

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 30.1 L 14.6

MYMENSINGH
H 28.3 L 12.5

CHATTOGRAM
H 29.2 L 14.3

SYLHET
H 29.5 L 14.8

RAJSHAHI
H 28.2 L 10.2

RANGPUR
H 26.6 L 12.5

KHULNA
H 29.2 L 12.5

BARISHAL
H 29.2 L 11.2

COX'S BAZAR
H 29.0 L 15.5

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB quoting Met office. Mild cold wave sweeping over Kumarkhali, Chuadanga, Naogaon and Moulvibazar may abate. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:39pm and rises tomorrow at 6:42am. Country's highest temperature 31.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Feni and lowest 09.5 in Rajshahi.

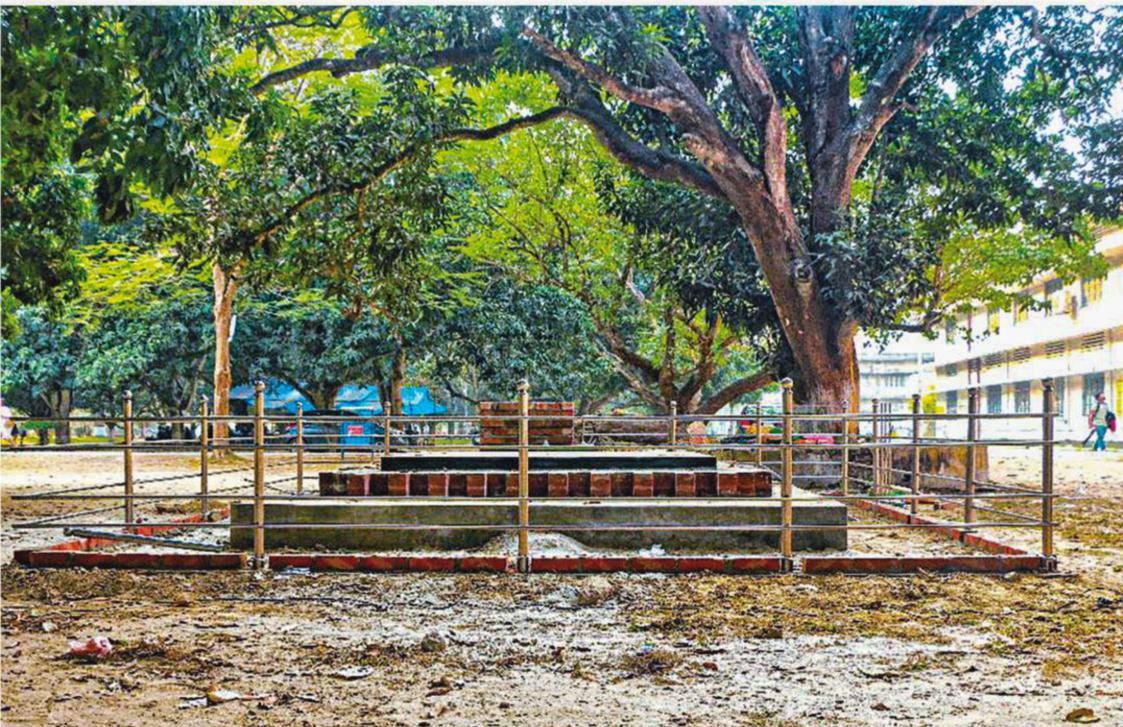


PHOTO: STAR

The Shaheed Minar will be reconstructed in this demarcated area on the Rajshahi University campus. The photo was taken recently.

RU's first Shaheed Minar to be reconstructed after 55 years

RU CORRESPONDENT

On February 20, 1964, students of Rajshahi University (RU) took the initiative to build a Shaheed Minar, a memorial commemorating the martyrs of the Language Movement of 1952, in front of Shahidullah Arts Building on the campus.

Later in 1967, with the help of Rucsu leaders of the time, its construction was completed.

But in 1971 during the Liberation War, the Pakistan army destroyed the memorial inside the campus, along with most other Shaheed Minars in Rajshahi.

The RU authorities planned to build another Shaheed Minar on the east side of the administration building in 1972. Then Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman laid the foundation stone of the memorial. It was inaugurated in 1975 by then Prime Minister Muhammad Mansur Ali.

Since then, the first Shaheed

Minar of the university gradually faded from memory, whereas it deserved special remembrance as a key historical monument, said many university organisations. Due to a lack of maintenance in this long period of time, there was nothing left where the Shaheed Minar once stood, save for a few broken bricks.

Campus-based literary organisations including "Swonon" and "Chinho" urged the authorities to preserve the memory on multiple occasions.

At last after 55 years, RU authorities has taken an initiative to preserve the memorial. Its construction is now underway at the same place.

Meanwhile, students and teachers from different departments praised the decision taken by the authorities.

Polash Pal, a master's student of Statistics department, said, "Many of us did not even know about the existence of that Shaheed Minar. So preserving

the old memorial and making us aware of that is a good decision."

Arbak Aditto, a student of Bangla department, said the authorities could reconstruct the monument following the design of Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka.

Prof Hashibul Alam Prodhan, director of Teacher Student Cultural Center (TSCC), said, "It should have been done earlier. It was a historical memorial for the university. Through the new construction students can learn about it now."

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Anand Kumar Saha, who is supervising the reconstruction work, said, "This monument was a memorial of the Language Movement. But Pakistan army destroyed it during the Liberation War. Everyone should know this history. So we took the initiative to preserve the university's first Shaheed Minar."

China to send investors to explore Rajshahi's agriculture industry

Says Chinese ambassador during his visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

China showed interest in sending investors to Rajshahi for exploring the potential of the fertile region's agriculture sector.

In order to build a deeper tie with Bangladesh, China is also interested in assisting the infrastructural development of the city.

Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton revealed this yesterday meeting with the Chinese ambassador Zhang Zuo at his office in Rajshahi Nagar Bhaban. The ambassador was given a warm reception followed by dinner.

"The region's agricultural landscape enchanted the ambassador," Liton told The Daily Star.

"He told me that he saw green potato fields overlapping with yellow

mustard fields, creating a captivating scenario. He talked about the mango orchards and production of rice, jute, and lentil," Liton added that the ambassador expressed his intention for inviting Chinese investors to explore the agriculture sector.

The mayor said that he reminded the ambassador of the Buddhist scholar Atish Dipankar who travelled to the region for spreading knowledge in 11th century and sought Chinese grants for educational expansion in the city.

China is already assisting in the Tk 3500 crore project for constructing a water treatment plant with Rajshahi Wasa while three investors are already working in the north-western city. The city has built a friendship with the Chinese city of Yiyang last year for sharing mutual benefits.

The mayor, however, sought the Chinese ambassador's assistance for preparing a feasibility study on the development of Rajshahi's urban transportation system and finding out whether the city needs elevated expressways and flyovers to overcome traffic problems.

"The ambassador termed Rajshahi a green, neat and clean city and said its traffic system can be developed," the mayor said.

The mayor said he expressed to the ambassador his intention of constructing gates at three entry points of Rajshahi city as a monument of China-Bangladesh friendship.

The Chinese ambassador has been visiting Pabna, Ishwardi, Sona Mosque land port, and mango orchards in Chapainawabganj in the northern region for last three days.

CUMILLA ARSON CASE

Dispose of Khaleda's bail petition Feb 4: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the lower court concerned to dispose of a bail petition of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on February 4 in a case filed over killing of eight people in an arson attack in Cumilla in 2015.

The HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Zafar Ahmed passed the order after hearing another bail petition filed by Khaleda on January 20 in the same case.

While passing the order, the HC said the Cumilla District and Sessions Judge's Court has to dispose of the bail petition on February 4, Kayser Kamal, a lawyer for Khaleda, told The Daily Star.

He said the District and Sessions Judge's Court in Cumilla on January 16 fixed the date for hearing the bail petition of Khaleda.

The BNP chairperson filed the petition with the HC on January 20, seeking bail in the arson case.

IRREGULARITIES IN BANKING SECTOR

HRPB asks for inquiry commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rights organisation yesterday served a legal notice to the authorities concerned of the government, requesting them to constitute a commission for an inquiry into irregularities in the banking sector, including misappropriation of money during the last 20 years.

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) sent the legal notice seeking formation of the commission led by former Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor Mohammed Farashuddin.

