

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA
H 25.2 | L 17.9

MYMENSINGH
H 25.0 | L 17.2

CHATTOGRAM
H 26.2 | L 18.5

SYLHET
H 27.5 | L 16.5

RAJSHAHI
H 29.5 | L 16.5

RANGPUR
H 28.0 | L 16.4

KHULNA
H 22.2 | L 17.6

BARISHAL
H 23.5 | L 17.0

COX'S BAZAR
H 30.8 | L 20.8

Rain/thunder showers with temporary squally wind may occur at many places over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram & Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to heavy falls at places and hails at isolated places in the next 24 hours till 6pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. The sun sets in the capital today at 6:00pm and rises tomorrow at 6:23am.



Paul and Ellen Connett in conversation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at her office in the National Parliament on Monday.

PHOTO: PID

Connetts' journey as friends of Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Back in 1971, a small office in London was a place where non-Bengalis and Bengalis gathered to wage a movement against the ongoing genocide in the then East Pakistan. That was where students turned into protesters organising demonstrations, and professionals turned into activists to create pressure on governments around the world to recognise Bangladesh as a sovereign country. That was how the relationship of Paul Connett, now emeritus professor at a university in the US, and Ellen Connett began with this country, as described by the couple yesterday at a press meet in Liberation War Museum, Dhaka. The museum organised the event so that the Connetts, who had been honoured as "Friends of Liberation War" in 2013 for their role during the Liberation War, could share their thoughts on and emotions for this country. Reminiscing those days after 48 years, Paul said, "It seems like just yesterday that we were in London organising 'Action Bangladesh'....A very moving experience."

The organisation that came into being in that office orchestrated the historic demonstration at Trafalgar Square in London on August 1, 1971 -- 20,000 people gathered to press the demand that genocide be stopped and Bangladesh be recognised. The first time the couple came to Bangladesh was in 1971, with Mukti Bahini, to provide aid and support. At the time Ellen was caught by the Pakistan army. In a "quick two-day trial" by them, she was sentenced to two years in prison. She along with other prisoners was liberated by the Indian army two months later. During their second visit the next year, the Connetts met Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and told him "We have named our son Peter William Mujib. He was conceived in Calcutta (India), but Ellen realised she would be a mother while in prison," Paul said. They visited Bangladesh in 1996 to mobilise support for waste management and later as recipients of the "Friends of Liberation War Honour". "It felt very nice last night (Monday) to give to the prime minister artwork done by

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Fire safety still eludes old town shops

HELEMUL ALAM



Most shops and markets in Mitford, Babu Bazar and Chawkbazar areas that carry either chemical or plastic products are still without fire fighting equipment. On the other hand, traders who have fire extinguishers at their shops do not know its operation due to a lack of proper training. "Keeping a fire extinguisher at a 1,000-square-foot or less shop is mandatory, said Md Ohidul Islam, assistant director of warehouse and fire prevention of Fire Service and Civil Defence. "It's equally important to know how to operate those," he stressed. Meanwhile, some traders in the areas have started to purchase fire extinguishers or refill the old ones after the fire incident at Chawkbazar that left 69 people dead on February 20. During a visit to Mitford and Chawkbazar areas yesterday, it was seen that

most chemical and plastic goods selling shops did not have any fire extinguisher or other fire fighting equipment. When asked, Obaidul Haque, owner of "Medi Chemical" in Mitford area, said they have a fire extinguisher but they kept it "elsewhere". One fire extinguisher was found at Makka Madina Tower, a market of plastic products, near its main gate. However, no one knew how to operate it. "We don't know how to operate the extinguisher... it was set up by the market's owner. The security guards may know," said Lokman Ali, a worker at the market. This correspondent waited for a while, but no security guard was seen at the market in the afternoon. The newspaper also met Dulal Das, an employee of Smart Fire Safety Limited, a private firm that sells fire fighting equipment, in the area. "Earlier, we hardly got any order but the

Step down: Oikyafront to govt

Opposition alliance claims 'negligence in duties'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikyafront leaders at a condolence meeting yesterday asked the government to step down for its "negligence in duties" over the Chawkbazar fire that claimed at least 69 lives. Mourning last week's horrific incident in Old Dhaka, they extended condolence towards the bereaved family members and prayed for salvation and eternal peace of the departed souls. Gonoforum, a component of the Oikyafront, the major opposition alliance, organised the meeting at Jatiya Press Club in the capital. The High Court issued some recommendations following almost the same type of fire that took place in Nimtoli in 2010, but none of those were implemented, said Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain. "Why were they not implemented? Why such tragedy occurred? People want to know," he said, adding that the government is not supposed to be "irresponsible" as its duty is to ensure citizens' security. "We want answers [from the government]... What did they do in the last nine years? People

want justice," said Dr Kamal, a top leader of Oikyafront. Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President ASM Abdur Rob said the incident occurred "due to the irresponsibility of the government, although the almighty Allah decides people's fate." "It wasn't a [simple] accident. I would say that people were killed due to negligence in duty... You [the government] should step down immediately," said Rob. Speaking at the meeting, Nagorik Oikya Convenor Mahmudur Rahman Manna alleged that the former industries ministers took bribe from the chemical traders of old town. As a result, chemical warehouses were not relocated, he observed. "You [ministers] did not consider the dangers of chemical warehouses in residential areas. Money has become more important to you!" Manna claimed. Expressing condolence, he urged people to be resolute and stage protests. Manna also alleged that Sunday's attempt of

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Japan to donate \$32.5m for Rohingya refugees

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has announced an additional funding of \$32.5 million as humanitarian aid for Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. The announcement came at the launch of the UN Joint Response Plan for Bangladesh in Geneva on February 15. Since the massive influx of refugees into Bangladesh in August 2017, the Government of Japan had granted approximately \$50.2 million to international organisations. Adding this additional support, the total amount of assistance has reached approximately \$82.7 million, said the press release. This aid will be donated through site management of refugee camps, providing food, shelter, medical services and trainings, and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) facilities and forest regeneration through the UN agencies and international organisations. The organisations are: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

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DUCSU POLLS BCL 'rebel' faction pulls out

DU CORRESPONDENT

The "rebel" faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday decided not to contest the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) polls following a negotiation between them and BCL top brass. The group, led by vice-president of BCL's recently dissolved central committee Sohan Rahman Khan, announced a separate panel with him competing for the vice-president post, and Aminul Islam Bulbul, former organising secretary of Zahurul Haq Hall, for general secretary post on Monday. They claimed that there were some "disputes" over the BCL panel. After the negotiation, BCL central president Rezwatul Haque Chowdhury Shovon was seen exchanging pleasantries with the "rebel" candidates. Talking to reporters, GS nominee from "rebel" group Aminul Islam Bulbul said they want to work together for Ducsu polls and there is no division among them. "We were a bit discontent initially, as we were not evaluated properly. But we are now content after holding a meeting with top Awami League leaders. They assured us of proper evaluation if we work for the party," he said. "There is no rebel faction in Chhatra League. The organisation has many activists but the posts in Ducsu are limited. That was why it was not possible for us to nominate everyone. They were discontent over the issue, but now we do not have any problem," BCL president Rezwatul told reporters. In another development, candidates of different student bodies, platforms and individuals yesterday submitted nomination forms for Ducsu and hall union polls, scheduled for March 11.



Yesterday morning's rain predictably caused waterlogging on the Dhaka-Aricha highway. In this photo, a bus tyre is halfway submerged in water, making it difficult for the vehicle to move.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Visitors at Dhaka University Publication's stall at the book fair yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No new publication from Dhaka University

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Despite its reputation as the highest echelon of education in the country, Dhaka University (DU) publication is yet to publish any new book at the month-long Ekushey book fair that ends tomorrow. Academics say the dismal scenario of publication indicates the waning of the university that was once prominent for being the hub of many renowned writers and researchers in the country. According to Bangla Academy sources, a total of 185 new books arrived at the fair yesterday, raising the total number to 4,284 this year. According to DU Publications Bureau, the university has published only 177 books in the last 98 years since its establishment in 1921. The first published book was "The Construction of Reading Material for Teachers of Foreign Language" by Michel West in the year 1926 and the last one was

"Mahasweta Devir Kothashahitye Adivasi Jibon" by Hosne Ara in December of 2018, said the DU Publication stall attendants at the fair. When asked by The Daily Star, they failed to provide any updated catalogue, as it was last updated in 2016. "This stall doesn't have much to offer, considering the lack of new books," said Minhaz Munna, a student of Economics department of DU. Prominent educationist Syed Anwar Hussain said the university administration lacks interest in this sector, and the poor state of affairs in publications is a reflection of that. "Vice-chancellors in the last few years did not take any initiative to enrich the university publication," said Syed Anwar, a supernumerary professor of DU's History department. He alleged that the university publication has a lengthy procedure for publishing

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Any Jamaat leader involved in war crimes will face trial

Says law minister

BSS, Dhaka

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said if any Jamaat-e-Islami leader is found to have links with war crimes, he will have to face trial -- no matter which name the party takes in future. "Jamaat's appeal against the High Court judgement that cancelled its registration as a political party is currently pending with the Appellate Division. If the apex court upholds the High Court order, Jamaat's registration will finally be scrapped and they will not be able to operate in Bangladesh as a political party," he told reporters.

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