

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 32.8 | L 21.4

MYMENSINGH
H 31.3 | L 21.8

CHITTAGONG
H 32.5 | L 24.5

SYLHET
H 33.7 | L 21.5

RAJSHAHI
H 34.0 | L 20.0

RANGPUR
H 30.8 | L 19.4

KHULNA
H 34.0 | L 20.0

BARISAL
H 34.1 | L 19.5

COX'S BAZAR
H 34.5 | L 25.0

Rain/thunder showers with temporary gusty/squally wind may occur at a few places over Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions with hail at isolated places over the country in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:20pm and rises tomorrow at 5:38am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Souimanga sunbird, Madagascar.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Sunbirds

Everyone knows about hummingbirds. These colourful creatures hover while drinking nectar from a flower with their long beak. Photographers love these birds and have developed elaborate techniques, often involving several flashes, to catch them drinking from feeders. A skilled photographer can make stunning images from such a setup.

Hummingbirds can only be found in the Americas. In countries like Costa Rica they draw a substantial number of avian tourists. But for the rest of us there is something just as beautiful. They are sunbirds - called *moutushi* in Bangla - found in Asia, Africa and Australia.

Sunbirds are small birds with a long curved beak for inserting into a flower to extract its nectar. In the process they also pollinate the flowers. Male sunbirds are colourful but females are drab brown or grey. In Bangladesh we have five varieties of sunbirds. The most common are purple, purple-rumped and crimson sunbirds. The others - purple-throated and ruby-cheeked varieties - are harder to find.

Sunbirds are fidgety birds. They rarely stay still for more than one or two seconds. During the mating season, however, I have noticed the male sometimes stays still because it is important for it to be conspicuous to attract a female. So it perches in an open place and displays its breeding plumage. The purple sunbird, which normally has iridescent blue colours, grows a yellow-orange splash of feathers on the side during breeding. It looks spectacular.

Where can you find them? Purple sunbirds (and to some extent purple-rumped sunbirds) can be found all over, including the middle of the city,

as long as there are flowers around. But the other sunbirds are found in forested areas. In the National Botanical Garden in Mirpur, I have often seen sunbirds in the *dhaira* vines you encounter after entering the inner gate. But I have also seen them in my neighbour's house in Baridhara, flitting from flower to flower. In the fields of Purbachol, I photographed sunbirds around flowers of *sajna* trees growing in village homesteads.

I have seen crimson sunbirds and ruby-cheeked sunbirds only in the protected forests such as Satchori, Kalenga or Sundarban. They are likely to be found around orchids or smaller flowers.

The anatomy of sunbirds is uniquely designed for drinking nectar. Inside their long decurved bill is a thin tongue which curls around to form a tube. The nectar is then extracted by capillary action. Their light weight and small but strong feet enable them to perch near flowers. If necessary, their wings allow them to hover near flowers while drinking nectar.

Outside Bangladesh I have seen sunbirds in Africa and Madagascar. They are also found in most of south and southeast Asia as well as parts of Australia. Worldwide there are 132 species of sunbirds (as compared to over 300 species of hummingbirds.)

Sunbirds belong to the bird family nectariniidae. This family also includes the spiderhunter which possesses a remarkably long beak to pick prey stuck in spiderwebs.

The next time you are near flowering trees, keep an eye out for these beautiful birds.

www.facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow [ikabirphotographs](https://www.instagram.com/ikabirphotographs) on Instagram

Hilsa sale drops on New Year's eve

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sale of hilsa dropped significantly at the capital's retail markets the day before Pahela Baishakh.

Though the fish traders said they have enough supply, customers are not buying the fish. As a result, they are incurring losses, they added. Usually, the price of hilsa is much higher compared to other fish during this month as people buy this particular fish for celebrating the Bangla New Year with fried hilsa and "panta bhat" (rice soaked in water). However, the trend seems to be changing as a small number of customers were buying the fish marking the first day of the Bangla calendar, said the traders.

While visiting the markets in Mirpur and Karwan Bazar yesterday, it was seen that city dwellers were buying the fish in less quantity. In addition, fish traders said they usually supply hilsa at different restaurants as the demand rises during the celebrations. But this year, they could not sell much. So, the price fell.

"Since the last couple of years, the demand for hilsa, during Pahela Baishakh, is on the wane," said Sukkur Ali, who has been selling the fish in Karwan Bazar market for 32 years.

"Before I used to sell hilsa to small traders who would open up makeshift hotels on the day and sell panta-ilish," he added. "Now, their number has also dwindled."

To compensate their losses, some of the traders were seen selling the fish at its purchase price. They also claimed that the supply was much higher than the previous year.



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SAVING SUNDARBANS

Rights groups seek Unesco intervention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is indifferent to the scientific opinions and precise conditions of the Unesco to save the Sundarbans, said green activists yesterday.

"We've written to Unesco to examine whether the government is following its conditions. We've also asked Unesco to take measures so that their conditions are fulfilled," said advocate Sultana Kamal, convener of Sundarban Rokkha Jatiya Committee (committee to protect the Sundarbans).

Fifty-seven organisations including Sundarban Rokkha Jatiya Committee and Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) organised a press conference demanding "Immediate Intervention of Unesco to Save the Sundarbans" at Dhaka Reporters Unity, says a press release.

"We took part in the Liberation War to save the country; its wealth, environment and people. The Sundarbans is a unique wealth of the world. It is our duty to save it," said Sultana.

Reading out the summary of their letter, she said they have asked Unesco to include the Sundarbans issue in its upcoming 42nd

meeting of World Heritage Committee and reevaluate the risk factors of the largest mangrove forest.

