

Dhaka Day by Day

When Lack of Patronage is the Fly in the Ointment

by Fayza Haq

Ustad Matiul Khan, who played 'Ijem Behag' at the Goethe Institut, Dhaka, recently, had this to say about the state of 'Uchango Shangeet' in Bangladesh. "I frankly feel that it is not being practised, taught or appreciated adequately. There is talent but a dearth of qualified teachers. There is also a shortage of eager and dedicated students. I myself have created three to four students who play and teach abroad. Safat is there in America, Munni is in Canada, while Promila is in Australia. They have begun institutes of their own abroad. Meanwhile, Shireen Ahmed, Tawheed, Aditi Jamili do a good job of handling eastern classical music in Bangladesh."

Dwelling on why 'Uchango Shangeet' is not popular in Bangladesh, the 'ustad' said, "We are not getting the necessary encouragement, I myself do not discourage or dislike any other 'Shangeet' like 'Rabindra Shangeet' or 'Nazrul Geet' or even folk songs. The basics of music in 'Uchango Shangeet'. No song can be created without the necessary 'sa-re-ga-ma,' which goes ultimately to form 'Uchango Shangeet'. Classical eastern music is not popular in Bangladesh, because Bangladesh radio, TV, the 'Shilpkala Academy' and the 'Bangla Academy' have not encouraged it or taken an initiative to promote it."

When asked if 'Uchango Shangeet' was not popular in Bangladesh because the basic language often used in it was not Bangla, the 'ustad' replied, "The composition can be done in any part of the Subcontinent. I will not say that there are not listeners of 'Uchango Shangeet' in Bangladesh. The enthusiasts who are there, practise and listen well. The followers, mind you, are of a 'mixed nature' by which I mean that some may not be great enthusiasts, after all, and may like it only marginally. You heard me perform at the Goethe Institut. I do not claim to be, the best, while there might be even worse players than me."

The 'ustad' continued, "Ustad Abid Hussain Khan, Khalid Hussain Khurshid, Yasin, Shomir Rai and such players, handle the 'sitar' well with care and mastery. Basically, there is not a good standard of 'Uchango Shangeet' due to lack of adequate teachers. The good players, as you know, have left for India e.g. Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, as early as in 1931. I myself was in Calcutta with my father and learnt from him for ten years. I then took admission in the fourth year in the 'Ali Akbar Khan College of Music', for completing six years' course. Having completed my studies, I came to Dhaka and worked for the radio and TV in '58. I have recently retired from Bangladesh radio, and the TV invites me only infrequently, say twice a year. I can only conjecture that TV does not encourage 'Uchango Shangeet' due to lack of interest of the viewers."



Ustad Matiul Khan playing at the Goethe-Institut recently. Photo: R K Paul

have practised ten hours a day."

Discussing his following in Dhaka, the 'ustad' said, "I have some students, as I mentioned like Aditi Jamili, Shireen Ahmed, Col. Suriya Rahman (of CMH), and I have created them within a short period of two to three years. I believe that no other 'ustad' in Bangladesh has achieved as much in so short a time."

When asked about how he made a living, he 'ustad' replied, "I get Tk 10,000 a month, and I have a house of my own near Rampur. I have an only son, Firdaus Arif Khan, who, incidentally plays the 'sitar' too. I have a group of my own with 25 students in the institution called 'Dhatabat' based on the note 'Dha'. I have made two cassettes, one in London, for which I was paid £500 years ago, and now I have another produced in Dhaka whose sale depends largely on foreign patrons. This contains not only classical but 'thumri', folk and modern music, keeping the basic 'raags' in mind."

The 'ustad' has encouragement from his wife, Zohra Khanum, the daughter of Ustad Khadim Hussain, and she plays the 'sitar' too.

"I hope that classical eastern music will not only exist but flourish in Bangladesh. With adequate patronage, the enthusiasts and patrons will increase. The basic notes and the ten basic 'raags' should be mastered, dealing with the simple ones like 'Emon', 'Kaft', 'Jainpuri' and 'Bilavali', at the outset," he concluded.

It was an eye-opener to talk to the self-effacing and soft-spoken 'ustad', while one longs for more performances like the one that he recently presented, for the sake of the promotion of classical music in Bangladesh.

BUET undertakes conservation study on Dhaka city

Prof. M. Shahjahan, Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) yesterday underscored the need for architectural conservation to bridge the present with the past and also for ensuring a better environment, reports BSS.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of a one-day seminar on "Architectural Conservation" here. Organised by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB), it was presided over by Prof. A. K. M. Nurul Islam, president of the ASB.

