

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA 32.6 | 27.6 MYMENSINGH 32.4 | 27.4 CHITTAGONG 32.2 | 26.5 SYLHET 32.5 | 26.0 RAJSHAHI 35.5 | 27.1 RANGPUR 34.4 | 28.0 KHULNA 34.0 | 27.4 BARISAL 31.0 | 27.0 COX'S BAZAR 30.2 | 26.5

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at many places over Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Dhaka, and Khulna divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:50pm and rises tomorrow at 5:15am said Met office.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Splendour in the grass, Purbachol.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

The Family of GRASS

Children love going barefoot. I was no exception while growing up and, despite my parents' best efforts, I constantly went without shoes in our family home in Sylhet. It felt light and nimble. A special thrill came from running barefoot in the grass of our lawn – a lawn which separated the two bungalows that comprised our home. Whenever I walked there, its thick, coarse grass with pointed tips, feeling moist and clammy under my feet, tickled and poked my sole. The tantalizing sensation of grass under my bare feet is one of my first ever tactile memories.

For most urban people, grass remains a symbol of nature, a convenient if minimal way to connect with mother earth without the hassle of trees, mud, bugs and rocks. Once, many homes in Dhaka and other towns of Bangladesh were adorned with grassy front lawns. But today, skyrocketing land prices have made lawns unaffordable, and with them, the grass children once grew up with.

Grass that beautifies lawns is part of a large and varied plant family called Poaceae, the fifth largest family of plants with over 12,000 species in it. Poaceae has impacted human civilisation perhaps more than any other group of plants. Domesticating certain grass species with edible seeds was an important step in the transition of Homo Sapiens from hunter-gatherer to agricultural man, the beginning of our march to civilisation.

Today, the grass family exerts an overarching influence over human civilisation in diverse ways.

Take food, for example. Our important cereals include rice, wheat, barley and corn. Together, these constitute the prime source of carbohydrate in the human diet. We all know the importance of rice in the Asian diet. But did you know the role of corn in the American diet? In his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, author

Michael Pollan shows the uses of corn, both as food and fodder. Corn grown in American fields – millions of tons of it – is harvested, processed, deconstructed and reassembled into numerous food items from chicken nuggets to salad dressing to sweeteners. And of course corn is fed to cattle and poultry which feeds Americans.

The grass family gives us virtually all our sweets. In addition to corn sweeteners, note that sugarcane is a member of this family.

Beyond human food, grass is also important for cattle. If you visit the haors in winter, you can see droves of cattle – cows and buffaloes – which are grazed there for fattening.

A surprising member of the grass family is bamboo. Its strength and flexibility make it useful in many ways: construction, fencing, scaffolding, roadbuilding, even clothing. But did you know that some varieties of bamboo are among the fastest growing plants on earth, growing as much as two inches in 24 hours?

Beyond the practical, the grass family also enhances our aesthetic pleasure. Take the *Kash* flower, for example, which blooms during autumn. Whose heart is not moved watching a field full of dazzling white *Kash*, set against the sky full of autumn clouds? *Kash* belongs to the grass family.

In the fields of Purbachol, I have lost count of the hours I have been held spellbound by birds, dragonflies, bees and butterflies flying, feeding and playing in the grass, tall and short, that they call home.

Grass may be far from our urban high-rise flat, but it remains close to our heart, like an umbilical cord connecting us to nature. That's why we talk about our grass roots and sing about the green grass of home.

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UNO foils 5th child marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The upazila nirbahi officer of Shajahanpur yesterday afternoon successfully foiled yet another early marriage of a girl – fifth in June – after joining as the chief executive of the upazila on May 24 this year.

A mobile court headed by UNO Mohammad Kamruzzaman, also the executive magistrate, arrived at 13-year-old Sumaiya Akhtar Brishty's house at Bejora Dakkhinpara village around noon as her parents were marrying her off to a local youth.

Sumaiya is an eighth grade student at Madla Chachaitara Jukto High School. Her father is Abdul Based, a farmer.

The identity of the groom-to-be could not be ascertained as he and his wedding party



Thirteen-year-old Sumaiya talks with the UNO and village elders yesterday afternoon. The eighth grader was being married off by her parents. But the bid was foiled due to a timely intervention of the UNO.

Woman killed for dowry in Rangpur Husband held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A woman was killed allegedly by her husband for dowry in Pirogachha upazila of Rangpur yesterday.

Locals caught and handed over the husband, Mizanur Rahman, 30, to police.

Mizanur along with his cousin Shahidul beat up Minara Begum, 23, of village Mohishmuri, until she fainted. Later, they suffocated her with a rope and finally hanged her from a ceiling fan, said locals, adding that Shahidul managed to flee.

Recently, Mizanur realised Tk 1 lakh out of Tk 2 lakh that he demanded from Minara's family.

Police sent the body to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Minara's younger brother Al Amin filed a murder case.

Man 'sets himself on fire protesting police action'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw-puller allegedly set himself on fire after police disassembled his battery-run rickshaw in Baipail intersection of Savar yesterday.

