

DRY WEATHER LIKELY



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Night temperature may rise slightly in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and may remain

nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:35pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

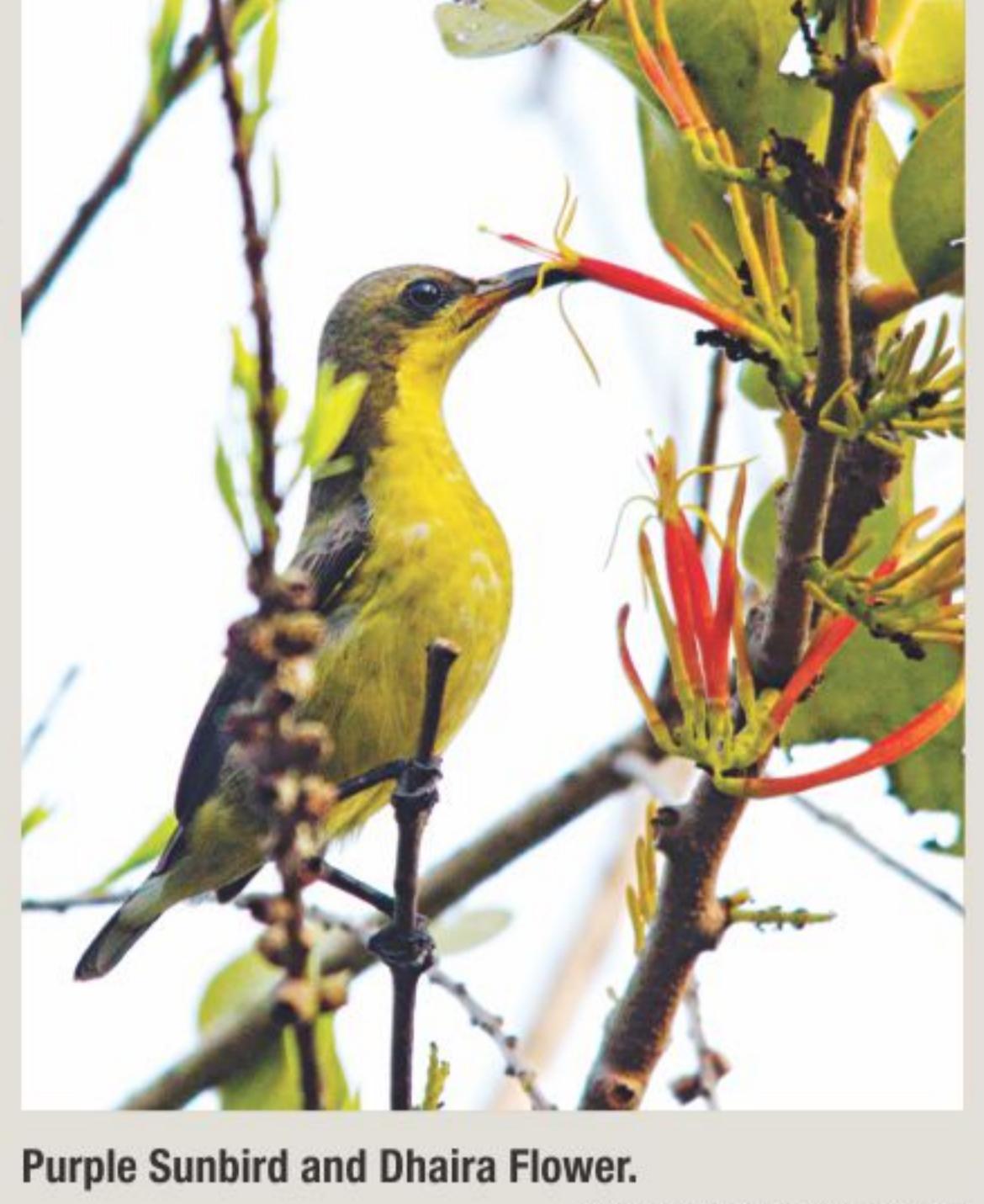
The Flower and the Bird

Some weeks ago I was in the Mirpur Botanical Garden. As I walked underneath a tall Asoka tree blooming with its red and yellow flowers, I heard a loud birdcall - chweep-chweep-chweep - that went on incessantly. I immediately looked up searching for the bird in the tree. But instead, high up above, I noticed a second flower mixed in with the familiar Asoka flowers. The flowers covered the top half of the tree. They were reminiscent of *Madhurilata*, growing in sparse bunches, thin and tubular in shape, with a mostly red stem and tiny orange petals. They had blended in seamlessly with the Asoka.

It took me a while longer to find the bird that was making the noise. It was tiny, perhaps 5 or 6 cm. long, with a distinctive curved bill. I had trouble spotting it because it never stayed still. A pair of them flew around each other playfully while jumping from flower to flower. Landing on a flower, a bird inserted its bill into the tube for a second or two before flying off.

The bird was difficult to photograph. Just when my camera focused on it, it would fly off. And on the rare occasion that it stood still for more than a second, most of its body was occluded by branches and leaves.

The flower, I noticed, grew from a creeper plant that was at the top of the tree. Wandering around the Garden, I noticed these flowers on several other taller trees. It is called *Dendrophthoe Falcate*, also known as Tropical Mistletoe. Its Bengali name is *Banda* or *Dhaira*. It is a native of South and Southeast



Purple Sunbird and Dhaira Flower.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Hummingbirds of the Americas, though they do not quite hover as much as the latter.

As I watched several sunbirds I was puzzled by their colouring. Males and females look quite different, with females being somewhat duller looking, brown over and yellow underneath. The males have a rich bluish colour. Not only that, "eclipse" males - that is, males not in breeding period - wear yet another plumage. Finally at wintertime, some males have a white mottling on their breast.

If the creepers grew from a spot high up in the host tree, how did the seeds get deposited there in the first place? I think we can look to birds for the answer to that question.

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Asia and Australia. It is parasitical, sending its roots into the trunk of the host tree and extracting water and minerals from it. There is considerable interest in this vine in plant-medicine circles. The bark is known to have several medicinal properties ranging from narcotic to wound-healing to asthma to menstrual troubles.

Eventually I managed to get a photograph of the bird feeding on the flower's nectar. I later identified it as Purple Sunbird, *Beguni Moutushi* in Bangla and *Cinnyris Asiatica* in Latin. Sunbirds - along with spider hunters - belong to a family of birds known as Nectaridae. They are the closest we have to the

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Country's highest temperature 27.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Sylhet and lowest 10.2 degree Celsius in Tangail.

The highest and lowest temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage		Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	23.0	13.0	95	78	Khulna	22.7	13.4	93
Chittagong	21.5	14.0	95	86	Barisal	21.4	11.2	100
Rajshahi	23.8	11.7	97	80	Sylhet	27.3	14.1	69
Rangpur	25.5	11.5	95	72	Cox's Bazar	26.0	15.5	82

Govt won't bow to foreign pressure

Says Obaidul Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day after United States Ambassador in Dhaka Dan Mozena called for a fresh parliamentary election in Bangladesh by May or June, Communications Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the present government would not bow to any foreign pressure.

"Foreign friends can make recommendations on the country's internal affairs. Donors and friendly countries have this right. But, we can't bow down our head to them," he told journalists after visiting the Ashulia-Bypile-Nabinagar highway outside the capital.

The government will bow down its head only to the reality of the country and its people, said Quader, also a top policymaker of the ruling Awami League. He, however, said they were not brushing aside the ideas of the foreign friends.

The minister also thanked BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia

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Reserve sixty JS seats for religious, ethnic communities

Demands National Hindu Grand Alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance yesterday demanded 60 reserved seats in parliament for religious and ethnic communities and a separate election procedure through which the communities would elect their respective representatives.

Protesting the recent attacks on Hindus centring the January 5 election, the alliance leaders also

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Govt plans to be reviewed

Says planning minister

UNB, Dhaka

With a focus on enhancing development project outcomes, newly inducted Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal hinted at revisiting the existing government plans to see if those can fulfill new expectations.

"I will have to review those plans, including the perspective plan and Sixth Five Year Plan," he told the news agency in a recent interview, the first after his assumption of office.

Various components or objectives of the plans will be examined to see if any failed to fulfill expectations and then steps would be taken to make those more time-befitting said Mustafa, better known as Lotus Kamal.

The "Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021): Making Vision 2021 a Reality" is a strategic articulation of the government's development goals in achieving a prosperous Bangladesh and making political and economic freedoms a reality in 2021.

The Sixth Five Year Plan projects a GDP growth of 8 percent at the end of 2015, giving priority to education, employment generation, industrialization and reducing regional disparity.

