

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

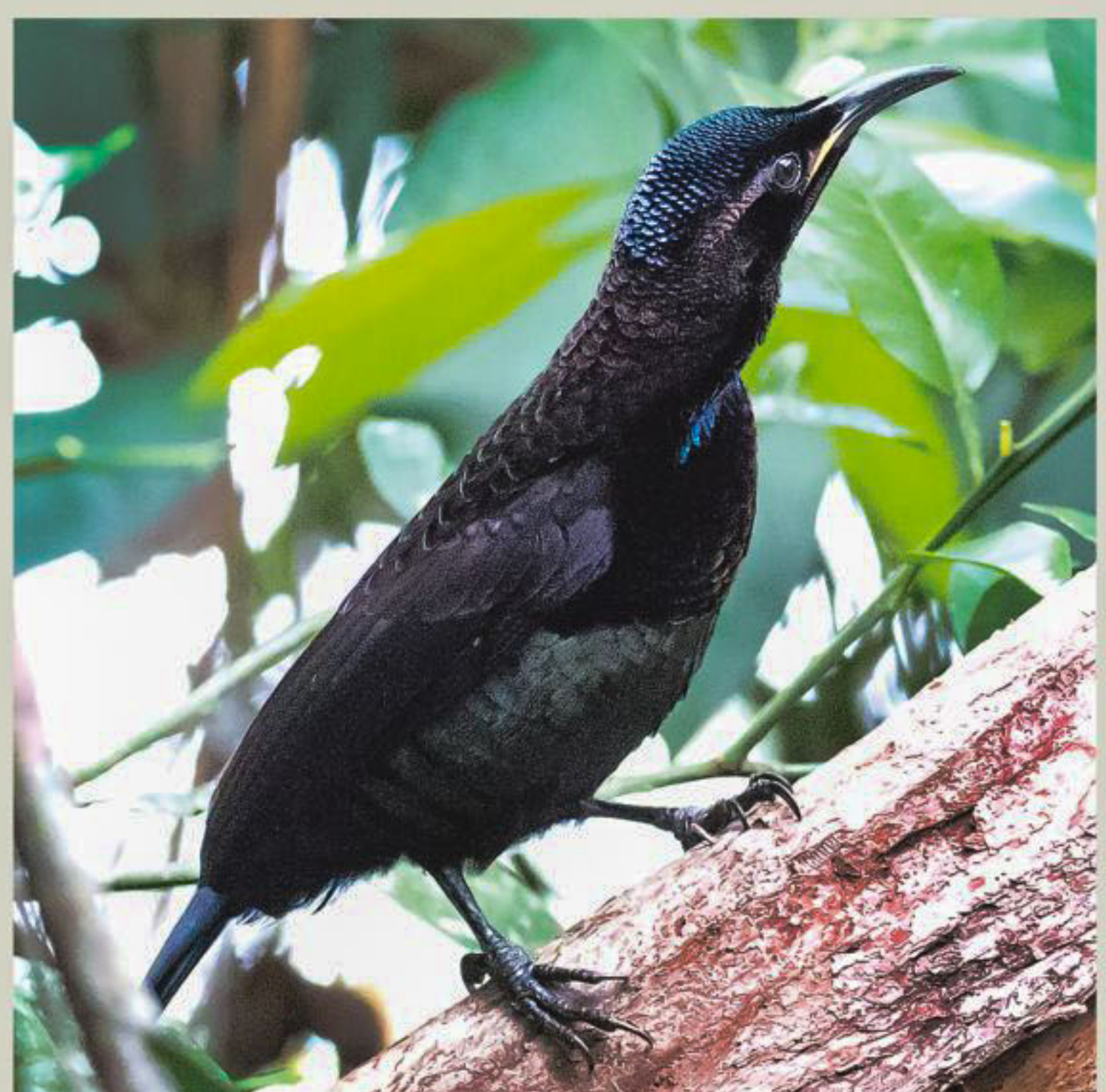
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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| DHAKA H 23.9 L 14.4 | MYMENSINGH H 22.5 L 10.5 | CHATTOGRAM H 25.0 L 13.7 | SYLHET H 24.8 L 13.5 | RAJSHAHI H 22.5 L 06.0 | RANGPUR H 23.0 L 08.7 | KHULNA H 23.5 L 09.8 | BARISHAL H 24.4 L 08.0 | COX'S BAZAR H 25.2 L 16.2 |
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Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in next 24 hours till 6:00pm today, UNB reports quoting the Met office. Light to moderate fog may occur at places over the country during late night to morning. Night temperature may fall slightly and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:21pm and rises tomorrow at 6:40am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Birds of Australia



Victoria's Riflebird.

PHOTO BY: IHTISHAM KABIR

Australia, the only country which is also a continent, is very special for bird enthusiasts. There are 969 bird species found there, but what's special is that 353 are endemic species, that is, they are found nowhere else but in Australia. In comparison, nearly 700 species of birds are seen in Bangladesh, but none are endemic.

While its bird variety is spread over the continent, a tropical rainforest in Northern Queensland called Wet Tropics holds an unusual concentration of Australia's birds. Recently I went to this forest on a birdwatching trip and our group saw close to two hundred bird species, many of them unusual and interesting.

I found the parrots of Australia to be extraordinary in colour and variety. They come in several groups, including lorikeets, galahs, rosellas, cockatoos, and, of course, parrots. Of these the most spectacular was also the commonest one – the brilliantly colourful Rainbow Lorikeet. The galah looked and behaved like a cross between a parrot and a dove. The parrots I saw varied in size from the diminutive, 5-inch Double-eyed Fig Parrot to the large, two-foot, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Virtually all of them are endemic to Australia.

Another widespread family is honeyeaters, a group of birds endemic to Australia, New Guinea and New Zealand. Living on nectar and insects, some of them vaguely resemble our sunbirds or flowerpeckers. Some honeyeaters were colourful, such as the Scarlet Honeyeater. Others, such as the Dusky Honeyeater, were drab. We saw honeyeaters just about everywhere we went.

The kookaburras also caught my attention, not the least because I could come quite close to them. They are terrestrial kingfishers native to Australia and New Guinea. Of the four species

of kookaburra in Australia, I saw the Laughing Kookaburra and the less common Blue-winged Kookaburra. Kookaburras are large like our Brown-winged Kingfishers, but – with brown and white feathers – not as colourful.

When walking through the forests, I occasionally saw mounds on the ground, made from soil and plant parts. These were Australian Brush-Turkey nests. The female lays its eggs inside the mound and leaves. The eggs then hatch without the presence of either parent. The chicks are self-sufficient at birth and scratch their way out of the mound!

Another bird of great interest that I photographed was Victoria's Riflebird, one of the four Birds of Paradise found in Australia. The Golden Bowerbird, which I covered in an earlier column, is an endangered bird we were lucky to find.

We also saw large birds such as bustards, cranes and cassowaries, as well as a variety of shorebirds.

While observing these birds and learning about Australia's birdlife, I found myself constantly comparing them to Bangladesh's birds. No doubt they have very interesting and colourful birds Down Under. But I was surprised to learn Australia has no woodpeckers (we have a dozen.) And while the Azure Kingfisher in Australia is spectacular, I am fairly certain that overall, our kingfishers are more colourful. Unlike Bangladesh, Australia does not fall under any major bird flyway (highways in the sky used by birds for migration), and their number of migrant species (especially migratory ducks) is less than in Bangladesh.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

Father, toddler killed in Ctg road accident

2 others injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man and his one-year-old daughter were killed, while two others were injured yesterday on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Mirsarai upazila of Chattogram, as a truck hit a battery-run rickshaw carrying them.

The deceased were identified as Md Sultan, 28, and his daughter Israt, said Jasim Uddin, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Chattogram.

The accident occurred while Sultan, along with his wife and daughter, was going to Baratakia Railway Gate area, Jasim Uddin said.

Sultan's wife Rozina, 20, and the rickshaw-driver Nezam, 40, were hurt in the accident.

They are undergoing treatment at Mirsarai Upazila Health Complex.

BNP pins hopes on 'huge response' from voters in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

After braving "difficulties" in campaign, BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront candidates in Chattogram are now waiting for a "ballot revolution" by voters in the 11th national polls, scheduled to be held tomorrow.

Meanwhile, grand alliance candidates expect that people would vote for them, as the AL-led government completed extensive development works in the port city and elsewhere in the country in the last ten years.

"People are eagerly waiting... they would go to the polling centres on December 30," said BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, adding, "When people of the country get united, they make the impossible possible."

Khasru, a candidate in Chattogram-11, alleged, "We could not conduct campaigns due to hindrance by the AL men; police continuously raided houses of our leaders, activists and probable polling agents."

"First, AL men attacked our leaders and activists; then they attacked our probable polling agents; and finally they began to attack the candidates."

"Had we not contested the polls, people would not have the option to choose their candidates... they would not have gone to the polling centres in that case," said Khasru, adding, "Now, as we are contesting, voters have a choice and they would exercise their

franchise properly."

Echoing the same, BNP Vice Chairman Abdullah Al Noman, a candidate in Chattogram-10, said his activists could not go for campaign in many areas due to attack and hindrance by AL men.

"People would come out of their houses on polls day and answer all injustice through ballot," he said.

Sources said of the 16 constituencies in Chattogram, campaigns for BNP-led alliance candidates were not found in most areas in Ctg-1 (Mirsarai), Ctg-3 (Sandwip), Ctg-7 (Raizan), Ctg-7 (Rangunia), Ctg-9 (Kotwali), Ctg-13 (Anwara-Karnaphuli), Ctg-14 (Chandanaish and part of Satkania) and Ctg-15 (Lohagara and part of Satkania) constituencies, while AL-led alliance candidates went for all-out campaigns in all constituencies.

Denying the allegations of hindering opposition's campaign, AL Chattogram city unit general secretary AJM Nasir Uddin said all candidates could conduct campaigns in Chattogram freely and no major incidents occurred except for some sporadic ones.

Nasir, also mayor of Chattogram City Corporation, said AL-led government has completed massive development works in Chattogram and elsewhere in the country, and so people would vote for their candidates.

"People would definitely evaluate the works of our government in polls," he said.



Visitors look at a sculpture on the last day of "Zainul Utshab" at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Dhaka University yesterday. Popularly known as Charukala, the institution is celebrating its 70th founding anniversary this year. The country's leading art educational institution was founded by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin in 1948. Today is also the 104th birth anniversary of the Shilpacharya.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Fatema Mahmood passes away

CITY DESK

Fatema Mahmood, wife of eminent artist late AKM Abul Kalam Nasiruddin Mahmood, died at Apollo Hospitals Dhaka on Tuesday.

She was 69 years old, said a press release.

She left behind a son, three daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn her death.

Fatema Mahmood was buried at Azimpur graveyard in Dhaka after a namaz-e-janaza in Uttara.

Her relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Her husband Kalam Mahmood was the former director general of the film and publications department at Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (FDC).

Fatema was the younger sister of Kafiluddin Mahmood, former finance secretary and adviser to a caretaker government, added the press release.

Fire in building

FROM PAGE 3

Around noon, Afzal went out of the office for Juma prayers and after he returned, he saw plume of smoke was coming out of the office, added the official.

Cook Afzal said the fire originated in the glass-covered server room of the business that belongs to a former police official.

Meanwhile, there were three other fire incidents yesterday in Tangail and Shariatpur, burning down a dwelling house and 20 shops.

Reasons behind the fires could not be known immediately.

TRAJECTORY TO A HEALTHY FUTURE

FIRST 1,000 DAYS

MATHEWS CHIRAN, back from Sylhet

When Rajon was born in 2016, his parents -- Mossammat Shajna and Gaus Ali -- were elated. He was after all their first child and the couple had been trying to conceive for a while.

They loved everything Rajon did. The way he smiled, cried and eventually moved around.

But around last year, the couple noticed even though the boy was one year old, he was not growing up like other children. Rajon used to get sick often and was losing weight.

The worried parents, who make and sell bamboo mats for living in Sylhet's Bishwanath upazila, took the child to a local hospital, where doctors told them to provide him with nutritious foods, saying otherwise he might suffer from malnutrition and stunted growth.

During that time, the couple did not even know what stunting was. They were also not aware that the first 1,000 days of a child, from conception until the age of two, is crucial to their overall development.

According to World Health Organization, stunting is the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutri-

STUNTING RATE (In %) AMONG CHILDREN < 5

| DIVISION | 2004 | 2007 | 2011 | 2014 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|
| SYLHET | 46 | 44.7 | 49.3 | 49.6 |
| KHULNA | 32 | 34.6 | 34.1 | 28.1 |
| DHAKA | 45 | 44 | 43.3 | 33.9 |
| CHATTOGRAM | 46 | 45.5 | 41.3 | 38 |
| BARISHAL | 49 | 46.9 | 45.1 | 39.9 |
| RAJSHAHI | 40 | 41.8 | 33.7 | 31.1 |

SOURCE: BIDS

tion, repeated infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.

Luckily for Shajna and Gaus, with the support of "Suchana" programme, a multi-sectoral nutrition programme of Save the Children in Bangladesh, they were able to learn about the importance of the first 1,000 days for a child's physical and mental development.

Now, Rajon is growing up healthy and strong and keeping his parents on their toes with his shenanigans.

Not just that, the couple had their second child, Raihan, early this year. Thanks to "Suchana", Shajna and Gaus remained alert since his birth and made sure that he is getting the nutritional support he needed.

"For my second child, who is now 10 months old, I ensured from beginning that he is receiving proper nutrition from food -- especially fruits, vegetables and fish, which we could not provide to our first child in his early days," Shajna told this correspondent last week.

FIRST 1,000 DAYS

The first 1,000 days of a child is considered the "1,000 golden days" by health experts. It is the most critical period when a child's cognitive ability and immune system take shape, said Dr Shah Nawaz, director general of Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC).

During the period, ensuring nutrition for a child is an absolute necessity, or else the child might suffer from stunting, which is irreversible and can have adverse functional consequences on the child.

Some of those include poor cognition and

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9 killed, 3,400+ hurt in pre-polls violence

HRSS report finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of nine persons, including six AL activists, were killed in electoral violence between December 1 and December 25, according to a report by Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), a Bangladesh-based human rights organisation.

Of the six AL men, three were killed in intra-party clashes, while the other three were killed in clashes with opponents, says an HRSS press release that contains the report summary.

Besides, four activists of BNP-led alliance were victims of extra-judicial killings by government agencies, it said, adding that according to its investigation and newspaper reports, seven BNP men and nine Jamaat activists became victims of enforced disappearances.

The organisation found 972 incidents of pre-election violence during this period, in which 2,623 activists of opposition alliances, 539 of the AL-led alliance and 202 common people and supporters of independent candidates were injured across the country, bringing the total to 3,420.

Apart from them, 28 police personnel and 28 journalists sustained injuries in electoral violence.

It said 2,068 BNP activists, 522 Jamaat activists and 11 AL activists were arrested during this time.



A patrol team of fire service in Dhaka's Kakrail area yesterday. The mobile teams were deployed recently to monitor major intersections for emergencies during the national election.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shimulia Ferry Ghat sees mad rush ahead of polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Shimulia Ferry Ghat in Munshiganj saw heavy pressure of vehicles and passengers yesterday, as a large number of people were heading towards their villages ahead of tomorrow's general election.

People mostly living in Dhaka were on their way home in south and south-western regions, said officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

People from the region generally use Shimulia-Kathalbari river route to go to their village homes, he said.

Due to the pressure, about 500 vehicles -- including buses, cars, ambulances, minibuses and goods-laden trucks -- were waiting to be transported to the other side of the river Padma.

In a bid to cast their votes, people went out of their residences braving cold weather.

The pressure of passengers and transports on launches and ferries on the river route intensified, as job holders are enjoying a three-day government holiday.

A total of 87 launches, more than 250 boats were busy ferrying the passengers, said BIWTC sources.

Mehedi Hasan, terminal assistant at BIWTC's Shimulia Ferry Ghat, said 26 ferries including two Ro-Ro ferries -- Bir Shrestha Jahangir and Enayetpuri; four K-type ferries -- Camellia, Kokoili, Raipura and Kishori-3; and seven drum ferries were engaged in carrying vehicles.

Many launches were seen taking passengers far beyond their capacities, Ghat sources said.

Solaiman Hossain, a transport inspector of BIWTA River Safety and Traffic Management Department, said legal action will be taken against authorities of the vessels carrying excess passengers.

He said the rush of passengers as well as vehicles started increasing since yesterday.