Shamim Shikder, 35, who suffered 25 percent burns, had allegedly poured kerosene on his body and tried to commit suicide around 10:30am. He is now undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

He said a "police sergeant" rode on his rickshaw as a passenger and directed him to get on the highway. As he got on the highway, police seized his battery-driven rickshaw and disassembled the battery, witnesses said.

As a protest he set himself on fire, they added.

Plying of battery-run rickshaws on highways is banned by the government.

"A rickshaw-puller tried to commit suicide by setting himself on fire," said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

But the OC declined to comment when asked why Shamim did that.

Father 'kills' son over family feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A man was killed allegedly by his father over a family feud in Kanainagar village of Sadar upazila of Bhola early yesterday.

The deceased, Khalid bin-Walid, a soldier of JESSORE army cantonment, went home three days before Eid, said family sources.

He and his father, Nur Islam, a retired employee of Water Development Board in Bhola, had a quarrel as Nur Islam often tortured Khalid's mother Nur Jahan, they said. At one stage, Nur Islam hacked Khalid, killing him instantly, Bhola Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mir Khairul Kabir quoted eyewitnesses as saying.

Nur Jahan, who was injured while trying to save her son, is being treated at Bhola General Hospital, said the OC.

Police arrested Nur Islam. During primary interrogation, the arrestee confessed to the killing, he added.



Visitors enjoying a day on the beach with their loved ones at Kuakata in Patuakhali. Even though the Eid holidays have ended, the beach drew a large crowd yesterday.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

3 teachers, two others jailed for taking alcohol in classroom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A mobile court on Thursday jailed five persons including a headteacher and two other teachers for three months as they were found consuming alcohol in a classroom in Tanore upazila.

A team from Tanore Police Station caught the five with local liquor in the classroom of Chhaoir Junior Girls High School in the afternoon after receiving a tip-off.

The convicted teachers are Sultan Ahmed, 42, headteacher of the school; Durul Huda, 30, a temporary teacher of the same school; and Bulbul Ahmed, 38, an assistant teacher of Fultola High School in Mohonpur upazila.

The other convicts are dead writers Shah Alam, 35, and Mostafijur Rahman, 40.

Sultan Ahmed, the headteacher, is also president of the upazila unit of Jatiyatabadi Sweekhasebok Dal, said Rejaul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

After Shawkat Ali, upazila nirbahi officer of Tanore, was informed of the incident, he arrived at the scene as the head of the mobile court and passed the verdict upon hearing statements of witnesses and the accused, said the OC.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Pranballave Saha, father of Barisal Correspondent of Boishakhi TV Mithun Saha, passed away in his Bazar Road residence of Barisal city yesterday. He was 76. He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter.

He was cremated at Barisal cremation ground.

Barisal Reporters' Unity mourned his death.

Road accidents claim 11 lives

CITY DESK

Eleven people were killed in road accidents across the country on Thursday and yesterday.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports, three people were killed and 20 others injured when a speeding bus of Hanif Enterprise hit a parked bus of Asia Travels from behind on Dinajpur-Rangpur highway in Taraganj upazila of Rangpur on Thursday night, said police.

The dead are the supervisor and helper of Hanif Enterprise bus and a passenger of the other vehicle, said police.

The law enforcers, however, could not provide further details of the dead victims immediately.

The injured were taken to Taraganj Upazila Health complex. Later, five persons were referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

In Dinajpur, Dipto Roy, 22, a student of Pabna Science and Technology

University, hailing from village Kanaibari, was killed as his motorbike flipped over on Dinajpur-Bochaganj road in Dhukurjhari area of Biral upazila yesterday afternoon.

Staff correspondent from Chittagong reports, two persons were killed and two others injured as a bus hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw that carried the four in Badamtol area of Patiya upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Md Mobarak, 22, and Jannatul Ferdous, 13, said police.

The injured were taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reports, Badal Mia, 30, died as a bus ran him over on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Bagar Bazar area of Trishal upazila yesterday.

Our Faridpur correspondent reports, Ashadul Islam, 12, son of Abdul Jalil, was killed and two others were injured as a three-wheeler carrying them was hit

by a bus on Rajbari-Kushtia road in Moaishala bus stand area in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari yesterday.

The injured were rushed to Pangsha Upazila Health Complex.

UNB adds, a man was killed and 13 others were injured in a collision between a truck and a covered van on Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Baro Aulia Mazar area in Sitakundo upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased, Rasel, 20, son of Bahar Uddin, hailed from Feni.

In Munshiganj, police constable Shahidul Haque, 30, was killed as a speeding vehicle hit him on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Anarpura area of Gojaria upazila early yesterday.

In Gaibandha, a helper of a trucker, Sadhon Chandra, was killed as another truck hit the vehicle in Dublagari area of Palashbari upazila early yesterday.



Villagers take it upon themselves after waiting for months for the authorities concerned to repair the 600-foot damaged embankment in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar. When asked, the executive engineer of Moulvibazar Water Development Board said they do not have any budget to repair the embankment and already sought funds from the authorities. The repair work started on Thursday. Mahmudul Haque, upazila nirbahi officer of Kamalganj, present on the day, praised the villagers for the initiative. The photo was taken from the Dakshin Tilokpur village portion of the levee.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA