

WEATHER
FORECASTYESTERDAY'S
TEMPERATURESDHAKA
H 25.7 L 15.5MYMENSINGH
H 25.0 L 16.0CHATTOTGRAM
H 26.7 L 16.5SYLHET
H 21.8 L 15.1RAJSHAHI
H 27.0 L 13.4RANGPUR
H 23.5 L 15.0KHULNA
H 28.0 L 15.0BARISHAL
H 28.5 L 14.5COX'S BAZAR
H 26.8 L 18.0

Rain/thundershowers with temporary gusty wind may occur at one or two places over Dhaka, Mymensingh, Barishal, Chattogram & Sylhet divisions and weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country in next 24 hours till 6pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 05:55pm and rises tomorrow at 6:30am.



Books in a puddle near the children's corner at Ekushey book fair yesterday, after heavy rain in the morning. Stall attendants try to recover some of the damaged books by laying them out in the sun, inset.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Book fair hit hard by rain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Like previous years, rain took its toll on the ongoing Ekushey book fair yesterday, damaging many bookstalls and thousands of books.

Though the exact extent of the damage could not be ascertained immediately, according to the publishers at least 100 stalls out of more than 700 were affected by the sudden downpour.

Among the severely damaged stalls are UPL, Bangla Prokash, Adorn Publication and Anya Prokash.

Although there was protection of tin roofs, the ceilings became damp and water trickled down from top, damaging books. Gusty wind also torn and blew away polythene sheets and fabrics used for protecting books.

Some parts of the Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan remained waterlogged due to the rain, which occurred in two phases in the morning.

While visiting the fair venues yesterday, staffers were seen drying the wet books under the sun and rearranging the stalls.

"We have more than 25,000 books in our pavilion and around 3,000 were damaged," said Noor-un-Nabi, manager of Bangla Prokash.

Kamruzzaman, assistant manager of UPL, said books worth around Tk 10 lakh were damaged at their stall.

Biswa Kalyan Publication, Sikor Publication, Shirin Publication, Jatiya Sahitya Prokash, Somachar and Anarja Publication also suffered losses.

"Almost half of our 5,000 books got wet,"

said Tawhid Shams, a staffer at Biswa Kalyan Publication.

The situation at Little Mag Corner and Children's Corner was no better. Attendants were busy sorting out wet books and drying them.

Due to precaution, some of the stalls avoided disaster. Nalanda, Pearl Publishers and Sikha Prokashani were relatively unscathed.

Publishers of the stalls, who suffered losses, wanted Bangla Academy to be more cautious in future. They complained that the pavilion roofs were not sturdy enough.

"Roofs were not up to the mark. There were holes which allowed water to trickle down," said Pradip Kumar, manager of Sikor publication. He said he lost around 500 books.

BANGLA ACADEMY'S INITIATIVE
Yesterday, Bangla Academy organised a press conference in the afternoon.

Jalal Ahmed, member secretary of the book fair's organising committee, said they had already warned the publishers about rain and asked them to take necessary measures.

Regarding the damage, he said stall owners can claim compensation from insurance companies as insurance coverage was made compulsory for them at this year's book fair.

Besides, he said, the academy has installed two pumping machines with the help of the fire department to remove water.

"This year, only 10 percent stalls were damaged by rain. I think the extent of damage has reduced than that of previous year," he claimed. "We will take more precautions next year."

Right to information act
can prevent corruption

Says law minister at seminar

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Observing that corruption has hurt the spirit and dream of the Liberation War and damaged the country's development, Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday suggested taking integrated initiatives that include making people more conscious about the right to information (RTI) act and its full implementation for corruption prevention.

"Corruption has bred social degradation and discrimination. Ideologies and principles vanished in many professions because of corruption. Therefore, we have to prevent corruption at any rate," he said.

He came up with the observations while speaking as chief guest at a seminar on "Anti-Corruption Drive and Success of the Leadership" organised by Bangladesh

Progressive Columnist Forum (BPCF) at Jatiya Press Club.

