

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 25.2 L 15.6	H 27.0 L 16.0	H 25.0 L 17.5	H 27.8 L 16.2	H 21.8 L 15.1	H 27.4 L 15.5	H 23.7 L 15.4	H 25.0 L 14.0	H 28.3 L 17.7

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today. Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the country during midnight till this morning and it may continue till noon, Met Office said. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:16pm and rises tomorrow at 6:37am.

GRAFT CASE
Khaleda's lawyer seeks justice
 COURT CORRESPONDENT

A defense lawyer of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday sought justice for his client in the judgment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

Advocate Abdur Rezak Khan, one of Khaleda's lawyers, made the appeal to the makeshift court set up at Bakshibazar while placing closing arguments for the first day. The hearing was adjourned till today.

The court will fix a date for the verdict after the defense lawyers' closing arguments end.

Earlier in the day, Khaleda appeared before the court at 11:00am and sought time for placing her self-defense in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

On Tuesday, the prosecution concluded their arguments and sought the highest punishment for Khaleda in the Orphanage Trust graft case.

In 2008, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case accusing Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and four others of misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that had come as grants for orphans from a foreign bank.

Missing in Savar, arrested in Dhaka
 STAR REPORT

Ibrahim Khalil, one of the three persons who reportedly went missing from Savar yesterday night, was arrested in the capital by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday, according to a press release of Rab-11 in Narayanganj yesterday.

Rab-11 also claimed to have arrested one Mizanur Rahman Abdullah along with Ibrahim from Sayedabad Bus Stand in Jatrabari. The press release claimed that the two are active members of "Sarwar-Tamim Group" of banned militant outfit JMB.

In addition, books and leaflets on militancy were seized from their possessions, according to the press release. It added that the two were accused in several cases filed with Bandar Police Station in Narayanganj and were on the run.

Ibrahim was one of the three, who went missing since Friday in Savar, reports our Savar correspondent.

The other two are -- Md Salauddin Rubel, 31, an English teacher of Akkhor Academic Coaching Centre, and Sharif Hossen, 18, a twelfth-grader of Savar Doshaid School and College.

Around 10:00pm on



The aerial view of Zindabazar in Sylhet city. Even 20 years back, the area used to be adorned with greenery. Due to unplanned and rapid urbanisation, not just this area, almost the entire city is losing its green covering. All that remains now is some green patches here and there. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

A city of fading greenery

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Sylhet, a city over 700 years old, has been facing a major crisis over the last 20 years where it has been steadily losing its greenery and turning into a concrete jungle like many other parts of the country.

Experts say this change is triggered because of the conflict between the existing environment and the rapidly expanding urbanisation of the city.

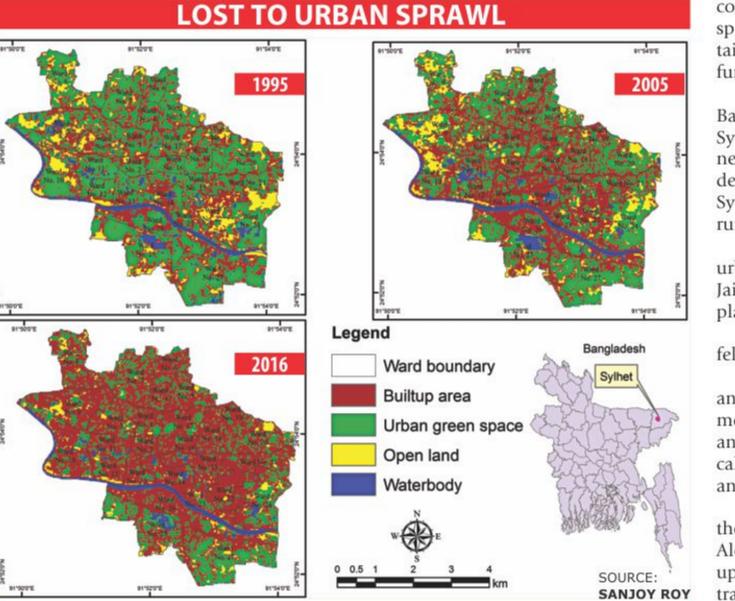
From a GIS (geographic information system) and RS (remote sensing)-based hybrid image classification technique conducted by Sanjoy Roy, a researcher and GIS/RS analyst, on the greenery of Sylhet City Corporation area, it has been found that the green cover of the city has reduced by half between 1995 and 2016.

The study shows that the city area's total green cover was 1,347 hectares in 1995, which declined to 1,066 hectares in 2005 and 673 hectares in 2016.

The city has thus lost a staggering 674 hectares of green cover over the last two decades. The study also reveals that among four different land-use or cover types -- the green coverage contributed to about 49.64 percent of total city area in 1995, which has since reduced to 24.81 percent in 2016.

The key causes of this reduction in greenery, revealed by the study, show that the built-up area -- which mainly represents buildings and infrastructures of Sylhet City Corporation -- increased from 927 hectares in 1995 to 1,799 hectares in 2016.

Therefore, built-up area of the city has shown an exponential expansion of 32.13 percent in 2016 from 1995. In addition, the open land area, which is commonly used as playgrounds, recreation or pasture land, has also diminished by 171 hectares in the last 21 years.



Sanjoy Roy told The Daily Star that the reason behind this is the fact that Sylhet is a rapidly growing city where urban expansion is the main factor behind green surface loss.

This is happening in order to meet the need of an ever-increasing population. Huge infrastructures and buildings are being developed but there is little to no prior planning about city standards.

