



YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
H 31.6 L 17.0	H 29.0 L 15.5	H 29.2 L 18.0	H 30.5 L 15.9	H 33.4 L 14.4	H 29.6 L 15.0	H 32.7 L 18.0	H 32.2 L 16.2	H 31.0 L 19.3

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rangpur division with hails at isolated places, reports UNB. Day temperature may rise slightly and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, says Met Office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:09pm and rises tomorrow at 6:04am.

Rehman Sobhan an inspiration and living legend

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politicians, economists, and civil society members yesterday praised Prof Rehman Sobhan as an inspirational figure and pro-people economist and recalled his contribution to nation building.

They said his projection on the economic disparity between the two parts of Pakistan had inspired the young generation to fight against the inequality and wage a struggle that led to Bangladesh's independence from West Pakistan in 1971.

The words of appreciation came at a programme where the economist was felicitated by Bangla daily Bonik Barta and think-tank Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

It was held at Sonargaon hotel in the capital Thursday night.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said Prof Sobhan fought against the economic disparity in the two parts of Pakistan. As a young university teacher, he inspired his students through his writings, Muhith said.

The minister said Sobhan was a member of the panel of economists to review the Third and Fourth Five Year Plans of Pakistan, which he still used.

Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said Prof Sobhan was a source of inspiration for them. "He is a living legend."

Eminent lawyer and politician Dr Kamal Hossain narrated the story of how Prof Sobhan

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A boy sits atop a suitcase -- all that his family was able to save, after a fire broke out at the capital's Korail slum early Thursday. The fire gutted at least thousand houses and rendered several hundred of families homeless. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Korail fire leaves hundreds homeless

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Holding their little babies, women huddled together in small groups for warmth, sitting under the bare sky.

When they went to bed on Thursday, they had a home, small savings and valuables.

But a devastating fire that broke out around 2:45 in the morning at Korail slum in the capital's Mohakhali gutted at least thousand houses and rendered hundreds of families homeless.

According to Brac, the number of families is at least 4,000.

When the fire started, all the slum dwellers could do was to run through the narrow alleys to save their lives. When they returned, their belongings were reduced to ashes with smoke still swirling from it.

"We are left with nothing," lamented Younus Miah, a security guard living in the slum for 23 years.

Seeing flames engulfing his neighbourhood, the 60-year-old ran outside carrying his 95-year-old mother. "I took her (mother) to a safer place. When I returned, my three rooms were burnt to ashes," said Younus.

Kalam Bali was staring at the burnt remnants of what used to be his home. "It was all I had," said the 42-year-old.

Yesterday, the day labourer was able to find a place amid the ruins for his five-member family to get some rest. He said he used some polythene sheets as a shade. "I don't know how I will be able to rebuild with my meagre income?"

Visiting the area yesterday, this

correspondent saw many of the victims were busy clearing the ashes, while some sat on the ground not sure yet what the future holds.

Some NGOs were assisting them with primary aid, but those were not adequate, said the locals, adding that there were scarcity of food and drinking water.

Many children could not attend schools as their study materials were burnt. Some NGO-run schools were also gutted in the fire, they added.

Not only the shanty dwellers, many shop owners also lost their businesses due to the fire.

Two months earlier, Rafiq, 48, and his son Sujon, 20, opened up a stationary shop investing Tk 2 lakh, which was also gutted.

"I had to borrow some money to start the business," said Rafiq. "I

don't know what will happen now."

A middle-aged couple Khalil and Nasima used to run wholesale grocery business. "We invested around Tk 7 lakh. Everything is gone..." Nasima could not finish the sentence.

Like her, most of the residents in Korail Boubazar slum are small business owners, garment workers or day labourers.

"We are on the process of making a list of the victims," said Mofizur Rahman, local ward councillor.

Several NGOs are also helping to prepare the list, said a Brac official, adding that the list will be made by tomorrow.

On December 4 last year, some 526 shanties were destroyed in another fire that engulfed a section of Korail Boubazar slum and rendered about 2,000 people homeless.

SNAPS & snippets

Four Jamaat, Shibir men arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested four Jamaat-Shibir leaders and activists with eight Molotov cocktails, two crude bombs and 300 grams of gunpowder at Koroi Krishi College when they were planning to carry out subversive activities in Joypurhat Sadar upazila on Thursday late night, said police.

Shah Alam, 40, secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Joypurhat Sadar upazila unit, Nahidul Islam Nahid, president of Islami Chhatra Shibir Amdoi union unit, and Rabiul Islam and Masudul Alam, Jamaat and Shibir activists respectively, are accused in different arson cases, police added.

BU opens daycare centre

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal University (BU) has set up a daycare centre for the children of the teachers and staff on its campus in Karnakathi area of Barisal Sadar upazila yesterday.

Dr SM Imamul Haque, vice chancellor of BU, inaugurated the centre, which will cater for the needs of 50 children, on the third floor of the university's administration building.

Pro-AL panel sweeps bar polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Awami League-backed lawyers' panel Sammitito Ainjibi Samannay Parishad has bagged all the 15 posts in the bi-annual elections of the Lalmonirhat District Bar Association.

The election was held at the bar association's conference room on Thursday where 122 voters cast their votes.

Safura Begum Rumi was elected president while Najrul Islam Raju became the vice president.



Children cut a cake at a children's park at Nayatola in Moghbazar area of the capital yesterday evening, marking Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birthday. Local ward councillor Foyzul Munir Chowdhury organised the programme.

