

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 29.0 IL 15.6	H 27.5 IL 13.5	H 30.9 IL 18.2	H 28.2 IL 13.9	H 28.4 IL 11.2	H 26.7 IL 12.4	H 29.2 IL 14.5	H 29.5 IL 14.4	H 31.8 IL 18.5

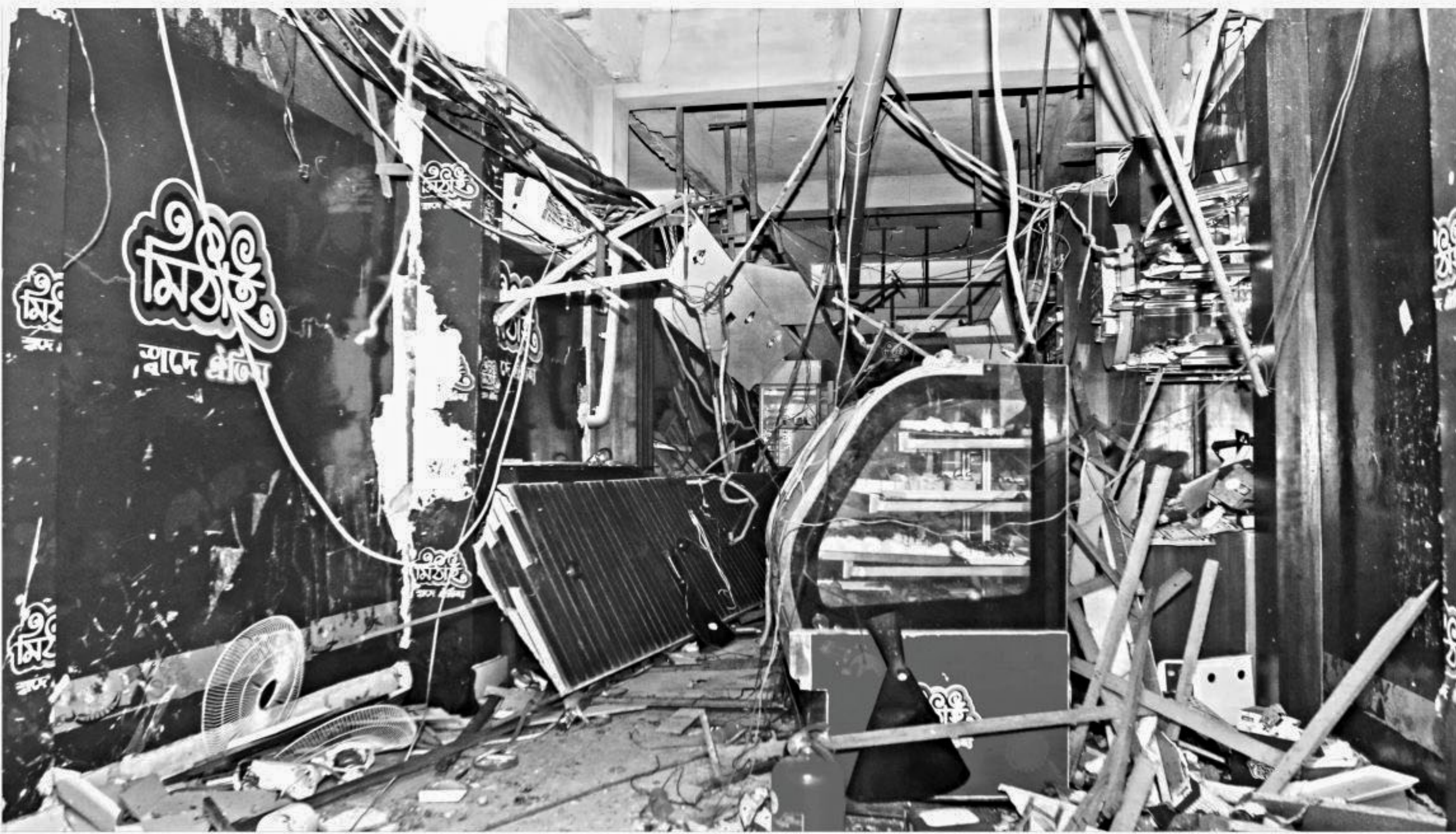
Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB. Night and day temperatures may remain nearly unchanged, says Met Office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:00pm and rises tomorrow at 6:22am. Country's highest temperature 32.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Sitakunda and lowest 9.7 in Sreemangal.