The law minister said that RTI ensures free flow of information and can play an important role in creating transparency, ensuring accountability, and reducing corruption.

The right to information has empowered people. Therefore, it is possible to reduce corruption through properly using this law, he said.

Minister Anisul said a government information stock can be set up for providing information about corruption.

At the same time the use of national identity cards with photos and fingerprints and the database of signatures should be increased for this purpose, he said.

The law minister said prevention

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KILLING OF NOTRE DAME COLLEGE STUDENT
Woman in CCTV footage
arrested by Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has arrested a woman in connection with the killing of Notre Dame College student Yougen Hanasie Consalves.

Sakhina Begum Sabita, 26, an intern lawyer at Judge Court, was arrested from Dhaka's Mugda area on Saturday night, Rab said.

Sabita is the woman seen in CCTV footage -- accompanying Yougen to the flat in Sabujbagh from where his body was found -- around 3:30pm on the day of the murder, said Lt Col Emranul Hasan, commanding officer of Rab-3.

Rab said Yougen got acquainted with Sabita in 2013.

During primary interrogation, Sabita said she made Yougen a witness in a rape case she filed with Shabbagh Police Station against another lawyer in 2017. Yougen used the opportunity and extorted money from her, threatening to

refrain from giving testimony in the court, Rab officials quoted Sabita as saying.

Recently, Yougen proposed renting a flat together, saying that the lawyer accused in the rape case filed by Sabita may harm them.

On January 15, Sabita rented the flat in Sabujbagh, Emranul said.

Sabita claimed that she was infuriated with Yougen as he regularly demanded money from her for drugs. She bought a kitchen knife and kept it in the rented flat, Rab quoted her.

On February 12, Sabita, clad in a burka, took Yougen to the flat. While he went out for a while, she put sedative in juice and prompted him to drink it upon return, the Rab official said.

Once the sedative kicked in, Sabita tied Yougen up, stabbed him indiscriminately with the kitchen knife, and fled wearing salwar-kameez, she told Rab.

2,000 edu institutions to
be brought under MPO

Education minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday informed the parliament that her ministry has taken measures to bring 2,000 eligible educational institutions under the monthly payment order (MPO) in phases.

"I have already spoken to the finance minister regarding allocation of funds [for bringing educational institutions under MPO]. The eligible schools and colleges will be brought under MPO very soon after receiving the funds," she said in reply to a supplementary question.

She also said 9,000 educational institutions have so far applied online for inclusion under MPO. Of them, the ministry has identified 2,000 as eligible.

PRIMARY EDUCATION BOARD BY 2022

Meanwhile, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education M Zakir Hossain yesterday told the parliament that the government has a plan to constitute a separate education board in order to operate the Primary Education Completion (PEC) examination.

"The government has a plan to constitute separate board to administer PEC examination under the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP)-4," the state minister said while responding to a question placed by treasury bench lawmaker Nurunnabi Chowdhury of Bhola-3.

The board will be constituted within 2022, said the state minister, adding that the Non-formal Education Act-2014 has already been enacted.

An important part of the act is to establish a non-formal education board, he added.

CEC hopes for 'competitive'
upazila polls

Disappointed with non-participation of major parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda yesterday said it is disappointing that some of the major political parties are not taking part in the upcoming upazila election.

He was, however, optimistic that the polls would be "competitive" despite non-participation of some major parties.

The CEC was speaking as chief guest at a programme for trainers at the Election Training Institute in Dhaka's Agargaon.

"Many major political parties are not participating in the upazila election. This is of course disappointing for us," Nurul Huda said.

"Local government election usually sees

stiff competition as locals become candidates," he said.

The CEC urged the EC officials to act neutrally while discharging duties during the election.

"If anyone works for any particular party or individual, the commission will be tough on them," he said.

"None will be spared if found guilty," he warned.

"You belong to no party. As officials of the state, you are only accountable to the constitution, laws and principles," the CEC told the EC officials.

The first of the five-phase upazila polls will be held in 87 upazilas on March 10. Second phase in 124 upazilas will be held on March 18.

