatmatha, the venue for the demonstrations at Bogra, declared Muktiyoddha Sangsad's Bogra unit on Thursday.

Saraswati Puja celebrated

STAR REPORT

Saraswati Puja was celebrated with much festivity and fervour at different educational institutions across the country yesterday.

Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, music and arts of Hindus, was born on the day of Vasant Panchami.

On the occasion, students alongside Hindu communities at different institutions arranged the puja and various other programmes.

At Dhaka University, thousands of Hindu devotees thronged the Jagannath Hall playground where the puja was arranged by students of the university's different departments, reports our DU correspondent.

The puja was also arranged at Bangladesh Kuwait Moitri Hall, Rokeya Hall, Shamsunnahar Hall and Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall.

The celebrations were marked by colourful puja mandaps where devotees and students offered sweetmeats, fruits, books and other items to the idols of Goddess Saraswati seeking her blessings.

Devotees and students at Jahangirnagar University also celebrated Saraswati Puja yesterday through daylong programmes on the campus, reports our JU correspondent.

Different halls of the university arranged the puja.

Meanwhile, different educational institutions in Barisal city set up beautiful puja mandaps with exclusive idols of the goddess of education to celebrate Saraswati Puja yesterday, reports our Barisal correspondent.

RAMPAL POWER PLANT NEAR SUNDARBANS

Greens reject govt's EIA report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some leading environmental organisations yesterday rejected the government's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on the proposed coal-fired power plant to be built at Rampal in Bagerhat near the Sundarbans.

They termed the report "fraudulent", "untrue", "faulty", and "fake" and demanded that the government form a committee with experts, scientists, intellectuals, human rights activists, and eminent citizens to produce a correct report.

The EIA report prepared by Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) allegedly suggests going for building the 1,320-megawatt power plant. BPDB had posted the 676-page report on www.bpdb.gov.bd and received opinions from people until yesterday.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity, the environmentalists urged the government to relocate the proposed plant to save the environment, ecosystem, land, water and atmosphere of the world's largest mangrove forest.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), Center for Human Rights Movement, Save the Sundarbans, Bagerhat Development Commission, and Green Voice jointly hosted the conference.

Bapa General Secretary Mohammad Abdul Matin said the government already acquired 1,834 acres of agricultural land and signed an agreement with India to build the National Thermal Power Corporation though scientists of Bangladesh Agriculture University and Khulna University earlier published two separate EIA reports showing its bad impacts.

The BPDB report says the plant will not affect the ecosystem of the forest, which is 14km away from the proposed site, he said, but locals said the distance was only 9km.

Matin said about 142 tonnes of toxic sulfur dioxide and 85 tonnes of toxic nitrogen dioxide would be emitted from the power plant everyday but the government report underestimated the emission level to clear way for legal approval.

Citing from the BPDB report, Abdul Matin said tigers, deer, dolphins and mangroves would be disturbed due to movement of water vessels carrying fuels, wastes, and machineries, and it would also result in water, sound and light pollution.

He also said the plant, which would run for 25 years, would benefit India and threaten Bangladesh's sovereignty.



Two students seek blessings of the Hindu goddess of knowledge and learning, Saraswati, at Dhaka University's Shamsunnahar Hall on the occasion of Saraswati Puja yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Finding Ulluk

A major attraction of Lawachara National Park is the Hoolock Gibbon (known as *Ulluk* in Bangla.) This ape, which lives in Bangladesh, India, Southern China and Myanmar, is endangered worldwide and critically so in Bangladesh. There are several families of them living in Lawachara.

Apes are different from monkeys. They have bigger brains and no tail. Hoolocks enter into lifelong monogamous relationships, produce 5-6 babies during their life and can live for 30 years.

Having read about it, I wanted to see a Hoolock Gibbon with my own eyes.

I did not know my way around Lawachara and was short on time, so I decided to short-circuit potential frustrations by opting for a guide to help me find an *Ulluk*.

Guides are trained by the Nishorgo Network (www.nishorgo.org, funded by USAID) and know the trails, fauna and flora of protected forests of Bangladesh.

I met my guide Razbe one morning and we entered Lawachara, which is eight kilometres north of Srimongol (about 4 hours from Dhaka by car.) There are three trails in the park: 0.5, 1 and 2 hours long. After passing the visitor centre under construction, we started hiking the long trail.

I had learned earlier from Pasha, my helpful contact at Nishorgo, that the Hoolocks start singing loudly between 9 and 10 am. As we walked through the dense forest, I waited to hear their voices.

The forest with its towering trees, dense undergrowth and fat creepers snaking around giant tree trunks was a thrilling if poignant reminder of this area fifty or hundred years ago. In 1956, scenes of the movie *Around the World in Eighty Days* showing Indian forests were filmed in Lawachara.

