

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 31.8 L 20.4	H 29.8 L 18.3	H 30.5 L 19.8	H 31.0 L 17.8	H 30.7 L 17.3	H 29.8 L 16.5	H 31.5 L 21.8	H 32.4 L 19.7	H 32.5 L 19.8

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain at one or two places over Rangpur division in the next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, said the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:01pm and rises tomorrow at 06:20am. Highest and lowest temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Govt taking tough stance against militancy funding: Amu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken a tough stance against the funding of militancy and started identifying the persons involved with the racket.

"Our intelligence units have increased vigilance whether remittance is being used to fund militancy. Bangladesh Bank and intelligence units are monitoring all the suspicious transactions," said Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu yesterday.

The minister was speaking to reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee for combating militancy at the home ministry conference room.

The government is working to trace the origin of militant funding, he said. "Three types of people fund militancy -- the militant, a supporter of militancy and an empathiser of militancy," he said.

The government is also checking fake currency and monitoring courier services. The border security has also been heightened.

The intelligence agencies are also investigating couriers, online transactions and suspicious telephone conversations, Amu said.

The minister said according to the direction of Bangladesh Bank, the authorities of the banks have to inform the intelligence units if they find any inconsistency in transactions.

The minister also asked the banks to follow rules during money transactions. Amu also said a nine-member committee has been formed to monitor inconsistency in transactions.

There was a rise in militancy in the country but the government successfully controlled it, he added.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, Inspector General of Police Javed Patwari and top home ministry officials were also present.



Participants observe a minute of silence to pay homage to Pakistani human rights activist Asma Jahangir during a discussion at Krishibid Institution in the capital yesterday. Inset, Iranian Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi narrates her life story at the programme. Two other Nobel Peace winners -- Mairead Maguire from Northern Ireland and Tawakkol Karman from Yemen -- also shared theirs.

When saviours labelled 'rapists'

Two youths in jail for 18 days; victim hopes for their release in today's court hearing

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

All they did was rescued a gang rape victim, took her to the hospital and gave her all sorts of assistance to keep her mentally strong during the critical time.

But the two youths -- Imran Khan and Shohag Hossen residents in Ashulia's Jamgora area -- have been languishing in jail for the last 18 days over the rape allegation, as police arrested the duo based on the statement of one of the rapists.

On the other hand, the victim girl said the arrested two are not rapists -- they were her rescuers.

On 12 January, a group of people including Rasel and Alam kidnapped her in front of her workplace around 3:30pm and forcibly took her to a secluded place boarding a CNG-run three-wheeler, alleged the victim while talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday.

"Later, they raped me. After that, they left me in Zirani area beside Nabiagar-Chandra highway around 6:30pm," she said.

"When I was crying, some people appeared and were trying to know my identity," she said. "I then gave them Imran's mobile number as he is a close acquaintance."

Later, the locals contacted Imran. And after hearing the news, Imran and Shohag rushed to the spot and took her to a local hospital and informed police and her parents, said the 14-year-old victim.

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A world without violence

With the call, 3 Nobel laureates share their stories

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When the Yemenis endured dictatorship, corruption, poverty and unemployment for years, Tawakkol Karman initiated a peaceful revolution against the powerful regime back in 2007.

An outspoken journalist and human rights activist, she began the anti-government protest movement, agitating for press freedoms and staging weekly sit-ins to demand the release of journalists and political prisoners from jail.

"Every Tuesday, we used to stage a sit-in in front of the cabinet, calling for freedom," said Karman, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, as she shared her life story and struggle at a discussion programme yesterday.

There was a pin drop silence as the packed audience was spellbound listening to how bravely she fought her battles and continued the peaceful movement against the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The regime threatened the protesters with bullets, but they responded with flags of peace, she said. "In our entire journey, we carried the flag of peace."

Tawakkol Karman along with two other female Nobel Peace laureates -- Mairead Maguire and Shirin Ebadi -- shared their stories at the discussion titled, "Of life and struggle" organised by Naripakkho, an organisation working on women's rights, at Bangladesh Krishibid Institution.

All the three Nobel laureates called for an end to violence and a world free from militarism and war.

Karman founded "Women Journalists without Chains" that defends human rights and freedom of expression.

"My organisation played a big role in the struggle for women's rights, freedom of speech and democracy in Yemen," she said.

She said it was their relentless effort that finally led to the resignation of Saleh.

At the discussion, Shirin Ebadi also narrated her struggle against the government.

After finishing her law school, she became the first female judge of Iran and served as the president of the city court of Tehran.

But soon after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, she was dismissed from that position and made a clerk in the court that she had presided over. "It was very painful for me to lose a job I love," she said.

Shirin, however, was undeterred.

She began her own law firm and took up the struggle for fundamental human rights, especially the rights of women and children. She wrote several books on human rights and laws. As she earned more fame, the more hostile the government became towards her.

"To silence me, the government arrested my husband and sister. They sent me a message that if I keep quiet, my husband and sister would be released."

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Too soon to end



The love affair with books seemed to continue forever as thousands of booklovers thronged the Ekushey book fair even on the last day of the month-long festivity yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MATHEWS CHIRAN

It was almost seven. The evening had already spread out against the sky.

Holding a heap of books, Maisha Jaben was sitting on a bench at Suhrawardy Udyan.

"I'll sure miss the book fair. The month went by so quick," said the Dhaka University student. "Why can't we have the Ekushey boi mela for two months? I'm planning to stay till the end today [yesterday]."

"These two are for my collections," she told this correspondent as she showed him "Deshe Bideshe" by Syed Mujtaba Ali and "Srestha Golpo" by Manik Bandyopadhyay. She bought the books from the stall of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro.

It was a farewell filled with optimism, excitement and yearning as booklovers in droves thronged the premises -- Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy -- of the Amar Ekushey Granthamela on the last day of the month-long fair yesterday.

Almost all the stalls were crowded with people of all ages picking their favourites. Publishers and volunteers were also helping bookworms to the best of their abilities.

"I bought books for my students as I believe it will help nurture a reading habit and culture among them," said Ferdous Ara Begum, a vice principal of Dhaka Residential Model College.

Expressing satisfaction over the fair management, she said, "Publishers brought out more books this year." She was optimistic that the fair next year will be better and bigger.

Almost all the visitors echoed her.

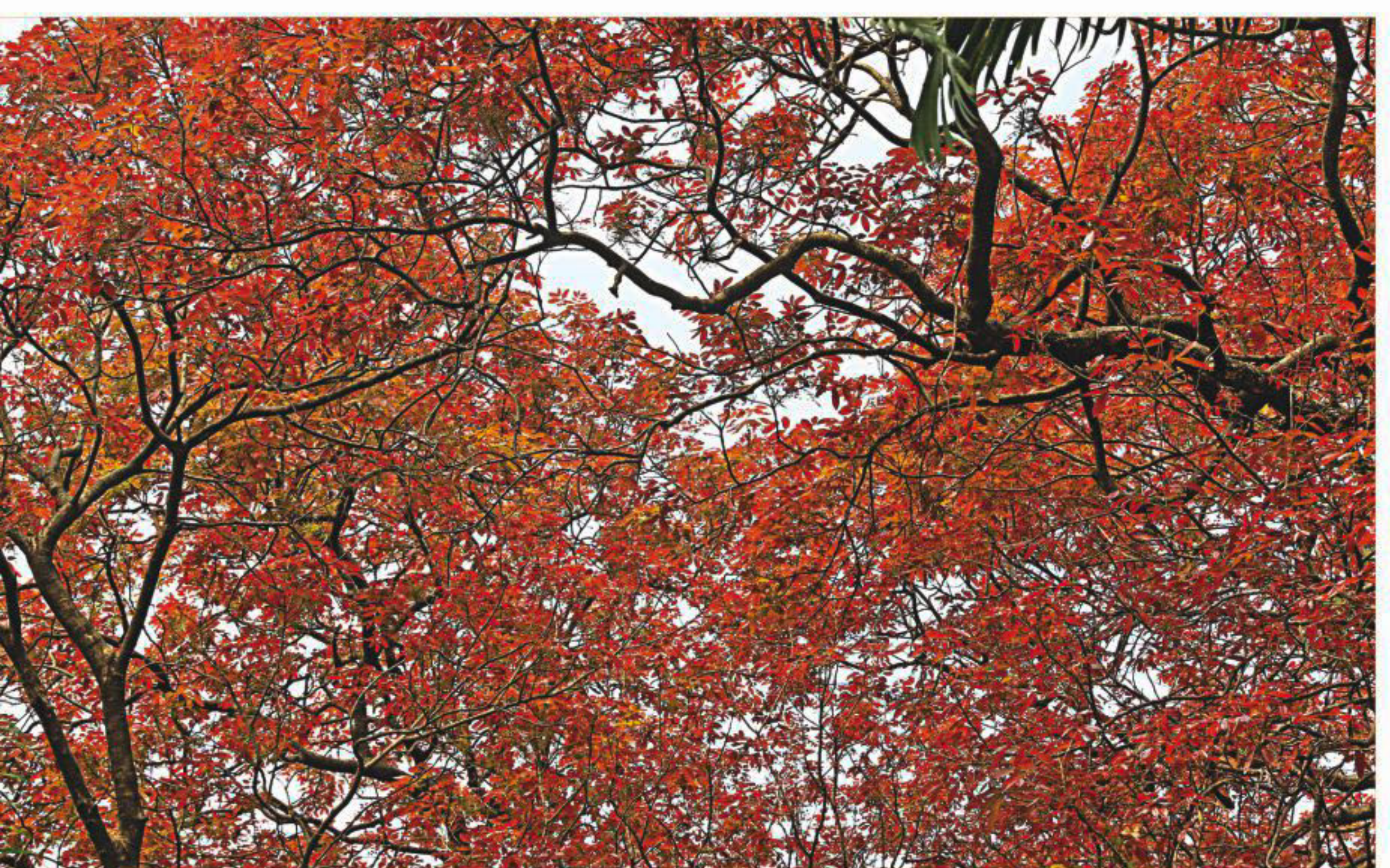
Being the last day, many of them could not resist dropping by for one last time. Some of the visitors also came from outside the capital with their family members to partake in the literary journey.

Rafia Zaman, a fourth grader, was all smiles as she showed this correspondent the books she bought. She came to the fair with her parents from Sylhet.

"I have bought books by Humayun Ahmed, Mohammed Zafar Iqbal and many others. I cannot wait to show these to my friends," she said.

Her father, Md Moniruzzaman, a government official, was also busy buying books. "I always encourage my daughter to read books."

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Spring awakens nature. It is the time when trees shed their dried leaves overlaid with dust of winter and bring forth fresh, colourful sprigs. The photo was taken at the capital's Ramna Park yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Rejoinder

The Dhaka Forum (TDF) has strongly objected to a report published in The Daily Star on February 25 with the headline "Democracy rests on inclusive polls" where the organisation has been characterised as a "pro-BNP platform".

In a rejoinder, TDF president and former Bangladesh Bank governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed said the organisation is non-profit, non-partisan and non-political platform of a cross section of like-minded citizens amongst scholars and practitioners in the field of administration, social, economic and sustainable development that has scrupulously adhered to its declared ethos in all its activities, public and private.

It has, since its establishment and in the recent past, held numerous

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JP playing due role of opposition

Says Raushan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The opposition is playing its due role in the House, said Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad in parliament yesterday.

"Different criticisms about us are being made in television talk shows. But we are following the British Parliament and playing our due role," she said.

On Tuesday, Raushan said she felt embarrassed when reporters asked her whether the Jatiya Party was in the opposition or in the favour of the government.

Raushan that day also urged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to relieve three Jatiya Party lawmakers of cabinet posts to help it emerge as the "real opposition" party.

Collaboration key to fighting disabilities

Says Saima Wazed

UNB, Dhaka

Disability is a very complex issue and it requires collaborative efforts to fight it, said Saima Wazed Hossain, chairperson of Bangladesh National Advocacy Committee for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders yesterday.

Saima, also a member of the World Health Organization's Expert Advocacy Panel on Mental Health, was addressing as chief guest the launching ceremony of a project for children with special needs at ICDDR,B.

With the Unicef providing financial assistance, the ICDDR,B, Faith Bangladesh, and Shuchona Foundation are conducting the project titled "A Comprehensive Approach to Identify Children with Disabilities through Capacity Building of Government and NGO Health Workers and Disability Service Mapping in Bangladesh". The project targets early identification of

children with special needs and strengthening the capability of related stakeholders as well as development of a referral association with proper service providers through service mapping. In many ways, it attempts to identify what the challenges are and how to reduce the vulnerabilities and build an inclusive community, said Saima, also the daughter of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

With the project, they will also be able to identify what support the people with special needs require, who can help them and what resources will be needed, she added.

Saima said, "From 2011, I was knocking door to door to draw international attention for the country's neurodevelopmental issues and Unicef is now with us."

Zillar Rahman, secretary, social welfare ministry, said Bangladesh has at least 15.1 lakh physically and neurologically challenged people and over two lakh of them are suffering from neurodevelopmental disorders.



Vendors with umbrellas occupy the entire length of a footpath while makeshift shops built in front of a market take up a significant portion of the road, causing sufferings to pedestrians and commuters. The photo was taken in Kanchpur bus stop area in Narayanganj's Shiddhirganj on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN