

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 33.6 L 27.0	MYMENSINGH H 33.2 L 25.3	CHITTAGONG H 33.4 L 25.7	SYLHET H 35.2 L 26.9	RAJSHAHI H 34.9 L 26.4	RANGPUR H 33.8 L 27.5	KHULNA H 31.7 L 25.5	BARISAL H 31.5 L 25.6	COX'S BAZAR H 32.3 L 25.1
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Light to moderate rain/thunder showers accompanied with temporary gusty wind may occur at many places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal & Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh & Sylhet divisions, with moderate to heavy falls at 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 6:37pm and rises tomorrow at 5:31am.



A woman waits leaning against the boundary wall of Dhaka CMM court after her son, a North South University student arrested during Monday's clash with police, was produced before the court yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'I plead not to punish Shahidul Alam'

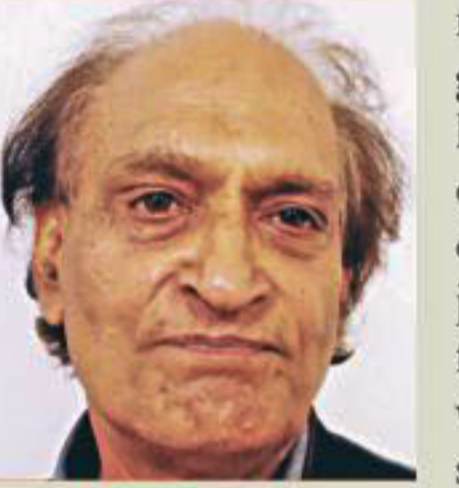
Award-winning Indian photojournalist Raghu Rai wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday on social media platform Facebook, requesting the government not to punish Shahidul Alam, the internationally-famed Bangladeshi photographer and prominent rights activist who was arrested by plainclothes men on Sunday night. A long-time friend of Shahidul, Raghu Rai was honoured by Bangladesh government in 2012 as a 'Friend of the Bangladesh Liberation War'. Rai documented Bangladesh's plight for freedom during 1971 through powerful photos of the refugee camps, action during the war and scenes of jubilation after independence, which were published as a book titled "Bangladesh: The Price of Freedom". Here is the full text of the letter he posted on Facebook.

Ms. Sheikh Hasina,
Honorable Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Prime Minister's Office. Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

minds of Bangladesh demand a sense of security against the malpractices in the transport department and negligence of police to respond that has resulted into several deaths. It seems what students are demanding that any citizen with a conscience would ask for and Shahidul has just stated that to Al Jazeera channel.

My name is Raghu Rai. I have been honored by you in 2012 as friends of Bangladesh Liberation War who photographed the Bangladesh war for freedom by Mukti Bahini supported by your neighbors and friends to transform east Pakistan into an independent nation today known as Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a country of poets, writers, musicians and some of them migrated to India during the partition. Our bond is deep not only culturally but spiritually as well.

Allah saves us from the unpredictable minds of this world. If any opposition and political party is using or manipulating these young minds, they are the ones to be dealt with. But faithful honest patriots like my dear and close friend Shahidul who I would call the eyes and ears of the common masses that can provide an insight into the ground reality of how the spirit of majority of the youth is feeling now, being punished for this. It reminds me of Pakistani general trying to teach a lesson to the faithfuls. Its not only me in India but many others journalists and photojournalists, artists, writers from all around the world who vouch for him and stand by him. We are deeply hurt by the news of Shahidul being detained and tortured.



Raghu Rai

Madam Prime minister, you are the daughter of great revolutionary Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who rose against the repressive and torturous regime of Pakistani generals—and in return the generals decided to teach Bangladeshis a lesson. Thus the nation rose against Pakistan under the leadership of Sheikh Sahib and this is how Bangladesh came into being. So let's not teach our boys a lesson.

All he has done is to use his photographic skill and voice to capture the truth of ongoing reality in a most committed and compassionate way.

Hon'ble Madam, Shahidul Alam founder of DRIK and Pathshala has been a great admirer of Sheikh Sahib, and I have had the privilege of knowing him as a close friend for the last 3 decades. I have no doubt in my mind that Shahidul is one of those rare breeds committed to truth and honesty, and can die for his country. It seems last night Shahidul was picked up by 20-30 men from detective branch of police, and was tortured and couldn't walk on his feet. My heart bleeds for that.

May I humbly request and plead not to punish the honest, the truthful representative of the youth. As the spirit of democracy – the truth must survive for itself that kindles the light in heart of millions of your countrymen and many of us.

Honourable Prime Minister, I hope you shall honour the humbling of the hearts, for a Shahidul Alam.

Sincerely
Raghu Rai,
Friend of Bangladesh.

We have been told that the young

Irregularity-free nat'l polls can't be guaranteed

Says chief election commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda yesterday said that it cannot be guaranteed that there will be no anomalies in the general election.

Replying to a query on whether there is agreeable atmosphere to hold the national election, especially after allegations of irregularities in the recently-concluded polls in five city corporations, Huda said, "I do not agree with the claim that city corporation elections were not satisfactory. We don't think such irregularities will occur in the national election. I cannot ensure that there will be no irregularities anywhere in a national-level election."



KM Nurul Huda

"We will investigate and take necessary actions if we receive complaints of anomalies," he added.

The CEC made the remarks while talking to reporters at the Election Training Institute at Agargaon, Dhaka.

"We always take actions against irregularities that occur in general elections. You have seen us taking extra measures during Barisal city polls, where there were irregularities," he told reporters.

When asked about Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain's statement that people do not have any faith in the Election Commission, the CEC said, "I do not know how Dr Kamal read the thoughts of the entire nation. Did he [Kamal] have any statistics? Did all the people come and tell him to say that? I don't know."

The current student movement for safe roads has nothing to do with the national election, the CEC said. "Voting in the national election will take place according to the constitution. We are working on it."

Huda said the election schedule will be announced in October and the election is likely to be held either at the end of December or beginning of January next year.

Publicise road transport bill

TIB urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday urged the government to make public the draft of Road Transport Act, which was okayed by the cabinet on Monday.

In a press release, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the High Court's order is to award a maximum punishment of seven years' imprisonment for causing death to a person by reckless driving.

"But, several media outlets yesterday published reports saying that the draft act proposed the punishment for five years instead of seven, which is contradictory to the court's order," said Iftekharuzzaman. If the government does not make the act public -- like on the government website and other forms -- confusion may rise among people, he added.

Meanwhile, Juktofront leaders in a press statement urged the government to include a provision in the act to award strict punishment for transport owners who operate unfit vehicles, and for drivers who do not have driving licences.

Its leaders AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, ASM Abdur Rob and Mahmudur Rahman Manna expressed frustration over the draft act, saying people's expectations were not reflected in it.

Besides, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) in another press release said the proposed act was "incomplete and one-sided", as it did not include several offences and irregularities related to the transport sector.

DESTINY GROUP HC clears way for Rafiqul's trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared way for the lower court concerned to continue trial against Rafiqul Amin, managing director of Destiny Group in a graft case.

Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against him on September 8, 2016 for not submitting this wealth statement.

The charge sheet was submitted by the anti-graft watchdog on June 6 last year.

Following the HC order there is no legal bar for the Special Judges Court-8 of Dhaka to continue trial proceedings, said Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan, lawyer for ACC.

Ensure rights, livelihoods of indigenous people

Speakers tell policy dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous people are increasingly leaving the country to escape political, social and economic repression. They are in a constant struggle for the recognition of their identities and rights to ancestral land, speakers yesterday said at a programme in the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Center.

To mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples tomorrow (August 9), a policy dialogue on "Implementation of Bangladesh Indigenous Rights Act" was organised by Research and Development Collective (RDC) in association with IP Caucus, United Nations Development Programme and Swedish International Development Authority.

Members of the parliamentary caucus mentioned that the Khasi and Marma communities are particularly repressed, and are

more likely to migrate to cities and neighbouring countries.

Lawmaker Nazmul Haque Pradhan, general secretary of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, said that most indigenous people live close to nature and their livelihoods depend on it. Deforestation is robbing them of the means to live a decent life and forcing them to leave their homes, he added.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, said indigenous communities often find themselves entangled in legal battles over land disputes and in clashes over tree felling.

Political repression makes the situation worse for them to survive on their own land, he added.

Prof Mesbah Kamal, a technocrat member and coordinator of the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples, said that

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A huge crowd gathers at a ticket counter of an intercity private bus operator in Dhaka's Gabtoli area, as advance sale of bus tickets ahead of Eid holidays started yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PM visits injured AL men at hospital

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital in the capital to see Awami League activists who were undergoing treatment at the hospital after being injured in an attack during the student movement for safe roads.

Sheikh Hasina went to the hospital around 6:00pm and enquired about the conditions of four injured workers of her party, including Sheikh Arafatul Islam Bappy who lost his eye in the attack.

She also directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps, if required, to send them abroad for better treatment.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, former Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, lawmaker Dr Habib-e-Millat, and Awami League Organising



Sheikh Hasina speaks to Arafatul Islam.

Secretary Enamul Haque Shamim were present.

Commonwealth secy general arrives today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland arrives in Dhaka today for a three-day visit to have discussions with high officials of Bangladesh government, opposition and other public figures on priorities and commitments of the voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states.

During the visit, she will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, opposition political leaders, civil society and foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka.

On the first day of his visit, Secretary-General Scotland will address to the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) on the theme "The Commonwealth Advantage – progress and potential" at 10:30am today.

This is her first visit to Bangladesh, where she will arrive from a visit to Sri Lanka. After Dhaka, she will travel to Brunei.

"Sri Lanka, Brunei and Bangladesh are greatly valued members of the Commonwealth family," Scotland said ahead of her travel.

No democratic space

BNP leaders tell diplomats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the student movement demanding safe roads "an outburst of their grievances", BNP leaders yesterday told diplomats of different countries working in Bangladesh that the government does not want to give any democratic space to anyone.

BNP leaders met the diplomats at party chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office to brief them on the latest situation in the country.

Diplomats and representatives from the USA, UK, Australia, European Union and 17 other countries were present at the briefing.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir briefed the diplomats, while senior leaders of the party were present.

They told the diplomats that the ruling Awami League does not believe in democracy and that is why they launched attack on students and journalists during the peaceful

student movement, party insiders told The Daily Star.

The briefing began with BNP leaders showing a video of how AL men rigged the recently concluded three city corporation polls.

The diplomats apparently wanted to know whether BNP will participate in the next parliamentary election, scheduled to be held towards the end of this year.

BNP leaders said that release of party chairperson Khaleda Zia is the first precondition for participating in the election.

They also said that Election Commission should be reconstituted, parliament should be dissolved, and a structure of non-partisan government should be devised to hold the general election.

The diplomats also wanted to know how BNP sees the student movement. In reply BNP leaders said that the demands were genuine and the students expressed their anger as their peers were killed.