

WEATHER FORECAST

| YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES | DHAKA | CHITTAGONG | SYLHET | RAJSHAHI | KHULNA | BARISAL | RANGPUR | COX'S BAZAR |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | H 33.2 L 23.0 | H 33.4 L 27.6 | H 31.0 L 24.3 | H 34.6 L 22.4 | H 32.2 L 23.0 | H 33.0 L 26.4 | H 28.0 L 21.4 | H 33.0 L 27.0 |

Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:40pm and rises tomorrow at 5:11am. Country's highest temperature 34.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Rajshahi and lowest 21.0 in Dimla (Niphamari).

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Yellow-wattled lapwing in favourite posture.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Our Lapwings

Lapwings are medium-sized wading birds that live near water, in paddy-fields, or in open grassland. They are closely related to plovers and belong to the bird family called Charadriidae. There are 25 species of lapwings spread all over the world (except Antarctica.) Bangladesh has five species: red-wattled, yellow-wattled, grey-headed, river and northern lapwings. The Bangla name for lapwing is *hot-ti-ti*. First time I saw a lapwing was in Sundarban several years ago when I knew very few birds. Our group was walking through a field towards Kotka beach when a bird suddenly emerged from the tall grass, very close to me, and flew away with a loud flapping noise. I could only manage a blurry picture showing a red and black face which I later identified as that of a red-wattled lapwing. I saw the same bird later around paddy-fields but found it to be extremely shy. Only recently, with careful stalking, was I able to get close enough for a decent photograph - in the mud in Hail Haor. Last winter I also photographed several grey-headed lapwings in the same area. These winter visitors are similar sized to their red-wattled cousins, with a fine grey plumage, yellow beaks and red eyes. Two or three were sitting on an *ail* that divides paddyfields. As I got closer, they shot up, flew around me making a loud call, and landed a bit farther. This pattern repeated itself several times. I got some decent flight shots while they circled me. Closer to Dhaka, I have seen yellow-wattled lapwings in Purbachol. The birder Quazi Ahmed Hussain first showed me the area where, I eventually discovered, an entire colony resides. Like the red-wattled lapwings, these are

resident year-round in Bangladesh. They have yellow skin flaps - called wattles - on their forehead which extend in triangular shape to both sides of their nose, lending them a slightly comical look. Their heads are black. Their spread wings have a band of white with black and brown on either side. They spend their time walking in the fields, taking a few steps at a time on their skinny yellow legs before stopping to search for insects. While stopped they often partially retract one leg at an angle and stand in a dainty posture. They fly low and fairly slow over short distances, often making a loud clicking call in flight. I have never seen them on a tree. As winter rolled around to spring then summer, the Purbachol lapwings started breeding. They made their nests on the ground, hidden in plain sight, laying a clutch of four eggs at a time. One day, from a distance, I saw an adult pair with four chicks in tow. The chicks, with scrawny necks and polka-dot patterned feathers on their head and body, were perfectly camouflaged in the grass and weeds of the field. Occasionally they dived under their mother's breast while she crouched, tilting her head to search the sky for airborne predators. They emerged after she gave an all-clear signal. Another time, I saw a juvenile, almost as large as an adult, with beautiful copper coloured feathers all over. It has been a thrill and a privilege watching these birds, but I cannot help but wonder what happens to them when the fields of Purbachol - expensive land - are filled with buildings. In the protected wetlands, our other lapwings probably face a better future. www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

Seriously injured domestic help dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Upon hearing that her 11-year-old daughter was hospitalised with malaria, Salma Begum rushed from Mymensingh to Dhaka Medical College Hospital on May 24. But what she saw shocked her. "She was lying unconscious, her hand and leg broken. There were burns on her back," Salma said. Until yesterday Salma's only comfort was her daughter Hasina Aktar had been breathing. Yesterday morning, the girl opened her eyes but only to bid farewell to her mother forever. Hasina, a domestic help, fought for life for seven days. She was hospitalised on May 20. "We had been waiting to see her regain consciousness. Yesterday morning my girl opened her eyes. But that was her last...", Salma said, her voice choked with tears. Hasina, daughter of Abdus Sobhan of Dhobaura of Mymensingh, worked as a domestic help at one Shariful Islam's house of Kathpatti of Mohammadpur Town Hall in the capital. Sources said one Abdur Razzak admitted Hasina to the hospital at 3:30am on May 20, with injuries in the head, face and other parts of the body. Salma said, "I worked at Shariful's house for one month.... I fell sick and gave my elder daughter in my place." She said her husband was a street vendor and unable to earn enough, so the family returned to Mymensingh on April 25.

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Girl 'raped' in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A six-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour at a village in Jamalpur on Thursday evening. The second-grader was sleeping when a neighbour's 16-year-old son entered the house and raped her, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, adding, the parents were at work when the incident occurred. Hearing her screams, neighbours rushed to the house and caught the boy, but he managed to flee, the OC said. The critically injured girl was immediately admitted to Jamalpur General Hospital, where she will have to stay for another five days, said the victim's father. A case was filed, the OC added.

VCs now appointed on political link

SAYS ECONOMIST PROF MOINUL ISLAM

Politics is using the public universities as a factory for raising goons, economist Prof Dr Moinul Islam said yesterday. The practice has gone so bad that student politics actually became "subservient" politics, he said. "Our public university teachers are also deeply involved in servile politics. As a result the public university vice chancellors (VCs) are now appointed no longer on the basis of knowledge and wisdom but on political lobbying." Dr Moinul, a professor of Chittagong University, made the comments while addressing a book handover ceremony at Chittagong Press Club. The book, "Bangladesh History, Politics, Economy, Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin", was formally handed over to Professor Emeritus Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, also and a former VC of Chittagong University. Prof Serajuddin was the last VC of Chittagong University to be elected by the senate in 1988, said Dr Moinul. "It is a matter of great regret that now politics has taken so much space in our society and politicians have taken leadership of society to such an extent that we are not getting much contribution from proper research and merit," said poet, journalist Abul Momen. The book, published by the University Press in April 2016, contains 30 articles written by prominent teachers and researchers from home and abroad.



Dust cloud makes journeys hellish on the heavily battered Gabtoli-Babubazar Beribadh (embankment road), on the western edge of the capital. It also creates a huge possibility of accidents. The photo was taken on Thursday at the Gabtoli end.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP slams govt for giving transit to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising the government for giving transit to India, BNP yesterday said it was nothing but selling the country's independence at a nominal fee. The party is also worried at the country's security due to the transit. "It's an ill-motivated decision to allow India to get land transit facilities from Akhaura to Agartala at a nominal fee. It seems like selling the country's independence at a small price. We think the government has sold its soul to the neighbouring country," BNP leader Rizvi Ahmed said at a discussion. Swadhinata Forum, a pro-BNP platform, organised the discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club, marking BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's 35th death anniversary. Rizvi, the senior joint secretary general of BNP, said the government was weakening the sovereignty by giving India transit and making the people confused. "We condemn the government's move." He claimed that security experts said the Indian government would send arms to its seven sisters through Bangladesh enjoying the transit facilities to control the people who were demanding independence. "It's not transit but a corridor because the same country's goods will go to the same country through our territory. It's a dangerous thing," Rizvi said. The BNP leader urged the nationalist forces to get united to protect the country's independence and sovereignty and foil any conspiracy against it.

