

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 29.8 L 17.5	MYMENSINGH H 28.8 L 16.1	CHATTOGRAM H 28.7 L 15.5	SYLHET H 31.1 L 15.0	RAJSHAHI H 28.1 L 12.2	RANGPUR H 29.0 L 14.0	KHULNA H 29.0 L 14.5	BARISHAL H 29.5 L 12.5	COX'S BAZAR H 30.8 L 16.7
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Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky till 6pm today. Light fog is likely to occur at places over the river basins during late night to morning, reports UNB quoting Met

BIWTA DRIVE ALONG BURIGANGA 124 structures, including house of ACC lawyer's family, demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Mosharrif Hossain Kajol failed to save a house, which he says belonged to his father-in-law, from demolition during the ongoing eviction drive to free the Buriganga River from encroachment.

The three-storey building, constructed at Jhauchar in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar, was among 124 structures that were bulldozed in the drive by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday.

"It was built illegally, without having the plan approved by Rajuk as well as clearance from BIWTA," said AKM Arif Uddin, a joint director of BIWTA, who led the drive.

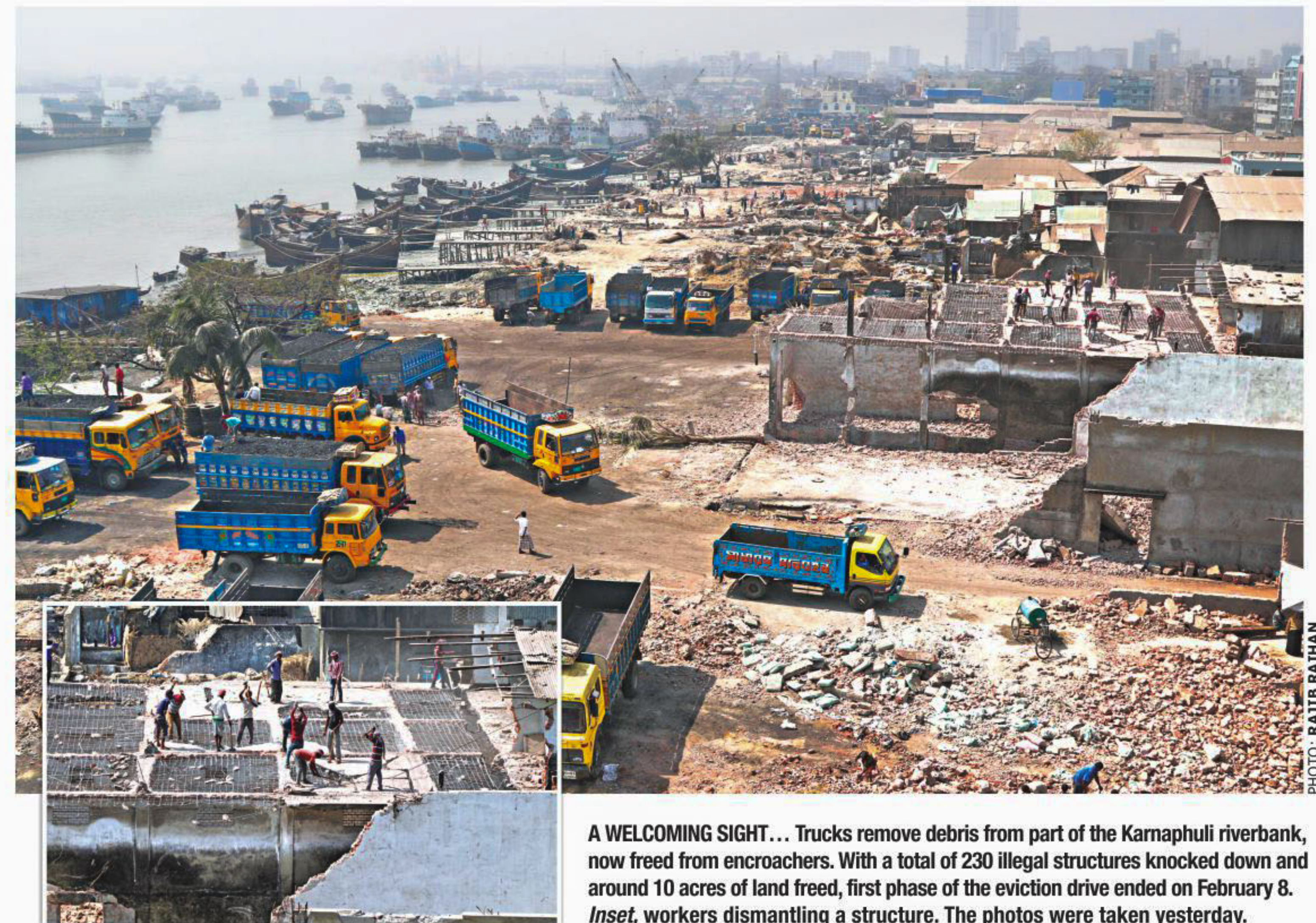
"Mosharrif Hossain Kajol came during the demolition, but could not show any valid document," he added.

