


DRY WEATHER LIKELY



WEATHER TODAY

Unb., Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:13pm and rises tomorrow at 6:32am.

Country's highest temperature 28.3

unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

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	20.7	13.7	86	84	Khulna	21.0	13.5	90	78
Chittagong	25.6	16.9	87	72	Barisal	22.2	13.8	86	88
Rajshahi	22.6	10.1	97	89	Sylhet	26.5	15.4	89	90
Rangpur	22.0	13.0	89	88	Cox's Bazar	26.0	17.0	95	80

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

PALM TREES

Some years ago, I was on the first of several trips to Sundarban. As our boat entered the forest, the vegetation changed gradually and the usual trees were replaced by those which can survive under the salt water tides. A boat passed us, packed to the brim with long, sturdy leaves. Those were leaves of *golpata* or *nypa* palm, which is abundant in Sundarban.

Soon the *golpata* trees appeared on the riverbank. Although recognizable as a palm tree, there was something different about *golpata*. After a while I realized what this difference was. *Golpata* is a *trunkless* palm tree. Its leaves grow straight up from the ground. Used in roof thatching and fences, it is an economically important product of Sundarban.

Golpata is a member of the palm family which includes over 2000 species. They fall into two broad categories: fan-leaved or feather-leaved. Our palms include edible palms such as coconut, *shupari* and *tal*, as well as ornamental trees such as *chaur* (*bon shupari*) and the tall palms such as royal palm.

Most palm trees grow vertically straight from the ground, spreading their leaves high overhead like a symmetrical crown. This imparts an elegance which is amplified when they are planted in rows.

Beside their aesthetic appeal, palm trees have also played an important role in human history. The date palm helped humans tame the desert. Nutritious and tasty, the date does not spoil easily, making it invaluable for desert survival.

Palm trees can only grow in warm temperatures. Thus, palms have become a symbol of beaches and vacations. Lines of palm trees in vacation spots from



Golpata at Sundarban.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Florida to the Maldives beckon the tourist with visions of languid days in the sun.

Other than *nypa* palm, several palm trees are important in the economy of Bangladesh. Take coconut, for example. Its flesh is eaten but also dried into copra for extracting oil. Rope and doormats are made from its husk. Its leaves are used to make brooms. The shell is made into activated carbon.

Another valuable palm is *shupari* or betelnut, which is chewed along with *paan* as a mild narcotic by millions. It is grown in Bangladesh, northeastern India and Burma. From the border regions of northern Sylhet, one can see the *shupari* orchards in Meghalaya – thousands of white trunks that blanket the mountain slopes. In fact, the Khasis love *paan-shupari* so much that when they speak of someone “who has been chewing paan forever”, they are referring to a dead person in heaven.

From a photographer's perspective, palm trees offer splendid opportunities. The rows of *golpata* in Sundarban create unexpected vistas. The edges of immature coconut leaves are joined by a thin thread before they fan out. Trunks of juvenile *shupari* trees grow layers of green bark with geometric design. The yellow blossoms of *shupari* shine like a golden necklace on the tree.

[I wrote the above before the recent disaster in Sundarban. The oil spill in the Shela river will no doubt create tremendous long-term stress for this fragile and precious part of our country. What will we do to deal with it and prevent future disasters?]

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Spoiling the aesthetic appeal, numerous posters apparently highlighting Jubo League, the youth front of Awami League, more than Martyred Intellectuals Day, to be observed tomorrow, have covered nearly every available space in the grounds of a memorial for the martyrs in the capital's Rayerbazar. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Keep trading vessels off Sundarbans

Sundarbans Rakkha Jatiya Committee urges PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing fears that the recent oil spill may destroy the river ecosystem of the Sundarbans by killing zooplankton, phytoplankton and microbial populations, environmentalists yesterday urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's renewed intervention in halting the movement of commercial vessels through the forest.

Defying the PM's earlier instruction, cargo ships, oil tankers are making their passage through the forest rampantly, threatening its ecology, they told a rally, organised by Sundarbans Rakkha Jatiya Committee in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

In her speech, Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, demanded formulation of a guideline on the use of the Sundarbans and its strict enforcement so that the world's biggest mangrove forest remained protected

with its resources that were providing livelihoods to thousands.

The speakers also expressed dismay at the government's "negligence" and "dilly-dallying" in protecting the endangered species of the forest.

An oil tanker, Southern Star-7, carrying 3.58 lakh litres of furnace oil and eight crew members, sank near Mongla on Tuesday after being hit by a cargo vessel. All but 400 litres of the oil has leaked out, spilling along a 100km stretch of the Shela and Pasur rivers, and the poisoning of the water has started killing aquatic life.

The environmentalists said that since many birds subsisted on the aquatic organisms, they too would be affected by the spillage. They also said that due to a lack of stringent preservation policy, the

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Two hurt in 'shootout' with cops in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two alleged extortionists suffered bullets in their legs during a "shootout" with police in the capital's Badda yesterday evening.

Police arrested seven "extortionists", including the two, from DIT project area along with a pistol.

Bachchu, and Robin were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Ten people went to a house on road-10 to demand extortion. Hearing hue and cry, locals informed police. When police rushed in, the miscreants opened fire, forcing them to return bullets, said Officer-in-Charge of Badda Police Station Abdul Jalil. Two police men also sustained minor injuries, he claimed.

War criminals' backers working against humanity

Projonmo'71 tells press conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The so-called pro-democracy and human rights campaigners backing war criminals of the 1971 Liberation War in exchange for money are actually working against humanity, opined children of the Liberation War martyrs yesterday.

"An evil quarter, in the pretext of protecting human rights, is trying to thwart the ongoing trial of a few people who led genocide in 1971 in the excuse of saving Pakistan and killed and abetted in killing intellectuals in a planned way," they said.

"We have been regretfully observing that in the plea of freedom of speech some local media have been playing the role that dims all good efforts of holding the historical trial process," Touhid Reza Noor of Projonmo'71, a platform of the children, told a press conference in Dhaka Reporters Unity.

"Different international news media -- Economist, Guardian and New York Times and TV channels, including Al Jazeera, have been presenting news and programmes to raise questions on the ongoing trial.

"We have also noticed that different international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are vocal for the rights of war criminals and infamous killers but did not talk much about the justice we have been seeking.

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CTG-COX'S BAZAR BICYCLE RALLY

Japanese woman promotes tourism

Says greenery, hospitality her inspiration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



When Yoriko Udea, a Japanese marketing consultant, first came to Bangladesh to take a short course on microfinance, she had no idea she would be bringing people from all over the world by organising a major rally for cyclists and drive to clean up litter here.

However, a field trip to a Tangail village at the end of the course made her return this February after four years and spend about a year for the three-day, 200-kilometre "Bangladesh Discovery Ride" from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar starting November 21.

"The greenery of the countryside, its food, and the hospitality of people made such an impression on my mind that I

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Logs piled up at a brick kiln in Jonota Bazar area of Barisal waiting to be burned for baking bricks in violation of Brick Kiln Control (amended) Act, 2001. The law prohibits use of wood as fuel. The owner, however, claims due to shortage of coal supply they have to use wood. According to environment officials, 33 out of 112 brickfields operating in six districts of Barisal division have been found violating the law that also prohibits setting up a brickfield in 3km radius of any human habitations, houses, roads and highways.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

Decomposed body found in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the decomposed body from a plot in the capital's Uttara yesterday.

Some labourers found the body, clad in jeans pant, while digging the plot on road no-4 at sector-5, said Uttara Pashim police.

It could not be immediately identified whether the body is of a male or a female.

The plot remained abandoned for a long time.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

ONE YEAR PAST JANUARY 5 POLLS

AL to celebrate 'victory day for democracy'

BNP terms it 'democracy killing day'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) plans to launch a massive publicity campaign across the country on January 5 next year to celebrate the day, terming it "victory day for democracy".

The AL would project its success stories through billboards, banners and posters at all districts and upazilas across the country to mark the day. It would also highlight violence, vandalism, arson, bomb attacks and killings allegedly by the BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami alliance ahead of the election.

On the other side, the BNP-led opposition alliance is going to observe the day terming it "democracy killing day" through forming

human chains across the country.

Ahead of the January 5 polls held amidst boycott and protests by major political parties including the BNP-led alliance, the AL grabbed most of the billboards in the city and elsewhere in the country to highlight various achievements of the government and appeal to the people to re-elect the party.

Owners apprehend their private billboards might have been taken up again due to the government's poster campaigns. An official of a major advertising agency said they had learned that their space would be taken up by the ruling party's campaigns.

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TEACHERS' REGISTRATION EXAM

14 jailed for unfair means

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A mobile court in Bogra town jailed 14 persons for one month each on the charge of resorting to unfair means in teachers' registration examination for high schools.

Joshirul, Jannatul, Mostafizar, Shahidul, Mamunur, Shontosh, Debbroto, Khokon, Shamim, Rafiul, Akkash, Mostafizar, Hannan were convicted for copying at different centres.

The other, Kamrul, was jailed after police had arrested him red-handed at Government Azizul Haque College area in the town while he was sending answers to such examinees in Joypurhat through a mobile, Bogra district administration sources said.

The mobile court was conducted by executive magistrates Masudur Rahman Masud and Foysal Haque.

Two killed as train hits three-wheeler

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Two people were killed and eight others injured when a Khulna-bound Sundarban Express hit a locally made shallow engine-run three-wheeler carrying them at Mouchak level crossing in Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur yesterday.

One of the dead was identified as Farid, 35. The injured were admitted to different clinics.

There is only a signboard which says, "Cross the rail tracks at your own risk" but no rail gate and the three-wheeler took the shortcut as the next protected rail gate is 8km away.