

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DKHAKA	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	KHULNA	BARISAL	RANGPUR	MYMENSINGH
H 27.0 L 13.8	H 28.0 L 15.0	H 27.5 L 15.0	H 25.6 L 09.7	H 27.0 L 12.0	H 27.2 L 11.4	H 26.2 L 11.0	H 26.5 L 11.5	H 26.5 L 11.5

Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the river basins and adjoining area and light to moderate fog may occur at places elsewhere over the country, reports UNB. Night and day temperatures may remain nearly unchanged, said Met Office. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:29pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am. Country's highest temperature 29.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Teknaf and lowest 7.5 in Tentula.

Gonoforum, two other parties want new law to form strong EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum and two other political parties yesterday proposed that President Abdul Hamid take initiatives to enact a permanent law in line with the constitution to form a strong, non-partisan and acceptable Election Commission for holding free and fair polls. They made the proposal in separate talks with the president at the Bangabhaban on formation of the next EC. Hamid has so far held talks with 18 registered political parties since he started the dialogue on the EC formation on December 18.

After the meeting, Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, who led a 14-member delegation, told reporters, the EC will have to be independent, strong and free from the influence and interference of the executive branch. He said he proposed forming a five-member search committee with an appellate division judge appointed by the chief justice at the helm.

The other members of the committee will be a neutral and reliable educationalist, an acceptable woman from the woman society, two representatives each from the minority community and the media. In its nine-point proposal, Gonoforum also recommended that the EC will be financially independent and free from the control of the finance ministry.

On the necessity of forming a neutral EC, Kamal said a cricket match could not be held fairly without a neutral umpire.



President Abdul Hamid talks to Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain at Bangabhaban in the capital yesterday as part of the former's initiative to hold dialogues with political parties on the formation of the Election Commission.

PHOTO: PID

Minister seeks complaints of high migration costs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expatriates' Welfare Minister Nurul Islam has sought written complaints of high migration costs so that the ministry can take punitive actions.

"Nobody makes written complaints about it. How can we take action?" he said during a press conference at the expatriates' welfare ministry auditorium.

"Please give us written complaints," he asked migrants.

High migration costs have been a real challenge as Bangladeshis were found spending one of the highest amounts of money to migrate abroad, while getting low wages.

Researches found that migrants often face forced labour to recoup the high costs. It takes two to three years to recover the money and pay lenders

as they borrow from them at home.

The minister's statement read out at the conference does not highlight the issue, prompting heated questions from the reporters.

When a reporter asked why Saudi Arabia-bound migrants are being charged Tk 5 lakh to Tk 6 lakh when the government-fixed rate is Tk 1.65 lakh, the minister said none had filed any complaint about it.

Another reporter pointed out that there were syndicates in the overseas labour recruitment sector and that the government was not acting properly to stop such malpractice.

In reply, the minister said, "No, there is no syndicate. We don't know."

Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Begum Shamsunnahar, however, said there were Bangladeshi brokers in the labour-receiving countries as well as in Bangladesh, and that they

were involved in visa trading, which raised migration costs.

"We are communicating with the ministries concerned [in destination countries] and our embassies to identify them [those trading on labour visas]," she said.

Minister Nurul Islam boasted of sending 7.57 lakh Bangladeshi workers abroad last year against 5.55 lakh in 2015.

Though the number of migrants going abroad went up last year, the amount of remittance came down to US\$13.61 billion from US\$14.004 billion in 2015.

Quoting a World Bank report, expatriates welfare ministry's Additional Secretary Javed Ahmed in his presentation said falling oil prices, recruitment of locals in the Gulf countries, and sending of remittance through informal chan-

nels were reasons behind the decline in remittance last year.

The ministry has a target of sending eight lakh Bangladeshis abroad for jobs in 2017.

For skills building of the overseas jobseekers, the ministry planned to add 40 more technical training institutes. Presently, there are 70 such training centres and construction of 40 is underway.

Minister Nurul Islam said the government had a plan to bring all migrant workers under an insurance scheme, and establish residential schools for migrants' children.

Formation of a national steering committee, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is underway in line with the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy-2016.

NEWS IN brief

Youth's hanging body found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of an unidentified youth, aged around 35, was found hanging from a mango tree in front of Mohakhali rail line in the capital yesterday.

On information, police recovered the body which was hanging -- around 15 feet off the ground -- with a nylon rope, said Sub-Inspector of Dhaka Railway Police Station Ali Akbar. However, there was no injury mark on his body, he added. He might have climbed up and hanged himself," said the SI. The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College for autopsy.

SC upholds stay on trial proceedings against Abbas in graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that stayed the trial proceedings against BNP leader and former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas in a corruption case filed in 2014 for causing Tk 16 crore losses to the state by allocating plots to journalists.

Yesterday, the SC dismissed the leave to appeal petition filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) against the HC order.

Dr Mostafa Kamal new DG of Primary Education Directorate

CITY DESK



Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal has been appointed as the director general of the Directorate of Primary Education. A BCS cadre of 1985 batch, Mostafa previously had been serving as an additional director general of the directorate, said a press release.

SC asks lower court to

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statements of 12 witnesses of the case, and that court would now hold arguments on their statements and deliver a verdict in the case following the SC order.

Following an ACC petition, the HC on November 24 last year directed the trial court to finish the trial proceedings by March 31. On December 19 last year, Sultan Mahmud filed the appeal with the SC challenging the HC order.

