

WEATHER

FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA H 29.4 L 15.3	CHITTAGONG H 29.4 L 16.5	SYLHET H 31.0 L 14.6	RAJSHAHI H 29.0 L 14.5	KHULNA H 30.5 L 17.5	BARISAL H 29.9 L 15.5	RANGPUR H 28.4 L 12.8	COX'S BAZAR H 30.2 L 16.0
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Night and day temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:55pm and rises tomorrow at 6:29am. Country's highest temperature 31.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Sylhet and Sitakunda and lowest 09.1 in Sreemangal.

29 ex-MPs urge Hasina-led govt to step down

Say fresh nat'l election can solve ongoing political crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-nine members of the last parliament, mostly BNP leaders, yesterday urged the Sheikh Hasina-led government to resign and make way for a credible, inclusive national election.

In a joint statement, they said the ongoing crisis, which originated from the one-sided election of January 5 last year, could be resolved only through a credible election.

The signatories, including Moudud Ahmed, Jamir Uddin Sircar, Joyanal Abedin Farook, Barkat Ullah Bulu of BNP, Andaleev Rahman Partho of Bangladesh Jatiya Party, and Oli Ahmad of Liberal Democratic Party, said neither the incumbent parliament nor its activities was democratic.

They accused the government of using force to subdue the ongoing movement led by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. The oppression has resulted in unrest, hurting the education, economic and transport sectors, the statement said.

The ex-MPs observed that the government wanted to label the movement an act of terror to

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Bar on food supply to Khaleda illegal

Says Barrister Rafique after breaking SCBA token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association observed a two-hour token hunger strike at its office from 11:00am yesterday protesting "the government's restriction" on food supply to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office.

Barrister Rafique-Ul Haq broke the strike by offering pro-BNP leaders and members of SCBA water.

He said "the government's action restricting" the food supply is illegal and it is bringing a bad reputation for the government.

Everyone has the right to food, clothing and medical care as per the article 25 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations, said Rafique, who was a lawyer both for Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia during the military-backed caretaker government.

He said the government should allow Khaleda to lead a normal life.

SCBA President Khandker Mahbub Hossain said the government has to bear a bad consequence if it does not immediately withdraw "the bar on food supply" and allow the party leaders and activists to visit Khaleda.



Students of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry Public School and College, who donated Tk 24,000 to local arson victims collected by saving up their tiffin money, visit one of the victims in Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday. Hospital sources said 20 people who were burnt in the ongoing blockade and hartals were admitted there.

PHOTO: STAR

Students donate tiffin money to arson victims in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Students of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry Public School and College on Monday donated Tk 24,000 to arson victims receiving treatment at the burn unit of Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Principal of the institution Prof KM Hasinur Rahman said the students collected the amount by saving up their tiffin money.

On Monday afternoon, the students along with their principal visited the burn unit of RMCH and handed over the money.

Hospital sources said 20 people who fell victims to arson attacks in the ongoing indefinite blockade and hartals were admitted to the hospital.

The victims each received Tk 1,200, they added.

Principal of Rangpur Medical College Dr Zakir Hossain, Head of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit Dr Md Maruful Islam were also present when the money was handed over.

No need to rush for KSA job registration yet

Khandaker Mosharraf says for male candidates; jobs only for females will be available in March

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After several thousand people signed up for jobs in Saudi Arabia last week following an advertisement, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment minister yesterday clarified that there was no need to rush for registration now and that the government would open online registration only for females seeking jobs as domestic helps in the Kingdom soon.

"Initially, Saudi Arabia wants to hire only house maids. So, male workers don't need to register names at this

moment," Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told a press briefing at the capital's Probashi Kallyan Bhaban, which saw a huge rush of jobseekers past week.

"The government didn't circulate any notice for registration for jobs in Saudi Arabia," the minister said. "Once we get job orders, we will go for the (registration) system."

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) published the advertisement in five Bangla dailies on February 6-7, asking people to sign up online for jobs in

Saudi Arabia and other countries between February 9 and 12, at the Probashi Kallyan Bhaban, district manpower offices and Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The minister said that when jobs were available, candidates would be able to register online at union information service centres and district manpower offices. He, however, asked the jobseekers to keep away from fraudsters offering help in exchange for money.

About the growing concerns over

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EC ready for DCC polls

Claims its secretary saying they are waiting for delimitation; also says CCC polls likely in June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has already taken necessary logistic preparations for holding the long overdue Dhaka city corporation elections that remain pending due to complexity over boundary demarcations.

"It is a big election. There are over 40 lakh voters... So, we need to take huge logistic preparations, and we have been already prepared," said Election Commission Secretary Sirazul Islam yesterday.

"We have completed updating the voter list, and sought budgetary allocations from the finance ministry for the election," he told reporters at his office in the capital's EC Secretariat.

But the election cannot be held until resolving the complexity over boundary delimitations.

"We will go forward after the LGRD min-

istry completes the delimitation and sends us the gazette notification," he said.

Replying to a question whether the vote can take place amid the political turmoil if the LGRD ministry completes the task within a few days, the secretary said, "The commission will definitely consider the issue of political situation while declaring the schedule."

The last election to undivided DCC was held on April 2002, and its tenure expired in May 2007.

At Monday's cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam to take steps for holding the elections. On December 8 last year, she told another cabinet meeting that the elections would take place in early 2015.

CCC POLLS

Sirazul Islam yesterday also informed that

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Muhith clueless about Hindu exodus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith was surprised yesterday to know that the Hindu population in Bangladesh has come down to as low as nine percent now.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Hindus made up 28 percent of the population in 1941 and it fell to 14 percent in 1974.

Muhith's astonishment at a book launching baffled the audience that as the longest-serving finance minister and an ex-top bureaucrat, he did not know the fact that the minority people have been leaving the country for long, which was evident in the BBS censuses.

"We have to think whether the minority people have been leaving the country for insecurity or not," the minister told the launch of

"Nirob Deshtag, Hundi O Ovbashan" (silent migration, hundi and immigration), at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital.

The book is a compilation of essays by former banker Mamun Rashid, published in newspapers.

Muhith said silent migration was not a good thing for a country like Bangladesh, which calls herself secular. "It's a shame for us."

Citing from an essay of the book, the finance minister said budgetary allocations for education and health had reduced during his current term due to increases in other sectors.

"My effort to make a balance has created this imbalance," he said.

Muhith also emphasised carrying out studies linked to festival spending in Bangladesh, which he said would help

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NOTHING BETTER TO DO

A roadside hawker dozes off on Sunday, at a time when he would be seen busy wooing buyers on normal days before the BNP-led indefinite blockade started on January 6. The strike coupled with violence killing civilians has seriously dented businesses across the country. The photo was taken near the Baitul Mukarram national mosque in the capital.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

The part of the Kuakata beach where fishes are sun-dried is seeing a surge in supplies with the fishermen unable to sell their fresh catch in the market due to the ongoing transport blockade. The photo was taken yesterday.

Novels outsell other fictions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Novels have been outselling all other books under the fiction category in the Amar Ekushey Granthamela.

This year, over 400 novels have already flooded the fair, held on the premises of Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan, with more on the way.

Eminent litterateur Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said people all over the world prefer novels to other books in the fiction category including short stories.

"Novels are a leisurely read. You can read a couple of chapters and leave the rest for later but in case of short stories, readers have to be engaged from the beginning to the end," he said explaining the popularity of novels.

"Besides, there are plenty of characters and a lot of twists and turns in a novel. So, if you do not like one character you might like some other one. You can relax and read," said Manzoorul Islam.

"Most of the new works we get from budding writers are novels," said Hasan Zaidi, proprietor of Pearl Publications, adding that almost 60 percent of his publications are novels.

Prof Manzoorul Islam said very few writers try out short stories.

He said many novelists, including Humayun Ahmed, who created a large readership of their novels, did not brand their short stories.

According to Anyapokash's publisher Mazharul Islam, each writer creates his own set of readers.

Though Humayun, almost two and a half years after his death, still holds the rank of the best-selling novelist, writers like Milon, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and Anisul Hoque have their dedicated readers as well, he said.

In fact, Milon had devoted readers even when Humayun was at the peak of his popularity, he said.

A total of 120 new books arrived at the fair yesterday and 11 new ones were launched.

Meanwhile, several writers, a publisher and activists of leftist organisations formed a human chain yesterday protesting the shutdown of Rodela Prokashani's stall by Bangla Academy for publishing a book with content which allegedly hurt religious sentiment.

They formed the human chain near

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An exclusive interview with Bangla Academy literature award winning writer Imdadul Haq Milon can be viewed by scanning the QR code.



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