

**WEATHER FORECAST**

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	KHULNA	BARISAL	RANGPUR	COX'S BAZAR
	H 34.0   L 22.4	H 30.8   L 21.0	H 31.0   L 20.7	H 33.0   L 17.9	H 35.5   L 21.2	H 34.3   L 21.6	H 28.8   L 19.8	H 30.0   L 21.6

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today. Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night till morning, said Met Office. Night temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:57pm and rises tomorrow at 6:27am.

**Cases against Star editor suggest attack on press freedom**  
*Says PEN America; Dr Kamal says people seeking answers from govt*  
**STAR REPORT**

A deluge of lawsuits against The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam on charges of criminal defamation and sedition is an indication of the worsening state of free expression in Bangladesh, said PEN America.

Moreover, Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain said Bangladeshis have already started seeking answers from the government while the world has raised voice over the harassment of Mahfuz Anam.

"The recent slew of charges leveled against Mahfuz Anam illustrates an escalation of the assault on media freedoms in Bangladesh," noted Karin Deutsch Karlekar, director of free expression program at PEN America, in a statement issued on February 18.

"The government and ruling party should cease using criminal defamation and sedition laws to harass the press, and should remove such restrictive statutes from the penal code," it read.

"Bangladesh's democracy will be immeasurably weakened if the media is not able to fulfill its watchdog role and speak truth to power without fear of disproportionate repercussions," it added.

As of Friday, 75 lawsuits have been filed against Mahfuz Anam in 50 districts since February 9. Of the cases, 17 involve pleas for bringing sedition charges against him, while the rest are defamation suits. The case spree began following a talk show on February 3 where Mahfuz Anam made an

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina along with party leaders stands in solemn silence as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the language heroes after placing wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka in the first hours today on the occasion of Amar Ekushey and the International Mother Language Day. Right, leader of the opposition in parliament, Raushan Ershad, and party members places a wreath at the monument.



PHOTO: STAR

**Fair crowd getting bigger**

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

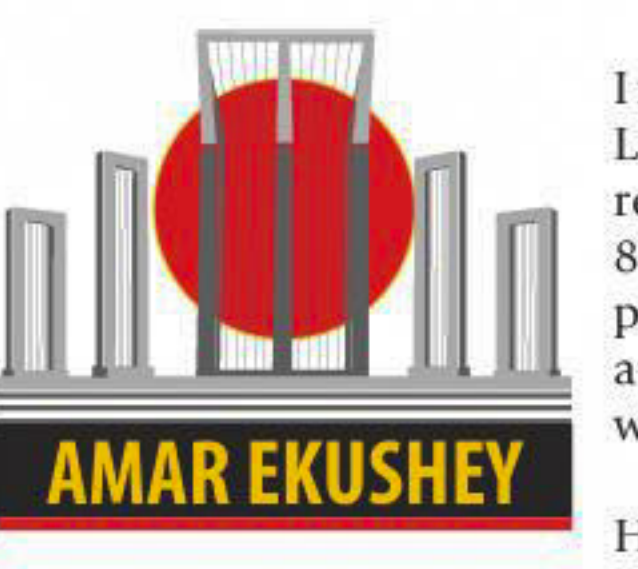
The number of visitors at Suhrawardy Udyan seemed to have multiplied yesterday, with the queue becoming longer than ever.

The fact that it was the day before February 21 added to the spirit of the swarming crowd.

"I have come to the fair because I felt that my unborn son should experience this great event as early as possible," said Mahjabin Archi, a pregnant woman, on entering Amar Ekushey Granthamela 2016.

"The hassle of getting in was worth it," she added, with a triumphant smile.

Cartoonist Sharier Khan's daily cartoon strip compilations were a huge attraction among children and young people.



On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, the fair will remain open today from 8:00am to 8:00pm. A poetry recital event to be attended by noted poets will start at 7:30am.

The crowd of readers of Humayun Ahmed in front of Anyapokash was bigger than at any other place in the fair.

"His books are addictive. I want to own all of them for my personal library," said corporate employee Raihan-bin-Shafiq.

Addressing a discussion on Bangla Academy premises, noted cultural personality Kamal Lohani said, "A cultural awakening of people can dispel all evil forces from society. Great events like this fair can pave the way for people to realise the potentials of the country's culture."

**BTCL to cut price of broadband internet by 35pc**  
*BSS, Dhaka*

Aimed at providing its customers with broadband internet facility at a cheap rate, Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) has decided to cut down the prices of different packages by 35 percent from today.

BTCL is changing the prices of different packages, through which the customers are able to talk on their land line and at the same time can use the broadband internet, said an official release.

Under the new rate, customers will have to

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**Patient dies as ambulance hits tree in Barguna**  
*3 family members, driver hurt; 2 others killed in Ctg*

**CITY DESK**

A cardiac patient was killed yesterday as an ambulance carrying him to a hospital hit a roadside tree in Taktabunia village under Amtali upazila in Barguna.

The deceased was Krisna Kanto Shil, 70, of Taktabunia village.

Three of his family members, his wife Amri Rani Shil, 50, brother Hiram Lal Shil, 56, and son Amol Shil, 40, and the driver of the ambulance, Hasan, were injured in the accident.

Critically injured Hasan was admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, while the rest were sent to Amtali Upazila Health Complex.

Family members were taking Krisna to Barisal by an ambulance. When it reached Sikra Bari, the driver lost control over the vehicle and hit a tree, said Officer-in-Charge of Amali Police Station Pullo Chandra Roy.

In Chittagong, Md Ziku, 15, of Rangamati was killed and his father injured when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw carrying them collided head-on with a truck in Bus Stand area in Hathazari upazila.

In Patiya upazila of Chittagong, Jahedul Islam, 8, son of Didarul Islam of Dhalghat area, was killed when a microbus hit him while he was crossing the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway in Munsef Bazar area.

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