

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 32.3 L 23.0

MYMENSINGH
H 32.0 L 17.8

CHITTAGONG
H 34.0 L 21.5

SYLHET
H 32.6 L 18.5

RAJSHAHI
H 32.1 L 14.4

RANGPUR
H 31.0 L 16.0

KHULNA
H 32.5 L 19.8

BARISAL
H 33.3 L 20.2

COX'S BAZAR
H 34.5 L 21.4

Weather may remain dry over the country in the next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, said the Met office. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged and night temperature may fall slightly over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:05pm and rises tomorrow at 06:14am. Highest and lowest temperatures recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:



A group of members of "Travelettes of Bangladesh", an organisation of female travellers in the country, on their way to Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj. Inset, President Sakia Haque and General Secretary Manoshi Saha Tuli with two other members on their bikes at Mujibnagar in Meherpur district. PHOTO: COLLECTED



United they travel

MATHEWS CHIRAN

The desire to see the unseen and know the unknown is perhaps latent inside every individual. The memories we make during travelling leave a captivating effect on our psyche. When we are depressed, the memorable experience can help us shake off our gloom and bring joy.

But when it comes to travelling solo, it is still considered to be a "guy thing", especially in this part of the world where parents still do not feel comfortable allowing their daughters to travel alone. Even at times, women themselves are not courageous enough to travel alone due to security reasons. Moreover, social taboo renders another barrier.

However, a positive wind of change is blowing as women themselves are taking initiatives to explore the world around them and see the unseen like their male counterparts.

One such initiative is "Travelettes of Bangladesh" (TOB) -- a Facebook group. The platform, solely operated by women, helps women travel as a group across the country by providing them with proper security and facilities.

They first create a public event on Facebook and set a place to travel to. Information like approximate cost is mentioned there as well. Those who are interested send money to the organisers through mobile banking service.

"That's how the process starts," Sakia Haque, president of the platform, told this correspondent.

"Parents do not allow women to travel alone in our society. But if we do not travel, meet new people and explore the world, we will not be able to learn. Ultimately, real empowerment of women will be hampered," she said.

Asked how it started, Sakia said she along with her school friend Manoshi Saha Tuli, now general secretary (GS) of the platform, launched TOB on November 27, 2016 with the motto "Empowering women through travelling".

Since its inception, TOB has successfully arranged 25 expeditions in different districts. In each expedition, they cover several districts. Women of different ages, starting from 12 years old, are allowed to travel with them, said Sakia.

The Facebook group now has more than 15,000 members.

"It is a huge achievement. We started with a couple of members, but now we have thousands of them giving us inspiration to work more with the young minds," said Manoshi, also an intern at Dhaka Medical College (DMC).

"Travellette means a woman who is not afraid to jump out into the unknown world. We want women of our society to be bold and independent," she added.

Talking about the expenses, she said, "Since it is a voluntary organisation, everyone pays for their own expenses. But we try our best to minimise the cost while ensuring a better travel experience."

SAFETY MEASURES
TOB has volunteers in different districts. They fix the spot and inform local police stations about arrival of the lady travellers.

"Till now, no unexpected occurrence has taken place. We keep contact with local police stations to keep our travelletes safe," said TOB president Sakia, also a student of DMC.

The platform has been able to gain trust of elderly women too.

Nasreen Akhter, a 60-year-old mother, said, SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Look after women construction workers

Prothom Alo-Seven Rings Cement roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women construction workers should be provided with financial assistance during and after pregnancy. At the same time, there should be toilet facilities for them at the construction sites.

Also, the government should invest in skills development programmes for them so that they do not face any wage discrimination.

Speakers said these at a roundtable yesterday. Organised by Prothom Alo in association with Seven Rings Cement, the roundtable titled "Women workers in construction industry" was held at the Bangla daily's office in the capital.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Mujibul Haque Chunnu said the labour law should be implemented strictly to ensure workers' rights.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), said workers have to pay a contractor to get a job at a construction site. As a result, the already ill-paid workers have to spend a portion of their wages, making it difficult for them to survive.

Sabina Sultana, senior programme officer at the multi-sectoral programme on

violence against women under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, said women workers should also seek assistance by calling the helpline "109". The toll-free number helps women and children who fall victims to different forms of violence.

Nasimun Ara Huq, president of Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (centre for women journalists), said accommodation facilities should be provided to the construction workers, especially women. Also, there should be a registration process for them, which will help them receive any sort of compensation without a hassle.

She said women workers were paid less than their male counterparts.

Abdur Razzak, general secretary of Imarat Nirman Sramik Union Bangladesh, said there should be a policy ensuring timely payment of the workers.

Syeda Munira Sultana, programme officer (RMG project) of International Labour Organization, said most of the women are victims of occupational diseases.

While working at construction sites, they suffer from various construction-related health hazards including breathing problems, hearing loss and skin diseases, she added.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Man 'kidnaps' wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man and his cohorts allegedly kidnapped his wife from Magura town yesterday after she filed a complaint with Ain o Salish Kendra.

Farjana Akhtar, 26, filed a complaint against her husband Rakibul Islam, 50, on Sunday seeking help, said Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir, coordinator of ASK in Dhaka.

Farjana left her husband's house in Magura town on January 19 due to domestic violence and was living separately in Dhaka, said Faijul. He further alleged that Rakibul, a businessman who maintains close link with powerful people in Magura town, filed a theft case against his wife on January 25 with Magura police "to harass her".

Following this, Farjana and ASK field officer Shamsunnahar, 50, travelled to Magura from Dhaka on Tuesday to seek bail in the case. Farjana was taken off the bus a couple of kilometers off Magura town by Rakibul and his men from the bus around 4:45pm, Faijul said, quoting Shamsunnahar. Rakibul and his men also beat Shamsunnahar when she tried to stop the men from taking Farjana away in the microbus. On information, police rescued the ASK official and took her to a local hospital.

Faijul said ASK has been preparing to file a case against Rakibul accusing him for kidnapping. Magura police said they were trying to rescue the woman and arrest the accused.

Dr Shahana first BSMMU pro-VC

CITY DESK



Prof Dr Shahana Akhter Rahman, chairperson of the paediatric department

of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), has been appointed as the first pro-vice chancellor of the institution.

She took charge of the office yesterday, a day after President Abdul Hamid appointed her to the post of pro-VC (academic).

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

A hectic day for Dhaka dwellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands suffered traffic snarl-ups yesterday due to an Awami League rally at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital, marking the historic March 7.

With traffic management suffering a serious setback, the party General Secretary Obaidul Quader sought the city dwellers' cooperation to make the rally a success.

"You might be suffering on the roads. But please be patient and cooperate with us in observing the historic day," Obaidul urged during the rally.

Quader, also the road, transport and bridges minister, said they had previously rescheduled some programmes considering public sufferings.

"But there are certain days, such as March 7, February 21, March 26 and December 16 that have to be observed on the due dates," he added.

This rally is not just a rally of the party, it is a rally for the people, the minister said.

Police made roads surrounding the venue off limits to vehicles since 11:30am. Many other roads were filled with processions brought out by Awami League men.

Throughout the day, traffic interruptions were observed in areas around Suhrawardy Udyan, as police closed down Shahbagh, Kataban, Bangla Motor, Farmgate, High Court, Mirpur, Segunbagicha, Bijoy Nagar, Kakrail and some other intersections to facilitate the passage of the arriving AL supporters.

This also caused severe tailbacks along Manik Mia Avenue, Mirpur Road, Karwan Bazar, Bijoy Sarani, Paltan, SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



It was a day full of struggle and suffering for the city dwellers as the capital experienced a traffic chaos due to an Awami League rally at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. Clockwise from left, People waiting for transports at Farmgate. Unable to find one in Shahbagh area, family members of Nasima Akhtar, middle, taking her to a hospital on foot. The usually busy Shahbagh intersection had very light traffic in the afternoon due to a restriction on vehicular movement. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PALASH KHAN, RAJIB RATHAN



2 'robbers' killed in Gazipur, Rangpur 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Two suspected robbers were killed in separate "gunfights" in Gazipur and Rangpur early yesterday.

In Gazipur, a suspected robber was killed in a reported gunfight between his cohorts and police at Patka in Sreepur upazila around 3:30am yesterday. The deceased is Abdur Rab Hawladar, 35, hailing from Goshairhat upazila in Shariatpur, said police.

Around 3:00am, a team of police was patrolling the area when the robbers shot at their vehicle. The team fired back, resulting in the "gunfight", said Joyanal Abedin, assistant sub-inspector of Sreepur Police Station.

At one stage, Abdur Rab sustained injuries after being hit by a bullet, fired by one of his cohorts, claimed police. He was declared dead at Sreepur Upazila Health Complex.

Three police personnel were also injured, said police. They were treated at a local health complex. Police recovered a locally-

made pipe gun, a Chinese axe and three machetes from the spot. The body was sent to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

In Rangpur, a suspected robber was killed and another hurt in a "shootout" with police.

The deceased is Md Prince, 28, and the injured, Golap Hossain Bappi, 27, of Amubari village of Madaripur. Bappi is being treated at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

On information that a gang of robbers is preparing for a heist near Keramatia Government School in Munsipara area under Rangpur city, police raided the area, said Abdul Aziz, inspector (investigation) of Rangpur Sadar Police Station.

Sensing their presence, the gang attacked the law enforcers and they retaliated, he said. Three police officials were also injured during the incident. The other gang members fled the scene. The body was sent to Rangpur Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

BCL men 'beat up' RU student

RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists allegedly beat up a student at Rajshahi University on Tuesday night.

Victim Moynul Islam, a student of mass communication and journalism department, is also an activist of Anushilon Natya Dal -- a university-based drama club.

Moynul said he was talking with some of his friends around 7:00pm in front of Momotaz Uddin Kala Bhaban.

At that time, a group of BCL men, numbering three to four, led by Mahmudur Rahman Kanon, information and research affairs secretary of RU unit, showed up and asked why they were staying there, said Moynul, adding that another leader was Jhalak Sarker, BCL joint secretary of arts faculty.

"At one stage of conversation, Kanon started punching in my face and eyes. The rest of them also joined him in beating me," alleged Moynul, who was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Asked, Kanon denied beating Moynul. He claimed that he had slapped his junior to stop the latter's altercation with Moynul.

Jhalak Sarker also denied the allegation. SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

HC scraps govt relief scam case against Falu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday scrapped the trial proceedings of a relief scam case filed against BNP leader Mosaddek Ali Falu during the regime of military-backed caretaker government in 2007.

After hearing a petition filed by Falu for quashing the trial proceedings, the HC also cleared Falu of the charges as he was not involved in any criminal offence mentioned in the case, his lawyer Khandker Mahub Hossain told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

6 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least six people including two of the same family were killed in separate road accidents across the country yesterday.

In Mymensingh, school boy Mohadev Pal, 8, was killed after being hit by a human-hauler on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Trishal upazila, police said.

Local rushed the victim to Trishal Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead.

Protesting the incident, agitated locals put a barricade on the highway for an hour. On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

In Thakurgaon, Fazila, 60, and her granddaughter Kabita 6, were killed after a three-wheeler skidded off the road and fell into a ditch on Priganj-Katihar road in Pirganj upazila, reports our correspondent quoting police.

The incident left five, including the duo injured. They succumbed to their injuries at a local hospital, police said.

In another incident in Thakurgaon, college student Shahnaj Begum, 17, was killed after being hit by a bus on Boda-Marea road in Boda upazila, police said quoting witnesses.

Locals rescued her and took her to a hospital, where the SEE PAGE 5 COL 4