On unnecessary delays in the planning process which often impedes the project approval and execution, Mustafa said necessary measures would be taken in this regard as his focus would be on a target-based approach.

Since the government plans to turn the country into a middle-income one by 2021, there is a need for rethinking every component of the plans to address various limitations and physical constraints, he said.

"We will have to work hard so that we can become a middle-income country well before 2021," said the former parliamentary standing committee chairman on the

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PM exchanges pleasantries with dignitaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hosted a programme at her official residence Gono Bhaban in honour of dignitaries, including intellectuals, artists and cultural, media and eminent personalities.

She spent a couple of hours exchanging greetings, recalling different memories with the guests and inquiring about their health and families. A cultural function and a pitha (cake) festival were also organised on the green lawn at the premises.

This gathering, which was not a government or party programme, was the first to be hosted by the Awami League president since she took oath on January 12 as prime minister of Bangladesh.

The guests included

Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, Maasrange Television CEO Syed Fahim Munain, Faridur Reza Sagar and Shykh Seraj of Channel i, BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, poet Syed Shamsul Haque, Nasir Uddin Youssuf, Aly Zaker, Sara Zaker, Pijush

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Millions mourn Suchitra's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was a dreary morning yesterday for millions of Suchitra fans in Bangladesh, who all woke up to the news of her death.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed profound shock at the death of the legendary film actress.

Terming Suchitra Sen an iconic figure, the president in a condolence message said her death is the end of an era for classical Bangla films.

A native of Pabna, she was also an asset of Bangladesh and has millions of fans here, mentioned Hamid.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her message, said the great actress will be remembered for ever by the Bangalees around the world.

"At her death Bengali people have lost a distinctive figure of a classical Bengali daughter, wife and caring mother," she noted.

Suchitra, said the PM, will remain as the lighthouse of future Bengali movies.

In another statement, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said a shadow of deep desolation has descended on the Bengali people at the death of Suchitra Sen.

The actress had achieved success and fame due to her unique acting style, which will be ever remembered, mentioned Khaleda.

The three leaders also prayed for the eternal peace of Suchitra's departed soul and conveyed their deep sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Finance Minister AMA Muhib, Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu, Health Minister Mohammad Nasim, Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor and State Minister for Finance Abdul Mannan in separate messages expressed sorrow at the demise of the renowned film star.

Bangladesh Film Archive Alumni Association, Bangladesh Shilpo Sahitto O Sangskritik Parishad and World Human Rights Council in separate releases expressed their deep condolence.

FARMGATE, ADJACENT AREAS

Gas supply cut off as pipe catches fire

Seven houses gutted in Mirpur Bihari camp fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A massive fire burst out in the middle of the road opposite the police box in the capital's Farmgate yesterday evening after a central gas pipe was punctured allegedly by workers installing optical fibre cables.

The fire in Farmgate raged for around 15 minutes, reaching heights of 60 feet, halting traffic movement and prompting commuters to flee in panic till it was doused at 6:40pm.

Gas connections to adjacent areas including Monipuri Para, Raja Bazar, Tejuri Bazar, Karwan Bazar, Bangla Motor,

Shatstra and Shahbagh had been cut off till filing of this report around 1:00am as engineers of Titas made desperate attempts to fix the leak.

"We will try to fix the rupture by tonight,"

Robul Islam, manager, Emergency Gas Control Section, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, another fire gutted seven makeshift houses in a Bihari camp in the capital's Mirpur 11 after erupting from, as firefighters presume, an electric short-circuit around 9:45pm. Firefighters doused the flames within 45 minutes.

Robbers loot women's hostel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers stormed into a three-storey hostel for female students at the capital's Tejgaon last night and looted their cash, gold ornaments and cellphones.

Witnesses said two security guards were taken hostage at a gun point.

Guard Azhar Ali told The Daily Star that around seven men forced him to open the door.

Two of them, entered the house around 8:45pm and the other took position outside, he said adding that they also snatched another guard's mobile.

Some students alleged that although they informed police of the occurrence, they did not reach the spot timely.

However, Tejgaon Police Station Officer-in-Charge claimed that soon after getting the information they rushed to the place.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, flanked on the left by her sister Sheikh Rehana, exchanges pleasantries with eminent poet and novelist Syed Shamsul Haque at her official residence Gono Bhaban. The newly elected chief of the government hosted a tea party for the country's intellectuals, including writers, artists, and media personalities, yesterday. Hasina was sworn in as the premier for the third time on January 12.

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NON-FICTION

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