Sylhet city canals turning into waste destination

Lack of apt initiatives blamed

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

The Gaviar Khal is one of the oldest canals in the Sylhet city. Ornate "naiyuri" boats carrying newly-wed brides used to cruise the canal, creating dancing waves and captivating the people. Its splendour was even more extended with exceptional scenic beauty and lush green surroundings. But these all now turned into mere stories as a good portion of the canal, stretching about 5km, has been swamped by garbage. Added to that is the illegal occupation. The 12 other major canals including Malni Chhara, Kalibari Chhara, Mangari Chhara, Dhopa Chhara, Baram Chhara, are, too, undergoing the same fate. During a recent visit to the canals, this correspondent found them filled with waste materials like plastic bottles, bags and other household trashes. Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Sylhet chapter of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said, "The canals are playing a vital role in the city's sewerage system. They should be kept clean and free so that their natural flow is not impeded. But the city corporation failed to take necessary measures to protect them." However, Ariful Haque Chowdhury, suspended mayor of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), who is now in prison, started taking massive initiatives to recover them in 2014. He even

launched speedboats after cleaning the Gaviar canal and reclaiming the parts occupied by the grabbers. But within a short time, the scenario turned out to be the same as before since the initiatives were stopped after the arrest of Ariful, according to the city corporation. Contacted, Enamul Habib, SCC's chief executive officer (CEO), said, "As part of those initiatives, we completed the dredging and excavation work in the canals and put up retaining walls in five of them after reclaiming the canals from the grabbers. "In an attempt to protect them, we already submitted a comprehensive plan to the parliamentary standing committee on planning ministry, which initially approved the plan. We are optimistic about getting the plan passed in the forthcoming fiscal year..." added Enamul. Faruk Mahmud Chowdhury, president of Sylhet chapter of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (SHUJAN), claimed, "The SCC's initiatives were a gimmick because they were undertaken without heading the real problems."

"Protection should be a continuous process. If the cleaning work remains halted, even for barely six months, and the authorities do not look after the canals, they return to the worst state as they have been," he added. About land grabbing, Karim alleged that SCC deliberately leaves establishments of some of the grabbers unscathed while conducting eviction drives. "Partiality of this sort must be stopped, and a fair, continuous and environmentally conducive drive ought to be undertaken instead," he urged. Karim also demanded that SCC campaign for making people aware against the occupation and dumping of waste, saying that raising awareness and designating the dumping spots would cost less than taking mammoth projects to protect the canals. Denying the allegation, the CEO said, "We admit that there are thousands of illegal structures erected on both banks of the canals," adding, "Our drive is going on against all the grabbers regardless of who they are, and none can enjoy any favour or impunity."



The Gaviar Khal in Sylhet city is swamped by garbage in many parts, while substantial portions are occupied by land grabbers.

PHOTO: SHEKH NASTI



Rights activist Sultana Kamal, artist Mustafa Manowar and child workers taking a look at a painting at Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts yesterday. The four-day exhibition which features paintings by child workers is organised by Ain o Salish Kendra and the faculty.

PHOTO: STAR

Postal letter flavours recalled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

There is something magical about receiving a letter from a postman, riding around the block on his cycle, while ringing the bell. A letter from a loved one or a family member or from a father to a son or vice versa, these are not just part of some misplaced nostalgia, they are forever etched in our hearts. When it comes to sharing true thoughts, sincere sympathies, ardent love, and deepest gratitude, writing and receiving letters will always offer an experience that modern technology cannot touch, since sending a letter is almost as close to personally meeting someone. These were the sentiments shared at a two-day fifth National Letter Festival, which

ended on Thursday evening in Kushtia. "I used to wait for the postman's bell," said 64-year-old Atoar Rahman, a habitual poet, adding, "Those days are gone now." Like Atoar, many became melancholic as they said the legacy of hand written letters was on the wane. "Whenever we saw the postman, we used to run up to him asking if any letter has come or not," said Rakhi Rani Paul, a housewife of Aruapara area. "It used to be an exciting experience," added the 66-year-old. Rakhi brought her granddaughter Puja at the festival, who smiled after hearing her nostalgic grandmother, since the concept of hand written letters and waiting for a reply

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