

**WEATHER FORECAST**

**YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES**

<b>DHAKA</b> H 20.8   L 13.2	<b>CHITTAGONG</b> H 22.0   L 14.3	<b>SYLHET</b> H 21.6   L 14.3	<b>RAJSHAHI</b> H 21.5   L 08.4	<b>KHULNA</b> H 21.8   L 11.5	<b>BARISAL</b> H 23.0   L 11.3	<b>RANGPUR</b> H 17.2   L 08.8	<b>COX'S BAZAR</b> H 23.0   L 15.0
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Mild cold wave may continue to sweep over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and Tangail, Sreemangal, Jessore, Chuadanga and Kumarkhali. Night temperature may fall by (1-2) degree Celsius and day temperature may rise slightly over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:39pm and tomorrow at 6:42am. Country's highest temperature 26.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Teknaf and lowest 08.4 in Rajshahi and Syedpur.



The 79.9 decimal pond of Saint Peter's Church, left, in Barisal city exists no more. It was filled overnight on April 10 last year, right, for building a courthouse. Christians had protested the move of "grabbing the church land by the Barisal District Bar Association" back then and are again vocal for recovery of the land as the construction is about to begin. Law Minister Anisul Haq laid the foundation plaque, inset, for the court building on January 12.



PHOTO: STAR

# Stop building courthouse on Barisal 'church land'

Leaders of religious minority communities urge govt

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Minority community leaders yesterday demanded that the government back off from building a courthouse on the "grabbed" land of a century-old church in Barisal city.

They sought the prime minister's intervention in stopping the construction and recovering the land of Barisal Saint Peter's Church, adjacent to Barisal District and Sessions Judge's Court.

However, the law minister and the Barisal District Bar Association president refuted the allegations of grabbing and said it was government land.

Bangladesh Christian Association, National Church Council of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, National Christian

Fellowship of Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad made the call from a news conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

In a statement, Secretary General of the Christian Association Nirmol Rozario said Saint Peter's Church was one of the oldest in the country, covering 2.52 acres of land.

But violating laws, Barisal District Bar Association grabbed the church's pond (measuring 79.9 decimals) and filled it on April 10 last year. The pond was dug for baptising Christians by the church, he added.

When Christians had formed a human chain in the city the next day to protest filling of the pond, a group of people attacked them leaving 18

injured, he said.

Rozario said they had informed the prime minister, law minister, chief justice and authorities concerned about the matter, and filed a writ petition with the High Court. Since the High Court rejected their petition, they filed a leave to appeal with the Supreme Court, which is now pending, he added.

However, amid protest Law Minister Anisul Haq laid the foundation stone of a multi-storey court building on the "church land" on January 12 this year, he said.

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of the Oikya Parishad, said it was a matter of regret that the government "grabbed" the church land, while the bar association assisted in it.

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## Cold wave may persist for couple of more days

**Says Met office**  
**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The mild cold wave that started sweeping over parts of the country after a sudden temperature dip yesterday would persist for a couple of days and is likely to worsen and spread to adjacent areas, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The cold wave started sweeping over Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and Tangail, Sreemangal, Jessore, Chuadanga, and Kumarkhali regions, read a forecast on BMD website.

"Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins and adjoining area &

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## Port city children worst sufferers of cold wave

**ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg**

With cold waves blowing over Chittagong for the last few days, cold-related diseases including bronchiolitis, breathing problem, pneumonia and diarrhea had affected the people badly.

Babies and elderly are the worst sufferers.

According to sources in the pediatric ward of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), rush of patients with acute respiratory infection (ARI) and diarrhea has increased over the last three days.

The minimum temperature of Chittagong was 14.3 degree Celsius yesterday, said Farid Ahmed of Chittagong Met Office. "This cold wave might continue for the next three to four days," he added.

During a visit on Friday at different wards of CMCH, The Daily Star correspondent found that number of patients with cold related diseases had increased rapidly. The 65-bed pediatric ward had to accommodate 170 patients that day, most of them suffering from breathing problem and diarrhea,

said the doctors.

Sheuli Chowdhury took her six-month-old baby Tumpa to the ward on Wednesday. Tumpa was suffering from severe breathing problem. Sheuli looked very worried.

Tahmina Akter was nursing her 3-year-old daughter Rukhsana, suffering from diarrhea for two days. "It was not curing at home, we had to rush her here," she said.

"Rush of ARI patients have increased. Babies are vulnerable to diseases as their immune systems are not strong," said Imrul Kayes, an associate professor of the ward. "They should be kept in warm places and hygiene must be maintained during nursing," he added.

Oral saline, mixed properly with water, should be given to those suffering from diarrhea, he emphasised.

Rush of patients with cold-related diseases had also increased in other hospitals including Chattagram Ma O Shishu Hospital Medical College. Dr Mahmud Chowdhury Arju, head of pediatric department of the

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Indigenous and Bangalee farmers of Gaibandha take part in a demonstration organised by Jatiya Adivasi Parishad and Sahebganj-Bagdafarm Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday demanding return of land acquired for Rangpur Sugar Mills Limited, alleging that the authorities violated the contract by cultivating crops other than sugarcane.

## LAND ACQUIRED FOR RANGPUR SUGAR MILLS

# Farmers demand return

Allege illegal use of it by mill authorities

**DUI CORRESPONDENT**

Hundreds of indigenous and Bangalee farmers of Gaibandha staged a demonstration in the capital yesterday demanding return of land acquired for Rangpur Sugar Mills Limited, alleging that the authorities violated the contract by cultivating crops other than sugarcane and leasing out parts of the land.

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, a platform of indigenous communities, and Sahebganj-Bagdafarm Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee organised the demonstration, starting off with a rally at Central Shaheed Minar and then bringing out a procession leading to Jatiya Press Club.

The protesters claimed that the crops included paddy and tobacco while they were barred from using the 1,842.30-acre land.

It was acquired in 1954-55 for the mill, established in Mahimaganj

under Rangpur division around 1957-58 under the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation, they said.

Holding bows and arrows, the demonstrators threatened to sacrifice their lives for the lands of their ancestors.

Oikya Nap President Pankaj Bhattacharya said, "According to the law, the mill has to surrender the land to the government and the government has to return the land to successors."

Noted columnist Syed Abul Maksud said, "The state violated a basic human right by grabbing the lands...which is also a violation of the constitution."

He urged the government to form a judicial committee with the ministries concerned, ensure return of the land and provide compensation to the farmers.

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad President Rabindranath Soren said, "People of

15 Adivasi villages and five Bangalee villages of Sahebganj-Bagdafarm area have become landless and jobless as the mill authority illegally leased out parts of the land to powerful persons."

"The Adivasis want to cultivate crops on their own lands," he said.

However, talking to The Daily Star, a high official of the sugar mill, on condition of anonymity, termed the demands "illogical" and claimed that the illegal leases had been cancelled.

He acknowledged cultivating various crops and planting trees to lessen "huge" losses for which the mill had to be kept shut for three years from 2004 and the mill was still running intermittently.

"We do not bar them from cultivating crops on the land," he said, adding that it was reasonable that the affected persons who had no livelihood hoped to get back their land if the mill had to shut down.

## Ministries not addressing women's rights concerns

Alleges Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam at conclusion of its nat'l confce

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Bangladesh's women's rights activists have been waging movements for decades seeking a women-friendly law preventing rapes and a strict one dictating the minimum marriageable age, something which should have been ministries' concerns, said Ayesha Khanam yesterday.

Feminists have been repeating the same thing for almost 50 years and though the movements made some progress in women's representation in different sectors, equal rights and access to resources remain a far cry, she said.

The Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) president was addressing a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club marking the conclusion of BMP's two day national conference.

Ayesha said the existing law stipulates that a female rape victim retain evidence to prove her point. "But the burden of proof

should be on the accused. Even in neighbouring India, men accused of rape have to prove that they are not guilty," she said.

Gender Consultant Kazi Sufia Akhter Shelly said women's representation in politics and parliament has increased but was yet to reach one third of the total seats.

"As the seats were reserved for women and were awarded to selected persons, such representation would not make any impact on women's political empowerment," she said.

These reserved seats are endowed to women according to a party's preference without following any democratic norms, she said.

"The female members of the parliament have not been able to uphold their duties with dignity. They do not even bring up the issue of women's rights in parliament. That is why we have always been asking for more seats for women in parliament where they should be elected through voting," she stressed.

BMP General Secretary Maleka Banu was present.

## Historic Mass Upsurge day today

**BSS, Dhaka**

Today is the 47th Mass Upsurge Day that signifies the de facto fall of the 10-year military regime of General Ayub Khan. It eventually paved the way for an independent Bangladesh.

In 1969 student-led protesters besieged the Central Secretariat on this day and at one point broke into it and burnt it down partially. Matiur, a class IX student of Nobo Kumar Institution, and another person died in police firing during the incident.

Earlier, the protesters had burnt down the National Press Trust (NPT) office that housed the government mouthpieces, the Morning News and the Dainik Pakistan.

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Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Bangladesh Environment-Friendly Shopping Bag Manufacturer Organization form a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday for a strict implementation of the law banning production and usage of polythene bags. Despite a ban, they are being traded and used throughout the country due to inadequate drives against their manufacturers.