

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 34.0 L 21.3	MYMENSINGH H 23.6 L 23.5	CHITTAGONG H 32.2 L 26.9	SYLHET H 31.9 L 20.7	RAJSHAHI H 38.4 L 26.5	RANGPUR H 34.0 L 23.4	KHULNA H 35.8 L 27.6	BARISAL H 33.2 L 27.3	COX'S BAZAR H 31.7 L 27.5
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Rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over Sylhet division and at one or two places over Dhaka, Mymensingh and Chittagong divisions till 6:00pm today. Met Office said, reports UNB. Day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 06:26pm and rises tomorrow at 05:27am.

Trial of five Patuakhali war crimes suspects begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trial of five war crimes accused of Patuakhali began yesterday with the prosecution placing the opening statement in a case filed against them for allegedly committing crimes during the 1971 Liberation War. Prosecutor Zead Al Malum read summary of the opening statement before the tribunal fixed May 2 for recording the testimony of the first prosecution witness. The tribunal on March 8 framed two charges against the five after the prosecution pressed the charges against them on October 13 last year.

The accused -- Esaahq Shikder, 83, Abdul Goni Hawlader, 72, Md Awal alias Awal Moulavi, 69, Abdus Sattar Pyada, 65, and Solaiman Mridha, 86, of Patuakhali Sadar upazila -- are in jail.

Of them, Esaahq was a member of Patuakhali Peace Committee while the other four were members of Razakar Bahini, according to the prosecution.

According to the charges, on May 4, 1971, the five along with a group of Pakistani army killed 17 people of Itbaria village, torched and looted 21 houses, and abducted six children, and 15 women, whom they confined to Patuakhali Circuit House and raped for 10 days.

Meanwhile, the tribunal yesterday allowed a prosecution's petition to interrogate a war crimes accused from Jessore at Dhaka Central Jail.

As per the order, investigator will be allowed to interrogate Siddiqui Rahman Gazi, 68, of Harergati village in the district's Monirampur upazila, for one day on May 7, Prosecutor Rezia Sultana Chaman told The Daily Star.

Siddiqui, a "sub-commander" of Razakar Bahini under Monirampur Police Station, was shown arrested in the case on December 15 last year.



From left, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) removes debris left behind by street vendors after they were evicted from sidewalks near New Market area in the capital. A view of the sidewalk across Gausia Market after the eviction drive. The photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Resolve Rohingya crisis bilaterally

Visiting Chinese special envoy urges Dhaka

China, which has strong relations with both Myanmar and Bangladesh, has asked Bangladesh to resolve the current diplomatic tension with Myanmar over Rohingya crisis bilaterally.

Chinese special envoy Sun Guoxiang, who began a four-day visit to Bangladesh on Tuesday, had several meetings with top diplomats at the foreign ministry and other government policymakers for bringing out a peaceful solution to the crisis.

In response to Beijing proposal, Dhaka put forward three conditions in which China can influence Myanmar for permanent solutions to the Rohingya crisis. The conditions are: Myanmar must take back all

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4-hr surveillance can check child drowning: Study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The death of children under five from drowning can be checked if they are kept under proper surveillance between 9:00am and 1:00pm, when their parents normally remain busy with work, says a study.

During the period, children who remain active in community day care centres have lower rates of drowning, it says.

The study report was revealed at a seminar on "Saving of Lives from Drowning" (SoLiD) project at a city hotel yesterday.

With financial support from the Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit (JI-IIRU) in the USA, in collaboration with the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh

(icddr), conducted the study on SoLiD project during 2012-15. SoLiD project was an implementation study conducted to test the large-scale effectiveness of evidence-based interventions to prevent childhood drowning in rural Bangladesh.

Under the project, a total of 51,244 playpens were distributed and 3,205 "anchals" were established in 51 unions of the seven upazilas (Raiganj, Manohardi, Sherpur, Matlab North, Matlab South, Chandpur, and Daudkandi). Over 1.2 million people were under active injury surveillance during the two-year implementation period, including 122,023 children aged between one and four years.

An anchal is a day care centre managed by a trained "Anchal Ma (mother)" (supervisor) who provides institutional supervision of childcare when their mother is away.

The incidence of drowning was more than eight times lower for

children aged between two and four years who were enrolled in anchals, said the study report.

"The mortality rate for drowning decreased from 105.4 per 100,000 children in the beginning of the study to 43 per 100,000 after the two year implementation period of the study," the report added.

Around 15,000 children die from drowning annually in the country including 9,000 aged 1-4, according to Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey 2016. The report also said most of the incidents of drowning take place when unsupervised children, mostly aged 1-4 fall into ponds near their homes. Some 75 percent of the incidents occur within 20 metres of the home, usually between the 9:00am and 1:00pm, when parents are busy with work.

Speaking in the seminar, experts suggested replicating anchals -- a unique approach to provide children's safety.

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Teenage girls shy away from reproductive health clinics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As sexual and reproductive health is considered a taboo in the society, teenage girls, especially unmarried ones, feel discomfort and embarrassment in seeking medical services for these issues at Adolescent-friendly Health Corners (AFHC).

Many teenagers told researchers that the instance of an adolescent or teenage girl going to an AFHC is perceived as the girl being pregnant or having complications in her reproductive system.

"Even if the health service providers go to their houses, people ask them about the reasons," said the study, quoting a 17-year-old girl as saying.

Population Council conducted the study titled "Adolescent-friendly Health Corners (AFHCs) in Selected Government Health Facilities in Bangladesh: An early Qualitative Assessment". The study was conducted to measure performance and effectiveness of the AFHCs for the wellbeing

of unmarried adolescent girls.

The outcome of the study -- supported by UNFPA, conducted on 10 AFHCs in Moulvibazar, Thakurgaon, Sirajganj, Patuakhali, and Cox's Bazar between August and October 2016 -- was revealed at a program at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday.

So far, the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), in partnership with development partners, has set up a total of 127 AFHCs at Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHC) and Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (UHFWC).

The DGFP has plans to expand the facilities in all the unions across the country in five years.

The initiative to provide reproductive and sexual health services to teenagers was undertaken against the backdrop of nearly 59 percent girls in Bangladesh getting married before they reach 18 years of age.

More than 4.5 crore or 31 percent of the

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Legal aid people's right, not govt's generosity

NHRC chief tells SC Legal Aid Committee discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque yesterday said the cases against the people awaiting trial in jail custody should be disposed of quickly.

There is no need for expanding the accommodation capacity of the jails, as a very little number of convicted prisoners are in custody, he said, adding, the human rights of the people languishing in jails for a long time without trial are being violated.

He made the remarks while speaking at a discussion on "The experience of the legal aid services at the Supreme Court and the role of NGOs" at the Supreme Court conference room.

The Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee (SCLAC) organised the meeting with its Chairman Justice M Enayetur Rahim in the chair on the occasion of National Legal Aid Day to be observed tomorrow.

The NHRC chairman said getting legal aid is a right of the people, not a generosity

of the government. SCLAC chairman said the NGOs can play a role in rehabilitating the people who get released from jails after a long period.

Every day, around 25 poor and destitute legal aid seekers approach the SCLAC office for legal assistance and they are provided with legal support after hearing their statements, the High Court judge told the meeting.

Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam said a fund needs to be raised for the NGOs to rehabilitate the people who are released from jail after languishing in custody for long periods.

The NGOs have a scope to play a role in rehabilitating them, she said, adding that it would not be sustainable if the government does not play the key role in this regard.

The jail authorities have informed the SCLAC that 462 people have been languishing in jails with little progress in trial proceedings of cases against them and 58 of them have been in custody from five to 10 years and SCLAC has taken initiative to give

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BNP not anti-Indian: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday claimed their party is not "anti-Indian", rather it is vocal in its demand for safeguarding national interests.

"BNP does politics for protecting the rights and interests of the country and its people. Should we be branded as anti-Indian as we raise our voice to realise our justified rights from India? We're never against India and its people," he said.

Fakhrul came up with the remarks while speaking at a discussion arranged by Muktiyuddha Ziaur Rahman Research Council at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

He also unveiled the cover of a book on Ziaur Rahman.

He said their party wants a change in power through acceptable polls.



A 100CC CAR! Mizanur Rahman from Sharsha upazila of Jessore has built a car from a 100cc capacity engine of a motorcycle. His project won the first prize in a contest of the National Science and Technology Museum. The car can run 30-35km on a litre of octane. If the fuel runs out, the vehicle uses electricity. The photo of the car with Mizanur behind the wheel was taken in front of the museum yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



A bulldozer of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) removes concrete planter blocks from the footpath in front of the boundary wall of Australian high commission on northern Gulshan Avenue in the capital yesterday following agreement reached between the DNCC and embassy officials. In a bid to ease pedestrian movement, the DNCC has already removed similar obstructive materials placed alongside sidewalks around the boundary walls of American embassy, Canadian high commission and mission offices of Italy, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Haor people need rehabilitation

Brac press conference told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Public representatives and development workers at a press conference in the capital yesterday said inhabitants of flashflood-hit Haor areas need immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation as their livelihood has been affected badly.

They said the early flashflood hit vast low lands in several districts including Sunamganj and Kishorganj and damaged their only crop paddy entirely while fish and fowls also died.

Development organisation Brac held the press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Speaking at the conference, newly elected Sunamganj-2 lawmaker Joya Sengupta said around 2.72 lakh people were affected in the two upazilas -- Dirai and Sulla -- under her constituency. In Dirai, 20,000 hectares of agricultural lands were inundated while in Sulla it is 18, 160 hectares, she said.

"Very few of Haor people have alternative source of income. They need a little support to rise again," she added.

Gawher Nayeem Wahra, director of the Brac Disaster Management and Climate Change programme, said

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