As we went deeper into the forest, Razbe continued looking up, scanning the tall trees. We saw several large black squirrels and heard numerous birdsongs. The birds, however, were at a great height, far from camera range. There was no sign of *Ulluk*.

Then about 9:30am, the singing – used to announce the family's territory – started loudly. There was no mistaking the loud "wau-wau" sounds used by groups of Hoolocks to communicate.

As we got closer to the source of the sound, Razbe led me up a dried stream to a point from which we could see several tall trees on a hillock, less than a hundred feet away. Soon we spotted the first Hoolock, a male (black.) As we waited, the female (brown) appeared as did a juvenile.

The dense jungle and overhead branches kept on getting in my way of capturing a clear photograph. Then the male saw us and turned his back towards us. The singing stopped.

Razbe informed me that while they are not afraid of humans, Hoolocks become cautious when they see us and often hide their face.

We watched and waited. The Hoolocks were soon effortlessly swinging from branch to branch, tree to tree, and I got my photograph. Presently they moved out of sight.

But those magical minutes of my first *Ulluk* sighting will be etched in my memory.

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www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir



Hoolock Gibbon at Lawachara.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

NEWS IN brief

JU central Hindu temple's foundation stone laid

JU CORRESPONDENT

Foundation stone of the Jahangirnagar University (JU) central Hindu temple was laid on the campus yesterday.

JU Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain laid the foundation stone at the south edge of the central

3 Shibir men held at RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

Three activists of Rajshahi University (RU) unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, a Jamaat backed student organisation, were arrested from the campus yesterday.

The arrestees are Mizanur Rahman Mizan, Deloar Hossain and Sadrul Islam.

Police said they arrested the three when around 30 to 40 Shibir leaders and activists were trying to gather at Narikel Baria, an outer campus of the university, to create anarchy there.

Necessary steps would be taken after primary interrogation, they said.

Int'l trade fair opens in Bogra


OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A month-long international trade fair started at Godarpura in Bogra yesterday.

With support from the district administration, Bogra Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised the fair.

Bogra Deputy Commissioner Sarwar Mahmud inaugurated the fair around 12:00pm.

A total of 142 stalls including 10 pavilions have been set up for showcasing and trading different products in the trade fair.



Roundtable

The Daily Star and the Center for Foreign Affairs Studies will arrange a roundtable on "Bangladesh-Russia Relations: New Openings & Challenges"; Venue: The Daily Star Center; Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Ain Samity and the daily

Prothom Alo will hold a discussion on "Bangla language in higher court: Necessity and limitation"; Venue: ICMAB auditorium, Nilkhet; Time: 10:00am.

Foundation anniversary

Daffodil International University (DIU) will organise its foundation anniversary; Venue: DIU campus,



PHOTO: COURTESY

Danish Ambassador Svend Olling cuts a cake to inaugurate "The Wild Rickshaw Challenge", a campaign to protect the Bengal tiger and its home, the Sundarbans, at the office of UNB news agency in the capital yesterday.

Rickshaw trek for saving tigers starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dare to care for tigers - with this slogan, 20 adventurers from all over the world will be cycling more than 400 kilometers on rickshaws through the country's scenic landscapes from Teknaf to Sundarbans.

Under the banner of "The Wild Rickshaw Challenge," the challengers will be riding for the cause of protecting the endangered Bengal tigers and the world's largest mangrove forest Sundarbans.

They will set off on the rickshaw journey today from Dhaka and continue the ride till February 26.

Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Svend Olling has joined in the event as a challenger. "Bangladesh has some powerful symbols, Bengal tiger being a significant one. If we do not step forward, within a couple of decades this gracious mammal might face extinction," he said, while inaugurating the event yesterday.

WildTeam, a nature conservation organisation based in Bangladesh, organised the event.

Prof Anwarul Islam, CEO of WildTeam said, "There are only about 3,200 tigers left in the world. In Bangladesh, the local people believe that the Bengal tiger is the natural guardian of the Sundarbans and as long as the tiger remains, the forest will remain."

The Daily Star, People's Radio, UNB News and Channel i are media partners of the challenge while Regent Airways and Green Delta Insurance are its corporate partners.

WEATHER TODAY

Weather may remain dry

UNB, Dhaka

Rain and thunder showers accompanied by temporary or gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Kushtia, Tangail and Mymensingh with isolated hails at places till 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary or partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Night and day temperature may fall slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:54pm and rises tomorrow at 6:30am.

Country's highest temperature 33.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 9.7 degree Celsius at Sreemangal.

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

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.6	15.0	34	28
Chittagong	32.5	14.0	44	28
Rajshahi	30.0	12.2	90	41
Rangpur	27.0	12.5	78	55
Khulna	31.5	14.8	69	70
Barisal	30.4	13.5	58	59