

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 35.0L 24.8

CHITTAGONG H 32.4L 25.2

SYLHET H 31.5L 21.0

RAJSHAHI H 36.1L 21.5

KHULNA H 35.5L 24.4

BARISAL H 34.6L 24.8

RANGPUR H 34.6L 20.8

COX'S BAZAR H 33.5L 25.6

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Sylhet division and weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country till 6:00pm today. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:19pm and rises tomorrow at 5:41am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Akhter with some favourites.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

A Sweet Passion

Maowar Chomchom, Pera Shandesh, Chhanar Payesh, Kachagolla, Malaikari, Malaichap, Monda.... Twenty mouth-watering names like this comprises the list. To the Bengali ear, each is redolent with sweet, rich flavours. But I am getting ahead of myself; let's start at the beginning.

When he returned home after fifteen years in London, Akhter Matin Chaudhury started working at a pharmaceutical company that required travelling all over Bangladesh. While touring, he found himself eating big lunches. But Akhter - a trim, tall man who looks half his age - had an unusual habit: he was accustomed to eating only one full meal daily. What to do at dinnertime? In the evenings, he found local sweetshops and tasted their sweets.

He started discovering exotic sweet specialties. For example, there was Balish - a massive Chomchom served with a packet of khir - from Goyanath sweetshop in Netrakona; or Gurur Roshogolla sweetened with date molasses from Nondo Gopal's shop in Sherpur. Word spread about Akhter's search for excellence in sweetmaking. When he went on tour, his local contacts scouted out the best sweetshops in the area. Soon, he was not just tasting sweets at smaller towns and villages, but also making notes and photographing them.

Akhter discovered that the best-tasting Bengali sweets were made in small family-owned sweetshops which had preserved and passed on the recipes from generation to generation. For example, the Monda store of Gopal Pal in Muktagacha is 187 years old and now run by the fifth generation of owners. It had started as a dedicated sweet supplier to the local Raja; excess mondas were fed to royal elephants.

Today sweets are an ubiquitous feature of our culture. One cannot imagine special events, such as weddings, akikas, childbirth and

promotions, without sweets. "I was always fond of mishti. When we were growing up in Dhaka, there were only a few sweetshops, such as Moronchand and Kalachand, and sweets were brought on very special occasions," Akhter reminisced.

But how did our sweetshops get started? "Local Bengali sweets originated as proshad offerings for temples. The sweetmaker families are from the Ghosh caste, which is responsible for upkeep and milking of cows," he said. No wonder, then, that most of our sweets are milk-based.

Over the years, Akhter has tasted notable sweets from every district in Bangladesh. From his extensive research, he has made a list of the top twenty sweets of Bangladesh. In his list - which he insists is subjective - the best sweet is Maowar Chomchom from Jagdish Mishtanno Bhandar of Kushtia, which he describes as a "succulent Chomchom covered with Maowa, dry on the outside, moist and juicy inside." The second best is Romesh Sweets' Roshomolai from Gaibandha. In third place is Khirer Shandesh from Poritosh Mistanna Bhandar in Narail.

However, Akhter sees storm clouds in the horizon. "The younger generation of sweetmakers do not want to stay in their store and look after the business," he says. Therefore, the family-owned businesses are at risk of closing down despite lucrative earnings. An effort must be made to save this cultural legacy.

This author's opinion? Having tried several of Akhter's favourites including Perar Shondesh, Khirer Chomchom, Chhanamukhi and a divine last-of-season Gurur Shandesh, he agrees wholeheartedly that Akhter's sweets are national and cultural gems that must be saved and propagated.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir.

Bapa wants strict monitoring for safe food

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) yesterday demanded that the government strictly follow proper metrology, science of measurement embracing both theoretical and practical aspects, to ensure safe food for the public.

It is not possible to ensure safe food ignoring the metrology, said Zahedur Rahman, member secretary of safe food and drinking water and consumer rights programme of Bapa, at a seminar held at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Syed Abul Maksud Ahmed, vice president of Bapa, stressed that the government should monitor the use of pesticide in farmlands and vegetables.

Former general secretary of Bapa, Mohidul Haque, said food manufacturers will have to play a vital role in ensuring safe food by maintaining proper metrology.

The government departments which are involved in monitoring food quality will have to play a more responsible role in this regard while the government will have to implement all necessary measures strictly, the speakers added.

Cooperation from the food manufacturers is highly required as government initiatives and law alone cannot stop food adulteration, emphasised Prof Nusrat Sultana.

Addressing the seminar, Dr Rezaul Karim also highlighted metrology as an important factor.

35 hurt in AL, BNP clash over Kamaruzzaman's death penalty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 35 people were injured when activists of Awami League and BNP clashed in Madhabpur of Moulvibazar Thursday night over the death penalty of war criminal Muhammad Kamaruzzaman.

Police said local AL leaders and activists brought out a procession in the area around 8:30pm supporting Kamaruzzaman's death penalty while BNP activists brought out a counter procession at the same time leading to the clash.

Police rushed to the spot and fired 30 rounds of tear gas shells to bring the situation under control.

About 35 activists of both parties were injured, said police.

RANA PLAZA COLLAPSE Survivors still crying for compensation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Almost two years have passed since Rana Plaza collapsed on April 24 leaving 1,136 people dead and hundreds injured but the survivors and their families are still struggling to press home their demands for compensation and punishment for the accused.

The demonstrators under the banners of "Rana Plaza Garment Workers' Union" and "Garments Workers Front-GWF" yesterday formed a human chain on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Savar Bus stand, outside the capital.

Six months ago, Rana Plaza Claims Administration (RPCA) conducted an assessment, based on medical reports of the injured issued by the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed, and fixed an amount for each injured worker.

But recently the RPCA informed many injured workers through letters that they will not get any financial aid from it as they already got the same amount, which the RPCA allocated for them, from the PM's fund, Ahmed Zibon, general secretary of GWF's Savar unit, said. Another injured, Nesar Uddin, said, "I got Tk 50,000 from PM's fund a long time ago which has already been spent for my treatment and my family."

Meanwhile, a convention on "Education Crisis Mitigation for Rana Plaza and Tazreen Fashions Victim Workers Children" was organised by Bangladesh Students' Union and Garment Workers' Trade Union Centre in Savar.

Bangladesh Students' Union presented a survey report, which was conducted on 324 children of the victims, which stated that 78.6 percent of the students were under 12 years, 2.3 percent of them had to leave schools due to financial crisis while 34 percent were bound to get involved with child labour.

Release of Manna demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some politicians and eminent citizens yesterday demanded that Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna be released immediately.

They alleged that Manna has been imprisoned in a "fabricated case" as he wanted to contest as a mayoral candidate in the Dhaka city corporation election. As he is not contesting in the election now, he at least should get bail on grounds of his sickness, the speakers said at a discussion on "Recent political situation and Mahmudur Rahman Manna" in Jatiya Press Club organised by Nagorik Oikya.

He is not like any Awami League or BNP leader who would leave the country fearing trial. Trial against Manna can be continued and he can be punished as well if found guilty, said ASM Abdur Rob, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rab).

Manna was arrested on February 24, a day after his telephone conversation with BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka about strengthening the anti-government movement, among many issues, was leaked. "The government got Manna arrested for conspiring against the state over the phone but why the government is not revealing the person's identity with whom he was talking to," he asked.

Dhaka University Professor Asif Nazrul alleged that Manna was arrested as he had been talking about people oriented politics and fair election.



A concert celebrating golden jubilee of music icon Runa Laila's career was held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

UN, EU urged not to go against execution of war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

War crimes trial campaigners yesterday called upon the United Nations and European Union to refrain from urging the government to halt execution of war criminals as it is a "sheer interference in the country's sovereignty".

"We know Jamaat (e-Islami) has appointed many international lobbyists to foil the trial and the appeal of UN and EU is its reflection...They have no right to raise questions on execution of Kamaruazzaman and our diplomats need to make it clear," said war crimes researcher Shahrar Kabir.

The act under which the trials are being held is of international standard and in many ways better than others,

he told a discussion "Spirit of Liberation War vs. Terrorism of Militants, Fundamentalists" in the capital's WVA auditorium.

Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 organised it marking the 44th anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence.

"As per the constitution there is no provision of mercy for war criminals. But why is the administration delaying his execution?" he said.

Over recent media reports on the two war crimes tribunal being merged, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman said it would frustrate justice seekers as it would cause delay trial proceedings.

"In whose interest has the decision been taken?" he asked.

The forum provided over Tk 35,000 to each of Rafique Hossain, who pedals a van for a living, and Labonno, a transgender, along with certificates in recognition of their courage in catching two killers of blogger Oyasiqu Rahman Babu.

Stating that the government is in a deep slumber, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque said it should recognise the valour.

Among others, Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, writer of the Proclamation of Independence, and Tureen Afroz, prosecutor of International Crimes Tribunals, also spoke.



Journalism Alumni Forum of Rajshahi University (Jafur) forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding a proper investigation into the recent death of former Rajshahi University student Wahida Sifat. Her parents have filed a case accusing her husband and in-laws of murdering her and trying to pass it off as a suicide.

PHOTO: STAR

Huge quantity of hilsha, fry seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Bangladesh Coast Guard seized 320kg of hilsha and 250kg hilsha fry in two separate drives at Chandpur launch terminal and on the river Padma and Meghna yesterday and on Thursday.

Chandpur Station Commander of Bangladesh Coast Guard, Lt Col M Hasanur Rahman said the seized hilsha, worth Tk 1.92 lakh, and the hilsha fry worth, Tk 75,000, were distributed among poor people and orphans.

Mentionable, the government has banned catching, transporting, stocking and sale of hilsa from March to April.

Housewife stabbed for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A housewife was admitted to a hospital after she was stabbed allegedly by her husband for dowry on Thursday in Moulvibazar.

The victim is Rahela Khatun, 34, of Habiganj. Rahela filed a case with Habiganj Sadar Police Station accusing her husband Asik Miah of stabbing her repeatedly on Thursday night before fleeing, said Md Nazim Uddin, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Quoting Rahela, Nazim said about a week back Asik beat her up after she refused to bring Tk 1 lakh from her family. Police are looking for Asik.

Jamaat 'defector' joins Rajshahi AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Jamaat-e-Islami leader, who claimed to have defected from its Bagmara upazila unit in Rajshahi, and around 100 of his followers joined the unit of Awami League (AL) yesterday, drawing flak from the ruling party's local leaders.

"I love the ideologies and activities of Awami League...I would like to be with the party till my last breath...I have no other intention," said Maolana Nurul Islam, the former general secretary and rokon (permanent member) and a teacher of Bhawaniganj Fajil Madrasa.

Welcoming them with wreaths at a press conference in the upazila headquarters' Bangabandhu Museum, Senior Vice President Motiur Rahman said there were many "good people" in Jamaat.

"We enquired about him...They will not create any problem," he added.