They suggested suspending the construction work of the coal-fired power plant in Rampal till the completion of "Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)".

They also requested Unesco to ask India the reason behind its involvement in the project that would destroy a world heritage site of another country.

They also asked Unesco to call upon the investors to not to invest in the coal-fired power plant project until the SEA is completed.

Bapa General Secretary Dr Abdul Matin said, "We'll expect the prime minister will take steps to stop the destructive activities against the Sundarbans."

Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) was awarded the contract to construct the 1,320MW Maitree Super Thermal Power Plant in Bagerhat's Rampal near the Sundarbans, a world heritage site, at an estimated cost of \$1.68 billion. A joint venture company styled Bangladesh-India

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Artistes mesmerise the audience with their dance performance on DC Hill premises in the port city yesterday during an event marking "Chaitra Sangkranti", the last day of the Bangla year 1424. Sammilito Pahela Baishakh Udjapan Parishad organised the two-day programme to bid farewell to the previous year and to usher in the new one.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Trump wishes joyous Pahela Baishakh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US President Donald Trump and the American people have greeted Bangladesh across the world on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, being celebrated today.

"On behalf of President Trump and the American people, I wish Bengalis everywhere a joyous New Year," said acting Secretary of State John J Sullivan yesterday.

Pahela Baishakh is an opportunity for those who speak Bangla as a mother tongue, of all faiths and beliefs, to celebrate their rich history and culture with beautiful parades, fairs, and dances, he added.

"Here in the United States, we take this opportunity to thank the Bangladeshi American community for its outstanding contributions to our nation, our economy, and our culture. We join all of you in looking toward a bright future, and wish you the best in the year to come. Shubho Noboborsho!," the message read.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's achievement of attaining eligibility for graduating to a developing country and the Bangla New Year were celebrated on Thursday at Bangladesh embassy in Washington, DC.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Port city welcomes 1425

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, being celebrated today, different parts of the country are busy spreading colour and the spirit of newness.

Like every year, the celebrations come alive after a considerable amount of work is put into festivities to make them near perfect. Hand-made decorations, painted sculptures and masks, street alpona, and most importantly the joy in the hearts of Bangladeshis, make this celebration what it is.

In Chittagong city too, different socio-cultural and educational organisations are welcoming the New Year and bidding farewell to the year 1424.

DC Hill Premises and Chittagong Railway Building (CRB) Shirish Tola are the two main venues in the city where two-day long elaborate programmes are being held to welcome 1425.

Sammilito Pahela Baishakh Udjapan Parishad is organising a two-day programme on DC Hill premises in the port city, like it has done for the past 39 years. A programme for "Chaitra Sangkranti", which is the farewell of this year, started at 3:30pm yesterday and continued till 8:30pm, said the organisers.

The venue, a hill-slope, has a natural atmosphere and is surrounded by green foliage, which gives the spectators a soothing environment to enjoy the programmes.

The celebrations of ushering in the New Year would begin at 6:00am with a combined presentation of Rabindra Sangeet "Esho Hey Boishakh Esho Hey" by the artistes of two cultural troupes in the city -- Raktakarabi and Sangeet Bhaban, said Ahmed Iqbal Haider, convener of the parishad.

"This is the 40th edition of celebrating the Bangla New Year, organised by the parishad on the DC Hill premises since 1978," he said. "A total of 46 cultural troupes would perform dance, music and recitation this year."

Haider said they were not happy as the district administration and police imposed different bars, including wrapping up of the New Year celebratory programmes by 5:00pm and not to use any loudspeaker.

Meanwhile, Naba Barsha Udjapan Parishad is organising Chaitra Sangkranti and Pahela Baishakh celebrations at CRB Shirish Tola for the 10th consecutive year.

The Chaitra Sangkranti programme started at 3:00pm yesterday with the release of colourful balloons to the

rhythm of drum beats, followed by music, dance and recitation. The new addition of a "kabadi" tournament would increase the attraction of the programme, said Hazi Md Shahabuddin, an organiser of the parishad.

The New Year celebration programme would start today at 7:30am, and will be completed by 5:00pm, with music, recitation, dance performances and Boli Khela (wrestling competition) to mark the day, he said.

Through Mangal Shobhajatra, the procession to observe Pahela Baishakh, Institute of Fine Arts of Chittagong University will begin its daylong programme to celebrate the New Year, said the institute's director Shaela Sharmin.

The programme will feature different folk sports like cockfights, breaking pots, releasing paper lanterns followed by a musical evening, she said.

Students of Institute of Fine Arts of Chittagong University were seen at Chatteshawri Road, busy creating different structures like tepa puttul (folk doll), tigers and elephants.

Shaela said the students of the institute were drawing a wall mural at Mehedibagh Badshah Miah Road in front of the institute.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Prime Minister's Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Adviser Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the opening day of the 16th International Energy Forum held in New Delhi on April 11.

Locals kill fishing cat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Locals have beaten a fishing cat to death and threw its carcass into a canal in Boalkhali upazila in Chittagong yesterday.

The incident took place at Ward 9 of Shakpura union, said Boalkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Achhiya Khatoun.

"Locals caught the animal after hearing screams of a minor boy in the area who was attacked by the wild cat," said Shakpura Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Mannan Monaf.

"I heard they hung its carcass from a tree after killing it, but I did not see it when I visited the spot," the UP chairman added.

Police and forest department officials were notified but they could not find the carcass as

locals threw it in the canal before police reached the spot, said UNO Achhiya Khatoun.

Fishing cat is a medium-sized wild cat found in South and Southeast Asia. Since 2016, it is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN RedList. Its population is threatened due to destruction of wetlands and has declined severely over the last decade.



The hanging body of the fishing cat. PHOTO: STAR

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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