The now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case against Ershad and three others in 1992. Ershad in collusion with others allegedly caused a loss of Tk 64.04 crore to the state exchequer by purchasing radars from the USA while he was in power, said the case statement.

On August 12, 1995, the trial court framed charges against Ershad, former air chiefs Sultan Mahmud and Mamtazuddin Ahmed, and United Traders Ltd director AKM Musa. Musa has been absconding since then.

EX-PAK ARMY CAMP COMMANDER ICT wants probe report on charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday directed the prosecution to submit an investigation report, if any, on March 22 in a case filed against Muhamed Shahidullah, a Bangalee official in the then Pakistan army, over committing crimes during the 1971 Liberation War.

Yesterday was fixed for submitting the investigation report, but Prosecutor Abul Kalam sought two months time, which the two-member tribunal led by Justice Anwarul Haque allowed.

Meanwhile, the tribunal allowed a prosecution's prayer to interrogate Shahidullah at the jail gate. As per the order, investigators will be able to question Shahidullah for one day on January 12.

Shahidullah, an alleged commander of a Pakistani army camp in Comilla, is the first former army man arrested in connection with war crime charges. He was arrested on August 2 in his Daudkandi house of the district following the tribunal order and is now in jail.

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR Detectives fear revival of ABT activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With many leaders of banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) still remaining at large, detectives fear a possible revival of their activities ahead of the Ekushey book fair.

In February, bloggers write more while militants search for possible opportunities, said Abdul Baten, joint commissioner of police's detective branch, yesterday.

Addressing a briefing at the media centre of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), Baten said they remained alert to avert any attack.

Talking about possible threats, Joint Commissioner Baten categorically said, "We are not remaining in a position to stay calm because we have to monitor each and every second."

He, however, said there was nothing to worry as they had already made arrests in clueless blogger killing cases except the LGBT rights activist Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy murder.

"We have got some leads from interrogating the arrestees. We are

now using them to arrest the others."

On April 25, armed assailants entered Xulhaz's Kalabagan flat in Dhaka identifying themselves as courier company staff and hacked him and Tonoy to death.

Mashruque Rahman Khaled, deputy commissioner of DB of police, told The Daily Star yesterday that they had come to know that five members of a sleeper cell took part in the killing. They have already got the names but have not got any trace of them yet, he said.

He, however, declined to disclose the identity of these killers.

Sources in DB police said they were looking for some 17 senior leaders of ABT including its chief Syed Ziaul Haque, a sacked army major.

Zia is facing a Tk 20 lakh bounty on his head. His outfit ABT has claimed responsibility for machete attacks on over a dozen secularist bloggers, publishers and teachers since 2013.

Regarding arrest of Maj Zia, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque said they were looking for him.



The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports brings out a procession and distributes leaflets in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday urging to observe a half-day hartal in the capital on January 26 from 6:00am to mount pressure on the government to scrap the Rampal power plant project near the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: STAR



Some of the 30 photos at a two-day photography exhibition titled "Art in your heart" ending on Saturday, organised by the management studies department of Jahangirnagar University beside Zahir Raihan Auditorium marking its "management week".

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Unplanned construction

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said without the "behavioural protocol" (or a set rules of behaviour), the maximum benefit could not be reaped from any infrastructure.

"There is a multi-storey car park at the Dhaka airport, where tickets are given for entry and exit... But there is zero management on how the cars get in and out," he said, while sharing his recent experience at the airport.

He also alleged that even after building the four lanes in the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, the average travel time between Dhaka and Chittagong had not come down due to the roadside businesses.

Dr AKM Abul Kalam, president of BIP, said capacity building for urban development was a prime necessity for urban planning, and the whole country should be under a national physical planning programme.

Dr Christopher J Webster, dean of the faculty of architect of Hong Kong University (HKU), and Dr Rebecca LH Chiu, head of the urban planning and design department, HKU, presented papers at the dialogue.

Govt urged to monitor

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owners follow the national building code properly during their construction. ActionAid Country Director Farah Kabir chaired the programme.

She said, "We have learned a lot from Rana Plaza collapse; we don't want such incident anymore."

Speaking as the chief guest, Director General of the Department of Disaster Management M Reaz Ahmed said there was a lack of coordination among the government departments concerned with regard to disaster management issue. "But we are working on it," he said.

Dr Mehedi Ahmed Ansary, vice president of Bangladesh Earthquake Society; Asif Ibrahim, former president of FBCCI; Shabel Firuz, country director of Islamic Relief Bangladesh; Arif Abdullah Khan, programme specialist of UNDP; and Nasir Uddin, director of ActionAid; also spoke.

RAMNA BATAMUL CASE HC starts hearing on appeals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday started hearing on the death reference and appeals in the sensational Ramna Batamul carnage case.

Yesterday, the HC began the proceedings of Ramna Batamul case with the state counsels reading out from the first information report of the case and statements from its witnesses.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Shahidul Karim also fixed today for resuming the hearing, Assistant Attorney General Md Nurul Islam Matubbar told The Daily Star.

A Dhaka court on June 23, 2014 handed down death penalty to eight militants of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), including its top leader Mufti Abdul Hannan Munshi, for killing 10 people in the attack on the Chhayanaut programme during Pahela Baishakh celebrations at Ramna Batamul in 2001.

Six other militants of the banned Islamist outfit were sentenced to life term imprisonment for involvement in the blasts.

Eight of the condemned accused filed nine appeals with the HC challenging the trial court verdict on them.