Assuming different name
will make Jamaat
'underground party': AG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General (AG) Mahbubey Alam yesterday said that if Jamaat-e-Islami men run the party with a different name, despite its registration with the Election Commission (EC) being cancelled by the High Court, it will be considered "underground politics", which the countrymen will not approve of.

The state has no obligation to give any facilities to a party that conducts "underground politics" without registering with the EC, he said while talking to reporters at his office on Supreme Court premises.

He said all political parties should register with the EC.

Replying to a question, the attorney general said his office will take an initiative soon for the Supreme Court (SC) hearing on the 2013 appeal filed by Jamaat-e-Islami, challenging the High Court (HC) verdict that declared its registration with EC illegal.

On February 6, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the

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DUCSU POLLS

Leftist alliances announce
11-point declaration

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ahead of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) and hall union polls, two leftist alliances -- Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote and Samrajjobad Birodhi Chhatra Oikya -- yesterday presented an 11-point declaration to form greater consensus.

The alliances said that they will form a panel comprising of those who extend support to the declaration.

Leaders of the two alliances came up with the decision and also placed their declaration as a base of the consensus at a press conference held at Madhur Canteen on campus.

Their 11 points include: creating a democratic campus environment free from

terrorism, occupation, administrative autocracy; allotment of seats in dormitories based on merit; putting a stop to the tortuous practices of keeping students in "gono room" and "guest room"; ensuring freedom of expression and coexistence of all political parties; shutting down all commercial courses; and increasing budget allocation in education and research sectors.

While reading out a statement, convener of Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote, Iqbal Kabir alleged that the administration has been ignoring their demands.

They also reiterated their earlier demands of setting up polling centres at academic buildings instead of halls, and allowing them

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Yesterday's downpour caused waterlogging on Malibagh-Mouchak Flyover. The photo was taken at 2:30pm.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Rain spells chaos
for Dhaka
commuters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Heavy spring rain freshened up a dusty Dhaka but caused chaos for commuters yesterday.

The capital received a total of 19mm rain from 6am to 9am, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Inundated streets spelt trouble for school and office-goers. Devotees at Biswa Jtema ground also had a difficult time.

"The sky was gloomy but I did not expect heavy rain, so I did not carry any umbrella," said banker Mahmud Hasan, visibly uncomfortable in his wet pants.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) says the possibility of rain today is low.

"After winter, the temperature is going up, creating low

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Over 35,000 develop kidney
failure in Bangladesh every year
Says Kidney Foundation president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Early detection and treatment of chronic kidney diseases (CKD) can prevent premature deaths from kidney failure, Prof Harun-Ur-Rashid, president of Kidney Foundation, said yesterday.

He also said all countries need a "legal and professional framework to donate organs" which will ensure donor and recipient safety and prohibit unethical practices.

He was giving a multimedia presentation on "CKD in Bangladesh: Current State of the Problem" at the plenary session on the last day of a three-day international conference.

Kidney Foundation organised the conference titled "Diabetic Kidney Disease and Deceased Renal Transplantation" at its convention hall in the capital's Mirpur.

In his presentation, Prof Harun-Ur-Rashid mentioned that CKD is the 11th leading cause of global mortality with estimated 1.2 million deaths annually.

According to Kidney Foundation, some 35,000-40,000 CKD patients, out of about 18 million, develop kidney failure in Bangladesh every year. To treat them, there are only 16 professors, 22 associate professors and 36 assistant professors (out of 140 nephrologists) in the country.

"The important causes of 'end stage kidney failure' (ESRD) in our country are chronic nephritis (40 percent), diabetes (34 percent) and high blood pressure (15 percent)," he said, suggesting that people with these three diseases should seek treatment immediately.

"After the age of 40, everyone should go for regular check-ups to detect critical health issues," he said.

"Kidney transplantation is a better alternative to dialysis, as it is cheaper and provides a better life for the patient," he added.

Renowned international academicians and physicians gave multimedia presentations on different aspects of CKD treatment at the event.