

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	KHULNA	BARISAL	RANGPUR	COX'S BAZAR
	H 37.4 L 27.0	H 34.6 L 28.3	H 32.5 L 19.9	H 41.2 L 27.8	H 37.5 L 28.0	H 36.5 L 28.2	H 33.2 L 22.2	H 34.4 L 28.4

Severe heat wave sweeping over the regions of Rajshahi and Kushtia and mild to moderate heat wave over remaining part of Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the regions of at least 12 districts, including Dhaka, may continue. Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:27pm and rises tomorrow at 5:25am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Catching a meal (l.) and relaxing (r.) PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Ashy Woodswallow

Some years ago, outside Dhaka, my car was crossing an empty bridge. From the top of the bridge, I saw a flock of perhaps fifteen small birds sitting in a row on an electrical wire running parallel to the bridge. In the cool winter's morning they snuggled next to each other, their soft downy feathers keeping them warm.

The wire was at the same height as I was, so it was a wonderful photo opportunity. But I also knew that the moment I opened the car door, the birds would fly. So I instructed my driver to finish crossing the bridge and then turn the car around.

Back on the bridge, I stopped the car and took several photographs from within. Then I opened the door and alighted very slowly, bending my knees to keep a low profile. One bird from each end immediately flew away. As I continued shooting, another pair flew, then one more. The last few flew off synchronously, but I ended with some decent photographs.

They were ashy woodswallows (artimus fuscus, metematha bonababil). These are dark birds with ash coloured wings and a dark-red chest, about 19cm long and weighing about 40 grams. Their outsized square black heads and thick, pincer-shaped beaks lend them a slightly menacing look. Year-round residents of our land, they breed from March to June, usually making their nests in leaves of palm trees. The birds will sit on a perch looking out for flying prey such as dragonflies, butterflies and termites. When they spot their prey, they will fly swiftly from their perch, snatch it from

the air and eat it quickly - sometimes in flight - before returning to the perch.

Since that winter day, I have not seen ashy woodswallows in a large group, but I have seen individuals and pairs. Recently I saw several at Purbachol. One was on a wire and squawked loudly when I approached. As I got closer it moved twenty feet down the wire. This repeated several times, but because of the height of the wire I was unable to get a decent photograph.

Another time I was watching a large swarm of dragonflies circling busily, also in Purbachol. Suddenly, a dark small bird swooped in from above. At first I thought it was a swift which is very difficult to photograph, so I did not raise my camera. It flew away, made a circle, and returned. That's when I realized it was a slower bird and aimed my camera at it. It was carrying a dragonfly in its mouth and shooting straight up when I captured it.

An interesting feature of the ashy woodswallow is its powder down. Some of its feathers disintegrate and become powdery. The bird then spreads this powder to the rest of the feathers when preening. The powder helps clean and waterproof the feathers.

So see this distinctive bird, head over to one of the villages in Purbachol and keep an eye on wires, pillars and treetops where you might find it perched, scanning the air for a meal.

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EASING SUFFERINGS FROM WATER CRISIS IN DEMRA

People take it on themselves

HELEMUL ALAM

Jannatul Ferdous, a house wife from Chingipara, has to carry at least five pitchers of water every day to meet the family's drinking and cooking water demand though her doctor had advised against such heavy lifting since she is suffering from chest pain for the last 15 days.

But she is unable to follow the advice and has to fetch water from a near-by house since they are not getting a drop of water from the Wasa supply line for the last one month.

"My pain increased on Thursdays night after collecting five pitchers of water and I could not avoid it as there are no other family members to collect it," said Jannatul, whose husband, a low-income person, has to spend most of his time at work.

Jannatul said she has to do all kinds of work like taking baths, washing clothes and dishes in a nearby dirty pond as there is no other alternative water source.

"I have come to Dhaka around five years back but I did not face sufferings like this before," a tired Jannatul sighed, while washing her dishes in the dirty pond water yesterday noon.

Thousands of people of Dogair, Pachimpara, Kabrostan Lane, part of Farmer Mor, Mazar Road, Salek Bhuiyan Road, Salam Bagh, and Bhuiyan Masjid Road, in Demra are facing a severe water crisis over the last two months.

Around two lakh residents of the areas are facing the problems as no water come through Wasa's pipeline, said Sheikh Abdul Kader, a resident of Dogair Bazar.

With a sweltering heat sweeping over the country for more than a fortnight, sufferings of the residents of several city neighbourhoods have worsened due to an acute water crisis, which is also triggered by the ongoing load shedding.

Many residents in the affected areas of Demra have set up around 450 feet deep tube wells spending around Tk 1.50 lakh.

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A tired Jannatul Ferdous washes her dishes at a nearby dirty pond in Dogair Bazar area of Demra in the capital yesterday as part of her daily ordeal, as she is not getting any water from the Wasa supply line for the last one month. With a sweltering heat sweeping over the country for more than a fortnight, sufferings of the residents of several city neighbourhoods have intensified due to an acute water crisis and the residents of Demra had it worse. But many Demra residents have taken it upon themselves and started helping each other to ease their agony. **Bottom left**, people standing in lines to fill their share at Dogair Bazar, where locals have set up a free water tank. **Right**, people wait patiently to receive water from a building at Hijibullah Road of Chingipara, whose owner willingly shares water with the residents.

PHOTOS: PALASH KHAN

Nor'wester wreaks havoc on Sunamganj

1 killed, 50 injured, some 200 houses destroyed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Hailstorm accompanied by strong winds rampaged through many areas in Sunamganj early yesterday, leaving a teenage girl dead and 50 others injured, uprooting electric pillars and damaging as many as 200 houses.

Tanjina Akther, 16, a resident of Jagannathpur village in Bishambharpur Upazila, died instantly when a large chunk of their house's roof fell on her all of a sudden in the heavy rain.

"The hailstorm coupled with lightning, thunder and strong winds took only 30 minutes to ravage our villages and destroy stress and crops," said Rakibul Hasan, a resident of Char village in Dharampasa upazila.

In Dirai and Dharampasa upazilas, thou-

sands of acres of crops, into which the farmers had painstakingly been putting back-breaking labour for a good long time hopping for a bumper harvest, were severely damaged.

The people who live on farming and have no other sources of income are the worst sufferers, said Abul Kalam, a farmer of Modhupur village in Dirai.

Contacted, Md Mukaram Hosain, chairman of Sukhair Razapur Dakhin union parishad (UP) in Dharampasa upazila, said he visited some of the worst-affected areas to assess the extent of the damage.

UNO of Dharampasa upazila Md Najmul Haque said, "We visited Haor area and asked all UP chairmen to take immediate actions for saving the drastically affected crops.



Devastated, a family gathers the remnants of whatever's left of their home in Jagannathpur village of Salukabad union in Bishambharpur upazila in Sunamganj after a nor'wester rampaged through many areas in the district early yesterday, damaging as many as 200 houses. A teenage girl was also killed and 50 others injured as a result of the storm.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Five AL men held over killing of fellow in UP poll violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police yesterday arrested five Awami League activists sued among 21 over the killing of a fellow in a pre-election violence in Dahkula village of Kushtia Sadar upazila the day before.

They are Shahinur Rahman, Masudul Haq, Oliur Rahman, Ashraful Islam and Uzzal Hossain of sadar upazila AL.

Laltu Mollah, 55, was killed when supporters of AL-nominated chairman candidate Akhteruzzaman and rebel candidate Serajul Islam clashed in Alampur union, which will go to polls on May 7. Laltu was a supporter of the rebel candidate, said police.

Shoemakers demand May Day holiday, fair wage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shoemaking factory workers in old Dhaka brought out a rally under the banner of Biplobi Paduka Shilpa Sramik Songhati in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding May Day holiday, fair wage and wholesome environment inside the factories.

The workers are paid only Tk 300 for 16 hours of labour daily.

Each factory has three types of workers: upper man producing upper parts of a shoe; sole man who is assigned to making sole; and fitting man who does patchwork.

"An upper man gets Tk 300 for making upper parts of 12 pairs of shoes. A sole man earns similar amount for the same number of pairs while a fitting man gets only Tk 100 for a dozen pairs of shoes," said Nur-e-Alam, a shoemaking worker at Siddiquebazar in old Dhaka.

"About Tk 150 is spent every day on buying

food and the rest of the money does not suffice to afford the cost of a family..." he added.

"We can't enjoy national holidays or weekends. If anyone speaks anything about the issues, employers often sack them," Alam said.

Hanif, a 17-year-old boy, said he has been working for three years in a factory without any wage.

"They don't pay me as I am still an apprentice," said the boy, adding that there were four others like him working at the factory, who too do not get any wage.

Angur Mia, president of Songhati, said workers were forced to work in a very unhealthy and polluted environment, adding that they regularly handled toxic chemicals without putting on any mask.

If shoemaking is declared an industry, then the working condition will be developed and employers could be forced to maintain standard wage and workhours for employees, opined Angur.

Govt college principals' conference starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the dearth of teachers and classrooms crippling education at the government colleges, a conference of these college principals kicks off today to find ways to improve the higher secondary education and solving the problems.

Principles of 306 colleges will discuss their problems along with suggestions towards the solution in presence of top officials of the education ministry at the conference to be held at 10:00am at International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Segun bagicha.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid is scheduled to inaugurate the daylong conference, organised by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

The conference, first of its kind, will focus on the improvement of standard of education, streamlining the audit and inspection of colleges and innovative ideas on college education, Prof Fahima Khatun, director general of DSHE, said.

Prior to organising the event, the directorate asked principals to submit reports on the number of students, teachers, infrastructural facilities, problems and potentials of their colleges.

According to the latest statistics of DSHE, around 3,700 posts of teachers are vacant in the colleges where the number of posts of teachers is more than 15,000. Around 13 lakh students are pursuing education in these colleges.

BNP willing to assist in fighting terror

Says Rizvi slamming govt for passing buck onto it for recent murders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday said it was ready to cooperate with the government with its experiences in combating terrorism in the country.

The party also called upon all irrespective of their political affiliations to come forward with concerted efforts to stand against terrorism.

"BNP proved highly successful in combating terrorism while it was in power and is ready to assist with its experience in fighting militant activities," said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed while addressing a press conference at the party's Naya

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facebook gives user info to govt

UNB, dhaka

Popular social networking site, Facebook, has for the first time responded to requests of the Bangladesh government, providing users' information.

The Facebook authorities provided some data related to 16.67 percent of requests made by the government between July and December 2015, according to its latest Global Government Request Report released Thursday. As per the report, the Bangladesh government made 12 requests seeking information on 31 Facebook users during the period.

"We respond to valid requests relating to criminal cases. Each and every request we receive is checked for legal sufficiency, and we reject or require greater specificity on requests that are overly broad or vague," said the report.

The site also restricted four types of content following the government's request. "We restricted access to pieces of content alleged to have violated local law regarding blasphemy, pursuant to a request from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission," it added.

Earlier, the government made 16 requests seeking information on 37 users in the first half of last year. But the Facebook authorities did not respond to any of the requests.

Meanwhile, Facebook provided information to 68 countries on requests from July to December 2015, while ignoring requests from 23 other countries. Of the 68 countries, Nigeria got information on the highest 100 percent of its requests.