PHOTO: STAR



Prof Rehman Sobhan receives a citation from BIDS Director General KAS Murshid, right, and Bonik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud, left, while Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Prof Sobhan's wife Prof Rounaq Jahan look on, during a programme at Sonargaon hotel in the capital Thursday night. Bangla daily Bonik Barta and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) felicitated the economist for his contribution to nation building.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Uphold

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She also released a commemorative postage stamp marking the 97th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki spoke at the programme as a special guest, with a fifth-grader Upama Biswas in the chair. Her classmate Faiyaz Mohammad Abdullah delivered the address of welcome.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh missions abroad also celebrated the 97th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with due solemnity and festivity, reports our correspondent.

Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Mumbai, India; Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand; Bangladesh Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal; and Bangladesh Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan organised various programmes including discussions, seminars and art competitions to mark the day.

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTHDAY

Shiekh Rehana revisits memories

BSS, Dhaka

Bangabandhu's younger daughter Shiekh Rehana yesterday shared her childhood memories with her father in interactions with children who visited the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

She said Bangabandhu was deprived of the simple pleasures of parenthood like taking his children to school as most of the time he had to languish in jail "when we were minor children".

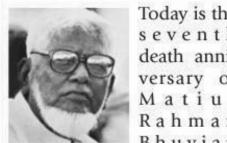
"When I was a young child like you, my father used to be in jail most of the times, fighting for the country," she told the interaction organised by the Centre for Research and Information marking Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 97th birth anniversary at his Dhanmondi 32 residence, now turned into a memorial museum.

"Most of the time I used to go alone, or my mother used to take me to school. In the exceptional times, when our father was not in jail, I used to urge him to take me to school," she said. "Because he was so rarely around, and spent most of his time in jail, whenever he was home, we used to really enjoy talking to him, listening to his stories of jail, being fed by him and play with him."

Rehana asked children to learn more about the great personalities like Bangabandhu to learn "how to help people, to sacrifice... and how to stand beside those who can't help themselves".

Death anniversary

CITY DESK



Today is the seventh death anniversary of Matiur Rahman Bhuiyan

(Mati Master), an organiser of the War of Liberation and educationist of Keraniganj in Dhaka, says a press release.

Mati Master, father of former secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Abdul Jalil Bhuyian, passed away due to old age complications at his residence at village Bhawal Monoharia in Keraniganj on this day in 2010 at the age of 91.

On the occasion, prayers will be offered at his grave at Joynagar graveyard after Zohr prayers and a milad mahfil will be held at Bhawal Purbapara Jame Masjid near Ati Bhawal High School in Keraniganj after Asr prayers on the day.

Road crash kills one, injures two

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A motorcyclist was killed and his two co-riders were injured as a goods-carrying truck rammed his vehicle on the Thakurgaon-Panchagarh highway in Kochubari village under Thakurgaon Sadar on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Manik, 28, of Salondar Chowdhuryhaat village under the upazila. He died on the spot.

Following the accident, agitated locals blocked the highway.

On information, fire-fighters and police rushed to the spot and recovered the body after removing the barricade.

SHITALAKKHYA RIVER

Pollution killing fish

UNB, Dhaka

Shankar Das, aged around 65, of Ispahani Jelepara in Bandar area of Narayanganj, has been catching fish in the river Shitalakkhya since he was 10, but now he is facing hard time for lack of fish in the river waters. Water pollution forces fish to disappear from the river.

Fishing is his only occupation like other fishermen to bear the expenses of his family. But, he is now thinking of leaving the occupation since he cannot catch fish from the river for their survival.

"Fish have disappeared fast in the Shitalakkhya where I used to catch fish. We experience scarcity of fish over the last 6-7 years," said Shankar.

Noting that a fishing boat is his only dependence, he said he frequently goes to the river to catch fish using nets, but he fails to find any. "I may catch poor amount of fish from the river, but this is not enough to lead our life. That's why my family has been suffering a lot."

Altam Miah, 77, another fisherman

of Laksmankhula area in the district, said once he used to catch fish from the river using fishing anchors, but now he does not put anchors in the river to catch fish as there is no fish in the river.

He said sitting on both the riverbanks many people had caught fish from the river using fishing anchors in the past, but the scenario is completely different now as fish rapidly disappeared from it.

Like Shankar Das and Alfat, all professional fishermen experience the same fate. The netting of fish is not seen in the river nowadays. Many of them have already quit their occupation due to disappearance of fish in the river, caused by water pollution.

Locals say a large number of unplanned factories were set up on the banks of the Shitalakkhya and those are continuously discharging waste into the river, putting aquatic animals at stake. Continued discharge of chemical waste from the factories and release of oil from water vessels have made the river water extremely polluted, they said.

They said dead fish are often found

in the river and if water pollution continues, fish species will totally disappear from the Shitalakkhya in near future.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), dissolved oxygen (DO) level in water should be 6 parts per million (ppm) for the survival of aquatic species, including fish, in water. But, the DO level is found about at 2 ppm in the Shitalakkhya during monsoon and it reaches almost zero level in dry season.

Encroachment and pollution of the river force its fish into disappearance. Major portions of both banks of the 110-kilometre river, which flows through Narsigndi, Gazipur and Narayanganj and falls into the Dhaleswari River in Munshiganj, has been brought under industrialisation over the years.

A large number of factories, including a fertiliser one, thermal power plant, textiles and dyeing, have been set up along the river from Ghorashal to Munshiganj through encroachment and those are polluting the river.



Top, A car lies in a maize field after its driver lost control over the steering while speeding on the Dhaka-Mawa Highway yesterday. Three injured passengers were admitted to a hospital while the driver, who sustained minor injuries in one of his legs, after being treated was left near the scene, bottom left. Reckless driving and unfit vehicles on highways continue to cause accidents with no visible stop to them, bottom right.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN