

WEATHER
FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 30.5 L 19.2

MYMENSINGH
H 29.5 L 18.5

CHATTogram
H 31.3 L 17.6

SYLhet
H 30.8 L 17.0

RAJSHAHI
H 29.2 L 18.2

RANGPUR
H 28.3 L 17.5

KHULNA
H 30.5 L 17.0

BARISHAL
H 31.5 L 14.0

COX'S BAZAR
H 31.2 L 18.5

Rain/thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Chattogram & Barishal divisions with hails at isolated places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna & Mymensingh divisions in next 24 hours till 6pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:54pm and rises tomorrow at 6:31am.



Poet Al Mahmud's body was taken to Jatiya Press Club yesterday, where journalists paid their respects.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Al Mahmud to be laid to rest today

UNB, Dhaka

Eminent poet Al Mahmud will be buried in his family graveyard at Mourail in Brahmanbaria after Zohr prayers today, according to family sources. People from all walks of life thronged the Bangla Academy premises yesterday noon to pay their last tributes to the poet. His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Bangla Academy premises, following which the body was kept at Nazrul Mancha of the academy for some time from 11:45am. Bangla Academy Director General Habibullah Siraji and academy members placed wreaths, bidding adieu to the poet. Poet Mohammad Nurul Huda, writer Anwar Syed Haq, Bangladesh Shishu Academy Director Anjir Liton and the poet's family were also present, among others, according to a Bangla Academy press release. A second janaza was held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Zohr prayers. The poet breathed his last around 11pm on Friday at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Ibn Sina Hospital in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area. He

was 82. He was hospitalised on February 9. He had been suffering from multiple old-age complications, said the poet's assistant. Born in Morail village of Brahmanbaria district in 1936, Mir Abdus Shukur Al Mahmud, better known as Al Mahmud, was a poet, novelist, and short story writer, and was considered one of the greatest Bangalee poets to have emerged in the 20th century. His work is characterised by his frequent use of regional dialects. In the 1950s he was among those who were outspoken in their writings on the Language Movement, nationalism, political and economic repression, and the struggle against the West Pakistan government. Al Mahmud started his career as a journalist and achieved widespread recognition after Lok Lokantor was published in 1963. Al Mahmud was honoured with Ekushey Padak, Bangla Academy Award, and Kabi Jasimuddin Award in recognition of his contribution to Bangla literature.

Govt working to establish equitable society

Says permanent rep to UN

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government is working relentlessly to establish an inclusive, just and equitable society, said Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Masud Bin Momen. He was speaking at the general debate of the 57th Commission for Social Development (CSocD) at UN in New York on Thursday. He said the government has taken initiatives for addressing inequality through poverty eradication; access to education, health, employment and social security; and financial inclusion. Bangladesh is a member of the Commission for Social Development. The 57th CSocD commenced on February 11 and will end on February 21.

INDIGENOUS LITERATURE Building a bridge between cultures

MATHEWS CHIRAN

What is the origin of Garo people? How did they endure? What are their age-old traditions that help them remain together and uphold values? The above questions were answered in a ballad, "Khabir", by Porag Ritchil. The Garo author transcribed the ballad in his native language using Bangla alphabet. Porag said he compiled the ballad after listening to it from Kanu Ritchil, a Garo folklore enthusiast. The book is a new release at this year's Ekushey book fair. It's available at "Thakbirim" stall on the Bangla Academy premises. "I did not translate it... I wanted to encourage readers to learn the language and appreciate its nuance and beauty," said Porag. Like Porag, a number of indigenous

writers have published books on their culture and heritage. These books, portraying their distinctive lifestyles and traditions, have added a new dimension to the month-long book fair. Sumana Chisim, a prominent writer from Garo community, also has new publications. She wrote a book on Garo folklore titled, "Delong" from Thakbirim publication. In the book, a strong and honest youth embarks on a journey to discover the mystery of a jungle, home to many mythical creatures. The book is translated in Bangla. "Every culture is enriched by a variety of experiences and stories, which make it unique. By reading books from a culture, we get to learn about its people, rituals and discover many similarities with ours. Reading helps build a bridge between cultures, said Sumana.



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An ever-looming danger

Chemical warehouses, factories continue to operate in Old Dhaka

HELEMLU ALAM

More than eight years after the devastating fire in Old Dhaka's Nimtoli that killed 123 people, chemical warehouses, considered prime fire hazards, are still being run in the old parts of the city, due to lack of proper action by the authorities concerned. Residents of the old town say some 1,000 chemical warehouses, factories and sales outlets are still being run in the over-populated residential areas, although Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has stopped providing new licences as well as renewal of old ones since last year. The chemical warehouses and stores are mostly located in Mitford, Armanitola, Kayettuli, Agamasi Lane, Islambagh, Bangshal, Shaheednagar, Chawkbazar, Imamganj and Babubazar areas. The 2010 Nimtoli tragedy caused a public outcry to relocate chemical ware-

houses and stores from the area, but little has been actually done. According to a survey of Fire Service and Civil Defence conducted at the end of 2017, a total of 360 factories and stores of chemicals were found in the areas under wards 24 and 35 of DSCC. However, the real number would be more than that, said locals. Last Tuesday, DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon said a drive will be carried out against warehouses and factories involving 20 types of hazardous chemicals in Old Dhaka from this week, by a joint team including representatives of chemical businesses. Rakib, a resident of Lalbagh, was cautiously optimistic about the news. "It's a great initiative to free the residential areas of fire hazard, but if there is no monitoring to follow up the drive, these factories might return." His apprehension is not baseless.

A team comprising officials of DSCC, Dhaka Deputy Commissioner's Office, Department of Explosives and Fire Service and Civil Defence conducted a week-long drive in Old Dhaka against the chemical warehouses and stores from March 1, 2018, but the scenario did not really change.

Tk 6.25 lakh was realised from nine factory owners and two persons were sentenced to prison during the drive, said an official of the DSCC. But no further action was taken. According to Bangladesh Environment

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Punish attackers of Ahmadiyyas

Demand eminent citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens yesterday demanded punishment of those responsible for the attack on Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh and steps to ensure security of the community members across the country. They also demanded that Awami Olama League, Khatm-e-Nabuwat and some like-minded organisations be banned "for their activities against peace and spirit of secularism." The citizens, including former justice, war crimes researchers and religious leaders, were speaking at a views-exchange meeting with Ahmadiyya community at their headquarters in Dhaka's Bakshi Bazar. On February 12, six people were injured and many houses were vandalised when supporters of local Islamist groups attacked people of the community in Ahmednagar village of Panchagarh Sadar, demanding cancellation of its annual conference, scheduled for February 22-24.

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11TH PARLIAMENT 49 aspirants for reserved seats set to be elected uncontested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-nine aspirants for the 50 parliamentary seats reserved for women are set to be elected uncontested as there are no rival candidates and none of them withdrew their nominations, Election Commission (EC) officials said yesterday. None withdrew their candidature till 5pm yesterday, last date for withdrawal, returning officer Abul Kashem told The Daily Star. He said today they will publish the names of candidates who won uncontested. Election to the reserved seats was scheduled to be held on March 4. According to the EC, 43 Awami League candidates submitted nomination papers. Four aspirants of Jatiya Party and one from Workers' Party of Bangladesh also submitted their nomination papers. The reserved seats for women are allocated to political parties in proportion with their number of seats in the parliament.

Accordingly, 43 seats are allocated to Awami League, four to Jatiya Party, one to BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront, Workers' Party and independent candidates each. ZAKIA NUR TAKES OATH AS MP Syeda Zakia Nur, who was elected as the uncontested member of parliament from Kishoreganj-1 constituency, took oath at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS. Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury administered the oath of the MP elected on Awami League ticket, said an official release. Zakia Nur is the younger sister of former AL general secretary and public administration minister, the late Syed Ashrafur Islam. She was elected from Kishoreganj-1 in a re-election as the constituency fell vacant following the death of Syed Ashraf. Ashraf, son of acting president of

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Booklovers at Thakbirim, a publication house promoting indigenous literature, on Bangla Academy premises yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Devotees return home on a train roof after offering final prayers on the bank of the Turag river at Tongi yesterday. Beginning on Friday, this year's Biswa Ijtima is being held in a single phase, with two separate Akheri Munajat. The photo was taken in Tejgaon.

Promoting harmony Debate for Humanity announces 6-month-long festival

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to promote harmony and tolerance, Debate for Humanity (DFH) announced their six-month-long university-level debate festival yesterday. Around 2,000 students from 12 higher educational institutions including madrasas in Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur districts will participate in the event. The festival is part of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)'s "SAMPREETI" project, which aims to increase resilience against violent extremist agendas among students. Tareq Aziz, president of DFH, shared the details of the event at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity. On January 31, the festival was launched through an intra-university debate competition at Prime Asia University. The next one will be held at Dhaka's Badrunessa College on February 24, according to organisers. Speaking at the conference, former governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Saleh Uddin Ahmed, also an adviser to DFH, emphasised the significance of debate as a potent tool to make one's voice heard and be a critical thinker. Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, stressed the need for empowering the youth and guiding them on the right path. She said the focus of debating is harmony and increasing ability to accept different opinions as well as promoting tolerance and non-violence. MJF has provided funds to 33 university-based organisations under the project since October 2018, she informed. Advocate Muhammad Shafiqur Rahman, chairperson of DFH, and Shahajadi Begum, deputy program manager of SAMPREETI project, spoke at the event, among others.

Bring planners of Kazi Aref's murder to justice

Speakers urge on 20th death anniversary of the leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for finding the motive and planning behind the murder of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader Kazi Aref Ahmed and demanded punishment for those responsible. Kazi Aref Parishad arranged the discussion on the occasion of the 20th death anniversary of the leader at the capital's Jatiya Press Club. Aref's daughter Kazi Afrin Jahan said although three convicted killers were executed, the planning behind the murder was yet to be revealed. "We need to know the reason," she said. Advocate ZI Khan Panna, an organiser of Gono Adalat, said those who planned the killing were as guilty as those who committed it. Delivering a memorial lecture, Liberation War researcher Mahfuzur Rahman said Kazi Aref wanted to establish socialism in the country but failed. However, lessons could be learned from this failure. Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee President Shahriar Kabir said Kazi Aref was a key person behind

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PM assures ICC of support in examining Rohingya crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Welcoming the decision of International Criminal Court (ICC) to send a team for "preliminary examination" of the atrocities on Rohingyas by Myanmar Army, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday assured them of extending all-out support in this regard. "The ICC team is scheduled to visit Bangladesh next month," Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said while briefing reporters about the outcome of PM's meeting with ICC Chief Prosecutor Dr Fatou Bensouda. Bensouda said ICC has already brought the Rohingya issue under its jurisdiction and established a court for the trial of the perpetrators. An ICC team will visit Bangladesh to have a preliminary examination aimed at establishing the case, she added. Shahidul said Sheikh Hasina laid emphasis on bringing the perpetrators of Pakistan army's genocide in Bangladesh in 1971 to book, and she underlined the background of Bangabandhu's killing in 1975, and informed ICC chief prosecutor about the trial process of the killers. Bensouda, a national of Gambia and an international lawyer, said she knows about the brutal killing of Bangabandhu and already conveyed her concern to the Bangladesh ambassador. She requested the prime minister to visit ICC to speak to the judges on the issue of the trial of 1971 genocide. Earlier, Executive Director of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Beatrice Fihn thanked the prime minister for Bangladesh's strong position on nuclear abolition issue.