

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES

DHAKA H 32.9 L 23.7	MYMENSINGH H 32.5 L 20.5	CHATTOGRAM H 32.1 L 23.0	SYLHET H 33.5 L 21.5	RAJSHAHI H 34.0 L 19.2	RANGPUR H 32.2 L 16.5	KHULNA H 33.2 L 23.6	BARISHAL H 34.0 L 22.7	COX'S BAZAR H 32.2 L 22.5
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Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of rain/thunder showers at one or two places over Khulna division in the next 24 hours till 6pm today, UNB said quoting the Met office. **The sun sets in the capital today at 6:07pm and rises tomorrow at 6:08am.**



Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority yesterday knocked down some 57 structures as part of their on-going drive against illegal establishments along the Buriganga and Turag rivers. A total of 174 structures have been knocked down so far in the second phase of the drive which will be continued for seven more working days. This photo was taken at Dhaka Uddan Housing near Mohammadpur beribadh. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

'Tk 150 crore spent on hotel bills in 6 months'

Minister blasts foreign agencies working for Rohingyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign agencies working for Rohingyas spent Tk 150 crore on hotel bills in the last six months, whereas they have spent no more than 25 percent of total aid for the refugees, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque said yesterday.

He was speaking to journalists following a meeting of the cabinet committee on law and order affairs held at the conference room of home ministry, reports BSS. Mozammel is the chairman of the newly formed cabinet committee.

Describing the scenario of aid agencies as "saddening", the minister said, "They [agencies] spent only a quarter of the funds they received to alleviate the miseries of Rohingyas while most of the amount were spent to pay their hotel bills."

"The cabinet committee has expressed its concern over the activities of NGOs..." he said.

Haque asked the law enforcement agencies to submit a list of NGOs who were operating in Rohingya camps with an "ill motive".

About the relocation process of 35,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char island, he said that Bhasan Char area has been made habitable, and it is Bangladesh's "internal matter" where the Rohingyas would be accommodated; foreigners should only look after the humanitarian aspects.

The Daily Star published a report titled "INGOs Spending on Rohingyas: Operations eating up a thick slice" on December 2, 2018, citing a study.

The study found that in some cases, the operational cost of international non-government organisations (INGO) in Cox's Bazar was five times higher than the programme requirement, a problem compounded by a lack of transparency in INGOs' operational cost expenditure.

Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (COAST) conducted the study.

Around 3,000 registered and non-registered foreigners are working under INGOs in Cox's Bazar.

More or less, every foreign aid worker receives approximately Tk 25,000 as daily allowance, excluding their regular salary, according to COAST officials.

In 2018, donors received some USD 682 million, equivalent to some USD 3,284 per Rohingya family, while 75 percent projects of INGOs or UN agencies were being implemented through local or national NGOs, the study added.

The INGOs are also spending a huge amount on transportation.

The study also mentioned that the daily movement of some 545-575 cars from Cox's Bazar to Rohingya camps had not only increased expenditure, but also "forced local children to stop going to schools".

BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE GRAFT CASE Khaleda 'unwilling' to appear before court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Jail authorities yesterday failed to produce BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia before a Dhaka court in Barapukuria coal mine graft case, as she expressed "unwillingness" to appear before the court.

Senior Jail Superintendent Iqbal Kabir wrote this on the custody warrant placed before the Special Judge's Court-2.

As she was not produced, Judge ASM Ruhul Imran adjourned the hearing of charge framing of the case against Khaleda and 8 others till April 9.

At the onset of the hearing, Khaleda's lawyer Masud Ahmed Talukder told the court that they were yet to obtain some important documents of the case which are required for hearing of charge framing.

The judge asked them to submit petitions for getting the documents.

Of the nine accused, Barrister Aminul Huq could not appear before the court as he is now in Singapore for medical treatment.

Seven other accused, who are now out on bail, were present at the courtroom yesterday.

Three illegal brick kilns demolished, nine fined

STAR REPORT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday demolished three illegal brick kilns on the banks of Turag River in Ashulia of Savar.

During the daylong drive, a DoE team, led by Executive Magistrate Tamzid Ahmed, also partially dismantled nine other brick kilns and fined the owners Tk 95 lakh in total for not having legal documents, reports our Savar correspondent.

The brick kilns are M/S Raju Bricks, MSB Bricks, Surma Bricks, Styling Bricks, Dhaka Bricks, two units of M/S Ashraf Bricks, SS Bricks and Meghna Bricks. SS Bricks is owned by the local union parishad chairman.

Tamzid said the brick kilns were set up on Turag banks, though there is a High Court directive against it. Legal action will be taken against the owners, he said.

BRICK KILNS TOP POLLUTER

According to DoE, brick kilns are the top air polluter in seven major cities in the country, particularly during dry season when most bricks are made, turning the air quality of these cities severely unhealthy.

A five-year survey by the department found Narayanganj has the most polluted air, followed by Dhaka. Third is Gazipur, which is followed by Rajshahi, Chattogram, Khulna, and Barishal. The survey was done between 2013 and 2018 with funds from the World Bank.

Continued exposure to poor quality air can cause heart diseases, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, and respiratory infections, including pneumonia. It could also cause stroke, according to WHO.

The UN health body estimates 37,000 Bangladeshis die due to air pollution every year, the average age of the victims being just 38 years.



With gas cylinders tied together by flimsy rope, a pick-up truck remains stuck in traffic on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Transporting flammable substances in such a way is dangerous. The photo was taken in Karwan Bazar area yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Produce Shahidul's case records immediately

HC asks authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday asked the authorities concerned to immediately produce the records of the case filed against internationally-acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam under section 57 of the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Act.

The bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil passed the order while hearing a writ petition filed by Shahidul, challenging the proceedings of the case.

On March 3, Shahidul filed a writ petition, SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shakes hand with a student while awarding her the "Primary Education Padak" at Bangabandhu International Conference Center yesterday. Earlier, the PM inaugurated the National Primary Education Week at an event there. PHOTO: PID

High Court asks DoE for report on steps to curb air pollution in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing dissatisfaction with the air and environment pollution in Dhaka, the High Court yesterday directed the Department of Environment (DoE) to submit a report on what steps the organisation has taken to curb pollution.

While hearing a writ petition, the court ordered Md Ziaul Haque, director (air quality management) of DoE, to appear before it on April 10 with the report -- explaining DoE's steps and plan for tackling pollution.

The HC also asked both Dhaka north and south city corporations to place a report before it on their steps taken to address air pollution in the capital.

The court said environment and air pollution are rampant in places of Dhaka where construction work of metro rail and elevated expressway are underway, but steps for preventing pollution are not

adequate.

"We need metro rail and elevated expressway. At the same time, prevention of air and environment pollution is very urgent. Pollution must be tackled to protect our children," said the HC bench of Justice Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamru Kader.

At the hearing, petitioner's lawyer Advocate Manzill Murshid produced a report published by The Daily Star on March 6, with the headline "Living in toxic air".

The Daily Star report says Bangladesh has the most polluted air in the world and Dhaka is the second most polluted capital city, as per a new study.

Bangladesh, one of the most densely-populated countries in the world, has been struggling with air pollution for long. Dhaka, the country's capital, often finds its place among the most polluted cities in global indices, it said, adding that brick

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GAS PRICE HIKE PROPOSAL

HC order on BERC's public hearing Mar 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver its order on March 31 on a petition that challenged the legality of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission's (BERC) ongoing public hearing for increasing gas price.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamru Kader fixed the date after concluding hearing on the petition.

Convener of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) Architect Mubassher Hossain submitted the petition on March 12, seeking stay on the process for increasing gas price.

During yesterday's hearing, petitioner's council Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua told the HC that BERC has

organised the hearing in violation of relevant procedures.

As per BERC laws, gas price cannot be increased twice in a fiscal year, he argued, saying that the commission raised the bulk, distribution and transmission rates of LNG-blended gas on October 16 last year.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam appeared for Petrobangla, the licensing authority of gas distribution companies, and Advocate AFM Mesbahuddin argued for BERC. They said the writ petition is premature as no decision was taken yet for increasing the price.

BERC started the public hearing on March 11 on the proposals placed by six gas distribution companies -- Titas, Bakhrabad, Jalalabad,

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Long-term plan needed for sustainable cities

Speakers tell policy dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a policy dialogue yesterday emphasised long-term planning to create sustainable cities for all, as "around 26 million people in Bangladesh will move from their places of origin by 2050".

In parallel with decentralising sources of livelihood earnings to divisional and other major cities, they also stressed on coordination among different government authorities, policy coherence and development of a system in this regard.

Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) organised the event at Cirdap, in collaboration with International Center for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), University of Exeter and Durham University -- both from the UK.

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