Kajol, however, told The Daily Star that his father-in-law bought the property in 1961 and it was in records of CS, RS City records.

"It's not illegal. We have all necessary documents, but they (BIWTA) have demolished the building without giving any notice and checking papers," Kajol claimed.

He said they will go to court against the demolition as it was "an injustice against the family".

Kajol said though BIWTA demolished their building, the adjacent one remained intact.



A WELCOMING SIGHT... Trucks remove debris from part of the Karnaphuli riverbank, now freed from encroachers. With a total of 230 illegal structures knocked down and around 10 acres of land freed, first phase of the eviction drive ended on February 8. Inset, workers dismantling a structure. The photos were taken yesterday.

DEATH OF CTG PHYSICIAN 49 noted citizens express concern over 'hate speech'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-nine noted citizens yesterday expressed concern over reported hate speech surfaced on social media and published on mass media over the death of physician Mustafa Murshed Akash.

Issuing a joint statement, they said Mustafa's widow physician Tanzila Haque Chowdhury Mitu and her family members became victims of such "hate speech" which could lead the incident to "mediatral" before a court verdict.

Mustafa, a doctor of Chattogram Medical College Hospital, allegedly died by suicide at his residence in the port city on January 31.

Law enforcers detained Mitu before a case was filed. Later, she was remanded, the citizens said in the statement.

Expressing grief at Mustafa's death, they said Mitu should not be treated as guilty and she and her family members should not face harassment and social pressure before any crime is proven in the court.

The signatories include Dr Shahdeen Malik, Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Gitiara Nasreen, Khushi Kabir, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, Barrister Sara Hossain, Rahnuma Ahmed, Prof Fahmidul Haq, Prof Mirza Taslima Sultana and Prof Sayeed Ferdous.

Prof Vincent Chang new VC of Bracu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Vincent Chang has joined Brac University as the vice chancellor.



The American national joined the university as its first foreign VC on Monday, after President Abdul Hamid authorised this appointment for the next four years, said a press release.

Before joining Brac University, Prof Chang was the inaugural chair for Institutional Development and a professor at the Practices of Management Economics in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, China.

He has more than 30 years of experience in university teaching, research and administration in different capacities, the press release said.

Prof Chang holds his PhD in economics

FROM PAGE 4 COL 5

Asean cannot ask Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation

Says Singapore foreign minister in parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asean cannot discuss citizenship of Rohingyas with Myanmar, but is ready to provide healthcare and education, said Singapore's foreign minister Vivian Balakrishnan in parliament yesterday.

"Simple answer: No," he said when MP Louis Ng asked him if the issue of citizenship for refugees could be discussed by Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) at a deeper level, reported The Straits Times.

Dr Balakrishnan said, "Citizenship is a fundamental political right. It goes to the heart of sovereignty. It goes to the heart of the construction of how a

country looks at itself and identifies who is in and who is out. This is not something that foreigners should get involved in."

He said it was not possible for Singapore or Asean to impose a deadline to start the repatriation process, but the regional bloc will stand ready to support refugees by aiding healthcare and education initiatives, and the promotion of interfaith dialogue.

Rohingya repatriation could not begin in November last year as the Rohingyas as well as the United Nations refugee agency and aid groups opposed it, saying the conditions in Rakhine were not safe and

they had no guarantee of citizenship.

Balakrishnan said that at the recent Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in January, the subject of Rakhine state came up for extensive informal discussions among the leaders.

"We focused on efforts by Asean to support refugees as well as Myanmar, and, in particular, on the safe and voluntary repatriation of these refugees," he noted.

The Asean Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance will dispatch to Myanmar a needs assessment team to help identify the areas through which Asean can provide support.

FARMERS BANK SCAM Former CEO granted bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to former Farmers Bank managing director and CEO, Chowdhury Mustaque Ahmed, even though the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court cancelled his bail in a case filed over embezzling Tk 29 crore from the bank.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Masud-Ur Rahman passed the order after Mustaque, accompanied by his lawyer Sheikh Baharul Islam, surrendered before it and sought bail.

The court granted bail considering his health condition and social status. He is now a managing director of National Bank Ltd.

On the other hand, ACC Public Prosecutor Abul Hassan opposed the bail petition saying that the lower court had no jurisdiction to grant bail in such a case, adding that the Supreme Court cancelled his

bail granted by the High Court.

The Daily Star repeatedly tried to reach Sheikh Baharul Islam over telephone, but he did not respond.

On October 28 last year, ACC Deputy Director Shamsul Alam filed the case with Gulshan Police Station against seven people including Mustaque Ahmed.

Following the case, Mustaque Ahmed surrendered before the High Court on December 10 last year seeking bail. After the hearing, the HC granted him eight weeks ad-interim bail and directed him to surrender before Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka.

But in January ACC challenged the HC order with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The apex court set aside the HC order and directed Mustaque to surrender before the lower court.

Playground or fair ground?

Another trade fair at Sylhet's Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium within 2 months

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

When Shahi Eidgah field in Sylhet city was renovated and upgraded to "Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium" last year as part of the government's plan to build mini stadiums in all upazilas, residents were elated.

After all, other than sporting events, a playground offers all a place to breathe fresh air in the congested city.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the field on October 21, 2018 along with 65 other mini stadiums -- named after Sheikh Russel -- across the country.

Ironically, the very first event held at the stadium was not a sporting event, but rather the month-long "Sylhet International Trade Fair (SITF)" by Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), from October 23 to December 21, 2018.

Since then, not a single sporting event has been organised at the field.

Even more perplexing is that another month-long SITF is being organised on the ground two months apart, denying children and youths their right to play.

This time, Sylhet Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SMCCI) is set to arrange a trade fair this month when parts of structures and debris from the last fair have not completely been removed yet.

In 2017, SMCCI held another trade fair on the ground.

According to organisers, the district administration, custodian of the field, allotted it to them following an approval letter from the Ministry of Commerce.

But according to the act to protect open fields, gardens and natural water reservoirs, leasing or renting them out for any other purpose is completely prohibited (section 5, act 36 of 2000). A person may face up to five years in jail or Tk 50,000 fine or

both for breaking the law.

However, the field, located in Shahi Eidgah area, is being used as a fair venue for a decade. The administration, violating laws, continues to lease it for such events by terming the decision "an issue of commercial development".

Locals and rights activists are also taken aback by the recurring trade fairs on the field. They said the field was developed for sports but continuous earth digging and erecting structures for such activities will eventually ruin the playground.

In late 2017, while the development work of the mini stadium was going on, SMCCI stopped it and organised its 4th SITF between December 23, 2017 and January 21, 2018.

Mentionable, SCCL is a 50-year-old organisation while SMCCI was formed in 2013, after being separated from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A man sits on a window of a bus while it travels on a road in the capital's busy Motijheel area yesterday. Such stunt could turn fatal in no time.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Barely a month has passed since the last trade fair ended at Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium in Sylhet. Now, work is going on to hold another month-long fair. Inset, a temporary office set up by organisers.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Eight injured as BCL factions clash at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) clashed at Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday, leaving at least eight of the activists injured, among them three were severely injured. At least six rounds of bullets were fired during the clash.

The clash started following an assault on former JU unit BCL general secretary Razib Ahmed Rasel by the incumbent secretary, SM Abu Sufian Chanchal, at around 5 pm on campus.

The injured were given first aid at university medical centre.

JU (acting) Proctor ASM Firoz Ul Hasan suffered minor wounds when he tried to control the situation.

Razib's wife was filming the altercation, and at one point Chanchal attacked Razib.

Once news of the assault got around, tension grew among BCL activists. Later, followers of each leader from different halls gathered at Bottala. There was a clash among the two groups, armed with sharp weapons, sticks, and firearms.

Razib said, "Chanchal assaulted me and beat up my driver without any reason. I just came to visit the campus with my wife."

He said that his wife was also assaulted.

Internal sources of JU unit BCL said, "For a long time, a conflict had been brewing between them over establishing supremacy on the campus, even though Chanchal had once been loyal to Razib."

Earlier in December 2018, Razib assaulted Chanchal on the campus.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Refrain from making provocative remarks

Home minister urges 2 Tablighi Jamaat factions

UNB, Gazipur

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday requested two factions of Tablighi Jamaat not to make any provocative comment against each other while delivering sermons at the Ijtama ground.

"Plainclothes police will remain deployed at the Ijtama ground. If anyone makes any such comment, they will take action," said the minister while attending a meeting at the regional office of Tongi City Corporation at noon on the overall preparations of 54th Biswa Ijtama.

Representatives from two groups of Tablighi Jamaat, one led by Maulana Wasif and the other by Maulana Zubair, attended the meeting.

Separate control rooms of Rab and police have been opened. Besides, 16,000 members of law enforcement agencies have been deployed and several layers of security will be arranged on the occasion.

Biswa Ijtama, one of the largest congregations of Muslims, will be held for four days in a single phase from tomorrow.