

RAIN LIKELY



WEATHER TODAY

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

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over the country, Met Office said.

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

**The sun sets in the capital today at 5:42pm and rises tomorrow at 5:53am.**

Country's highest temperature 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 23.4 degree Celsius at Rangamati.		The highest and lowest temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:	
Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka 28.5	25.0	83	93
Chittagong 26.6	24.1	96	93
Rajshahi 31.6	24.6	91	86
Rangpur 30.8	25.0	87	95
		Khulna 28.6	25.5
		Barisal 29.3	25.0
		Sylhet 28.8	24.0
		Cox's Bazar 30.0	24.5
			88 97
			92 94
			93 96
			97 93

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Black pepper vine PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Black Pepper

From a distance, the big, tall tree appears wrapped in a shimmering garland of yellow and green leaves covering the length and girth of its trunk. Coming closer, you notice that it is a vine that has climbed around the tree's trunk, encircling it in a colourful envelope while digging roots into the flesh of the tree.

The vine is piper nigrum, black pepper or *gol morich*, which is consumed more than any other spice in the world.

To grow a new black pepper vine, you cut a branch from a mature vine and sow it next to a grown tree. Within a year or two, it finds its foothold on the tree and starts climbing. After a few more years, the flowers appear, dangling in strands from the climber. Around September, the fruits appear, tiny dots that soon grow into small pellets.

In December, this fruit, still mostly green but plump, is collected. It is cooked for a few minutes in boiling water, until it turns dark, and then dried, giving us whole black pepper which, when crushed, add aroma and zing to food.

The black pepper plant is a native of the Indian subcontinent, though today it is grown in many countries, notably Indonesia. It has been used as a spice for centuries and was sought after during ancient times. During the Roman Empire, the Arabs traded it by bringing it to Alexandria from where it was distributed throughout the empire. It was valuable enough for the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius to impose customs duty on its import in 176 AD.

In the middle ages, black pepper was an important ingredient in European food. Those who could afford to used it abundantly. Food quality, particularly that of meat, was often poor, and pepper helped disguise the otherwise foul taste. A recipe from the seventeenth century indicates the usage of peppers was about ten times what it is today for a sausage, for example.

Of course it had arrived halfway around the world, and so black pepper was expensive. In fact, it became like hard currency, with some people storing it under lock and key for their rainy day. When the Visigoths laid siege to Rome, their demands for freeing the city included 2500 kg of gold, 15000 kg of silver and 2500 kg of black pepper!

It was the most important spice for centuries, and it was pepper trade more than anything else that brought wealth to cities such as Venice, Genoa, Amsterdam and Lisbon.

The plant grows in many parts of Bangladesh, particularly in hilly terrain. It usually climbs around a support tree and can grow up to 20-30 feet tall. Using plain stakes it can grow up to 8 or nine feet.

White pepper also originates in the same plant; the only difference is that the fruit is ripened before being picked.

If eaten raw, black pepper fruits taste mildly sweet – and, of course, peppery. Once cracked open, the aroma of black pepper fades quickly. Therefore, connoisseurs usually grind their pepper just before eating.

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## SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAMMES

# WB lends \$500m to help 4m poorest households

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday signed an agreement with the World Bank to receive \$500 million to strengthen the major safety net programmes covering four million of the poorest households.

The fund will support the Safety Net Systems for the Poorest (SNSP) project to be implemented by the disaster management and relief ministry, said a press release.

Abul Kalam Azad, secretary to Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Finance, and Christine E Kimes, acting head of the World Bank, Bangladesh country office, signed the agreement at the ERD in the capital.

"SNSP would cover the poorest and most marginalised people of the country and thus would directly contribute to the World Bank's goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 and enhancing shared prosperity," said Christine Kimes.

It will support improvements in the implementation of the safety net programmes by focusing on the increased allocation of programme resources to benefit the poorest population, strengthening their management and monitoring capacity, and enhancing governance and accountability.

The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessional lending arm, has 40 years to maturity, including a 10-year grace period, and carries a service charge of 0.75 percent, according to the release.

"The government of Bangladesh is committed to poverty reduction and strengthening the coordination, targeting and coverage of social protection programmes," said ERD Secretary Abul Kalam Azad. "The project is a critical milestone in this process."

The project will provide technical assistance to the Statistics and Informatics Division for the development of the Bangladesh Poverty Database, which would reduce the overall costs and errors associated with targeting of safety net programmes in the country and facilitate coordination among different ministries responsible for their implementation.

SNSP applies a results-based financing modality whereby 86 percent of the IDA financing would be disbursed on achieving targets such as improved beneficiary selection, the use of modern management information systems, and improved field level implementation with an increased emphasis on addressing beneficiary grievances.

## RANA PLAZA COLLAPSE

# Ten children of victims get scholarships

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mehedi Hasan, 7, who became an orphan due to the Rana Plaza collapse, now dreams of becoming a doctor.

The boy lost his mother Sheuli Aktar when he was much younger. His father Idris Ali who worked in a garment factory at Rana Plaza in Savar died in the incident.

Accompanied by his grandmother all the way from Savar, Mehedi yesterday came at the CBCB centre on Asad Avenue in the capital's Mohammadpur to receive a new schoolbag and Tk 1,000 scholarship funded by Y's Men Club of Dhaka.

Choked with emotion, his grandmother Rozia Begum told The Daily Star that her grandson was a student of class I of Village Education Resource Centre.

Like Mehedi, nine other children of Rana Plaza victims yesterday received new schoolbags and Tk 1,000 each.

One of the victims' daughter, Bristi Aktar, is a student of class III and wants to be a teacher. She lost her elder sister who was the only source of income of her family.

Omar Faruk Tareq loves to play cricket. Her mother has been suffering from burn injuries. "I want to be a police officer," said Tareq after receiving the scholarship.

Babu Markus Gomez, president of Y's Men Club, said the money would be given to the children each month. "We will give them the scholarship up to 10 years," he added.

State Minister for the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki presided over the programme and handed over the schoolbags and scholarships to the students. Members of the club were present at the programme.

The nine-storey Rana Plaza collapsed on April 24 killing at least 1,131 people.

## Prothom Alo Tangail correspondent assaulted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The Tangail correspondent of Bangla daily Prothom Alo was critically injured in an attack by miscreants in Tangail town yesterday.

Kamonashish Saha Shekhor, also the district ABC Radio correspondent and vice-president of Tangail Press Club, was admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

The victim's nephew, Sudipta Saha, said his driver and a truck driver got into an altercation after his car and the truck collided. Soon the truck driver called someone and a group of

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## NEWSINbrief

### Moulvibazar Gonojagoron Mancha leader gets death threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Gonojagoron Mancha Moulvibazar unit Convener Nasir Jaman filed a general diary with Moulvibazar Police Station on Thursday night over a death threat he received via a letter and sought police protection.

The letter, received in the evening on the day, read "Be ready for death," said Nasir.

Md Azizur Rahman, office-in-charge of the police station, confirmed the matter saying they were investigating it.

### Four shops gutted in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A fire gutted four shops at Chandra intersection in Kaliakoir upazila of Gazipur yesterday.

Local sources said around 7:30am the fire broke out at a bedding shop and, later, spread to the other shops, including a grocery. Fire service sources said fire fighters doused the blaze after an hour.

The fire might have originated from a burning cigarette thrown by passers-by, they said.

### Dhaka College Alumni Assoc HSC '96 reunion Dec 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first reunion of Dhaka College Alumni Association HSC '96 will be held on December 20 in the college auditorium.

The former students can register their names by October 15 for a fee of Tk 1,000 and Tk 500 for each of their family members, says a press release.

The students are asked to send their pictures, names, blood groups, job positions, and present and permanent addresses to anmbulbul@yahoo.com

For details, one can call 01716914490 or 01943223344 and log on to ex-student of dhaka college 1994-96 on Facebook.



Convention

Bangladesh Rukhe Darao will hold a national convention Venue: Suhrawardy Udyan; Time: 10:00am.

Contest

Bangladesh Astronomical Association, and Russian Centre of Science and Culture will hold a contest among students on making model rockets;

Venue: the latter's premises; Time: 3:00pm.

Discussion

National Committee to Protect the Sundarbans will organise a discussion, "What damages will the Rampal coal-fired power plant do to the Sundarbans"; Venue: Dhaka Reporters Unity; Time: 3:00pm.

Incessant rain from Thursday midnight till 10:00am yesterday inundated Bakalia and many low-lying areas of Chittagong city. The Met office recorded 69.4 millimetres of rain-fall in the 24 hours preceding 12:00 noon yesterday. Inset, a rickshaw puller struggles to raise his vehicle that overturned on a submerged road in Muradpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## UP chairmen demand Tk 15,000 as allowance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Union Parishad chairmen yesterday demanded a tenfold rise in their monthly allowance to Tk 15,000.

In addition, the Tk 700 allowance that the UP members get must also be raised to at least Tk 8,000, they said at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, organised by Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum.

Mahbubur Rahman Tulu, a UP chairperson of Gaibandha, and chairman of the forum, said the UP chairmen must be given at least ten times the current amount—Tk 1,500.

"Just a few years back, UP chairmen used to get as little as Tk 500 from the government. This was stingily raised to Tk 1,500, but it is in no way enough," he said.

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## Mentally challenged girl raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A mentally challenged girl was raped at her house in Mohendranagar union of Lalmonirhat on Thursday.

The victim, a class IV student, is undergoing treatment at the upazila sadar hospital.

Police said the alleged rapist is a newspaper hawker, Rafiqul Islam, 35. Quoting neighbours, police said Rafiqul Islam entered the victim's house in the name of selling papers on Thursday afternoon. Finding the girl alone at home, Rafiqul forced himself on her, they added.

Hearing the victim's groans, her neighbours rushed in and caught Rafiqul red-handed, police said. They detained him and called the police.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested Rafiqul. A rape case was filed Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station.

Dr Mrinal Kanti, the acting residential medical officer of Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital, said the girl is out of danger now.

## ATTEMPTED RAPE IN MEHERPUR Villagers set fire to culprit's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An agitated mob set the house of a man on fire on Thursday night after he refused to appear in a village arbitration over an allegation that he had attempted to rape a three-year-old child in Meherpur.

One Jalal Uddin, 37, son of Robiul Islam allegedly tried to rape his neighbour's daughter. He took her to an isolated area and attempted to violate the child, said police.

Jalal was caught by a villager who was passing through area, police said.

The child's family took the matters to the village elders and police.

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