

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA 30.1 | 26.0 MYMENSINGH 31.8 | 26.0 CHITTAGONG 28.5 | 25.5 SYLHET 32.5 | 26.3 RAJSHAMI 33.6 | 26.3 RANGPUR 32.2 | 27.0 KHULNA 31.0 | 26.2 BARISAL 30.5 | 26.6 COX'S BAZAR 28.0 | 25.0

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at most places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Barisal, Khulna, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to very 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 5:17am, said Met office.

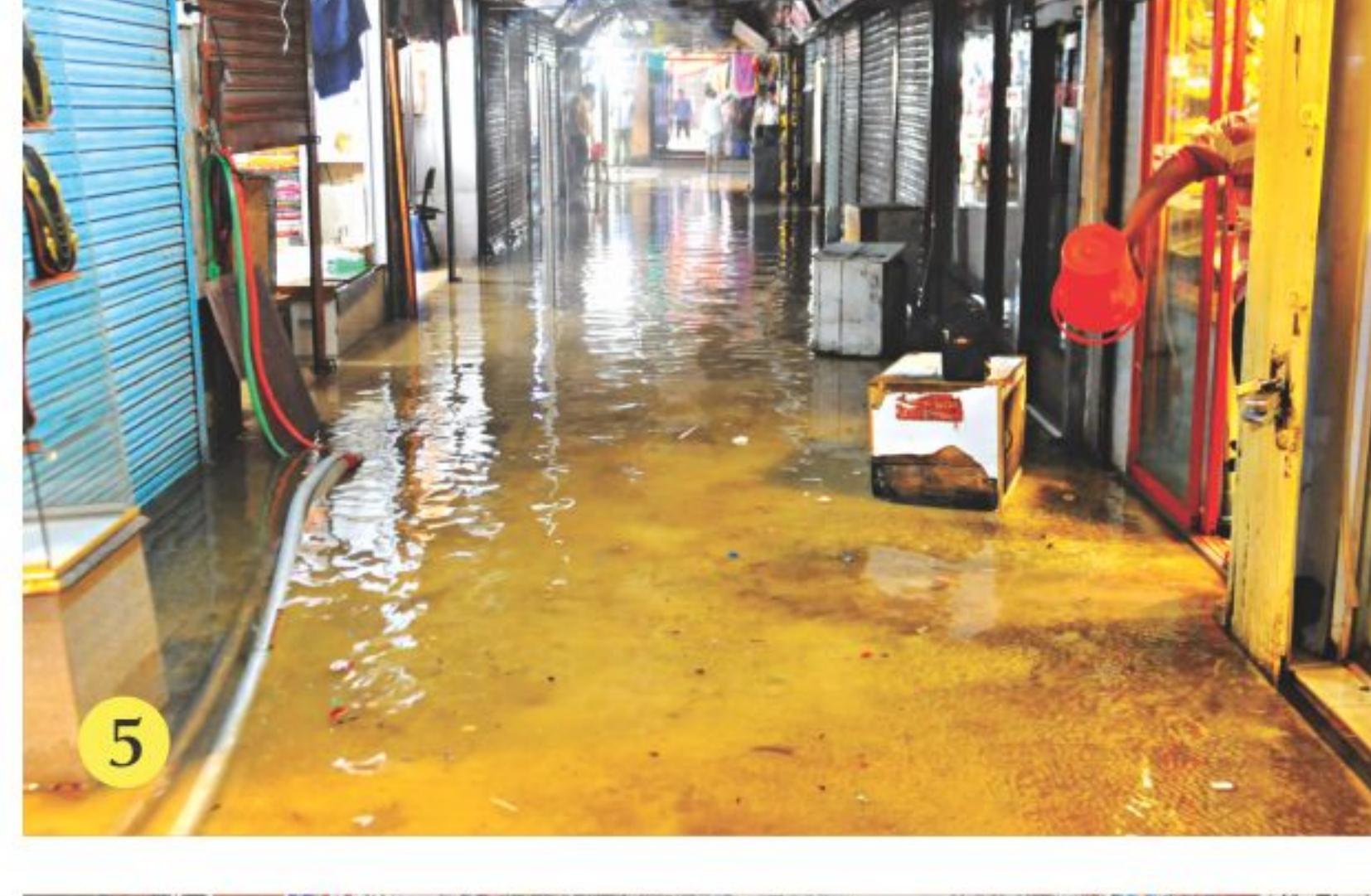
CITY OF MISFORTUNE



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Rain or shine, misfortune follows Dhaka residents. During the dry season, when Dhaka turns into a dustbowl, the city dwellers long for the rainy season for respite. But when the rain comes, a dysfunctional drainage system offers them only sufferings. Only a couple of hours of moderate seasonal downpour on Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning left the residents with a waterlogged city. (1) A rickshaw van full of commuters passes a cautionary red flag put inside a submerged open manhole on Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka. (2) A man helps a woman get onto the sidewalk in front of Motijheel Ideal School. The woman was fully drenched after she fell in the water while trying to get off a rickshaw. (3) Vehicles ply almost entirely submerged streets near Janata Bank intersection at Motijheel -- the city's business hub. (4) A large tailback on one side of a street near Malibagh rail gate in Khilgaon due to waterlogging ahead. (5) A shopkeeper inside the submerged Mouchak Market scoops out water with a bucket from his store. (6) A school child dangerously comes close to a moving car as he wades through water that inundated the street in front of Rajarbagh Police Lines School.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, PALASH KHAN, PRABIR DAS

No compromise on air pollution

SC says in full text of Hazaribagh tannery verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday released the full text of its order in a Hazaribagh tannery case, observing that the court cannot compromise on the air pollution because Dhaka city's air is one of the most polluted in the world.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha passed the order on April 9 this year following two separate petitions filed by the tannery owners against a High Court order that asked them to pay Tk 50,000 each per day as penalty for damaging the environment.

The HC had passed the order on July 18 last year following a contempt of court petition moved by the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

Issuing directives, the SC in its full order said, "Due to shifting of

the tanneries from Hazaribagh to Savar, the factory owners had to incur huge amount of loss towards installation of new infrastructure befitting for running a modern tannery."

More so, the workers who are working at Hazaribagh have been living around the area for generation to generation and some of them will not be able to work at Savar leaving other members of the family at Dhaka. Ultimately, they will be unemployed and their future [sic] will be at stake," it said.

Even then the court is left with no option as it cannot compromise with the pollution that directly affects the living condition of the residents of Dhaka city. It is reported that Dhaka's air is one of the most polluted air in comparison with other cities in the world.

Keeping this situation in mind, the High Court Division directed the tanneries to shift from Hazaribagh to Savar for preservation and pro-

tection of environment.

"Therefore, the court cannot remain a silent spectator if in similar manner the Dhaleswari river is polluted due to discharge of waste."

In the order, the apex court asked the owners of 155 Hazaribagh tanneries to deposit Tk 50,000 each to the secretary of the labour and employment ministry in seven days and said the money would be spent for the welfare of the tannery workers.

The SC also directed the owners to pay arrears, if any, to the workers and employees within one month. If the owners fail to pay the outstanding dues, the workers or employees can seek directives from the HC, it said.

The SC ordered the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) to give gas connections to the tanneries in Savar in 15 days, and warned any failure would be dealt with severely.

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7 of a family injured in gas line blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven people, including two children, of a family sustained burn injuries due to a gas line explosion inside a house in Dhalkanagar area in the capital's Gendaria yesterday.

The injured are Aleya Begum, 60, Shahida, 35, Shahnaz, 28, Ali Akbar, 38, Shariful Islam, 42, Sharifa, 13, and Shuvo, 8.

Five of the seven injured remain in a critical condition, said a doctor of the burn unit at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

A neighbour Al-Amin Haque, who rushed them to the hospital, said the gas line exploded around 4:00am, leaving all the family members injured.

Abdur Razzaq, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station, said they primarily suspected that the explosion had taken place due to a leakage in the pipeline.

RANGPUR-DHAKA, DINAJPUR-DHAKA ROUTES

Train schedules collapse

KONGKON KARMAKER, Rangpur

Thousands of Dhaka-bound passengers suffered long delays due to a collapse in train schedules on Dinajpur-Dhaka and Rangpur-Dhaka routes in 72 hours till yesterday.

Desperate to return to the capital after spending a prolonged Eid vacation with their families, passengers got stranded at train stations for several hours.

The Dhaka-bound trains operated five to seven hours behind schedule, said the passengers. The Rangpur Express, the lone train plying the Rangpur-Dhaka route, is running five hours late, said railway officials.

Schedules of Akota Express and Drutojan Express, which ply the Dhaka-Dinajpur route, have also collapsed, said railway officials in Dinajpur. All the six special trains launched between Dinajpur's Parbatipur and Dhaka on the occasion of Eid, are also running seven hours behind the schedule.

A passenger, Azhar Ali, said he had arrived at Parbatipur railway station to board a special train scheduled for 6:15am on Monday. But the train left for Dhaka at 2:15pm, he said, adding that he had to

spend eight hours at the station.

There are five power cars for the six special trains; therefore, one train remains unused, said Shovon Roy, station master of Parbatipur railway station. However, he said the situation would improve within a week.

Goutam, another passenger, said he was supposed to start his journey from Rangpur railway station at 8:00pm on Monday. But the train left at 1:30am -- Tuesday early hours, he added.

During a visit to the stations, this correspondent found the intercity trains over-crowded. Each coach is carrying passengers three to four times more than its capacities.

Contacted on Tuesday, Nazmul Hossain, divisional engineer of Lalmonirhat division of Bangladesh Railway's West Zone, said they had instructed the locomotive drivers to run the trains slowly for passengers' safety. As a result, slow-moving trains are running behind the schedule, he added.

Officials of Parbatipur station yesterday said the situation remained the same. However, Rangpur Station Superintendent Abdul Jabbar said the situation had been improving. "From today (yesterday), the trains will leave on time," he added.



Guests and writer hold copies of two books -- *Economics & Policy in the Public Arena* and *Nightfall (a collection of short stories)* -- during their launch at Policy Research Institute in the capital yesterday. Dr Abdullah Shibli, an economist and IT professional based in Boston, USA, is the author of the books. From left, Nasreen Shibli, Rubana Huq, Aasha Mehreen Amin, Dr Abdullah Shibli (author), Dr Qazi Khiliquzzaman Ahmad, Mahfuz Anam, M Farashuddin, Ahsan Mansur, Mostafa Zaman Abbasi, and Prof Rebecca Haque.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

27 snakes beaten to death in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Locals killed what they claimed were cobras, 27 of them, after the snakes were found holed up in the walls of an earthen house in Rajshahi city yesterday.

The snakes were found in the house owned by Mazdar Ali, an employee of a private telecom company, in Budpara area.

He spotted a snake slithering on the floor when he returned home around 10:00pm on Tuesday. Under the cupboard, he found two more.

"I killed them right away with a stick. I was panic-stricken. My wife and son were sleeping in the room," he told The Daily Star.

Hearing his screams, locals rushed in and started searching. To their surprise, they found more snakes in the mice holes on the mud walls.

One by one, all the snakes were brought out by pouring hot water into the holes. Once they came out, the panic-stricken people beat them to death in the wee hours of yesterday.

Mazdar's brother Saidar Ali said their house was old and they had been living in it since birth. "These are mice holes. Maybe, the snakes were holed up there to catch rodents."

He feared there could be some other snakes around.

SM Sajjad Hossain, an official of Rajshahi forest division, told The Daily Star that they had not received any complaint in this regard.

Five arrested with stolen motorcycles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives in a special 17-hour drive till yesterday morning arrested five alleged members of a gang of motorcycle thieves and seized eight stolen motorcycles from their possession in Chittagong city.

The arrestees are: Arif alias Girabaz Arif, 26, of Bholia, Shahid, 23, of Bahaddarhat, Md Ismail, 28, of Bahaddarhat, Amanat Ullah Rabbi, 22, of Cox's Bazar and Yousuf, 34, of Comilla.

Anwar Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, said the arrestees had been living in the city for a long time and had been involved in various criminal activities.

A case was filed.