In the notice, the organisation proposed the authorities to include former BB governor Dr Salahuddin Ahmed, former caretaker government adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam, former deputy governor of BB Khondokar Ibrahim Khaled, former chief executive officer of City Bank

NA Mamun Rashid, and one representative each from BB and finance ministry in the inquiry commission.

HRPB sent the legal notice to BB governor, secretaries to the cabinet, prime minister's office, and finance and financial institutions divisions of the ministry of finance and law.

In the legal notice, the organisation asked the officials to form the commission within seven days, in order to recommend a guideline for establishing good governance in the banking sector.

Advocate Manzil Murshid, president of HRPB, told The Daily Star that his organisation will file a writ petition with the High Court seeking necessary order upon the government officials, if they do not form the commission under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1956 within seven days.

Channel 24 staff sexually assaulted, one detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A staff member of Channel 24 was assaulted yesterday while waiting for a bus in Amtoli area of the capital's Mohakhali.

The victim said that a youth approached her, and tried to force himself on her after she "declined a sexually offensive offer".

"He touched me all over and started beating me up when I tried to stop him," she added. The man was later identified as Md Alamgir, 24.

A senior assistant commissioner of DMP's Gulshan division, Taposh Kumar Das, was passing by

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Transfer 'corrupt' officials immediately

ACC requests health service DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday requested the director general of Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS) to transfer its 23 "corrupt" officers and staffers on an "emergency basis".

Some corrupt, authoritarian and power abusing officers and staffers of different offices of the DGHS have created a strong nexus, taking advantage of working at the same place for a long time, said ACC in a letter to the DG.

ACC also sent a copy of the letter to the cabinet secretary of Cabinet Division. The Daily Star has also obtained a copy.

"...these officials and staffers, misusing power, have amassed a huge amount of wealth. Many allegations have already been submitted and our intelligence unit is inquiring against them," reads the letter.

"In this circumstance, the commission

believes that to prevent corruption, they are needed to be transferred from their current workplace on an emergency basis," it adds.

Meanwhile, ACC yesterday filed a case against two deputy general managers -- Imrul Islam and Shakir Mahmud Sharfuddin -- and 11 others for allegedly misappropriating around Tk 8 crore of BASIC Bank.

ACC's Deputy Assistant Director Mohammad Jinnatul Islam filed the case with Gulshan Police station.

ACC also arrested a surveyor of AC-Land office in Kishoreganj, Gias Uddin, while taking Tk 10,000 bribe from a client.

The commission also arrested an officer of Sonali Bank's Bhatia branch in Gopalganj, Aktar Hossain, for misappropriating about Tk 2.55 crore from the bank. He along with five others misappropriated the money through fake loan.

On November 29, 2017, ACC filed a case against the six with Kashiani Police Station.

Rescued Nilgai still in shock



PHOTO: STAR

ANWAR ALLI, Rajshahi

Sitting inside an enclosure at the Wildlife Rescue Centre in Rajshahi city yesterday, the Nilgai kept on panting.

The rare antelope looked tired with its wide eyes reflecting a certain fear and confusion.

Every time, someone went closer, it stood up and attempted to jump a few times, with ropes around its neck, as if it was trying to break free, thinking about the traumatising experience it had to endure, said Zillur Rahman, Rajshahi divisional forest officer (DFO).

The once-believed to be extinct Nilgai -- the largest antelope in Asia -- was rescued by local administration from Jobbazar village of Naogaon's Manda upazila on Tuesday.

It was taken to the animal rescue centre in Rajshahi the same evening after the administration handed it over to the Wildlife Conservation Division of the Forest Department.

"The antelope lost a lot of energy, struggling through the daylong attacks on it before rescue," said DFO Rahman. "We have forbidden visitors as the Nilgai needs rest," he added.

He said the animal might have made its way into Bangladesh from India through any of the Indian frontiers at Naogaon's Sapahar or

Dhaimoihat or Dinajpur's Hili.

But Jahangir Kabir, an inspector of Wildlife Conservation Division, who led a team of eight forest officials during the rescue, believed an "organised gang" might have smuggled it into the country for slaughtering and selling its meat.

"I heard some locals say that the Nilgai jumped off a truck while being carried along with cattle," Kabir said.

When the gang members started chasing it, locals joined them out of curiosity as they have never seen such an animal before, he said. "Rescuing the Nilgai from locals was our main challenge," Kabir said.

