

Rain likely on Eid day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country is likely to experience a rainy Eid-ul-Fitr, said Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) yesterday.

According to yesterday's forecast of BMD, medium to heavy rainfall may occur in north-eastern region of Bangladesh along with adjacent Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura of India in the next 72 hours.

Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be celebrated on Friday if the moon is not sighted on Wednesday. "Till May 14, there is a possibility of rainfall in the country and later it will gradually reduce," said Omar Faruq, meteorologist of BMD.

"Kalbaishakhi [nor'wester] accompanied by troughs of low lies over West Bengal and adjoining area of Bangladesh are the reasons for the rainfall," he said.

Due to this light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places including Dhaka. All major rivers except Surma-Kushiyara in the country's north-eastern part are in rising trend and flowing below their respective danger levels.

The highest rainfall was recorded 78 mm in Tangail till 6pm yesterday. During this period, a total of 34 mm rainfall was recorded in Dhaka.



Bashundhara City has been busy as ever prior to Eid, evident from throngs of customers going up and down the mall's escalators last night. Inset, a customer examines an outfit inside a store at the mall.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Eid shopping a priority above health safety?

MATHEWS CHIRAN

The government has directed all supermarkets, malls and shops of Dhaka city to adopt precautionary measures to stop the spread of Covid-19. However, the markets are struggling to maintain proper health and safety measures as there are large crowds of people shopping before Eid-ul-Fitr.

This correspondent observed such a situation in several markets of the city. During Ramadan, the peak operating hours for the businesses are 11am-4pm and 7pm-9pm.

One of clothing brand Aarong's most popular branches in Asadgate often has queues forming in front of it. According to brand officials, the store can accommodate around 400 customers hourly.

On May 6, this outlet was fined Tk 1 lakh by Dhaka North City Corporation for allowing more people than its capacity and not maintaining the safety measures.

This correspondent, on a visit to Aarong in Asadgate, found that everyone was wearing masks inside the store, and customers were provided hand sanitiser at the point of entry. People also had to get their temperature checked before entering the store.

There were guards at the entrance to keep the number of people in check. Store staff were not keeping customers' bags in lockers before letting them enter, and outfit trials were also closed.

Last year, when the government shutdown was lifted initially, Aarong had a system of pre-registration for customers. However, this system isn't in use this year.

Seeking anonymity, a store manager said, "Pre-registration system wasn't friendly for all. Many customers would show up without registering beforehand and that would cause overcrowding outside the store. So we decided to forgo the practice this time."

"However, we have more displays than before, to help people choose

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TREE-FELLING AT SUHRAWARDY UDYAN

It was clearly a 'criminal act' Will look into the matter

...Architect Rafiq Azam

...Liberation War Affairs minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cutting down trees from a public space in the name of development work in a city like Dhaka is sort of a crime, said architect Rafiq Azam.

Destroying greens for constructing a structure is a century-old concept. Architecture students were taught this nearly 100 years ago and that concept started to change around 50 years back, he added.

"Now the concept of architecture has totally changed," said Rafiq Azam while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

Now an architect should consider the entire landscape of a certain place as their architectural work. So maybe an architect may decide not to build any structure at all if she or he feels, Azam said.

An architect should consider the geological characteristics of a certain place, climatic condition of that area, trees, sunlight and soil condition before deciding to construct any structure.

"You need to remember, a structure is not only for humans, but also for wildlife," he said.

Asked about his views on tree felling at



Suhrawardy Udyan for development work, Azam said, it was clearly a "criminal act".

The government has not told them to cut down trees and make those structures. So those involved with the development work should have thought about how to do it without harming the environment.

"There is a norm and standard procedure to work in a public place. But they did not follow it. They could have engaged people or exchanged views with experts. In that case, there would have been a festivity surrounding the project, but it has now become a pain for us," he said.

In the 80 acres area of Suhrawardy Udyan, normally there should be five to seven thousand trees even after building all those structures.

Also there was a scope to recharge groundwater using the 80 acres. If there's two inches of rainfall a day, it would be possible to recharge two crore liters of water there.

It takes time to recharge water, so they could build small water retention ponds there to recharge

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty trees have been cut down to implement the third phase of Swadhinata Stambha project at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital and 50 more may have to be felled for the project, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque said yesterday.

Addressing a press conference at the ministry, he said they will form a committee -- incorporating relevant experts like architects, botanists, environmentalists -- who will visit the area and take further decision on cutting 50 more trees.

"We will change our plan if necessary, as per suggestions of the experts and will try to save as many trees as possible. We will plant 1,000 trees in the (Suhrawardy) Udyan to compensate for it," he said.

He said considering the concerns of all, they will discuss with all stakeholders, environmentalists and urban planners and will find a solution on how the project can continue without hampering the environment.

"However, we will protect all the historical sites related to the Liberation War and freedom of struggle at the Udyan for the interest of protecting history," the minister said.

Responding to a question on why they did not start planting trees before cutting any, he said they had a plan to plant trees during this upcoming rainy season and they will start it within the next month.

On the primary design where there was no provision of cutting trees, the minister said it will be very unfortunate if the trees were cut down to construct walkways.

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APPROVAL OF FOREIGN STUDY CENTRE

Private universities' association says it's conflicting with law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's recent approval of a study centre of a foreign university is conflicting with the Private University Act 2010 and the policy of non-profit higher education, said Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) yesterday.

APUB Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain, in a statement, demanded suspension of the approval and effective steps to formulate a rule to approve a branch or study centre of a foreign university in line with the act.

The education ministry in February approved Monash College (Australia) Study Center, Bangladesh operated by Eduko Bangladesh Limited of (STS Group), in line with a rule for operating branches and study centres of foreign universities framed in 2014.

"The approval to operate a branch campus/study centre of a foreign university as a for-profit institution has caused great concern and anxiety in the country's growing higher education sector," said Kabir.

According to the Private University Act, private universities in Bangladesh run as non-profit higher education institutions under the Trusts Act, 1882.

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Budget session of JS sits Jun 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad will go to budget session on June 2.

The session will start at 5pm, parliament secretariat said in a press release.

This will be the 13th session of this parliament.

President Md Abdul Hamid convened the session, exercising power bestowed upon him by Article 72 (1) of the constitution.

Business Advisory Committee on parliament will finalise the duration and activities of the session.

Like other sessions of Covid-19 period, this session will maintain health safety guidelines. In this case, only MPs who were tested negative for Covid-19 will be allowed to attend it.

A limited number of MPs required for fulfilling quorum will be asked to attend the session on a rotation basis, sources at the JS secretariat said.

BLOGGER ANANTA BIJOY DAS MURDER

Justice still out of sight in 6yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

With the killing of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider in February 2013, banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team started a spate of attacks against free-thinkers, which continued till 2016.

A total of eight free-thinkers were hacked to death in a similar manner in those years, with four being killed within just seven months in 2015.

Today is the sixth death anniversary of blogger and science writer Ananta Bijoy Das, who was hacked to death in broad daylight in Sylhet by a group of masked assailants in that gruesome year.

Six long years after the gruesome killing, his family members are still awaiting justice, as the case filed in connection with the murder is still under trial at Anti-terrorism Special Tribunal of Sylhet.

So far, testimonies of 19 witnesses out of 29 have been recorded in the court, and three recent scheduled dates were deferred due to several reasons, including the "lockdown".

After Ananta's murder, his father Rabindra Kumar Das died on April 21, 2017. His mother Pijush Rani Das is suffering from different ailments for long and was in hospital for 15 days recently. His brother Ratneswar Das has also been ill for a long

time and is not willing to talk about it.

Somor Bijoy Shee, brother-in-law of the slain blogger, said, "His mother, brother, sister, we relatives and his well-wishers are awaiting justice."

Ananta was killed on the morning of May 12, 2015 at Subidbazar area near his residence in Sylhet, when he was on his way to work with his sister.

Banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team claimed responsibility for the murder. Ratneswar had filed a murder case accusing several unnamed persons with Airport Police Station that day, and the investigation was later handed over to Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

On October 18 in 2016, Arman Ali, inspector of CID and investigation officer of the case, pressed a charge sheet, but the court rejected it and ordered CID to reinvestigate and file a supplementary charge sheet, which was later filed on May 9 last year.

The accused in the charge sheet are Shafiur Rahman Farabi, Mannan Yahya alias Mannan Rahi, Abul Khaer Rashid Ahmed, Abul Hossain alias Abul Hussain, Harunur Rashid and Faisal Ahmed.

Among them, Farabi and Abul Khaer are now in jail, while Mannan, the only one among them who confessed before the

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Flowers blooming here and there in the summer, like this bunch of bright magenta bougainvillea on the busy Panthapath-Tejgaon Link Road in the capital, adds much needed colour to the drab greyish capital, and offers residents of the concrete jungle a rare refreshing sight.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



As Eid vacations kick in, the capital's Gabtoli was seen crammed with vehicles and pedestrians, as many were seen rushing to leave the city yesterday, despite the obstacles posed by travel restrictions. As inter-district public transport remains suspended, many are using informal means to reach home in a desperate attempt.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Allocate 20pc of nat'l budget for education

Speakers at webinar urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should allocate 20 percent of the next national budget (2021-22) for the education sector, to mitigate the learning loss of an estimated 4 crore students, and to tackle the predicted increase of dropout rate, demanded educationists and development workers, yesterday.

They made the demands at a webinar, titled "More and Better Financing for Education", organised by DARPAN and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), as part of celebrating the Global Action Week for Education (April 26-30).

They also demanded maximum and effective utilisation of the education budget and a special fund to bring children who have dropped out, back to the classroom, as many of them have been involved in income-generating work to help their families during the pandemic.

CAMPE deputy director KM Enamul Hoque in a presentation highlighted the

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Barishal's vaccine stock to run out in nine days: officials

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The stock of vaccines in Barishal division is running out quickly. According to Barishal Divisional Health Office, the vaccines would get used up in the next nine days only.

After that, they have confirmed that no new instruction has been issued to vaccinate the rest of the citizens there.

The divisional health office told The Daily Star that out of 4,29,823 doses of vaccine that were received in Barishal division, 2,50,300 were allocated for the first dose. A total of 1,79,500 were allocated for the second dose, out of which 1,50,200 have been used till Tuesday.

"We heard about new vaccines coming in. We have not decided whether they [Barishal residents] should be given the new vaccines. With the existing vaccine, we can continue for at least nine days," said Dr Basudeb Kumar Das, director of health at Barishal Divisional Health Office.

The decision over complications caused by expiration of vaccine will come from the central level, he said.

According to the divisional health office, an average of 3,000 people are receiving the vaccine every day currently, and till filing of this report, 14,951 people have been infected with Covid-19 in the division so far, of which 12,583 have recovered and 272 have died.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front called on all people to be vaccinated at the right time, free of charge, at a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall in Barishal city on Monday. They demanded that the vaccination programme be continued even if alternative sources of vaccine were used.