

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 20.2 L 10.0	MYMENSINGH H 18.0 L 08.7	CHITTAGONG H 24.1 L 13.2	SYLHET H 22.8 L 10.5	RAJSHAHI H 17.0 L 05.3	RANGPUR H 12.0 L 07.5	KHULNA H 22.0 L 08.6	BARISAL H 23.0 L 07.8	COX'S BAZAR H 24.4 L 15.2
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Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB. Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during midnight till morning and it may continue at places till noon, Met Office said. Mild to moderate cold wave sweeping over Dhaka, Mymensingh and Barisal divisions and parts of Rajshahi, Khulna and Rangpur divisions and Sreemanghal and Sitakunda may continue. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:27pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.

RANGPUR CITY POLLS
Dispose of plea for vote recounting

HC directs EC
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Election Commission to dispose of in 30 days an application for recounting the votes cast in the Rangpur City Corporation election held on December 21 last year. BNP mayoral candidate Kawsar Zaman Babla, who was defeated in the election, submitted the application to the EC on December 27 bringing an allegation of irregularities. Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice M Moazzam Husain and Justice Md Shohrwardi passed the order following a writ petition filed by Babla challenging the legality of the EC's inaction to settle this application. Jatiya Party (Ershad) mayoral candidate Mostafizar Rahman Mostafa won the Rangpur city polls

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REVISITING THE HORROR
Centring on the January 5 election in 2014, the country experienced a reign of terror unleashed by then BNP-Jamaat-led opposition alliance, killing people and damaging property. During January-February, following the first anniversary of January 5 election, the alliance also enforced nationwide blockade which turned violent resulting in more than a hundred deaths. Clockwise from left, Blockaders set a BRTC bus and a private car on fire in front of Rajuk Bhaban in the capital's Motijheel on January 6, 2015. A fire extinguisher being installed inside a bus at Mohakhali Bus Terminal on January 21 the same year -- a precaution the bus owners used to take with incidents of petrol bomb attacks on buses rising alarmingly at that time. Monir burned and blackened, sits dazed on the road as his father wails. The Daily Star printed this partly pixelated picture a day after the 14-year-old suffered severe burns on November 4, 2013, when pro-hartal pickets set fire to his father's lorry during the violence flaring up ahead of the January 5 polls the next year. The boy died on November 7.



PHOTOS: FILE

SEVEN YEARS OF FELANI KILLING

Wait for justice not over yet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Yesterday was the seventh death anniversary of Felani Khatun, who was shot dead by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in 2011. Long seven years have passed by, but her family's wait for justice is not over yet. "I am yet to get justice for the murder of my daughter," said Felani's father Nur Islam



The body of Felani hanging from the barbed-wire fence at the border.

while talking to this correspondent over the phone. Fifteen-year-old Felani was gunned down by the BSF when she, along with her father, was returning home from India through Anantapur border along Phulbari upazila of Kurigram on January 7, 2011. Although her father managed to get inside the Bangladesh border by scaling the barbed-wire fence, Felani was shot dead by a BSF man before she was able to do so. The

ghastly photo of Felani's bloody body hanging from the barbed-wire upside down sparked an outcry of protest and condemnation throughout the country. The BSF trooper, Amiya Ghosh, who killed the unfortunate child, faced two phases of trial in an internal court. In both cases, he was acquitted. Nur Islam said, "I testified two times before the BSF special court in Cooh Bihar where the lone killer BSF man Amiya Ghosh admitted his killing. But the court acquitted him." Challenging the acquittal, Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Ainjibi Samity through an Indian lawyer filed a writ petition with the Indian Supreme Court in 2013. Following the acquittal of Amiya for the second time, Felani's father with the help of Indian human rights organisation Manobadhiker Surokha Mancho (Masum) filed another writ petition with the court on July 13, 2015, said Advocate Abraham Lincoln, Kurigram public prosecutor and lawyer of the Felani killing case. The Indian Supreme Court fixed hearing of both the petitions on January 18 this year, he added. Meanwhile, marking the anniversary yesterday (January 7), Felani's family organised a doa mahfil in their village home under Rumkhana union of the district's Nageswari upazila, praying for the salvation of her departed soul.

BNP-Jamaat alliance man behind forced disappearances

Alleges Obaidul Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A BNP-Jamaat alliance leader, who went into hiding in Sweden, is behind the recent abductions and enforced disappearances, alleged Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday. "His name is Nahid. He leads several killing groups from Sweden. He is carrying out and plotting such abductions," he said. The road transport and bridges minister was inaugurating a photo exhibition organised by AL Publicity and Publications Sub-Committee at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka. The alliance carried out the abductions to tarnish the image of the government at home and abroad, he said. Different media reported that the leader [Nahid] is behind serial killings and the abductions, he said. The minister also said many people, including several AL leaders, became victims of abduction that also spread panic among people. The two-day exhibition is featuring the arson attacks by the BNP-led 20-party alliance centring on the 10th general election held on January 5, 2014. Speaking as the chief guest, Quader said Nahid also carried out several arson attacks at different parts of the country as per the direction of the BNP chairperson. Quader said innocent people fell victim to such attacks launched by the BNP-Jamaat alliance before and after the national polls across the country. The attackers will be defeated in the upcoming national election, he said. According to Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 60 people -- including former Bangladesh ambassador to Vietnam Maroof Zaman, North South University teacher Mubashar Hasan and journalist Utpal Das -- fell victim to abduction or enforced disappearance last year. Bodies of two such victims were recovered later, eight were claimed to have been arrested by law enforcers, seven returned home and the rest are still missing, it added.

The questions go unanswered

Victims of arson attacks during BNP-Jamaat blockade recount agonising memories

ABDULLAH AL NAYEEM

"... What did we do wrong? ... What did my husband and daughter do [to deserve this]? Could you all please tell me?" A pin drop could be heard in the auditorium, but Mafruha Begum's questions remained unanswered. "Why we, the ordinary people, will have to fall prey to politics when we are out, going about our lives? Why will the people be burned alive?" Mafruha, who lost her husband and a school-going daughter in an arson attack during the political unrest over the national election in 2015, kept on bombarding the audience yesterday with her heart-wrenching questions. The 48-year-old widow was speaking during the inaugural ceremony of a photo exhibition showcasing photos of victims and incidents of arson attacks unleashed on roads during a countrywide blockade called by the BNP-led 20-party alliance over the 10th general election held on January 5 in 2014. The two-day exhibition is being organised by Publicity and Publications Sub-committee of Awami League (AL). It happened almost two years ago, on February 3 of 2015, but the vivid memories of that terrifying day still haunts Mafruha as that day she lost two of her beloved souls -- her husband Nuruzzaman Pobl and her daughter Mysha Nahiyen Tasnim who was in tenth grade. The three of them were coming home after vacationing at Cox's Bazar.

"We boarded a bus of Icon Paribahan to return to Jessore... but the trip turned into a curse for us," Mafruha said. As the bus reached Chouddogram area of Comilla around 4:00am while most of its passengers were fast asleep, several alleged blockaders hurled a number of petrol bombs at the bus. Fire engulfed the entire vehicle, burning seven of the passengers alive and injuring at least 20. Mafruha's husband Nuruzzaman and their daughter Mysha were among the dead. Mafruha managed to jump out the window of the bus before losing consciousness. She was later given treatment at a Comilla hospital. A case was filed with Chouddogram Police Station that night against 56 local BNP and Jamaat activists in connection with the arson attack. "I can't forget the incident... watching [helplessly] my daughter and husband burning alive. My son and I still cry every night," said Mafruha, who lives in the capital's Mirpur-2 area. "...I don't know how much longer my son I and will live bearing so much pain," she said breaking down in tears. She thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for taking the responsibility of her and her son. "I am thankful to the prime minister as I'm alive because of her help. Like Mafruha, many arson attack victims and their family members across the country shared their sufferings to media at the

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Madrasa teachers follow school colleagues' lead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of ebtedai madrasas, the primary level educational institutions under madrasa board, continued their sit-in for the seventh consecutive day in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, demanding nationalisation of all the registered madrasas. They submitted a memorandum to newly appointed State Minister for Education Kazi Keramat Ali to press home their demand to nationalise the madrasas like the registered primary schools. Under the banner of "Bangladesh Swatantra Ebtedai Madrasa Shikkhak Samity", several hundred teachers began their agitation on January 1 and vowed to continue their programme if their demand is not met. According to the leaders of the association, currently around 10,000 madrasas are being run in the country where around 50,000 teachers teach students from class I to V under the madrasa education system. Qazi Mokhlesur Rahman, president of the association, said they will take a decision to go for a tougher movement like fast unto death today after discussing the matter at the executive committee of the association. They would submit a memorandum to the prime minister today, he said. According to the memorandum, teachers of the ebtedai madrasas and the registered primary schools started getting Tk 500 as allowances through a government circular in 1994. Later in 2013, the government elevated the amount to Tk 1,000 of 6,776 teachers of 1,519 madrasas, it said, adding that the government in 2016-17 fiscal year increased the salaries of headmasters to Tk 2,500 and assistant headmasters to Tk 2,300 from Tk 1,000. "The salaries and allowances of the primary teachers rose in phases. But the teachers of the ebtedai madrasas are still overlooked," it said. Mokhlesur said they have long been teaching students like all other teachers, but facing discrimination. "Many teachers are failing to provide for their families as they got nothing from the government," he said. None from the government contacted them yet, he said, adding they would continue their agitation until their demand is met.

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