When Kabir's team reached Jobbazar at 1pm on the day, locals had already captured the antelope. Some received injuries while capturing it. "They were about to slaughter it," he said.

By that time, a 17-member police team, led by OC Mozaffar Hossain of Manda Police Station, reached there. "The OC stopped them and took away their knives," he said.

"But locals demanded Tk 5 crore from police and forest officials for handing it over," he claimed.

The officials managed to rescue the antelope, following hours of negotiations. "We told locals that the prime minister might reward them for releasing it," Kabir said.

Contacted, OC Mozaffar ruled out

the possibility of the animal being smuggled into the country. "It entered the country after getting separated from its herd," he said.

He said carrying the animal on a truck was difficult. Echoing him, Jahangir Kabir said, "We had to make several stops to make sure the animal was okay."

He said Nilgais avoid humans as well as dogs and monkeys. Unless forced, the wild animal also stays away from human habitats.

Yesterday at the rescue centre, trained wildlife experts provided it with necessary treatment. "It would need time to recover," said DFO Rahman.

After the male antelope has healed, they are planning to send it to Ramsagar National Park in Dinajpur, he said. "There is a female Nilgai at the park and we can arrange a breeding."

The forest department rescued the female Nilgai from Thakurgaon in September last year.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi zoo authorities have begun lobbying for arranging the breeding at the zoo, said Dr Farhad Uddin, veterinary expert at the zoo.

Nilgais were found in the north of Bangladesh until 1940s when they were last sighted in Tetulia and afterwards were declared extinct from the country.

Want a corruption-free

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We want to work with transparency and won't allow any irregularities or corruption. I hope officials present here would be more aware of their responsibilities," he said.

"I want a corruption-free BRTA. I don't want people to be harassed when they come to BRTA offices," Quader said.

"There was time when fitness papers of a vehicle could be collected even without bringing the vehicle. The scenario has changed a little at present, but I want to put a stop to such practice completely," the minister said.

MASUD AGAIN IN DISCUSSION

At one stage of his speech, Quader mentioned Masud Alam, a deputy director of BRTA who led its Mirpur office.

When Masud went near the minister, Quader said, "If I transfer Masud, he returns to [Mirpur] office. He has some magical power... Is there no alternative to him?"

On several occasions, Quader warned Masud for his alleged negligence in duty and irregularities. On one occasion, Quader, in presence of the media, asked him to mend his ways.

The minister in May 2014 ordered to transfer Masud, then an assistant director from Mirpur office since he had been working in the same office for more than three years.

'It was a war-like situation'

Holey Artisan owner, three others testify at tribunal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The owner of the Holley Artisan Bakery yesterday appeared before a tribunal in Dhaka and narrated what he knew about the gruesome militant attack inside the upscale eatery on the night of July 1 in 2016.

His wife and two more prosecution witnesses also gave their statements before the tribunal.

Judge Majibur Rahman of Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal recorded their statements. Later, defence counsel for the accused cross-examined the witnesses.

Sadat Mehdi, owner of the restaurant, told the tribunal that around 8:30pm on July 1 one of his managers called to tell him that gunshots were exchanged inside the restaurant. Mehdi went to Holley Artisan and found a police van there.

"Two powerful bombs exploded inside Holley that seemed a war-zone and at one stage two injured policemen were taken away. Moreover, around 10:30pm different law enforcement agencies

started planning how they would rescue the hostages safely. The next morning an operation was carried out to rescue the hostages and I came to know that 24 people were killed," Sadat said in his statement.

In a choked voice, Sadat said five of his close friends, who were regular guests, were killed in the attack. Later, defence for all the accused cross-examined him.

Three more witnesses -- Sadat's wife Samira Ahmed; Abdul Hakim, a manager of Lake View Clinic cafeteria; and Akash Khan, a chef at Holley Artisan -- gave their statements before the tribunal.

The tribunal then fixed January 29 for the next hearing of the case.

During yesterday's hearing, six of the accused, now in jail custody, were produced before the tribunal. Two other accused had fled the scene during the incident.

On July 1, 2016, armed militants stormed the upscale eatery in Gulshan's diplomatic zone and killed 20 hostages, most of them foreign nationals.