

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA 30.8 | L 25.9 MYMENSINGH 30.0 | L 26.2 CHITTAGONG 30.5 | L 24.7 SYLHET 33.3 | L 25.2 RAJSHAHI 28.9 | L 26.0 RANGPUR 31.5 | L 26.0 KHULNA 30.3 | L 25.0 BARISAL 30.5 | L 25.7 COX'S BAZAR 27.4 | L 25.0

Rain accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at most places over Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to very heavy falls at places over the country till 6:00pm today, reports INB. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:47pm and rises tomorrow at 5:24am. Country's highest temperature 32.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Sreemangal and lowest 24.4 in Sandwip, says Met office.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



European starlings in Villa Borghese.

PHOTO:
IHTISHAM KABIR

The Starling's Story

Two years ago, birder friends reported that the European starling had been spotted in a field at the edges of Dhaka's Uttara neighbourhood. They were excited because this bird is not seen in Bangladesh, making it a rare sighting. I was not too thrilled, however. The European starling is a nasty piece of work. There, I said it.

Take North America, for instance, where the European starling originally did not exist. But a little over a century ago, in 1890, an eccentric American businessman by the name of Eugene Schieffelin - who had made a fortune from pharmaceuticals - imported sixty European starlings from England in an ocean liner and released them in New York's Central Park. The next year he released another forty. The businessman had an eccentric goal: introduce into North America all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. Over subsequent years, many such introductions such as skylarks, nightingales and song thrushes did not survive or thrive.

But the European starling's story was different. It had a slow start, building the first breeding nest in the eaves of the Museum of Natural History, across the street from Central Park. From there it went on to succeed beyond anyone's wildest expectations.

Within a few decades of its introduction it had spread to the furthest corners of the continent: Alaska, Florida and California. Today those 100 European starlings have multiplied into approximately 150 million found all over North America.

No doubt a non-native bird in these large numbers has made life difficult for many native species of North American birds. Their effect was also felt by others, particularly farmers.

European starlings are voracious creatures, willing to eat just about anything. They also reproduce profusely. Further, they are difficult to eliminate and can adapt quickly to new surroundings.

I have seen these birds in many places outside Bangladesh. My most memorable encounter with them was in Villa Borghese, the 200-acre park in central Rome. Inside the park, black birds with shiny spots of green and purple pattered about in small groups, swimming in puddles, searching for insects and taking the occasional short flight. They reminded me of a group of *shaliks* on Bengal's soil.

This harmless group seemed far removed from reality: that flocks of European starlings can become gigantic - sometimes totalling over a million birds - while creating a massive dark cloud that descends into cities and villages, destroys crops, and leaves a mess with their droppings. For example, a cloud of European starlings can devour twenty tons of potatoes in a day. No wonder farmers in California and other places tried hard to eradicate it.

Near Bangladesh, European starlings can be found in northern India. It is not clear to me why they have been unable to set down roots in Bangladesh. One possible reason is the aggressive behaviour of some of our populous native species such as common myna (*bhat shalik*), black drongo (*jhingey*), red-vented bulbul (*bulbuli*) and pied starling (*pakra shalik*). I imagine these birds, with their assertive survival skills, would make it hard for a newcomer like the European starling to settle down in this land. And - with all due respect to Eugene Schieffelin - that is a good thing!

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

Bullet-hit body found in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An unidentified man was found dead with bullet injury in the neck in Kanchanpur Eidgah area of Chuknagar in Dumuria upazila of Khulna early yesterday.

Sukumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Dumuria Police Station, told The Daily Star that after being informed by locals, they recovered the body clad in a half sleeve shirt and a jeans pant from the border area of Satkhira and Khulna.

The deceased, aged around 30 years, was dumped on that spot after being murdered somewhere else, suspected police.

The body was sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said police.

From bridge to boat

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Thousands of people have started using boats to commute between Delduar upazila in Tangail and the district headquarters as a Bailey bridge on the road collapsed four days ago under the weight of a fertiliser-laden truck.

The repair work of the 66-metre steel bridge has been going on since Tuesday when the accident happened, but an official said it would take four or five more days to restore it.

The bridge collapsed when the truck with 38 tonnes of diammonium phosphate crossed halfway, said Shahadat Hossain Kabir, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Delduar. It was taking the fertiliser to Tangail town from Chittagong, he said, adding that the truck and fertiliser could not be salvaged yet.

In the accident, the driver and helper of the truck got seriously injured.

A resident of Nagarpur upazila next to Delduar, State Minister for Posts and Telecommunications Tarana Halim visited the site on Thursday and directed the authorities to restore the bridge as soon as possible.

Mohammad Abdul Hakim, a sub-divisional engineer of Roads and Highways

Department in Tangail, said the work was going on. "It will take four to five more days for readying the bridge for vehicular movement."

RHD built the bridge in 1989.

Talking to The Daily Star, boat user Abdul Hamid said most of the bridges in the upazila were old and shaky, but heavy vehicles from different parts of the country kept on using them to avoid the traffic jam on Dhaka-Tangail highway.

That's why these accidents happen, he said.

Just four days before the latest accident, another bridge in the same upazila collapsed after a bus of Hanif Paribahan with over 50 passengers got on it. As a result, road communication between Tangail Sadar and Manikganj has remained suspended since that day, July 14.

Contacted, lawmaker from Delduar-Nagarpur constituency Khandakar Abdul Baten said heavy vehicles were using the local roads though they did not have the permit; the bridges were collapsing one after another because of that.

He said, "Steps will be taken immediately so that the heavy goods vehicles cannot ply these roads."

Accused found dead in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

An alleged criminal was found dead in a beel (water body) adjacent to Hashimpur bridge in Akhaura upazila of Brahmanbaria yesterday morning.

Darbar Police Camp Inspector Ziaul Hoque said the hands and legs of Kamal Hossain Jibon, 35, were tied up and a gag was wrapped around his mouth.

He hailed from Purbo Medda area in Brahmanbaria town.

The family identified the body at the morgue of Sadar hospital morgue where it was taken for an autopsy.

He was an accused in 18 cases -- including drug, arms and robbery -- filed with Sadar Model Police Station, said its Officer-in-Charge Nabir Hossain.

Kamal's uncle Shafar Ali said he had been missing since some unidentified persons called him out of home three days ago.



Boatloads of people crossing a canal in Delduar upazila of Tangail as the bridge nearby collapsed on Tuesday with a loaded truck, suspending road communications between the upazila and the district headquarters. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO:
MIRZA SHAKIL

ACC set to launch hotline to receive graft allegations

UNB, Dhaka

People would be able to lodge allegations against graft suspects through calling from their mobile phones soon as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is set to launch a hotline to record their complaints.

A plaintiff can submit his or her complaint dialing 106 from any mobile phone operator of the country or telephone free of cost, ACC system analyst (director) Rajib Hasan told the news agency.

The hotline is expected to be launched by Finance Minister AMA Muhith on July 27.

Rajib said the ACC has already set up a complaint centre, commonly known as call centre, installing necessary equipment to

receive calls from complainants. The centre is now operational on an experimental basis.

To receive phone calls from the complainants, he said, four ACC officials will work in each of the four shifts a day.

About the hotline, ACC Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said after launching of the hotline, people can directly make phone calls to it from all phone operators without any charge.

"As people will be able to submit their complaints through phone calls, public servants responsible to provide services to them will be more careful. They will not dare get involved in corruption," he added.

Rajib Hasan said the ACC will install

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Govt, EC working for one-sided polls

Alleges BNP; wants repeal of section 57

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that the government and the Election Commission (EC) have been jointly moving forward to hold a "one-sided" election. It also alleged that the Awami League with the help of the EC has made a "blueprint" to win polls.

The party also alleged that the government is repressing journalists by using the section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act and demanded its cancellation. The section 57 is a barrier to the freedom of expression, it said.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital also demanded withdrawal of cases filed against journalists and release of the arrested ones under the section.

Regarding the polls, Rizvi alleged that their

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CLIMATE FINANCING Young debaters demand good governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Young debaters of South Asia yesterday demanded establishing good governance through ensuring transparency, accountability and fairness in financing climate change adaptation programme.

The demand came at the final session of a two-day South Asian Debate Competition at the channel-i studio in the capital.

The programme was organised by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) under its Climate Finance Policy Integrity Programme. Sixteen debaters of eight teams from six countries -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan -- took part.

Debaters of Islamic University of Technology of Bangladesh became champion while Sri Lankan debaters became runner-up.

Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam, member of TIB board of trustees, was present as the chief guest. Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, and Sumaiya Khair, its deputy executive director, were also present.



Renovation work of the sidewalk and drainage left in a half done state for months on Mirpur Road near Asadgate intersection in the capital. The authorities did not even bother to place any caution sign or make the area off limits to pedestrians. As a result, pedestrians using either the sidewalk or the road risk sustaining serious injuries.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh embassy in US lauds Facebook contest winners

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh embassy in the USA has hosted a reception for a six-member team from Dhaka University for winning a Facebook-based anti-extremism campaign competition held in Washington, DC.

They won the P2P Facebook Global Digital Spring 2017 Award. The competition was organised by Facebook in collaboration with US Homeland Security and the US Department of State on Wednesday, said a press release of the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, DC.

The Dhaka University team competed as one of the four finalists and won the first prize. The three other teams are from Nigeria, Spain and the Philippines. A total of 156 institutions participated in the worldwide competition.

"It's great news...Your success will inspire and guide our young generation," Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Mohammad Ziauddin said greeting the team that visited the Bangladesh

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Too little, too late



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Maybe her fate was also sealed like the wild elephant, Bangabahadur, who floated into the country from Assam last year and eventually died amid "inadequate" efforts of the authorities concerned.

Though in this case, she got badly injured while getting down from a truck on the night of July 14 in Ishobpur of Moulvibazar.

Hurt, she lay in a field beside Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Sreemangal upazila for around a week.

Rajlakkhi breathed her last around 10:30am yesterday.

A pall of gloom descended in the area as the news of the death spread. Locals alleged that the accident

occurred due to negligence of the men of the circus party that had rented her for a show and eventually a lack of proper treatment resulted in the death.

Sirajul Islam, owner of the elephant, said, "I used to rent the animal to circus parties in different areas. A circus group took her on a truck and brought it to Sreemangal from Brahmanbaria after a show on July 14."

"As she was getting down, the vehicle started before the elephant could land its four legs on the ground. She suddenly fell down and got badly injured. After the incident, the circus group fled the spot."

Dr Ariful Islam, veterinary surgeon at Sreemangal Upazila Livestock Department, said, "The elephant got

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