

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHATTOGRAM	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISHAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 31.1 L 19.4	H 29.3 L 17.0	H 30.8 L 19.0	H 29.6 L 17.3	H 31.5 L 15.6	H 28.0 L 16.2	H 32.3 L 20.5	H 32.8 L 20.5	H 31.5 L 20.5

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country, having chances of light rain/drizzle at one or two places over Khulna, Barishal, Dhaka & Rajshahi divisions, said the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:58pm and rises tomorrow at 6:26am.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Bar-headed Geese, Rajshahi. PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR.

The Bar-headed GOOSE

For the final time this season, my friend Niaz and I are on a boat on the Padma in Rajshahi. We are watching birds in the chars. As I look through my camera at a small bird skipping along in the mud, I hear a loud racket approaching overhead. "Bar-headed! Bar-headed!" cries Nuru, our boatman. The V-shaped formation of Bar-headed Geese flaps wings in perfect synchronicity. It continues its flight over the shoreline past our boat and disappears.

Will we find the geese again? As it happens, luck favours us. They have landed on the bank about a kilometre downstream and we spot them walking down a wedge of land towards water's edge: about two dozen grey birds sporting two distinctive black bars on their white head. They are social creatures, poking their beaks into the water, honking at each other and moving together lockstep. These, along with Greylag Geese which I photographed in Tanguar Haor years ago, are the only two wild geese species seen in Bangladesh.

For thousands of years, human civilization has had a close relationship with geese, ducks and swans (the biological family Anatidae) obtaining eggs, meat and feathers from them. These birds, collectively known as waterfowl, have been hunted, treasured and domesticated. Together, they form fifteen tribes, divided into swans, geese, whistling ducks, dabbling ducks and others. Geese, which are larger than ducks and smaller than swans, are subdivided into three groups: grey, black and white geese. Both our geese are from the grey group.

About 73 cm long and weighing 1.6

kilograms, the Bar-headed Goose is a large bird. It eats mainly grasses, water plants, seeds and berries, but also partakes of smaller animal matter including insects and crustaceans. Its legs are well-developed for walking and running in soft wet land where it forages. And as I look at one through my telephoto lens, I have to admit it is an elegant creature.

It is a migratory bird. It spends the summer months in central Asia, nesting and raising its young. As winter sets in it migrates to warmer climes of Southern Asia.

This migration is its claim to fame. The Bar-headed Goose is one of few bird species known to fly over the Himalayas. There are reports of it actually flying over Mount Everest. How it deals with oxygen issues at enormous heights - as well as the reason for following that high-altitude route - is a matter of great interest for scientists.

Back on the river, the flock takes flight as our boat comes too close for comfort. But it lands near the water again, and this time we watch from a distance. After frolicking in the water, it walks up a slope on the char, away from us. There are small, short-lived weeds and grass growing on this slope. While feeding, they turn and change directions several times, looking this way and that, but I never catch one looking directly at us. Near the peak of the slope, three geese stop, stretch their necks and honk. Necks still strained, they cross them momentarily. Within minutes they have walked over the top and out of our sight.

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

Choking an already busy road

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Panthapath to Karwan Bazar is one of the busiest roads in Dhaka. Every day the road sees heavy traffic.

While traffic jam on a major Dhaka street is not news to anyone, irresponsibly parking vehicles on the road and thus directly contributing to worsening congestion should certainly be noted.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) put up signs directing all not to park any vehicle on the road, but the situation on the ground paints a picture of blatant public nonchalance. While visiting the area last Friday, this correspondent observed the condition first-hand.

One of the biggest and busiest shopping malls, Bashundhara City, happens to be on the road, drawing droves of people, particularly during the weekend. Many of them park their cars on the road while going to the mall, despite paid parking space in the basement of the complex.

Some drivers blamed the mall for not having enough parking spaces while some said they park on the road simply because they see others doing that.

"The owner of the car told me to park on the road as the mall's parking area is occupied," said Siraj Ahmed, a driver who parked on the street opposite to the shopping centre.

A biker got visibly agitated and responded rudely when asked why he parked on the road: "I'm not the only one doing this! I see other vehicles parked here, so I did the same."

The mall's parking area can accommodate 800 cars, nearly 800 motorcycles and 400 cycles, according to parking in-charge MD Alamgir.

He said, "We accommodate cars more than we can afford to most of the time. Our parking area is always occupied with the flow of cars; just as one leaves, another shows up."

Regarding roadside parking, he said, "That is not our concern. Traffic police is supposed to look into that. We have security guards who direct vehicles to our parking zone."

People who do not park on the road or use public transport were annoyed.

"I have not seen this road free for once. Vehicles are always parked on the road, choking the flow of traffic. We waste hours on the road thanks to irresponsible behaviour of some," said Hanif Sheikh, a private service-holder, who came to Bashundhara City with his 14-year-old daughter.

An electronics vendor Md Russel said, "On holidays, the road stays free in the morning and noon but in the evening starts seeing heavy traffic, and road-side parking only makes movement more difficult."

Asked, traffic police officials said the two sides of the road belong to two different traffic areas. The side right in front of the mall falls under DMP west division, and the opposite side of the road belongs to south division.

Traffic sergeants on the road were seen direct-

ing vehicles and trying to mitigate the problem in the presence of vehicles parked on the road, violating traffic rules.

A number of law enforcers' vehicles were also parked there.

"Some vehicles of senior officers are parked here due to duty reasons and we are making sure that those do not cause any issue for the public," said DMP (west division) Traffic Sergeant Md Shimul.

When asked about vehicles parked on the other side of the road, he said that is not his area.

Seeking anonymity, a traffic police from DM south division said they try to drive away cars parked on the road but sometimes the vehicles belong to "influential people with political connection", and when they try to fine them they call high-ups -- putting unjust pressure on the field officer.



Despite the clearly visible "no parking" sign, vehicles line up in front of Bashundhara City shopping mall. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh shouldered a great responsibility to protect languages: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her firm conviction that no evil force would be able to suppress the Bengali nation.

She said this while addressing a discussion organised by Awami League, marking Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day at Krishibid Institute Bangladesh.

The premier said Awami League, with full support of people, came to power for the third consecutive term. "We have to work to uphold the confidence of people through continuing the pace of development and taking the country forward," she said.

At the event, a one-minute silence was observed in memory of the martyrs of Language Movement, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, martyrs of

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Global leaders, foreign missions shocked by deaths

CHAWKBAZAR FIRE

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Several countries and their missions in Dhaka have expressed their deep condolences over the deaths in Chawkbazar fire.

In his message to President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, "I express my sincere condolences at the loss of lives of many people in an incident of fire in Dhaka," reports BSS.

"Please convey the words of sympathy and support to the bereaved families as well as wishes for speedy recovery to all those who were injured in this disaster," added the Russian president.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Earl R Miller said, "I express my heartfelt condolences and those of the American people for all those affected by the fire at Chawkbazar in Dhaka."

In his message to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he also said, "Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you, the great nation of Bangladesh and the families of the victims during this difficult time."

The US Embassy Dhaka community offered their heartfelt condolences to all those affected by the fire. "Our prayers are with the families of those injured and lost and to all who mourn across the great nation of Bangladesh," said a Facebook post yesterday.

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Good times for local comic book lovers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Last night, a dozen men were brutally killed. The bodies bore marks made by sharp claws and teeth. Such mysterious crimes have been happening in the city. No one knows who is/are behind these atrocities. Some claim that they saw a nocturnal creature on the prowl but the description they provide is vague, and as such the entity is yet to be identified. Inspector CK Zaki, a special agent, is assigned to investigate the case. The case takes an unexpected turn when Zaki finds a small plastic pot near the creature's hideout.

What happens next?

To learn more, a reader needs to pick up the comic book titled "Denied", published by Dhaka Comics at the Ekushey book fair. It is part of comic book series featuring CK Zaki as the protagonist.



Two children engrossed in reading a comic book at a stall in Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Dhaka Comics -- founded in 2013 by cartoonist Mehedi Haque -- has a number of engrossing characters like CK Zaki who can draw in avid comic book lovers.

The series are written in Bangla, with authentic Bangladeshi setting and storylines.

"Comic books are a significant part of pop culture around the world. Readers belonging to all age groups love them. But when we create local characters, they become more readily relatable and readers feel more connected to

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ROHINGYA CRISIS German parliamentary delegation due today

Another to arrive on Monday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary delegation from Germany will arrive in Bangladesh today to discuss climate change and Rohingya refugee crisis with government officials and other stakeholders.

The delegation led by German Bundestag Vice President Claudia Roth will stay for six days, diplomatic sources said.

Claudia Roth has been in the Bundestag since 2002 and she will be accompanied by two MPs -- Matthias Zimmer and Frithjof Schmidt.

During their visit, they will learn about the consequences of climate change in Bangladesh and discuss possible remedies.

Meanwhile, another German delegation of Parliamentary Friendship Group for

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Special prayers for fire victims at Bangabhaban

UNB, Dhaka

A special doa mahfil was held for victims of the Chawkbazar tragedy at Bangabhaban Jam-e Masjid after Juma prayers yesterday.

Sixty-seven people were killed in a devastating fire that broke out at a chemical warehouse and raged through nearby buildings in Old Dhaka on the eve of International Mother Language Day.

The prayers sought eternal peace for the departed souls and wished quick recovery of those injured. It also sought the welfare and continuous progress of the country and the nation.

President Abdul Hamid, Member of Parliament Rejwan Ahammad Taufiq, president's military secretary, press secretary, officials and staff of Bangabhaban attended the special prayers.



A student receives an award from Bishwo Shahitto Kendro founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed. PHOTO: COLLECTED

5,872 win BSK reading awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 5,872 students have won awards in Bishwo Shahitto Kendro's (BSK) book reading programme for last year. They are among 40,000 students of class 6 to 10 from 96 schools in the capital, who took part in the reading contest, said a press release.

Addressing the award ceremony at Notre Dame College yesterday, BSK founder Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed said reading enlightens the mind. He urged students to read works of noted personalities and dedicate themselves for the betterment of society.

Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal stressed the need for developing reading habit that would help create a knowledge-based society.

Congratulating the students, writer-journalist Anisul Hoque urged them to apply knowledge gained from reading books in real life.

A total of 3,874 students received prizes yesterday, first day of the two-day award ceremony.

Selection round of Math Olympiad 2019 ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The selection round of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad 2019 ended yesterday through the last three regional competitions in Dhaka, Sylhet and Barishal.

A total of 388 young mathematicians from different schools and colleges were selected during the competitions. They will participate in the final round of the Olympiad next month.

With them, about 1,350 students were selected for the final event through 12 regional competitions held across the country, said the organisers.

Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee (BdMOC), in association with the Bangla daily Prothom Alo and Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited, has been organising the event since 2001 to make math more popular among students.

This year's Olympiad is scheduled to be held at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School in Dhaka on March 1 and 2, said Munir Hasan, general secretary of BdMOC.

"The number of participants has exceeded our expectation. Students were more enthusiastic than the previous years," Munir said.

More than 50,000 students participated in the primary level of the competition; around 14,000 of them were finalised for the regional selection, he added.

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