

Rain washes

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ground at 1.10pm local time as it had been raining since the morning. There were two instances when the rain did seem to cede. The first time was just after lunch, and allowed enough time for the groundsman to uncover the Basin Reserve pitch for the first time. However, just as everyone was gearing up for some cricket, rain once again poured all over their hopes.

With players of both teams eagerly waiting, rain again stopped at 3.00pm. The umpires inspected the thirty yards and the bowlers' run-up area and wanted to have another inspection 25 minutes later before starting the game. Both sets of cricketers even came out to practise at the side-nets and started warming up, but the skies opened up yet again. Ross Taylor, who was heading towards the dressing room, remarked to this reporter: "Well it seems the weather is in a pretty bad mood. I would say goodbye for today [yesterday]." Just after Taylor's prediction, match officials finally called off the day's play in a match where the toss has not even taken place. The game is scheduled to start half-an-hour earlier tomorrow at 10.30am local time today.

While heading out of the ground after play was called off, Tamim Iqbal was seen having a chat with Neil Wagner and New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson. Perhaps the cricketers were talking about the forecast, which suggests more rain today as well.

Flags of freedom

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When Bangabandhu's call came, people from all walks of life responded. The situation was changing; the air was tense, electrifying almost. For the 10th consecutive day, all government and semi-government organisations and institutions remained shut.

In different areas, clashes between the Pakistani army and the Bangalees broke out. Crowds of people used open defiance to demonstrate their hostility towards the soldiers and waves of Bangalees brought difficulty to troop mobility. Sheikh Mujib's March 7 demands were coming to fruition. His people were with him, immovable and unwavering in their commitment.

Patriotic Bangalee songs were played on Dhaka Betar and programmes in favour of a liberated Bangladesh filled the schedule of Pakistan Television's Dhaka centre.

Bangabandhu, in a statement made in Dhaka, said that his order to keep offices, banks and other institutions closed was being followed.

He reminded all that West Pakistan's attitude towards Bangalees was a ploy to keep the country under military rule.

NAP chief Wali Khan told journalists that he would be travelling to Bangladesh from Karachi on March 13 to hold a meeting with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A message was sent to Bangabandhu by ZA Bhutto saying the future of the country was uncertain.

In Karachi, Air Marshal Asghar Khan expressed concern about the changing situation of the country. He had said many steps needed to be taken to protect the country from being separated.

He added that, in Dhaka, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had become the "acting government".

While most rooftops donned the Bangladeshi flag, the flag of Pakistan was flying only on cantonment premises.

It was clear that no issue could be solved until the party that won the most votes came to power.

Source: Liberation War Museum

Four more

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yesterday, raising the death toll to five.

Shahjalal's wife Shahida alias Rashida, was still missing.

The bodies of Shahjalal's daughter Meem, 8, her sister Mahi, 6, her uncle Delwar, 35, and her 6-month-old cousin Zunair were recovered in a drive conducted between 7:30am and 12:30pm, Kamrul Islam, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence headquarters, told The Daily Star.

The bodies were floating in the river near Swari Ghat, he said. Shahjalal's nephew Badshah termed the incident as a murder and said they would file a case soon, seeking justice.

The family members were going to the Sadarghat Launch Terminal from Kamrangirchar by a boat before it was hit by a launch, which suddenly moved backwards before being anchored at the terminal.

Earlier on Friday, the body of Jamshida Begum, 30, was recovered. Firefighters are continuing their search operation for the last missing person Shahida, the fire service officials said.

Shah Jaman, officer-in-charge of South Keraniganj Police Station, said no case was lodged in this connection till the filing of this report at 8:00pm yesterday.

"We will investigate whether it was an accident or there was a fault from any side," the OC said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits a stall at a fair marking the International Women's Day 2019 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Join forces to stop violence against women

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to create awareness in the society. To make it happen, women and men have to work together," she said.

Hasina was addressing a programme marking the International Women's Day at the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The PM, in charge of the women and children affairs ministry, said all have to remember that no society can be built leaving behind half of its population, who are women.

Expressing deep resentment over child and woman rape incidents, the PM said those who commit such a heinous crime are enemies of the society.

She urged all to publicise the names, addresses and pictures of rapists properly so that people hate them.

"This problem not only exists in Bangladesh, but also in developed and civilised countries."

The PM urged all to remain alert to discrimination against girl children as well.

Unlike in many developed and civilised countries around the world, Bangladeshi women already proved themselves, she said, adding that they showed that they can.

Recalling the role of the Father of the Nation in upholding the dignity of women, Hasina said Bangabandhu had ensured their equal rights in all spheres of life.

About various steps taken by Bangabandhu for the rehabilitation of those mothers and sisters who were tortured by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators in

1971, the PM said many parents did not accept their daughters violated during the Liberation War.

She said the successes of women was everywhere in Bangladesh and they along with their male counterparts were now moving ahead at the same pace in education, sports and creative works.

She mentioned that women were now holding very high positions in the civil administration, the judiciary, education, armed forces and law enforcement agencies.

The PM also elaborated various steps taken by her government for the development and welfare of women.

About the Lifetime Contribution for Women Empowerment Award, given to her by the Institute of South Asian Women, Hasina said she dedi-

cated the award to the womenfolk of the world, including those in Bangladesh.

A documentary on women empowerment and achievements in Bangladesh was screened at the function.

Hasina also distributed "Joyeeta" awards among the winners for their achievements in life.

Later, she witnessed a cultural function and visited stalls of women entrepreneurs.

The women and children affairs ministry organised the programme, with Meher Afroz Chumki, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Women and Children Affairs Ministry, in the chair.

Mia Seppo, UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in Bangladesh, was present as a special guest.

Students wary of 'fear tactics'

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"Senior brothers [BCL leaders] are telling us that they will not allow anyone to stay in the halls if anyone votes for any other candidates," said a first-year student at Salimullah Muslim Hall yesterday.

Some students have also alleged that they were being asked to cast their votes openly or show their ballot papers to the BCL candidates' polling agents before dropping them in the ballot box.

"Otherwise, they will drive me out of my dormitory," said a student at Kabi Jasimuddin Hall.

"It's not that the BCL men are threatening everyone. Those who are likely to vote for other candidates are receiving such threats," said another.

Students and candidates outside the BCL are also worried about the election-day environment.

At least 10 BCL leaders and activists, who spoke separately with The Daily Star, spoke of a plan to scare general students away by staging "big showdowns" on and around the campus.

Chhatra League leaders dismissed the allegations.

"We have requested all voters to go to the polling centres to exercise their democratic rights as elections are taking place after so many years," said BCL panel VP Candidate Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury.

Sonjit Chandra Das, president of BCL's election conducting committee, said they would provide every assistance to the university authorities in order to hold a free and fair election.

Meanwhile, Candidates held their campaigns for the last day yesterday for the Ducsu election that is taking place after 28 years.

The last committee of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) was dissolved in 1998, and students have since waged several movements demanding an election.

In January last year, the High Court ordered the DU authorities to hold the election in six months, but that did not happen. Last month, the university set March 11 for polling.

About 43,000 students will cast their ballots to elect 25 Ducsu leaders from among 229 contenders. Another 512 candidates are vying for 13 posts in each of the 18 dormitories.

Students can vote only in the centres at their halls. Voting will open at 8:00am and will continue till 2:00pm without any break. The authorities allotted four minutes for each student to complete voting, which some students say is not enough.

Pragatisheel Chhatra Oikya VP candidate Liton Nandi said there are 38 positions on the ballot papers.

"We want the voting deadline extended until 6:00pm so that all students can cast their votes," he added.

Zahaurul Haq Hall Provost Delwar Hossain said they would set up adequate booths so that a student gets at least 4 minutes to make his decision.

Every voting centre will be under CCTV surveillance, but quota reformist panel VP candidate Nurul Haque Nur is still skeptical.

"The administration said there would be CCTV cameras.... The whole incident of the attack on me and my fellows during quota reform protests were filmed by different electronic media, but they [DU] did not take any action against the attackers," he said.

NO OUTSIDER FOR 24 HOURS
No outsiders will be allowed to enter the Dhaka University premises for 24hrs from 6:00pm today.

But DU students, teachers and employees as well as people having university passes will be out of the purview of the ban, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia at a press briefing at the Shahbagh Police Station yesterday.

Vehicles without a valid university pass or sticker will not be allowed either.

Adequate policemen will be deployed on the campus, and they will act on instructions of the university authorities, he added.

Rickshaws from outside will be stopped at the entry points, but some rickshaws will be available for commuting inside the campus.

The university authorities have also imposed restrictions on the number of media personnel in DU during the election. No more than four camera units from each TV channel and maximum two reporters and one cameraperson will be allowed from each print media house.

UZ polls kick off, festivity lacking

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The Election Commission has yet to announce the schedule for the fifth-phase polls.

In 2014, 487 upazilas went to polls in six phases between February and May.

For the first time in Bangladesh's history, political parties are nominating aspirants for upazila council, which includes a chairman, a vice chairman and a female vice chairman.

Opposition BNP; Left Democratic Alliance, a combine of eight left-leaning parties; Islami Andolan Bangladesh; Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan and Bangladesh Muslim League have boycotted the election.

They said they boycotted the polls as they did not see any prospect of a free and fair election.

The BNP alleged that the EC was controlled by the government and that's why it might stage "another farce" over the polls like it did with the national election won by the ruling Awami League.

Their boycott has the election one-sided, ensuring AL dominance in the local government body elections.

At a press briefing at the Nirbachon Bhavan yesterday, Election Commission Additional Secretary Moklesur Rahman said all preparations were over for holding the election

Total upazila	78
Total voters	1.42 cr
Total polling stations	5,847
Chairmen aspirants	207
Vice Chairmen aspirants	386
Vice chairmen (reserved for women)	249

Voting starts at 8:00am. Continue till 4:00pm

in a free and fair manner.

He called upon all voters to cast their ballots for the candidates of their choice without any fear. He also asked the candidates to follow the electoral code of conduct.

He warned of actions against any kind of negligence of duty by the law enforcers and election officials.

The EC primarily decided to hold election in 87 upazilas but on Friday night withheld elections to three upazilas -- Aditmari of Lalmonirhat, Purbadhala of Netrokona and Jamalganj of Sunamganj -- saying holding of impartial election was not possible.

The commission has also withheld election to three other upazilas -- Ullapara of Sirajganj, Paba of Rajshahi and Phulabari of Dinajpur -- due to stay order on polls there, said officials.

Besides, there will be no elections to another three upazilas -- Melandah and Madarganj of Jamalpur and Natore Sadar. All candidates of the upazilas are set to be elected unopposed.

A total of 28 candidates for chairman posts, vice-chairman and vice-chairman posts reserved for women have been elected uncontested in the phase. Of them, 15 are candidates for the chairman posts, six for vice-chairman and seven for reserved women vice-chairman posts.

EC sources said a total of 207 candidates were vying for chairman posts, 386 candidates for vice-chairman and 249 candidates for reserved women vice-chairman posts.

EC sources said 14 law enforcers would be deployed at each polling station. Besides, one executive magistrate will work in each upazilas for today's election.

EC Additional Secretary Moklesur said BGB and Rab personnel would be deployed in the election areas.

According to the Upazila Parishad Act 2009, elections will be held for three posts -- chairman, vice chairman and vice chairperson.

As per the act, the mayors of municipalities, chairmen of Union Parishads and members in seats reserved for women in both municipalities and

Union Parishads automatically become members of an upazila parishad.

As per Article 59 of the Constitution, the Upazila Parishads are designated to perform significant functions relating to administration and the work of public officers, maintenance of public order, the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.

11 AL MEN JAILED
Meanwhile, a mobile court in Rajshahi yesterday sentenced 11 Awami League men, including a municipality mayor, to five-day imprisonment each for violating the electoral code of conduct in Durgapur upazila.

The mobile court headed by executive magistrate Mohammad Kawsar Hamid handed down the verdict.

The convicts include Durgapur Municipality Mayor Tofazzol Hossain and Jhaluka Union Parishad chairman Mojahar Ali. All of them are leaders and activists of different units of local Awami League.

Officer-in-charge of Durgapur Police Station Abdul Motaleb said police arrested them while they were holding a "secret meeting" to carry out subversion activities in the municipality area ahead of today's polls.

Three-wheeler, car collide; 3 killed, 3 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

At least three people were killed and three others severely injured in an accident at Murail Bazar in Adamdighi upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shyaml Saha, 48, son of Jagannath Saha and Afzal Hossain, 35, son of Jasim of Dupchanchia upazila, and Md Shahidul Islam, 55, son of Uzir Uddin of Adamdighi upazila, said police.

The incident occurred as a car and a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on around 5:30pm on the Bogura-Naogaon Highway.

The seriously injured are Rashedul Islam, 32, Alim, 30, and Shohel Rana, 32. They were taken to Adamdighi Upazila Heath Complex and later to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Adamdighi Police Station.

Home boss

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innocent people on the pretext of crossfire," he said, adding, "I want to make it clear that no one of our forces is killing anyone in the name of crossfire."

"During anti-narcotics drives, the law enforcers are forced to retaliate and fire, not to kill anyone but in self-defence."

The minister also said that a list of drug dealers had been prepared and the drives would continue.

The prime minister has a "zero-tolerance policy" against drugs, he added.

There has been a wide-ranging criticism at home and abroad about crossfire deaths. Several hundred of suspected drug dealers have been killed in "gunfights" with law enforcers since the government launched an anti-narcotics drive in May last year.

Fire started

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Home ministry's report said forensic experts would probably be able to tell what kind of chemical or gas was stored on the first floor of the building.

Its short-term recommendations included preparing a list of factories and warehouses of chemical, plastic, polythene, battery, shoes, counterfeit medicines, fake cosmetics and other flammable substances.

It also recommended identifying as soon as possible the very risky and low-risk areas considering the population density and number of factories and warehouses.

Its recommendations to be implemented in the long run included taking initiatives to move those establishments out of the residential areas and to conduct regular mobile court drives.

There should be hydrant points and water reservoirs in the area to douse any future fires.

Obtaining a licence for a chemical warehouse or factory should require a No-Objection-Certificate from the fire service, it said.

It should be mandatory to appoint trained and efficient chemists in the warehouses.

No high-rise building should be constructed near chemical warehouses and factories, it suggested, adding that such establishments should not be set up within 10 metres of any educational or religious institutions and community centres.

The report mentioned that the Old Dhaka roads should be widened for vehicles of fire service and other emergency responders. Redevelopment of the old town with modern facilities is needed. Vehicular movement can be prohibited on the narrow roads.

IEB PROBE REPORT

Officials of the Institution of Engineers who are also investigating the fire earlier said the fire broke out at Wahed Mansion due to the chemical storage. They ruled out the explosion of a gas cylinder as the source of the fire.

Khandker Manjur Mohsed, general secretary of the institution, told The Daily Star that the fire could have originated from the spark of a gaslight or match. "We recommended a forensic examination to find out the exact cause."

They submitted their report to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on March 1.

EXPLOSIVES DEPARTMENT REPORT

A probe of the Department of Explosives also found that the fire originated from the first floor of the building where perfume cans and gas lighters were stored.

"We prepared the report analysing the CCTV footages, witnesses' statements and examining the evidence. There were highly inflammable substances there, the fire originated from an explosion of one of those chemicals," Samsul Alam, chief inspector of the department, told The Daily Star.

INDUSTRIES MINISTRY REPORT

A committee of the ministry submitted its report on Thursday, but the findings have been kept secret, an official said.