

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 28.3 L 17.1	H 27.8 L 16.0	H 28.5 L 17.3	H 28.3 L 16.5	H 27.1 L 14.6	H 27.0 L 14.6	H 27.5 L 14.6	H 28.1 L 14.3	H 28.0 L 17.8

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB. Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night to till this morning, Met Office said. **The sun sets in the capital today at 5:11pm and rises tomorrow at 6:25am.**

Textbooks are to be easier, intriguing

Says education minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Textbooks under all education boards will be gradually made easier and intriguing for students, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said yesterday. A total of 12 textbooks for ninth and tenth grades have recently been revised so the students find those simple, easy-to-read and absorbing, he said. "The revised books have been printed and will be distributed for the upcoming school year".

The minister made the comments while speaking with reporters after a meeting with top educationists of the country at education ministry in the secretariat. Suggestions made by noted educationists have been incorporated in the newly revised textbooks, Nahid said, adding that they would organise a conference of teachers and students from all over the country to bring further changes in other textbooks. Work is underway to reduce pressure of text books on students and to

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Left, Pope Francis with President Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban in the capital yesterday. Top right, Commemorating the sacrifices of the Liberation War martyrs, the pope places a wreath at National Memorial in Savar. Bottom, Pope Francis is being given a guard of honour by a smartly turned out contingent of army, navy and air force at Dhaka airport. The spiritual leader of the world's 1.29 billion Catholics and head of Vatican is on a three-day visit to Bangladesh. He will leave on Saturday.



PHOTO: PID

Digital connectivity must for 'smart city'

Say experts urging integrated mass transport system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An integrated mass transport system with measures to reduce physical trips need to be ensured to make Dhaka a modern habitable city, speakers said at a discussion in the capital yesterday.

"A smart city shortens physical trips to workplaces through digital services and connectivity," said Dr Shamsul Hoque, a professor of civil engineering department at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

For a dependable mass transport system, there needs to be comfortably wide pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths connected to the metro rail network, he said.

Besides, a modern city has to discourage the use of small personal vehicles by providing a dependable mass transport system to the city dwellers, added the transportation engineering expert.

United Nations Development Programme and Access to Information programme of the Prime Minister's Office organised the discussion at Bangabandhu Novo Theatre as part of an

ongoing smart city campaign week to explore means to improve civic services in the capital.

Prof Adnan Zillur Rahman, chairperson of department of architecture at Brac University, said due to a lack of land use zoning, Dhaka dwellers have to travel unnecessary distances every day for their work and to acquire services.

Ensuring services within walking distance can heavily reduce excessive dependency on motorised vehicles. This would enhance mobility and reduce carbon emission in the city, he also said.

Prof Ishrat Islam of urban and regional planning department at Buet, said a wider use of information and digital communications technology would help reduce traffic gridlock in the city and thus save the environment.

Dr Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, among others spoke while Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan, chaired the discussion.

HUNGER STRIKE FOR DUCSU POLLS

Walid drawing a crowd

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) student Walid Ashraf, who has been on a hunger strike since Saturday demanding election to Ducsu [Dhaka University Central Students' Union], is not alone anymore as more students have started expressing solidarity with his cause.

Yesterday, a group of 15-20 students painted the walls adjacent to Eternal Memory premises at DU and wrote "Ducus De" (Hold Ducsu election) on the road leading to DU vice-chancellor's residence.

To support Walid's cause, they said they are planning to organise a concert on the Eternal Memory premises at 4:00pm today. Walid, a master's student of Social Welfare and Research, has been staying in a tent on the premises since Saturday, demanding Ducsu election before December 16. Since then, he has not taken any food except for water.

Meanwhile, Pragatishil Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, declared that it would stage a symbolic demonstration today by covering their faces with black clothes at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture on the campus.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Gonosonghoti Andolon, also expressed his support on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, DU teachers Prof Gitiara Nasreen of mass communication and journalism department and Prof Ahmed Kamal of history department, and Jagannath University teachers Prof Md Moniruzzaman Khanadaker and Kazi Shakhawat Hossain also expressed solidarity with Walid and visited him.

The same day, two assistant proctors of DU also visited Walid and asked him to break his fast citing that his health condition might deteriorate if he continues the strike.

They, however, did not give any assurance of holding the

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President seeks Pope's help to repatriate Rohingyas

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday sought Pope Francis' help in sending back the displaced Rohingyas to their homeland and keeping up the pressure on Myanmar to resolve the protracted crisis.

The president made the call as Pope Francis, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, held a private talk with him after a reception hosted by the president in the evening.

"During the meeting, the president categorically sought Pope's active role so that different countries and the international community put pressure on the Myanmar government to settle the issue," president's Press Secretary Joynal Abedin quoted the president as telling the meeting.

Thanking Pope's stance on the Rohingya issue, the president hoped that Pope Francis will play a positive role to ensure their (Rohingyas) safe and dignified return to their ancestral land.

He recalled the heartfelt support of the Vatican government during the 1971 Liberation War and said the relations between the two countries strengthened gradually.

During another meeting with Pope Francis at Bangabhaban in the evening, President Hamid said the very commendable position of Pope Francis has taken in favour of the distressed Rohingyas and his passionate voice against such brutality raises hope for resolving the crisis.

"Your closeness to them, your call for helping them and ensure their full rights provide moral responsibility to the international community to act with promptness and sincerity," the president said.

"Now, it's our shared responsibility to ensure for them (Rohingyas) a safe, sound and dignified return to their own home and integration with the social, economic and political life of Myanmar."

Hamid said Bangladesh has given shelter to one million Rohingyas who were forcibly displaced from their ancestral home in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

He said thousands of Rohingyas, including women and children, were brutally killed and thousands of women violated as they saw their houses burnt into ashes.

The president said they had to take shelter in Bangladesh to escape the ruthless atrocities committed by the Myanmar army. "Our people have welcomed them with open heart, sharing food, shelter and other basic needs. They've accepted the inconvenience of accommodating them in a densely populated land with limited resources."

About religious interfaith, the president said no religion is immune from forms of individual delusion or ideological extremism.

The government is pursuing a "zero tolerance" policy in eradicating the root causes of

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Protesting rape and torture of women, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organises a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Six held with 1 lakh Yaba pills

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Law enforcers arrested six people with more than 1 lakh Yaba tablets during different drives in Chittagong on Wednesday night and yesterday.

In the city, Rapid Action Battalion arrested two drug peddlers with 68,000 Yaba pills in Dampara area yesterday.

The arrestees -- Alamgir Hossain, 45, from Narayanganj; and Amir Hossain, 33, from Kishoreganj -- were carrying the contraband drugs to Dhaka by a bus, said Rab officials.

In Patiya upazila, Rab arrested two alleged drug peddlers with 36,400 Yaba tablets at Shantirhaat Bazar early yesterday.

The two -- Ramjan Ali, 34, and Mizanur Rahman, 24 -- are from Rajshashi, said Rab-7.

In Satkania upazila, police arrested two people with 600 Yaba pills on Wednesday night.

Akhter, 22, and Helal Uddin, 27, who are from Teknaf, were held when they got down from a vehicle at a police check-post, said Sub-inspector Mizanur Rahman of Satkania Police Station.

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