



A day packed with fun... Singers of Chhayanaut welcome Nababarsha at Ramna Batamul; traditional horse carts ply in front of Bangla Academy; a girl dressed as snake charmer entertains spectators; drummers and men carrying traditional masks march through city roads yesterday to welcome the Bangla New Year.

Govt wavers on vessel law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The government is in a dilemma whether to repeal the Bangladesh Flag Protection Ordinance 1982 or to amend it to protect national flag carrier vessels without hampering export-import trade.

conflicting opinions.
One group suggested repeal of the ordinance which gives preference to national flag carriers while the other pleaded for its amendment to allow the local shipping sector flourish without hampering foreign trade.
The issue may be discussed at the next cabinet meeting.
Leading chamber bodies have also demanded scrapping of the ordinance for smooth export-import trade.
Commerce Secretary Sohail Ahmed, Shipping Secretary Julfiqar Haider Chowdhury, former shipping secretary

Ghulam Rahman, Director General of Shipping Commodore Ghulam Rabbani were among others present at the meeting.
The commerce secretary told the meeting that the overall trade would be affected following cancellation of the general waiver to foreign vessels.
On the other hand, shipping ministry officials said national flag carriers require some protection for development of the shipping sector.
Government policies should protect the local shipping sector without hampering foreign trade, they said.

The issue came on focus as the government recently cancelled the general waiver to foreign vessels following a Supreme Court verdict.
Leading chamber bodies and business circles reacted sharply to cancellation of the waiver and demanded immediate reversal of the government decision.
But local ship owners demanded strict enforcement of the ordinance for development of the shipping sector, saying it can earn more foreign currency than the garments sector if it is given some protection.

Goods worth Tk 26 lakh seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The customs at Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized undeclared gold bullion, medicines and laptop computers worth about Tk 26 lakh yesterday and Sunday.
A team of customs personnel stopped incoming passenger Mohammad Shahjalal at the green channel and seized 11 gold bars, several films and scarves worth about Tk 9.5 lakh from his luggage.
He arrived at Zia at about 8:01 am by an Emirates airliner from Dubai.
Shahjalal told the customs officials that he was not owner of the valuables. He carried the luggage of another passenger who promised to pay him ticket fare.
In another incident, customs personnel seized undeclared medicines worth about 14 lakh from Selim Ullah Shikder. He arrived by an Emirates airliner.

Khatunganj magnate abduction 3 businessmen arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Three businessmen were arrested yesterday in connection with the abduction of Hazi Mohammad Hanif, a non-Bengali business, for ransom from Khatunganj on Sunday.
They are C&F agent Samiuddin, Md Khairul Bashar alias Lulu and Md Belal.
They were sent to jail and will produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court today for remand, police said.
Protesting the abduction, the business community held a rally at Khatunganj yesterday and demanded his rescue by Wednesday. They threatened of an indefinite strike at Khatunganj, Asadgonj, Chaktai and Terri Bazar business hubs from Thursday.
Criminals abducted the 50 year-old proprietor of HH Brothers and Messers Amin Enterprize from Momin Road in Khatunganj at around 8pm and

demanding Tk one crore ransom for his release. They later reduced the ransom to Tk 90 lakh.
Police said, the arrested persons were negotiating release of the victim and might have information on whereabouts of the abducted person and activities of the kidnappers.
The businessmen community will submit a memorandum to the Chittagong Metropolitan Police at noon today and hold a press conference at Chittagong Press Club later on the day.
Meanwhile, the victim's family said, the abductors contacted them on phone at around 10pm on Sunday. They allowed Md Hanif to talk to his younger brother Md Harun over phone. During the three-minute talk, Hanif told his brother that he was being tortured, the family said.
It was learnt that the family would go for legal steps rather than submitting the criminals.

12 separatist rebels killed in Philippine fighting

AFP, Philippines
At least 12 Muslim separatist guerrillas have been killed and three soldiers wounded in fresh fighting in the southern Philippines, the military said yesterday.
About 50 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) attacked the main headquarters of the Army's 75th Infantry Battalion near the town of Tugaig with rocket propelled grenades, injuring three soldiers and triggering a gunbattle that lasted for several hours, Major General Generoso Senaga said.
Troops fired rounds of mortar into enemy positions, forcing the rebels to flee and leaving behind the bodies of 12 guerrillas, Senaga said.
The battalion headquarters sits inside a sprawling compound bordering several towns in the main southern island of Mindanao that had once been the MILF's main command post in the south, he said.
MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu admitted the rebels initiated the attack as part of its plan to recover rebel-held areas that had fallen to military hands. He denied however that the rebels suffered any casualties.
Peace talks between the government and the 12,500-strong MILF have been stalled after government launched a major offensive this year that left an estimated 200, mostly MILF fighters, killed on both sides.
MILF leaders have also been blamed for recent bomb attacks on a wharf and an airport in the southern city of Davao that killed 38 people and injured scores of others.
MILF leader Hashim Salamat, his top lieutenants, and other MILF

Saddam airbrushed

ROBERT FISK, THE INDEPENDENT, UK
The fresh black paint is everywhere. "Sadr City", it says, where once the name was "Saddam City". Outside the Aleppo Intermediate School for Girls, I actually come across a graffiti artist in action, painting over "Saddam" and again inserting "Sadr".
The Imam Bakr Sadr of Najaf was one of the first of Saddam's priestly victims. The governor of Najaf, I recall, leant towards me with special eagerness when I visited his city well over two decades ago. "Yes, we hanged him," he said with a smile. "And his sister." Legend has it -- all too real, I fear -- that they burnt off his beard with a cigarette lighter and hammered a nail into his eye before they hanged him.
So now this city of Shia Muslim hovels, of open sewers and burning rubbish, of piled-up loot -- buses seem to be a speciality -- this centre of opposition to the Baathist regime bears the murdered Imam's name and the hopes of all that he aspired to, not least an Islamic Republic. Thus, is it newly painted on another wall: "Islam and al-Sadr do not accept looters."
And who should be a better spokesman for such worthy sentiments than the Sheikh Aref Jassim es-Saed, imam of the as-Sadjad

Tigers go down fighting

HASAN MASOOD
Bangladesh finally ended their batting blues while going down to South Africa by 83 runs in their second match in the TVS Cup tri-nation series at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.
Chasing 295 runs for an unlikely victory, Khaled Mashud's men replied with a spirited 211 all out in 49.3 overs.
The score represented a major achievement for the home side, who had not crossed the 200-run barrier in their last 16 one-day matches. It was also the Tigers' highest total against the Proteas in five matches.
Bangladesh's previous sequence of scores against the South Africans were 133, 154/9, 151 and 108 respectively.
After being dismissed for 77 in the opening match against India on Friday, young opener Mohammad Ashraful and skipper Mahmud designed Bangladesh's remarkable turnaround.
Ashraful, the youngest Test centurion on debut, scored a patient 52 off 93 balls which included seven hits across the rope. Mahmud hammered a gutsy a run-a-ball 40 that featured six bound-

aries.
Besides, Alok Kapali contributed 27 runs while one-down Habibul Bashar returning to the side added 18 quick runs.
Together with Ashraful, the elegant Bashar added 58 valuable runs for second-wicket.
Former skipper Shaun Pollock and Allan Dawson shared seven wickets.
Earlier, the South African batsmen toyed with the lightweight Bangladesh attack to score 294 for three in 50 overs after electing to bat first.
The Proteas bounced back from Sunday's 153-run defeat to India, with their frontline batsmen all making good contributions.
Boeta Dippenaar led the way with 66 from 80 balls and Neil McKenzie hammered 55 in 65 balls with two fours and one six as the pair shared an unbeaten 105 runs for the fourth wicket.
Dippenaar's 16th one-day half-century included seven hits to the fence.
Opens Herschelle Gibbs and his captain Graeme Smith gave the South Africans the perfect start



South African batsman Boeta Dippenaar blocks the ball during his unbeaten 66 against Bangladesh yesterday.

Police vice behind harassment at Sangsad Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Lack of supervision and widespread corruption among police are the main reasons for the two incidents of violence that took place on the Sangsad Bhaban premises within ten days, senior police officials said.
The incidents led to the pullout of law-enforcers from the Sangsad Bhaban area, suspension of seven policemen and arrest of the officer-in-charge of the Tejgaon Police Station.
Locals allege that the area, one of the breathing spots of the townspeople, now bristles with predators blessed by police.
They say they lodged a series of verbal complaints with police, but the law-enforcers sat on their hands, emboldening the criminals.
The first incident on the Sangsad Bhaban premises took place on April 1 when police went on frenzy and beat up two people indiscriminately.
Policemen clad in lungi and armed with wooden sticks swooped on a young pair a youth and his cousin -- 'suspecting them as muggers', striking terror

into other visitors.
Mahbulul Kabir, an NGO activist who was present on the scene along with his wife and two-year-old daughter, came forward to the rescue of the pair. But the 'wild policemen' started beating him to the protest of hundreds of visitors.
They dragged Kabir to the Sanshad Bhaban police box, grappled him on the floor and kicked him savagely in front of his wife and child. The victims tried to draw the attention of Inspector Wahab, in-charge of the post, but he ignored their plea.
The injured young man and Kabir were confined in the police box till 11:00 p.m. and did not give them any treatment.
Locals allege that the policemen shelter muggers, sex-workers and their pimps for financial gains. "It is one of the breathing spots in the city, but people fear to visit it for lack of security," said a visitor.
Two separate cases were filed with Tejgaon police. The victims and their family members met Speaker

PM exchanges Nababarsha greetings with president

BSS, Dhaka
Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday met President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban and exchanged New Year's greetings.
Khaleda presented the president and his wife Dr Anwara Begum some books as a gesture of greetings.
The prime minister also apprised the president of the outcome of her recent visits to some Asian countries.
Iajuddin appreciated Khaleda for her diplomatic successes during the visits.
State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Selima Rahman and Political Secretary to Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury were present.

Human genetic blueprint complete

REUTERS, London
Scientists have completed the finished sequence of the human genome, or genetic blueprint of life, which holds the keys to transforming medicine and understanding disease.
Less than three years after finishing the working draft of the three billion letters that make up human DNA and two years earlier than expected, an international consortium of scientists said yesterday the set of instructions on how humans develop and function is done.
"We put out the draft sequence as a way of getting it out to scientists as quickly as we could. It gives them

something to work with and get going, but the aim was always to generate a reference sequence for the human genome," Dr Jane Rogers, head of sequencing at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, said.
"It's a bit like moving on from a first attempt demo music tape to a classic CD."
The Human Genome Project has already aided scientists in discovering a mutation that causes a deadly type of skin cancer and accelerated the search for genes involved in diabetes, leukemia and childhood eczema.
The completed sequence will help scientists to identify the 25,000-30,000 genes in humans, including those

involved in complex diseases such as cancer and diabetes.
Researchers from 120 countries have downloaded information which has been freely available on the Internet since the rough draft was announced in June 2000.
Exciting chapters
"We shouldn't expect immediate major breakthroughs but there is no doubt we have embarked on one of the most exciting chapters of the book of life," Professor Allan Bradley, director of the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, said in a statement.
The Institute sequenced nearly one-third of the genome.

Scientists in the United States, France, Germany, Japan and China have also worked on the publicly-funded Human Genome Project.
The human genome has already revealed some of its secrets. There are far fewer genes than scientists had expected and proteins, which build tissues and regulate the body's function, are much more complex than they thought.
"The nematode worm has about 17,000 genes, so we haven't really got very many more than a small worm. But we manage to construct a great variety of proteins from those genes. Understanding how that happens is the

next challenge," Rogers said.
The finished sequence is expected to spark a boom in genomic research in the pharmaceutical industry and to underpin biomedical research in the coming decades.
New treatments, customized drugs to individual genetic profiles and earlier diagnosis of disease are expected to be among the initial benefits of the human genome sequencing.
Scientists have already identified more than 1.4 million SNPs, single nucleotide polymorphisms -- variations in the three billion letters of the human genetic code.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
April 15		6-20 pm
April 16	5-38 am	

Prayer Timings		
April 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-26	6-32
Esha	7-35	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation