

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 31.0 L 27.5

MYMENSINGH
H 33.0 L 26.6

CHITTAGONG
H 33.6 L 25.8

SYLHET
H 32.2 L 25.4

RAJSHAHI
H 33.5 L 27.2

RANGPUR
H 32.2 L 27.6

KHULNA
H 31.6 L 26.8

BARISAL
H 32.5 L 26.3

COX'S BAZAR
H 32.2 L 24.8

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at few places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Dhaka divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over the country till 6:00pm today, report UNB. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:29pm and rises tomorrow at 5:35am, said Met office.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Flower of Ora (Sonneratia caseolaris.)

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Sundarban in Monsoon

I have been to Sundarban several times but never in monsoon, so when a friend invited me to join a group of photographers on a trip to Sundarban, I was delighted. We boarded the night train from Dhaka to Khulna in the early evening. Upon arrival at Khulna station the next morning, we walked a short distance to the ghat where our boat, M.V. Bhela of Bengal Tours, awaited us.

It took us the better part of the day to reach the forest. The riparian scenery unfolded before my eyes from urban to suburban and industrial to rural and, finally, the forest. As its lush monsoon greenery came into view, my emotions ran away with me. Once again I was amazed and speechless at the beauty of the magnificent forest.

As my eyes feasted on the green, I could not help but wonder: what a stroke of good fortune we have managed to preserve Sundarban!

Consider the facts. In this small land of 145,000 square kilometres are packed 160 million people. That's a population density of over 1100 people per square mile. And within this we have, virtually untouched, the Bangladesh Sundarban which takes up 6000 square kilometres or over 4% of our country. Adding the other protected areas scattered throughout Bangladesh triples or quadruples this percentage.

Compare this to the nation which has led the world in modern conservation thought and methodology. The United States has 323 million people in 9.8 million square kilometres and population density of 32 per square kilometres. The area of protected land there is approximately 540,000 square kilometres or around 5.5%.

My point is that we have a lot to be proud of. Despite our population pressure we still have much left in

nature. In Sundarban, this revelation comes as a welcome surprise.

And we have a lot to lose if we don't protect it vigilantly.

The sharp dive of a Brahminy kite catching fish wakes me from daydreaming. On the banks of the swollen river, monsoon has brought new life to the trees. The fruits of goran, sundari, gewa and keora hang from the branches. The gorgeous starlike flowers of ora break up the green and attract brightly coloured sunbirds. Nearer the ground, a buzz of wasps, bees and other flying insects jostle each other for pollen and nectar of golpata's yellow flowers.

Much remains to be learned from the forest. A scientist working in the forest informs us that the brown vine snake, which I photographed here five years ago for my book on Sundarban, has been re-classified as an entirely new species. The mysterious and rare bird, masked finfoot, which is found in Bangladesh but not Indian Sundarban, is also the subject of field research. And some of the salt pots found along the coast of Sundarban appear to be many centuries old.

How is it that we have managed to save this treasure? Fear of the tiger discouraged human encroachment. The land, covered everywhere by deep, sticky mud and pointed mangrove roots, is not exactly inviting to humans. The administrative mandates from British times to the present protecting this forest – the size of the Wildlife Sanctuary within the forest was recently doubled – have also helped.

Sundarban is our treasure. It is up to us to take care of it.

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Boy seeks justice for mother 'killed by drug addict father'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 14-year-old son wants his drug addict father brought to book for alleged killing of his mother in the capital's Rampura area last month.

Parvez, a ninth grader at a Feni high school, alleged that his father -- Monir Hossain -- often used to take Yaba tablets at home and tortured his mother Sahana Parvin, 40, in front of them, when she refused to give him money.

Sharing his ordeal at a press conference held at the Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh in Segun Bagicha yesterday, Parvez said Monir's behavior made him shift school from Rampura last year.

Parvez and his seven-year-old sister are now living with Sahana's father Abdur Rob in Feni.

Rob, also present at the press briefing, said Monir and Sahana got married 17 years back. Monir used to work at his brother's shop in Badda.

"But he left his job around three years back. He had been unemployed ever since," he said.

He alleged that Monir often took money from his daughter forcibly for taking drugs. When she refused, Monir used to beat her. "I also gave him money...", he alleged.

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Govt official assaults diver over drowning of boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government official allegedly assaulted a diver of Fire Service and Civil Defence during a rescue operation at a pond in the capital's Azimpur colony where a boy drowned yesterday afternoon.

The diver Abdul Aziz, 33, was assaulted by an additional secretary of a ministry, alleged Mahmudul Hasan, duty officer of Fire Service Control Room.

Four divers from fire service headquarters and a unit from Palashi went to Azimpur colony to rescue 14-year-old Rakibul Hasan, an eighth grader, who drowned while bathing in

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Imran H Sarkar 'attacked again'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonojagoron Mancha spokesperson Imran H Sarkar and his activists were attacked yesterday for the second time within a span of 24 hours in the capital's Shahbagh area.

Imran said 20-25 miscreants attacked them in front of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) around 5:00pm when they were walking towards Paribagh after holding a press briefing at Shahbagh.

He said the miscreants threw bricks and assaulted the activists of the Mancha. They entered BSMMU premises to save themselves.

"A brick chip hit my head, but I was protected by them [Mancha activists]," Imran told The Daily Star. "I think the same people attacked me on the court premises and yesterday [Thursday]."

Earlier, on July 16, Imran came under attack while walking out of a Dhaka court after securing bail in a defamation case filed for his "derogatory" remarks about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On Thursday, 10-12 people, carrying sticks, scrap wood,



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RMG workers at a rally demand salaries and festival bonus for them ahead of Eid. The rally was organised by Garments Sramik Front in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Two-day Berlin conference starts today to discuss Rampal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day European conference will start in Germany today with a view to protecting the Sundarbans and discussing possible alternative energy sources to meet the electricity demand in Bangladesh, said a press release.

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports in Bangladesh and European Action Group will jointly organise the conference in Berlin where hundreds of international professionals and representatives of organisations are expected to gather.

Economist Prof Anu Muhammad of Bangladesh, Kerstin Doerenbruch of Greenpeace, and Prof Wilfried Endlicher of Germany will discuss the impact of the Rampal power plant and sources of alternative energy.

The organisers hope that the Bangladesh government would stop construction of the coal-fired plant near the Sundarbans and explore "green energy" solutions.

The "Berlin Declaration", which was signed by different international organisations including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and Women Engage for a Common Future, will be revealed at the last session of the conference.

River management to blame for flood

Says Int'l Farakka Committee at Dhaka press confce

UNB, Dhaka

The International Farakka Committee (IFC) observed that excessive floods and acute scarcity of water occurred during rainy and dry seasons respectively in Bangladesh due to its unsustainable river management.

They made the observation at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

The IFC leaders also called for keeping the common Himalayan rivers alive through basin-wise integrated management on the basis of regional cooperation so that people of all the riparian countries living along the banks of these rivers can continue to get benefits from their services.

They said people of at least 30 districts, out of 64, in Bangladesh have been affected by serious late-monsoon floods due to the onrush of water of common rivers from across the border and incessant rainfalls.

Quoting experts, they said 92 percent of the floodwater comes from the upper catchments of the common rivers while the rest 8 percent from local rainfalls and stream flows from hills.

Due to the unplanned construction of a series of dams and barrages at the upper catchments of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna, many small rivers in the subcontinent have started drying up, the leaders observed.

About the share of the Teesta water, they said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has recently been elected a member of an influential UN committee on water, expressing their belief that she will be able to stop the diversion of water of the Teesta river basin to other river basins.

They also added that transfer of water from one basin to another is prohibited under the international law.

IFC Chairman Atiqur Rahman Salu, President of Bangladesh Farakka Committee Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmad and Coordinator of IFC Mostafa Kamal Majumder were present at the press conference.



The man is all smiles as he has just won a lottery ticket. After waiting for hours at Gabtoli bus terminal, he got his bus ticket for the Eid holidays. Sale of advance bus and train tickets began yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ctg route permit survey sees poor turnout

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The route permit survey of public transport in Chittagong has been suffering from less than half turnout of registered vehicles since the survey began two weeks back.

On Thursday, out of 213 registered human hauliers plying route 13, 14, 15 and 16, only 79 showed up for the survey -- a 37.1 per cent turnout.

Of these vehicles, 77 were found to be fit and possessed valid documents while 2 were declared unfit by Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

One of the primary objectives of conducting the survey was to make the city roads off-limits to unauthorised and unfit vehicles -- buses older than 20 years and other vehicles 25 years. Without cooperation from the transport operators, success of such an initiative now hangs in the balance.

The survey would prevent unlawful operation of public transport vehicles on unauthorised routes, said Mohammad

Shahidullah, deputy director (DD) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Chittagong zone.

"Once the vehicles are labelled with stickers showing respective route numbers through checking of their route permits, it would be easy to identify violators," the DD hoped.

While speaking with The Daily Star regarding the poor vehicle turnout at the survey, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of CMP (Traffic-West) Chitra Dhar Tripura, also convener of the survey committee, said, "We've sent letters several times to the public transport owners and associations asking to bring in their vehicles on the due dates."

Following the completion of first week's survey on buses and minibuses plying 13 different routes in the city, 49.5 per cent presence was recorded. Out of 1,134 registered vehicles, only 561 showed up.

On August 10, the last day of survey on buses and minibuses, only 34 or 23.5 per cent

3 children drown in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Two siblings drowned in a pond while in a separate incident, another child drowned in a river in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The siblings are Maria Akter, 5, her brother Zunayed, 3, children of Mazed Mia of Basharuk village in Nabinagar upazila.

In Shitarampur village, Rayhan, 4, son of Shamsul Alam Khokon, drowned in the Titas river while bathing around 2:00pm, said police.

Meanwhile in Basharuk village, Zunayed slipped into the pond and drowned while playing by the bank. His sister Maria also drowned around 1:30pm as she tried to rescue him, said police.

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