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Friday rain brings down mercury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Multiple regions of the country have been facing light to moderate rain since yesterday morning, triggering chilly weather conditions.

The rain, accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind, may continue in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal and Sylhet divisions in the next 24 hours till 9:00am Saturday, reported the met office.

According to a Bangladesh Meteorological Department forecast, a few places in Chattogram division and some other places across the country will face moderately heavy falls during this time.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country from midnight to morning, it said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged and day temperature may fall by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius over the country on Saturday, it added.

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A vehicle is carrying sand lifted from a wildlife sanctuary in Rangmahal in Cox's Bazar's Chakaria. A syndicate linked to the ruling party has also been taking away topsoil from arable land there, making the area look like a desert. Inset, the remaining of Dulahazara canal nearby being dredged. The sand and topsoil are sold for construction work.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF IBRAHIM KHALIL MAMUN



'Honourable retreat'

OLI AHAD

On February 21, 1952, a meeting of students began at Amtala (now Dhaka Medical College and Hospital). Gaziul Haque presided over the meeting. Shamsul Huq and Toaha tried to refrain students from breaking Section 144 referring to the decision of the state language action committee. However, students decided unanimously to violate Section 144.

The all-party committee met at the medical college hostel on the evening of February 21 to discuss the situation after the shooting. Among others Oli Ahad, Toaha, Abdul Matin, Golam Maula and Mohammad Sultan were present at the meeting.

Next day, a gayebi janaza (funeral prayer without the dead body) was held. I spoke at the event. After the funeral prayer, a procession was brought out from the medical college hostel compound. When the demonstrators reached in front of Dhaka High Court building, police started lathi-charge. A part of the procession went towards Nawabpur. Police opened fire on them near Bangshal.



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Know your deshi 'SUPERFOODS': HORITOKI

STAR HEALTH DESK

The dried ripe fruits of the "horitoki" tree, also known as chebulic myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*), have been used as an integral part of the subcontinent's traditional medicine for ages.

The medium to large tree is native to South Asia, southwest China, Malaysia and Vietnam.

It is one of the main ingredients of the popular Ayurvedic formulation "Triphala".

Horitoki is used as a bowel regulator and digestive aid. It is a mild laxative. Its powder is often used in treating chronic diarrhoea.

It can provide relief to patients of piles and constipation. Its consumption may increase appetite.

It is considered as a promoter of memory and it can also promote eyesight. It may regulate breathing in patients with asthma.

Its consumption lowers blood sugar levels and is helpful for diabetes patients. Horitoki may also

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Forestland at the mercy of powerful gangs

Despite environmental threats, local admin leased ecologically-sensitive land for sand extraction in Cox's Bazar

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

After damaging two canals by building dams and extracting their sand, a local syndicate linked to the ruling party is now tearing apart a wildlife sanctuary by scooping out sand from it and topsoil from adjacent arable land in Dulahazara union of Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar.

The two canals, leased out in January this year to a local influential group, are Paglir Chara canal and Dulahazara canal, both in Chakaria upazila of the ecologically sensitive and tourist town.

Ever since, the syndicate has been extracting sand and topsoil from the canals and the farmland using at least 50 dredgers, selling the extracted sand and soil for construction work.

According to locals, some 50 trucks carry the sand and soil every day to various construction sites. Each truck can carry 250 sqf of sand or soil, which can fetch up to Tk 8,500.

In the process, trees, shrubs, sun grass, herbs are being cleared for sand while various wildlife are losing their habitat in the area.

Fasiakhali forest is known as one of the habitats for critically endangered Asian

Elephants.

A DoE team estimates 4,000 square feet area of the two canals were damaged as of last year as a result of sand and soil extraction by previous lease holders. The DoE then fined eight people involved in the illegal act, before it was leased again by the district administration this year.

Affected locals whose arable land was reduced to ditches due to earth extraction filed a complaint with the district administration on February 1 seeking remedy.

Mainul Ehsan Chowdhury, an indirect victim of the earth extraction in Dulahazara union, said their ancestral arable land now runs the risk of collapsing as adjacent land turned into a pond due to scooping out of earth.

"Not only that, the forestland also fell victim to the syndicate. Around 20 acres of forestland have been damaged," he said.

Ibrahim Khalil Mamun, chief executive of Youth Environment Society (YES), a Cox's Bazar-based environmental organization, said the forestland and farmland belonging to locals were excavated 30 feet deep, turning an estimated 300 acres of arable land and forestland into large ponds.

"The nearby forest which is home to various species of wildlife has not been spared. But the authorities are paying little attention to it," he said.

Locals said current union parishad chairman Hasnul Islam Ador, former acting chairman of the same union parishad and also vice-president of Dulahazara union Awami League Saidul Islam Bablu and Nurul Amin Bhutto, a local Jatiya Party member, are leading the syndicate.

Hasnul denied that he was involved in the destruction of the environment.

He went on to claim he even informed the authorities concerned to take action against those involved.

Nurul Amin and Saidul did not receive the phone or respond to text messages requesting their comments.

Kawsar Uddin Kasir, Chakaria upazila unit general secretary of Jubo League, denied that they were lifting sand and damaging arable land and forest.

"Those who got lease in the past did the damage. We did not do it," he claimed and hung up the phone.

Anwar Hossen Sarkar, divisional forest officer of Cox's Bazar (north), said they

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OPPOSING NATO EXPANSION Putin secures Xi's backing

AFP, Moscow

Russia won China's backing in its showdown with the West over Ukraine yesterday, as Beijing agreed with Moscow that the US-led Nato military alliance should not admit new members.

The demand for Nato to stop expanding came after a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing in which saw Putin hail the two countries' "dignified relationship".

In a long strategy document, Moscow and Beijing hit out at what they said was Washington's destabilising role in global security.

"The parties oppose the further expansion of Nato and call on the North Atlantic Alliance to abandon the ideological approaches of the Cold War era," the document read, urging respect for the "sovereignty, security and interests of other countries."

The call echoes demands from Russia that have been at the centre of weeks of intensive negotiations between Moscow and the West, under the shadow of a potential conflict.

Western capitals have accused Russia of amassing some 100,000 troops on the borders of pro-Western Ukraine in preparation for an invasion and have vowed to impose devastating sanctions on Moscow if it attacks.

Putin's meeting with Xi -- hours ahead of the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games -- came after the US said it had evidence of a plan by Moscow to film a fake Ukrainian attack on Russians to justify an attack on its neighbour.

Deadly seven days 75pc of all Covid deaths since Jan 3 occurred in past week alone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Covid fatalities have risen alarmingly over the past week, which saw more than 75 percent of the total deaths from coronavirus in the country since January 3.

Covid cases have also gone up significantly in those seven days.

Over 2.5 lakh cases were reported in the last one month and 2.11 lakh of them were detected between January 28 and February 3, shows DGHS data.

The Directorate General of Health Services reported 434 coronavirus deaths since January 3. It said 340 Covid patients died in the past seven days alone.

Thirty people died in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Though the death rate increased, the number of daily cases dropped below the 10,000-mark after 12 days, the data shows.

Fresh 9,052 cases were reported yesterday.

The positivity rate decreased to 22.95 percent after 39,445 samples were tested in 24 hours from Thursday 8:00am, the DGHS said in a press release.

The daily cases had crossed the 10,000-mark on January 23 and remained above that till Thursday.

The positivity rate remained above 25pc for 16 days at a stretch. On Thursday, it was 25.86 percent.

Covid cases began to rise after December 10 following the detection of the Omicron variant in the country. A month after that, the government issued a fresh 11-point restrictions to curb the surge.

Another 6,282 patients have recovered from Covid-19, taking the total number of recoveries to 15,87,374 and the recovery rate to 86.04 percent.

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Hyginex spray

Instant hand sanitizer with essential oils

50 ml

BEACON Pharmaceuticals Limited



Holding banners, local children attend a human chain to save Tentultala playground in the capital's Kalabagan. Residents of the area say police want to construct a building of Kalabagan Police Station right on the field. The human chain was formed near the ground yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN