

YESTERDAY'S  
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA 32.2°C 24.6 MYMENSINGH 30.7°C 24.1 CHITTAGONG 30.8°C 23.7 SYLHET 28.0°C 23.5 RAJSHAHI 35.4°C 23.8 RANGPUR 32.2°C 25.5 KHULNA 33.0°C 23.6 BARISAL 32.4°C 23.2 COX'S BAZAR 31.6°C 23.5

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at most places over Chittagong, Myymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at many places over Rangpur, Barisal, Rajshahi, and Dhaka divisions and at a few places over Khulna division with moderately heavy to very heavy falls at places over the country till 6:00pm today. Day temperature may rise slightly and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said, reports UNB. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:43pm and rises tomorrow at 05:11am.

Hefajat out to malign country's secular image

Says Shahriar Kabir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qawmi madrasa-based Islamist organisation Hefajat-e-Islam is trying to malign the secular image of the country by demanding demolition of sculptures, war crimes trial campaigner Shahriar Kabir said yesterday.

He also criticised the government, saying the government acted tough after the Hefajat-led May 5 mayhem at Shapla Chattar in Dhaka in 2013, but it has moved away from the position. "The government should explain why it has become soft on a fundamentalist and terrorist organisation like Hefajat."

Addressing a press conference, the president of Ekattorer Ghatai Dalal Nirmul Committee also demanded a judicial investigation into the bribery allegation against Shyamal Kanti Bhakta, a

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**Bangladesh Navy rescues 24 more survivors from the Bay**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Navy has rescued 24 more missing survivors from the Bay of Bengal during its search and rescue operations following cyclone Mora, which caused widespread destruction and rendered thousands of people homeless.

Navy ships -- Dhaleshwari and Aparajeyo -- spotted the fishermen floating in the sea. They were picked up from Elephant Point and near Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar, said an ISPR press release yesterday.

The rescued fisherman were in good health and handed over to Patenga Police Station on Thursday evening, it added.

Earlier on Tuesday, BNS Khadem rescued 20 fishermen from a boat which went out of order in deep-sea.

Apart from the Bangladesh Navy, Indian Navy ship Sumitra, an offshore patrol vessel, carrying disaster relief materials, rescued 33 Bangladeshi survivors from the Bay, some 90 nautical miles south of Chittagong on Wednesday.

Since after the cyclone, 18 Bangladesh Navy ships, a helicopter and patrol aircrafts have continued search and rescue operations in the coastal areas and deep sea.

The Navy ships in five groups continued search and rescue operations in the entire maritime area of Bangladesh simultaneously.

Side by side, the Bangladesh Navy also continued relief operation and medical services among the affected people in Kutubdia and Saint Martin's Island.

# Blissful Ctg lacks free public spaces

ARUN BIKASH DEY and SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, Ctg

## SEVEN PARKS FOR 60 LAKH RESIDENTS

Newlywed Dipak Nandi and his wife went to Jatisangha Park (UN Park) recently on a Friday. As soon as the couple entered the place in the port city's Panchlaish area, they were welcomed by heaps of mud and scattered garbage instead of greenery and open space. To them, the place looked more like a landfill.

The couple then decided to try their luck at Abhoy Mitra Ghat -- a much sought-after spot for city dwellers to enjoy fresh air by the banks of the Karnaphuli river in Sadarghat area.

"But it was overcrowded," said Dipak. "Also, hawkers were forcing us to buy unhygienic food at a higher price. When we refused, they started harassing us."

He said they had to leave the spot due to the harassment. "I went to the Ghat last week also but could not find a place to sit as it was swarming with people."

Though Chittagong is a city to which nature has endowed all its beauties, the dwellers are deprived of parks and planned recreational places.

As a result, people, especially children, are unable to spend their pastimes in a healthy way.

During a recent visit to Abhoy Mitra Ghat, these correspondents saw some hermaphrodites realising money from visitors but did not find any police patrol team to stop them.

Contacted, Saleh Mohammad Tanvir, additional commissioner (crime and operation) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, said they did not receive any complaint of public nuisance by hawkers or hermaphrodites in the area.

"We will look into the matter. If necessary, a patrol team will be deployed in the area," he added.

On the other hand, Jatisangha Park has been left in a sorry state for the last two years for renovation work. For that reason, Biplob Udyan remains overcrowded. Laldighi Park is the only park where people from all walks of life can still relax.

Azizul Islam, a resident of Panchlaish, who went to Jatisangha Park last Saturday, said, "Earth was piled up all around as if it was a garbage depot."

Meanwhile, Mou Ahmed, a mother of one from Patenga, said, "Besides Patenga beach, we don't have that many suitable places where we can enjoy with our children."

"Only names of restaurants come to mind when we think of spending time with families. No wonder children are becoming addicted to junk food and video games since they don't have anywhere to go."

## REPLACING PARKS, FIELDS

The government is constructing a park on Jamburi field, in place of the playground. In addition, on December 24 last year, Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain after visiting the under-construction "Jamburi Park" told reporters that a novo-theatre will be made in place of Karnaphuli Shishu Park in Agrabad.

On December 26 the same year, CCC Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin at a programme said the city corporation would construct a Liberation War memorial at the place of Kazir Dewri Shishu Park. However, he did not elaborate when the memorial would be constructed.

The civil society members and social scientists criticised both the initiatives terming those "unplanned".

"It is unfortunate that the minister declared to construct a novo-theatre in place of a children's park," said social scientist and Vice Chancellor of Premier University, Chittagong Prof Dr Anupam Sen.

"A park is more important than a novo-theatre," he said. "Our children already don't have suitable recreational places... All the open grounds are being occupied."

"If we fail to provide them with open spaces and parks for their proper mental development, can we later blame them for their derailment?" he asked.

About the Jamburi field, he said playgrounds should exist to ensure healthy upbringing of a child. Parks should be constructed somewhere else, he said.

Freedom fighter and Liberation War researcher Dr Mahfuzur Rahman said Chittagong is not a "children friendly" city as it is already short on parks.

The city should have at least 10 parks

with free access for all, he said.

## WHAT THE MAYOR SAYS

Contacted, CCC Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin said he is trying to make the city clean and green. "We have taken various initiatives to this end."

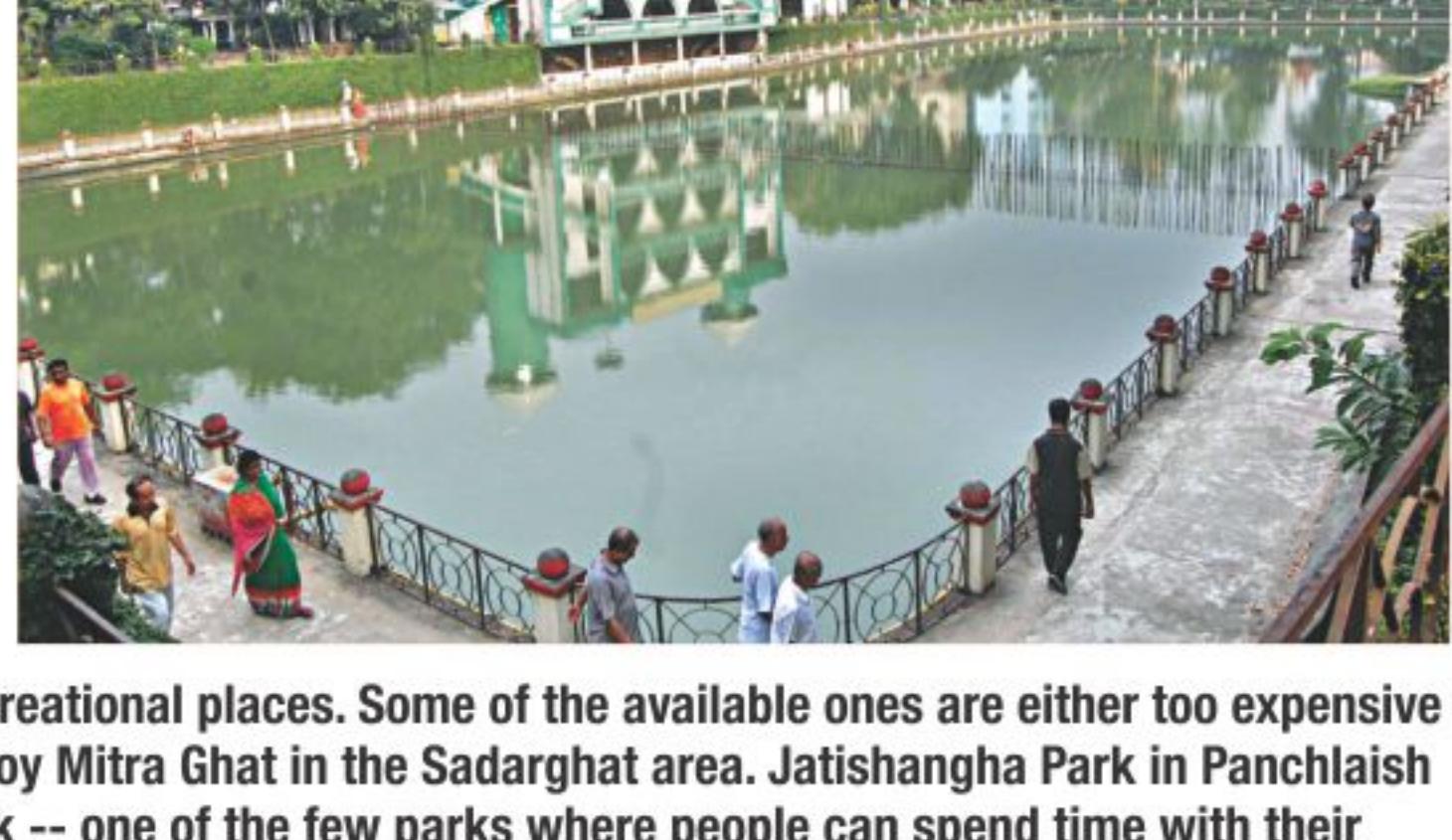
"An initiative has been taken to make the footpaths -- from Kazir Dewri intersection to Nur Ahmed Road, along the Chittagong Outer Stadium -- green and eye-catching," he said.

"Also, there will be other facilities under the project for people to pass their leisure time. We have also planned to create recreational spots in different areas of the city," he said.

Asked about the derelict state of Jatisangha Park, Nasir said when the CCC took an initiative to renovate the park last year, some locals filed a case against the move. As the case is now pending with the court, the work cannot be restarted, he said.

Mentionable, CCC floated a tender to lease out the park for development and management for 25 years on February 9, 2016. Panchlaish Residential Area Welfare Association protested the move saying that the park's privatisation would restrict people's free access to it.

The association also filed a writ petition with the High Court against the move.



Although Chittagong city is blessed with natural beauty, its 60 lakh residents are deprived of sufficient numbers of parks and planned recreational places. Some of the available ones are either too expensive to enter or facing the fear of replacement. As a result, the remaining ones stay overcrowded. Clockwise from left, Residents flock the Abhoy Mitra Ghat in the Sadarghat area. Jatisangha Park in Panchlaish area is in an awful state for about two years due to renovation work, depriving the children of open air recreational facilities. Laldighi Park -- one of the few parks where people can spend time with their families. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## UN urges aid for cyclone victims

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over the safety and welfare of the people hit by cyclone "Mora" (a Thai word which means 'star of the sea'), the UN has stressed the need for urgent humanitarian assistance for the tens of thousands of affected people across the southern part of Bangladesh.

According to UN estimates, over two lakh people were displaced as a result of the cyclone which killed six people and injured 136, said a press release of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Bangladesh yesterday.

Meanwhile, a news note received from UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund) yesterday, said at least 1.3 million children were affected across the Bay of Bengal region following severe weather over the past six days.

The UNRC press release also said Rohingya communities, already vulnerable and marginalised, were particularly

## Nimtoli memories haunting still

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theyoungest brother, who is also sick, he claimed.

"They are surviving on our father's pension, who was a clerk at a primary school," he added.

Kashem's neighbour and also a relative, Sabuj lost six members of his family in the fire. "It has been seven years, I'm still struggling to survive." He said now they live in a rented house nearby.

"The burnt place is still vacant," he added.

Gulzar Elahe, owner of the building from where the fire originated, lost 11 family members in the deadly fire.

"Not a day goes by I don't think about them. The memory of that night still haunts me," he said.

According to fire fighters, the fire originated from a stove in the building that housed a combustible chemical depot on the ground floor.

When the fire came in contact with the chemicals it engulfed eight residential buildings and some 20 shops within a few minutes.

The residents of the Nimtoli area claimed that they have kept the area free from the stocks of flam-

mable chemicals ever since the incident took place.

Now they want the same for the neighbouring areas to avoid another disaster.

Many also lamented that the owner of the chemical depot is not arrested.

When asked, Gulzar Elahe said the owner rented the depot for storing plastic materials. "I did not know he was storing flammable chemical materials," he claimed.

After the Nimtoli tragedy, authorities concerned conducted several drives to keep the Old Dhaka free of those hazardous materials, but the chemical stocks remained as the drives stopped.

The Daily Star published a report on March 2 this year titled, "Old Dhaka exposed to chemical hazards," which showed that 360 stores, warehouses, factories and shops with the chemicals were found highly hazardous in terms of fire safety, handling of the chemicals and explosion management, according to the findings of a recent fire inspection.

The only way to avoid the danger is to relocate them immediately, Major AKM Shakil Newaz, director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, earlier said.

The chemical stocks were surveyed in different areas of Lalbagh, Bangshal, Armanitola, Moulovibazar, Imaamganj, Islambagh, Shahidnagar, Kamrangirchar, Chalkbazar, Mitford and Babubazar.

The Dhaka South City Corporation along with the fire department was all set to launch an eviction drive from March 1. However, it had to be postponed due to a lack of police support, said DSCC sources.

Following the devastating Nimtoli tragedy in June 2010, the commerce ministry was supposed to build a "chemical village" in Keraniganj, after acquiring land, building the physical structure and ensuring safety, for relocation of the chemical stores from the residential areas.

But the Keraniganj village has not been developed by the government yet.

## Nagorik Oikya now a political

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"Nagorik Oikya is surely not going to be another simple political party," he said.

The party was formed with an aim to ensuring good governance, building a welfare state, corruption-free nation based on equity, dignity and social justice, he said.

Terming the prevailing situation "suffocating", Manna demanded a participatory election immediately to overcome the situation.

He said they will apply to the Election Commission for registration.

Manna is also a former Ducus vice president.

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