Saber meets Hungarian president

CITY DESK

Inter-Parliamentary Union President Saber Hossain Chowdhury called on Hungarian President Janos Ader at Sandor Palace, Budapest Friday, says a press release.

The follow up action on the recent Budapest Water Summit, which was attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was, among other issues, discussed. The Hungarian president raised the possibility of Bangladesh benefiting from Hungary's technology and know-how in arsenic mitigation. Saber along with Laszlo Kover, speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, also inaugurated a 2-day Regional Seminar on Sustainable Development Goals for Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



Broken pieces of furniture, walls and doors lay strewn inside Mithai, an eatery, at Lalbagh intersection in the city, after a refrigerator compressor apparently exploded there yesterday. Eight people were injured in the incident. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SNAPS & snippets

Elderly man 'tries' to rape 8-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

An elderly man allegedly attempted to rape an eight-year-old girl in Asulia of Savar on Friday evening.

Victim's mother said, one Hamed Ali Shikdar, 60, -- a neighbor -- took her daughter into his house luring her with chocolates while she was playing outside home.

As he tried to rape her, the girl started screaming and locals rushed there, said the mother.

However, Hamed managed to flee the scene.

Officer-in-Charge of Ashulia Police Station Mohsinul Kadir said they are trying to arrest Hamed.

Annular solar eclipse today

BSS, Dhaka

An annular eclipse of the sun will occur today, said sources at Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

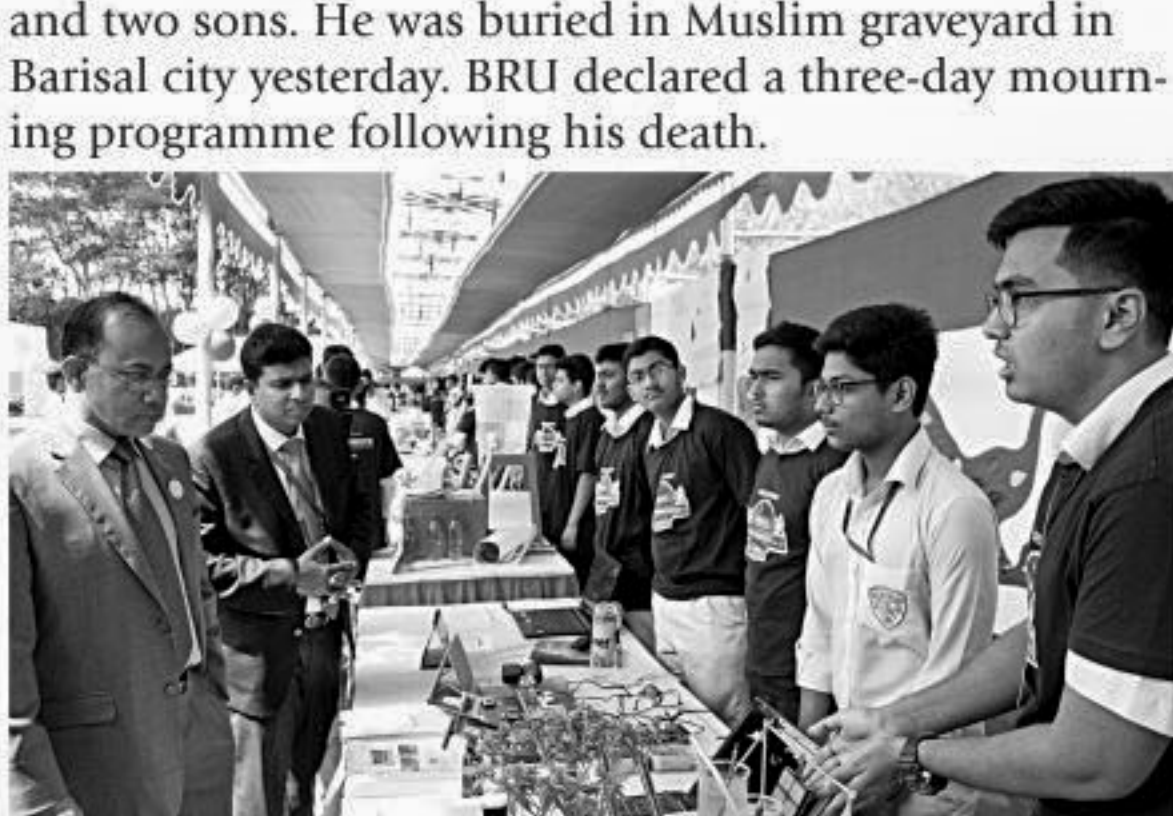
It will start at 6:10pm (BST) and end at 11:36pm. The central eclipse will begin at 7:16pm and end at 10:30pm and the greatest eclipse will occur at 8: 53pm.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Mir Maniruzzaman, editor of Barisalar Kotha, former president of Barisal Reporters Unity (BRU) and secretary of Barisal Press Club; died of a cardiac arrest at Vanga Upazila Health Complex in Faridpur on Friday. He was 53.

He left behind his wife, a daughter and two sons. He was buried in Muslim graveyard in Barisal city yesterday. BRU declared a three-day mourning programme following his death.



Visitors at a stall of the "3rd ACC National Science Festival-2017", organised by the NEUTRINO ACC Science Club of Adamjee Cantonment College, on its campus at Dhaka Cantonment. The four-day event started on Thursday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Death anniversary

CITY DESK

Today is the fifth death anniversary of Ali Ahsan Bacchu, former senior official of Pragoti Industries Ltd.

On the occasion, a milad and a doa mahfil will be held after the Asr prayers at Siddheshwari mosque in Dhaka, says a press release.

He is brother of Prof Ali Riaz of Illinois University, USA.

Ispahani reality show on Bangla to air soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Channel-I is going to air a knowledge-based reality show titled "Ispahani Mirzapore Banglabid (an expert of Bangla)" soon to motivate the young generation to use and practice Bangla language correctly.

Ispahani Group, one of the largest business conglomerates in the country, is the sponsor of the show to be aired in the middle of this year, where students of class VI-X will be able to participate after undergoing different tests -- including Bangla spelling, pronunciation and the correct use of grammar -- at divisional levels.

Interested students can register by sending SMS or at <http://banglabid.com>, said Ispahani officials at a press conference at the channel's office in the capital yesterday. Registration will continue until March 23.

Selection will start from March 24 in seven divisions, and the selected participants will appear at the final round on Channel-i, said Shantanu Biswas, chief operating officer of Ispahani Tea.

The winner will get a scholarship of Tk 10 lakh, and the first and second runners-up will get Tk 3 and Tk 2 lakh respectively. In addition, 10 other winners will receive a laptop each and books worth around Tk 50,000, and bookshelves to create personal libraries.

Channel-i Managing Director Faridur Reza Sagar, Ispahani Foods Ltd Managing Director Sajid Ispahani and language hero Ahmad Rafique, among others, also spoke.

Expats to get MRPs in 7 days

Says Asaduzzaman Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi citizens abroad will receive their Machine Readable Passports (MRPs) within seven days, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said yesterday.

Bangladeshi nationals abroad usually receive their MRPs in two to three months after submission of their applications, as the passports were sent through diplomatic bags, the minister said.

"We have now signed a deal with the Federal Express (FedEx) courier service...which is able to send passports to our foreign embassies within three days and the Bangladeshis living abroad will get their passports within maximum seven days," the minister said.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of "Passport Service Week-2017" at the Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) office in the capital.

As part of upgrading passport services, the minister said that they are about to introduce passports having a validity of 10 years. He, however, said the facilities would be introduced for a certain age group.

Asked about underhand financial dealings by officials of the special branch (SB) of police during verification of passport applicants' addresses, the minister said actions are always taken against the corrupt personnel if found guilty.

However, showing logics for verification by the SB, the minister said it is also necessary to avoid providing passports to militants or criminals.

No militants will be allowed to leave or enter the country, he said, adding that immigration officials were working on it.

Apart from this, Bangladesh has taken steps to launch e-passport service to curb corruption, the minister said.

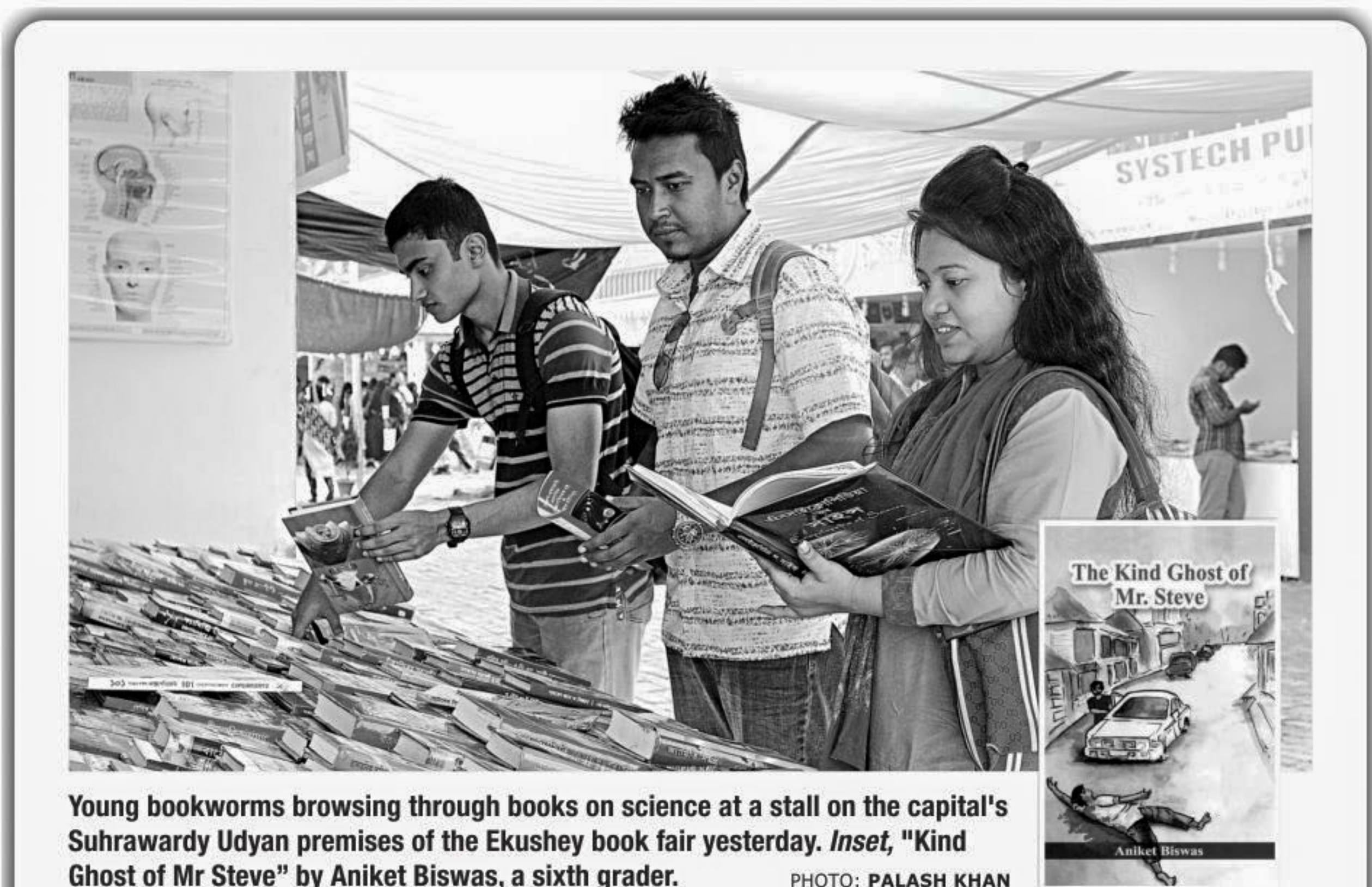
Maj Gen Masud Rezwana, director general (DG) of the DIP, said they are providing passport and Machine Readable Visa (MRV) facilities from 71 passport offices of 64 districts, MRP-MRV wings of 65 foreign missions and seven visa cells.