He said, "It is needless to say that such reduction of green coverage will have a very adverse impact on urban environment and its scenic beauty. Expansion of impervious surface along with vegetation reduction

will hamper rainwater penetration to the ground, which is a large source of ground water recharge."

As a result, ground water levels will also deplete gradually resulting in deficit in ground water extraction for the city dwellers, he said.

"Besides, vegetation reduction will also affect the urban biodiversity and urban micro climate pattern by increasing surface temperature and decreasing rainfall."

Moreover, city dwellers are losing recreational facilities that have a long-term negative impact on human psychology. It is urgently needed to undertake a proper

conservation action for the remnant green spaces in the city along with a more sustainable city development plan to reduce further degradation, he stressed.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Sylhet chapter, said a proper planning is needed to protect urban greenery. "The demand for protecting the greenery of Sylhet remains part of a long movement run by Bapa."

"For example, we demanded that an urban park be developed in place of Sylhet Jail, which is being transferred to another place. But that didn't happen."

"Also, offences like cutting hills and felling trees must be punished," he said.

Dr Md Jahir Bin Alam, professor of civil and environmental engineering department of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, said the city is dramatically losing its greenery due to unplanned and rapid urbanisation.

"A workable plan is required to ensure the protection of greenery in the city. Alongside this, the government has to take up plans with the local governing administration to protect the existing greenery."

Contacted, Enamul Habib, chief executive officer of Sylhet City Corporation, said the corporation is planning to start a tree plantation campaign from the next season. Under the initiative, they would plant 10,000 trees per year to keep the city green.

Ariful Haque Chowdhury, mayor of Sylhet city, said they now have a master plan for the development of the city. "It is environment friendly and could prevent further greenery reduction in the coming years."

"We are also consulting with experts to implement projects for protecting the green cover of the city," the mayor said.

Biswa Ijtema begins Jan 12
 BSS, Dhaka

Biswa Ijtema, the second largest congregation of the Muslims, is scheduled to be held in two phases on the bank of the Turag river, on the outskirts of Dhaka, from January 12-14 and January 19-21.

The preparations have already begun on the congregation ground in Tongi.

According to the organisers, several hundred people including youths, teachers and students are taking part in various works including construction of makeshift accommodation facilities for foreign guests, makeshift toilets and bathrooms, and installation of electricity, gas and water lines.

People from 32 districts will take part in this Ijtema -- Dhaka, Sherpur, Narayanganj, Nilphamari, Sirajganj, Natore, Gaibandha, Laxmipur, Sylhet, Chittagong, Narail, Madaripur, Bhola, Magura, Patuakhali, Jhalokati, Panchagarh, Jhenidah, Jamalpur, Faridpur, Netrakona, Narsingdi, Comilla, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Feni, Thakurgaon, Sunamganj, Bogra, Khulna, Chuadanga, and Pirojpur.

CTG STAMPEDE
Mohiuddin Chy family stands by victim families
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Families of nine people who lost their lives in a stampede at the qulkhani of ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury were given financial assistance yesterday.

Mohiuddin's son Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel distributed Tk 1.05 lakh each among the families of the nine deceased.

The family of the tenth victim, Debobrata Bhattacharjee could not come from Rangmati for his post funeral rituals held yesterday, Jaoharlal Hazari, a councillor of Chittagong City Corporation said.

Mohibul said his family would take the responsibility of the education of the children of the deceased. All costs of treatment were also provided for the injured persons, he added.

"No death can be repaired by financial compensation...we have just stood by the deceased families whom we consider the part of our family," he said.

A prayer was held at Chatteshwari Temple in the port city on behalf of the



A biker drives on the wrong side of Mouchak-Moghbar flyover in the capital yesterday. Showing a complete disregard for the rule of law and public safety, many of the riders often take the shortcut just to save time. The photo was taken around 11:00am in Moghbar area. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Children's fundamental rights must be ensured
 Says Justice Wahhab

Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, who is performing functions of the chief justice, yesterday said fundamental rights of every child must be ensured.

"We must bear in mind that the children who are living on road having no families are our children too and they need urgent inspiration and utmost care. The conditions they live in and the threats they face should drive us to work for them with urgency. If we succeed in fulfilling their dreams, they will create a better world in the future," he said.

Justice Wahhab was speaking at a programme organised on the occasion of extending the existing memorandum of

BGB will soon get choppers
 PM tells BGB Day event; asks members to maintain discipline strictly

Border Guard Bangladesh (BCB) will soon get helicopters to patrol inaccessible areas across the country's borders, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced yesterday at BGB's Pikhana headquarters in the capital.

The prime minister made the announcement while addressing BGB members on the occasion of Border Guard Bangladesh Day 2017.

Urging the BGB members to work for the country's development maintaining strict discipline, she said, "I believe that mutual confidence, respect, discipline, humanity and above all, mutual sympathy, among the officers and members [of BGB] will strengthen the bond of this force."

BGB is a force of unquestionable loyalty and allegiance and it gives the nation a sense of confidence when it comes to safeguarding the border, maintaining internal law and order and tackling manmade and social calamities, said the PM.

Asking the BGB members to discharge their duties with patriotism, honesty and discipline, she recalled BGB's outstanding and praiseworthy role in maintaining law-and-order situations in the country, espe-



cially during the destructive activities including arson attacks by the BNP-Jamaat clique centring the last general elections.

The PM informed the BGB members of various development programmes undertaken by her government for the welfare of the BGB and its members and assured them of her government's continued support in this regard.

Highlighting the glorious role of members of the then EPR, the predecessor of BGB, during the Liberation War in 1971, the premier said they had put up a strong resistance against the Pakistani occupation forces in the early hours of the