

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURESDHAKA
H 28.6 L 20.4MYMENSINGH
H 28.4 L 17.5CHITTAGONG
H 29.0 L 19.3SYLHET
H 28.2 L 16.2RAJSHAHI
H 28.3 L ---RANGPUR
H 27.2 L 14.9KHULNA
H 28.0 L 19.7BARISAL
H 27.8 L 18.5COX'S BAZAR
H 30.2 L 20.0

Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at most places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions, at many places over Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places Rajshahi division. Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country till 6:00pm today. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:11pm and rises tomorrow at 6:30am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



View of the spiny forest.

PHOTOS:
IHTISHAM KABIR

The Spiny Forest

In the south of Madagascar near the town of Toliara lies one of the most unusual places I have visited. Spread over dry, arid, sandy land are forests punctuated by giant baobab trees with massive trunks that look like bottles. However, something is different: these are not dense green forests. Instead, they are thickets of dry, spiny, thorny plants dominated by many species not found elsewhere in Madagascar, let alone the rest of the world.

Residing among the spiny forest are species of unusual and rare birds, as well as reptiles, lemurs and tortoises. At the entrance of the forest, as our group awaited the guide (an absolute necessity since most birds and animals here hide very well), we hear flapping wings and look overhead to find a motley of weaver bird nests hanging from a tree. The birds – sakalava weavers, one of two species of weavers in Madagascar – look not too different than our *babui* (baya weavers.) But their messy nests appear to be constructed *ad hoc*, as opposed to the exquisite well-constructed homes of baya weavers.

Walking along the sandy path through the forest we first encounter several smaller birds before a familiar sight – the Madagascar hoopoe. It looks quite similar to our hoopoe (*mohonchur*) but it is a different species: it is larger, with a longer tail and a different call.

Further up the trail we encounter one of the prized inhabitants of this strange land. Scampering back and forth underneath the dry bushes is a bird that spends all its time on the ground, running from ants to worms to cockroaches. At first glance, its long tail is the only distinctive feature of the otherwise bland, grey and white bird. But then it turns around and I see its claim to fame – a splash of delicate powdery blue on its wings. We have found the long-tailed ground roller, one of the rarest birds in the world.

Birds from two other families can also be found here: the vangas and the couas. These families of birds are only found in Madagascar. While the couas are colourful and fast-moving, my favourite is the sickle-billed vanga with a most unusual bill shaped like a sickle.

I mentioned the subdesert mesite in my previous column, but another encounter I enjoy is with a Madagascar sparrowhawk. As I stand underneath the large tree – where it is perched, high up – and aim my camera towards it, it swoops down straight at me, veering upward at the last minute to land on another branch, from which it again flies towards a third branch. As it flies above me, I can see the perfect rows of thin black stripes the entire



Long-tailed ground roller.

width of its bottom from wingtip to wingtip. "Now you tell me!" I exclaim as the guide points out that it is defending its nest high up on the tree.

Not to be outdone, many kinds of reptiles – lizards, skinks, chameleons – also put on a show. Our guide grabs a small snake that was slithering by and dangles it while we take photographs. In Madagascar you can be brave with snakes because they are all non-poisonous.

The arid but vibrant beauty of spiny forest returns often to my mind, like a recurring dream.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabir on Instagram

Of BCL audacity and a teacher's insecurity

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Cig

It has been more than a month, a Chittagong University teacher could not go to the campus as he still feels insecure after being threatened by a faction of the university unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

"I want to go to the campus but I cannot... I feel insecure after they threatened me at gunpoint at my office," Amir Uddin, an associate professor of Institute of Education and Research, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

"I've informed the matter to the proctor in writing and also filed a general diary with Hathazari Police Station on November 5," he said. "Neither the university authorities, nor the police have assured me of security." On November 5, introducing them

as BCL activists and followers of the Chittagong City Corporation mayor, some youths allegedly threatened Amir at gunpoint for his activism against the CCC's holding tax reassessment programme.

The next day, a BCL faction led by president of the dissolved (on December 6) committee Alamgir Tipu submitted a memorandum to the vice chancellor, demanding the teacher's dismissal. On November 7, the BCL faction also vandalised the VC office to realise their demand.

When asked, Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin, also the general secretary of Chittagong city unit Awami League, denied his involvement. "I'm not involved... I'm here in the city and the university is around 22km away."

Amir is the general secretary of

Chattagram Kardata Surokhya Parishad, a group created to protect the taxpayers of Chittagong.

The CCC on November 27 postponed the holding tax reassessment programme after the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives in a meeting the day before took the decision.

Contacted, Alamgir Tipu said as the teacher organised movements against the CCC mayor, they were also doing the same against him.

"Before organising a movement against a big leader, he [Amir] should have thought about the consequences," said Tipu. "We have given the CU authorities a one-month ultimatum till December 15 to remove him."

Tipu, however, claimed that they did

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Begum Rokeya Day today

BSS, Dhaka

Begum Rokeya Day will be observed today with due respect to mark the 137th birth and 85th death anniversaries of Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, the pioneer of women's rights in the subcontinent.

On the occasion, Women and Children Affairs Ministry will organise a function in the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium where the Rokeya Padak-2017 will also

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A woman walks over a bamboo platform to cross an inundated portion of a road in Narayanganj yesterday. In the absence of maintenance and a proper drainage network, the road has become unusable for the last four months. The photo was taken in Purba Isdair area.

PHOTO:
PALASH KHAN

Gaibandha Santals want their land back

Hold mourning rally for leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Santals of Gaibandha yesterday at a rally demanded that the government return the around 1,842 acres of land belonging to their forefathers.

Indigenous Santal community in the area has long been demanding ownership of the land, which the government acquired from them to cultivate sugarcane for a mill.

The rally, participated by Santals and Bangalees, was held to commemorate the death of Shajahan Ali Proddan, secretary of Shahebganj-Bagda Farm Bhumi Uddhar Committee on Shahebganj High School premises. He died on December 3 due to old-age complications.

The speakers said Shajahan dedicated himself for recovering the land of the indigenous people, and rehabilitation and compensation for those evicted from the land of Sahebganj-Bagda sugarcane farm in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj.

They also demanded exemplary punishment for those involved in killing men and setting fire to Santal homes during an eviction drive on November 6, 2016.

On the day, a tripartite clash broke out between the Santals, staffers of Rangpur Sugar Mills, and police over the eviction of the indigenous people from the disputed land, leaving three Santal men dead and 20 others, including nine policemen, injured.

Many of the injured are still suffering. The victims claimed that they did not get any promised compensation from the government.

Corruption biggest hurdle in SDG attainment

Says ACC chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption is one of the biggest challenges to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), said Chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Iqbal Mahmood yesterday.

He made the comment on the eve of "International Anti-Corruption Day", which is being observed today with the theme "United against Corruption for Development, Peace and Security", said a press release.

On the occasion, ACC will form a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club about 10:00am and hold a discussion at 11:00am at Shilpakala Academy. The government decided to observe the day nationally after ACC made a request to the cabinet division in this regard last year.

CYBERCRIME PREVENTION

Digital literacy, monitoring a must

Dhaka discussion told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Digital literacy among people and strong monitoring mechanism are crucial to prevent cybercrime and propaganda, said speakers at a discussion in the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday.

The discussion titled, "Combating Cybercrime and Propaganda", was held as part of Digital World 2017, a four-day IT exposition that will end today, reports BSS.

The incidents of cybercrime are on the rise where social media is playing a vital role in sharing information, said Prof Touhid Bhuiyan, director of cyber security center at Daffodil International University.

Referring to the incidents of Nasiragar and Rangpur, DBC News Editor Pranab Saha said Bangladesh is already experiencing some shocking ones as social media influences people's attitude.

The photoshopped image of convicted war criminal Delawar Hossain Sayedee on the moon posted on a Facebook page, creating a countrywide violence -- is a perfect example of cybercrime and propaganda, said Prof Touhid.

The speakers feared that such incidents may happen ahead of the next national election. They said people have to verify the information posted on the internet.

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BTCL landline core cable cut off due to repair work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The core cable of the BTCL landlines was cut off due to Dhaka city corporation repair work, snapping communication between mobiles to landlines and landlines to mobiles across the country since early morning yesterday.

The core cable was cut off in Dilu Road area in the capital's Moghbazar on Thursday night, BTCL Director (public relations) Mir Mohammad Morshed told The Daily Star.

It may be fixed by today, BTCL officials hoped.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd (BTCL) maintains a total of 7.5 lakh landlines in the country.

Meanwhile, the emergency helpline numbers of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence headquarters in the city remain out of order due to the same reason, said Mahfuz Riben, duty officer at the fire service headquarters.

None can reach the five landline numbers of the control room.

"The authorities have been informed of the serious matter," he said, adding that they are trying to fix the line.

More landline numbers around the area also went out of service, the duty officer said.

Temporary emergency fire service helpline 1 is 01730336699 and helpline 2 is 01713038182, he added.

Students in front of a miniature model of metro rail at the Digital World 2017 exposition at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital. Yesterday, various events were organised for the youth, who thronged the four-day expo with enthusiasm.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

Int'l day on genocides today

BSS, Dhaka

International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime will be observed today in the country as elsewhere in the world.

Different organisations have chalked out various programmes marking the day. The Liberation War Museum has drawn up an elaborate programme including candle lighting and recitation from essays on genocide.

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem OUR MOTHER



Syeda Saleha Mansoor, wife of Mr. S. A. Mansoor, passed away on 31st October 2017. At the time of death, she left behind her husband, one daughter and two sons, two daughters-in-law and a son-in-law, six grandchildren and one great granddaughter. We humbly request all friends and family to pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) for her departed soul.

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