A total of 1.64 crore MRPs and 4.5 lakh MRVs have been provided so far, he said, adding that revenue worth Tk 8,000 crore had been earned from it.

He demanded that manpower and incentive service for the officials, who are providing best effort, be increased.

Farid Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, secretary of public security services of the home ministry, spoke as special guest.

According to DIP officials, presently 15,000 to 18,000 passports are being printed daily.



Young bookworms browsing through books on science at a stall at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan premises of the Ekushey book fair yesterday. Inset, "Kind Ghost of Mr Steve" by Aniket Biswas, a sixth grader. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Make voice louder to claim water

Seminar urges govt on water-sharing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To get fair share of water from the trans-boundary rivers, the voice of Bangladesh should get louder and its bargaining capacity with the neighbouring countries enhanced, said discussants at a seminar yesterday.

Political commitment and sincere efforts of a government are crucial in this regard, they told a seminar titled "Water Sharing Problems in Himalayan Region: Search for a Sustainable Model", organised by the South Asia Youth for Peace and Prosperity Society, in the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

Former water resources minister Hafizuddin Ahmed said no government could raise the demand boldly during negotiation with the neighbouring nations. He urged the young generation to conduct movements to mount pressure on the government to this effect. Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder Dr Zafullah Chowdhury said Bangladesh is deprived of just share of water by the neighbouring countries. Former environment minister Mostafa Jamal Haider proposed for launching a mass signature campaign and placing an application with the signatures to the prime minister.

Ex-ambassador Ashfaqur Rahman suggested that the government strategically pressurise the neighbouring countries. Prof SI Khan, former environment and disaster management planner of the UN, said the Himalayan region is characterised by numerous river basins.

Nat'l Committee supports

FROM PAGE 4

programmes had faced police obstruction in the last six months. He said they will continue their movement against the power plant and will hold rallies in coastal areas in the first week of April. The National Committee leaders Tipu Biswas, Bazlur Rashid Firoz, Moshrefa Mishu, among others, spoke.

Meanwhile, police in Chittagong obstructed a sit-in programme of the National Committee on the road in front of Chittagong Press Club.

Cops locked into a scuffle with the National Committee activists and tried to snatch their banner while they were assembling on the press club premises at 11:30am, the protesters said. The committee leaders claimed three activists -- Arifuzzaman, Shawkat Ali and Md Rabin -- were injured as police charged baton on them.

Denying the allegations, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Jasim Uddin of Kotwali Police Station, said, "They (committee activists) tried to hold the programme on the road obstructing the vehicular movement. We just moved them from the street."

Similar programmes were held in Khulna, Narayanganj, Bogra and Gaibandha, report our correspondents.

Science fiction pulls in young readers

MATHEWS CHIRAN

The tree of literature has many branches, and science fiction remains one of the strongest.

Like all other forms of fiction, a good science fiction is about people, which focuses and examines the human condition, may be in a new landscape, or from an "alien" perspective.

This "literature of ideas" not only proposes a futuristic vision but also asks readers questions about themselves and their destinations dissolving the boundaries of past, present and beyond.

Like previous years, the Ekushey book fair with its array of science fiction (SF) books -- by famous writers from both home and abroad -- offers readers a unique opportunity to enrich their literary experience.

Yesterday being a weekly holiday, bookworms, especially the young ones, were seen flocking the stalls searching for new SF books at the Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy premises of the fair.

"I like to read science fiction as it opens the door to the unknown," said Sadia Afrin Moury, a seventh grader at AK High School and College.

Avid SF reader Nanziba Momo, a tenth grader at Viharunnisa School and College, came to the fair to buy books of her favourite author Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal.

"She enjoys reading science fiction since she was small," said her father Sayed Khan, a private job holder.

Zafar Iqbal's new book "Ritin" from Tamralipi publication was much sought after.

Besides, "Alina" by Tanzila Hossain from Prothoma publication; "Matra" by Dhruvo Esh and "Tritiya Anubhuti" by Tasruzzaman Babu from Somoy publication; and "Arek Prithibi" by Md Monirul Huda from Kotha Prakash were in high demand.

Booklovers were also buying Humayun Ahmed's SF collections. The wordsmith's "Manobi" and "Ditiya Manob" are still favourites among the fans.

Apart from science fictions, books based on science also drew readers' attention.

"Beginnings: The Story of Origins", a book on history of science for youths, by Isaac Asimov, is a must buy for science enthusiasts, said Moshir Rahman, publisher of Sriyani publication.

Besides, "Black Hole" by Sisir Kumar Bhattacharya, "A Small History of Nearly Everything" by Bill Bryson and "Bibartaner Path Dhore" by Bannya Ahmed were much in demand at Aboshar publication.

There were also books written by children at the book fair. "Kappi's Friend", published from Good Life Publications, by Sreyo Ghand, a fourth grader, and "Kind Ghost of Mr Steve" by Aniket Biswas, a sixth grader at Maple Leaf International School, were creating a lot of buzz among the young booklovers.

Police stop seminar on border killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday stopped a seminar on border killing organised in the capital by People's Movement for Democracy, a pro-BNP professionals' platform.

Acting editor of Bangla daily Amar Desh Mahmudur Rahman was supposed to present key note paper at the seminar titled "Border Killing: Responsibility of the State" organised at Spectra Convention Centre. Forhad Mazhar was the moderator.

Attended by around a hundred people, the event started around 10:00am when some Gulshan police members took entry and requested organisers to cancel the seminar as they did not take permission from police for the event.

Police said they were instructed by the higher authorities, but did not mention who the authorities were.

Population density should match civic amenities

Experts tell discussion on new DAP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To implement Dhaka's detailed area plan (DAP), its population density has to be in proportion to the civic amenities, said leading urban planners at a discussion in the capital yesterday.

Size of a city and its growth rate are determined by the size of population, they said, adding, a healthy urban living depends on adequate civic service facilities -- health, education, water, drainage, open spaces and transportation.

Population density is not being effectively controlled based on the floor area ratio (FAR) and maximum ground coverage (MCG), said Salma A Shafi, vice-president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP).

The institute organised the discussion on "Density Planning for the DAP" on its premises.

"Dhaka is a city with the highest density but lowest liveability," said BIP General Secretary Prof Md Akter Mahmud.

At present, population density in the revised 1,624-square-km area of Dhaka master plan is controlled primarily by FAR provision of the building construction rules that allow vertical growth of buildings leaving some open space.

But under this regulation, the density of population went up compared to the facilities, the experts said.

As a result, living quality went down, said Md Ashrafur Islam, Rajuk deputy town planner and project director of DAP.

This trend should be tailored by desired population size per unit of land -- 350 people per acre or six people per Katha -- for a healthy living and sustainable economic growth, he added.

"It has to be examined how much housing is really needed in the capital and on what rationale the designated wetlands, flood flow zone and agricultural lands have been converted," he said.

The DAP boss said they are scrutinising the survey reports for the final plan.

Pointing to the usefulness of people's participation in the planning process, he said the locals came up with the idea of connecting a canal from Ashkona with the proposed 100 feet canal along the 300 feet road for the neighbourhood's drainage solution.

BIP President Prof AKM Abul Kalam conducted the discussion.