Prof. Shahjahan informed that a project on "Conservation study on Dhaka city and its historical buildings and areas" is going on in full swing by a number of teachers of Architecture Department of the BUET.

Prof. Abu H. Imamuddin, head of the Architecture Department, Prof. Hasna Begum, General Secretary and Dr. Shrifuddin Ahmed, Joint Secretary of ASB spoke on the occasion.

Architect Shah Alam Jahiruddin, Chief Architect of PWD, Prof. M. M. Ali, Prof. Muntasir Mamoon, among others, presented their papers on the seminar.

IUB classes begin

Independent University Bangladesh (IUB), yesterday started classes at its temporary campus in Baridhara yesterday, reports BSS.

A private university, IUB is offering 4 years bachelor of science degrees in business administration, computer science and environmental management and several other fields.

The course offers graduates high prospects of employment, new business and higher study, both at home and abroad.

CPB leader dead

By Staff Correspondent

Ashutosh Bharadwaj, a veteran leader of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), died in the small hours of yesterday at his residence at Rajbari district. He was 82.

Born in Kotalipara of Pogaiganj, Ashutosh started his political activities in the Anushilan Party, an underground terrorist group, during his school life.

Ashutosh, who was the President of CPB's Rajbari unit till his death, had to undergo imprisonment several times for political activities.

Meanwhile, the Presidium of CPB in a statement Saturday condoled the death of Ashutosh and expressed sympathy to the members of his bereaved family. The party will hold a condolence meeting on April 20 at 4 pm at its central office at Purana Paltan to pay tribute to the late leader.

The visiting Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, had a meeting with his Saudi counterpart Sheikh Faisal Al-Hegelani at his office in Riyadh yesterday, according to a report received here, says BSS.

The Saudi minister was assisted by adviser to the minister, Director General, Ministry of Health and other senior officials of his ministry.

The Bangladesh minister was assisted by Bangladesh Ambassador Abdul Momen Chowdhury, members of his entourage and senior embassy officials.

During the meeting, the Saudi Health Minister appreciated the contribution and role by Bangladesh medical personnel at various levels and in different hospitals of the Kingdom. He apprised the Bangladesh Minister about the services rendered by the government custodian of two holy mosques to all residents and explained the ambitious scheme on primary health care under which two thousand units will be set up all-over the Kingdom.

He indicated that services of required medical personnel from Bangladesh at various levels including multipurpose medical assistance could be of significant importance. Both sides agreed to examine this proposal in detail.

Weather

Day temperature may rise

By Staff Correspondent

Weather forecast for the next 24 hours commencing 6:00 am today (Sunday) says, rain or thunder shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur over the regions of Mymensingh, Tangail, Comilla and Sylhet while weather is likely to remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country.

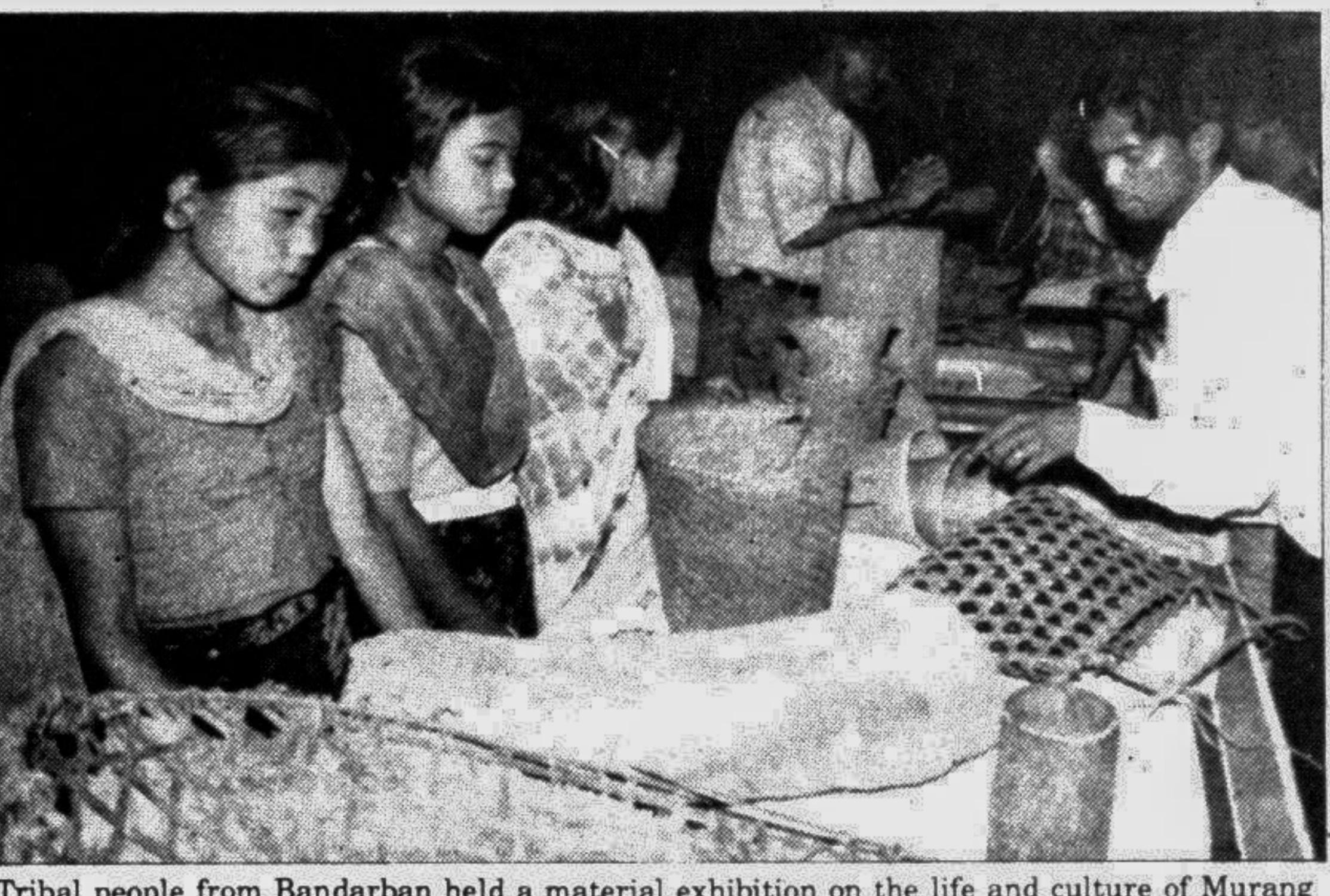
The Met office forecasts, day temperature may rise by one to two degree Celsius over the country.

The maximum temperature of the country recorded yesterday (Saturday) of 37.2 degree Celsius was reported from Sylhet and the minimum of 20.4 degree was reported from both Srimangal and Sylhet.

The sun sets today at 6:21 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:34 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some of the major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	Max 35.8 Min 23.2	9 am 82 6 pm 35
Chittagong	31.0 21.1	90 78
Rajshahi	34.8 23.2	64 28
Khulna	36.2 23.2	75 39
Bardia	34.0 20.6	85 75
Cox's Bazar	31.5 23.0	73 78
Sylhet	30.0 20.4	100 70
Dinajpur	33.4 22.8	82 49



Tribal people from Bandarban held a material exhibition on the life and culture of Murang at the TSC in the city yesterday.

Star photo

Jute officers submit memo to Biswas

A 25-member delegation of the Jute Industries Officers Association called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday and submitted a memorandum containing various problems facing the jute industries of the country, reports BSS.

President Biswas said the government was aware of the situation and making all out efforts for its improvement.

He advised the officials to work harder with utmost sincerity and help the government in improving the situation to make jute an economically viable sector.

Jute has been facing stiff competition with synthetics and other artificial fibre, the President told the officers.

Sircar meets UNESCO DG in Turkey

Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, now leading a Bangladesh delegation to the international congress on population education and development being held in the Turkish capital, had an exclusive meeting with Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor Friday, according to a message received here, reports BSS.

He discussed matters relating to UNESCO assistance to Bangladesh in promotion of education.

The Education Minister during the discussion focussed on the possible areas where, UNESCO-assistance could be of much benefit in development of education in Bangladesh.

BIT exam date shifted

CHITTAGONG, Apr 17: All semester examinations and the fourth year final examination of Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT) here will now be held from May 9 instead of April 18, reports BSS.

OBITUARY

Dr. Akhlaqur Rahman (72),

Son of Late Dr. Abdur Rahman of VIII, Putna,

Thana-Rupganj, Dist. Dhaka and the eldest son-in-law of Late Khan Bahadur Abdul Khaleque: died on 16th April 1993 at Sarwardi Hospital (Innailia) ...

Rajeun.) He was buried at Banani Graveyard the same day.

He served as the house physician of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and also held the position of Civil Surgeon, Comilla. He retired as the Deputy Director, Institute of Public Health Dhaka. He left behind his wife, one daughter two sons and innumerable admirers.

All his friends, colleagues, relatives are requested to attend his Qul-khwani on 19th April (Monday) after Asar prayer at his Science Laboratory residence.



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