



Hats off to our green heroes!



P9 Lessons from a Palestine solidarity encampment



P7 Rahul Gandhi to contest India polls from family borough



P3 Water woes worsen in the hills

Lightning fatalities on the rise

Changing weather patterns key reason; govt's palm tree project to reduce casualties proves futile

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh has been witnessing a rise in casualties from lightning strikes mainly due to drastic shifts in weather patterns.

Most of the fatalities happen in the pre-monsoon and monsoon seasons, with the northern and northeastern regions being the most vulnerable areas, according to the "GIS-based spatial analysis for lightning scenario in Bangladesh".

The southern parts of the country exhibit lower susceptibility to such incidents, says the study published in Heliyon, a peer-reviewed journal.

From 2015 to 2022, lightning strikes left 2,142 people dead and 538 others injured in the country, adds the study published in March.

According to the UN, Bangladesh witnesses an average of 300 deaths by lightning every year. The US, which has almost double the population, sees fewer than 20 deaths a year caused by lightning strikes.

According to Bangladesh Disaster Forum, an NGO, at least 22 people have been killed by lightning so far this year. Eleven of them got killed on Thursday.

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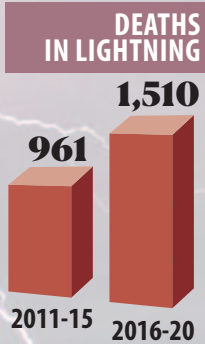
Paddy grown in haors of Kishoreganj and Sylhet has been brought to Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj, one of the largest paddy trade hubs in the country. The staple, sold for Tk 800 to Tk 850 per maund depending on quality, would be sent to rice mills by trucks. Millers buy 80,000 to 100,000 maunds of paddy every day. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

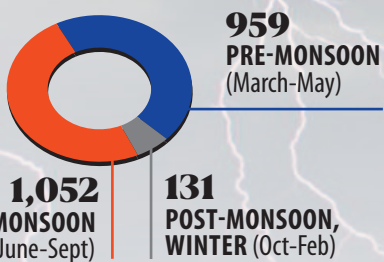
Lightning strikes kill **300** annually in Bangladesh: UN

Northern, northeastern regions most vulnerable

350 deaths in 2023



2,142 DEATHS DURING 2015-22



DISTRICTS WITH THE HIGHEST FATALITIES

- Sunamganj
- Habiganj
- Naogaon

DISTRICTS WITH THE LOWEST FATALITIES

- Pirojpur
- Bandarban
- Gopalganj

"The pattern and characteristics of the weather drastically changed in Bangladesh due to global warming, resulting in extreme climatic events like prolonged heatwaves, cold waves and shifts of seasons. That's why we see a rising trend in lightning."

M ABUL KALAM MALLIK, RESEARCHER

PRESS FREEDOM Bangladesh drops two notches on global index

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has slipped two notches on the World Press Freedom Index 2024, published yesterday by Reporters Without Borders on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day.

The country has been ranked 165th among 180 nations and its position in South Asia is only above Afghanistan.

Bangladesh's score dropped to 27.64 out of 100, a decrease from 35.31 last year when it was ranked 163rd.

In 2022, the country held the 162nd position with a score of 36.63, while in 2021, it was at 152nd place with a score of 50.29.

Nepal has now emerged as the leader in press freedom in South Asia, ranking 74th globally with a score of 60.52, followed by the Maldives at 106th with a score of 52.36.

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WOMEN MPS IN RESERVED SEATS How empowered are they really?

RASHIDUL HASAN

Fifty-two years ago, a provision was included in the constitution to reserve seats for women in parliament for a greater representation of women in the legislative body.

It began with 15 seats in Bangladesh's first parliament in 1972. Since then, the number increased several times and now stands at 50.

The distribution of reserved seats is arranged in proportion to the number of seats a party gets in parliamentary polls. Thus, the ruling party mainly benefits from it.

However, political analysts, constitution experts and women's rights leaders are skeptical about how much this provision has achieved so far in terms of political empowerment of women.

While eligibility and political commitment should be the primary criteria to be nominated for the reserved seats, unless those elected are given proper authority and the opportunity to share the responsibilities of a constituency, it will be impossible for them to prove their mettle, they said.

They added that direct elections for reserved seats would significantly empower women politically.

Moreover, they believe political parties must nominate more women for general seats in parliament.

They said becoming a reserved seat MP has now been reduced to a family affair with many top leaders bringing their relatives to parliament through this process.

Nominations are more like rewarding certain individuals for loyalty to or relationship with an

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"In many official events, people asked me why I was there, which was so humiliating for me ... I didn't get any cooperation from the local administration either due to my 'reserved seat' status. However, after being elected in a general seat, I don't face such problems anymore."

AMATUL KIBRIA KEYA CHOWDHURY, a lawmaker from Habiganj-1. She was a reserved seat MP in the 10th parliament.

RESERVED SEATS FOR WOMEN: A BRIEF HISTORY

1972 Provision included in the constitution to keep 15 seats reserved for women in Bangladesh's first parliament.

1978 Duration of reserved seats increased from 10 to 15 years and number seats increased from 15 to 30 by Military Ordinance.

2004 8th parliament extended the tenure of the reserved seats by another 10 years through a constitutional amendment and increased the number of seats to 45 from 30.

2009 Tenure extension by 10 years came into effect and number of seats increased by another 5.

2018 17th amendment unanimously passed in Parliament, increasing tenure of the 50 reserved seats for women to 25 years for 11th parliament.

All secondary edn institutions to stay shut in 25 dists today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All secondary schools, colleges, madrasas, and technical educational institutions in Dhaka and 24 other districts will remain closed today due to the ongoing heatwave.

In a press release yesterday, the education ministry said educational institutions in all districts of Khulna and Rajshahi divisions will remain open.

The educational institutions in Dhaka and Tangail districts of Dhaka division, Chandpur district of Chattogram, Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari, and Dinajpur districts of Rangpur division will also remain closed, said the release.

The announcement came after a fresh heat alert for 48 hours was issued by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department yesterday.

"The ongoing heatwave over Khulna, Rangpur, Rajshahi divisions, and the western parts of Dhaka division may continue for 48 hours commencing from 6:00pm today [yesterday]," meteorologist Md Omar Faruq said in the latest heatwave alert message.

Because of the increase in moisture

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Damaged carriages of the train that rammed a stationary oil tanker train at Joydebpur Junction in Gazipur yesterday. The driver of the commuter train and two crew members were injured. Luckily, there were no passengers on board. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTS 2,200 arrested on college campuses across the US

AGENCIES

Police have arrested nearly 2,200 people during pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses across the United States in recent weeks, sometimes using riot gear, tactical vehicles and flash-bang devices to clear tent encampments and occupied buildings.

One officer accidentally discharged his gun inside a Columbia University administration building while clearing out protesters camped inside, authorities said.

No one was injured by the officer's mistake late Tuesday inside Hamilton Hall on the Columbia campus, the NYPD said on Thursday.

In the pre-dawn hours on Thursday, helmeted police swarmed a tent city set up at the University of California in Los Angeles, using flash bangs and riot gear to push through lines of protesters who linked arms in a futile attempt to halt their advance.

Los Angeles police said on social media that 210 people were arrested at UCLA, and hundreds of arrests were made at other universities overnight and on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people protesting Israel's offensive in Gaza rallied at one of Australia's top universities yesterday demanding it divest from companies with ties to Israel, in a movement inspired by the student occupations sweeping US campuses.

Pro-Palestinian activists set up an encampment last week outside the sandstone main hall at University of Sydney, one of Australia's largest tertiary institutions.

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