

Dhaka Day by Day

Hassan Turns Copy of a Masterpiece into an Art Exhibit

by Nancy Wong



Aminul Hassan standing before his copy of Rembrandt's "Nightwatch"— Star photo

Visitors to the "Rembrandt and Amsterdam" exhibition that ends tomorrow at the National Museum must have gazed in wonder at the great master's work, "The Nightwatch" which occupied the place of honour, right in front of the main hall. They may be forgiven if they had thought for a moment that the Royal Netherlands Embassy had transported it all the way from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam for the occasion. Arguably Rembrandt's most acclaimed masterpiece, "The Nightwatch" is rated as one of the world's top ten best paintings of all time.

However, further enquiry reveals that it is not the original, but a very close copy of the magnificent work of art. Who had the audacity to imitate a painting so complex in composition (with 22 life size figures of that period's high society, fine details and above all Rembrandt's famous interaction of light and shade technique) and so daring in its scope of large-scale narration? Many asked if it was done by an accomplished artist, or perhaps an expatriate Dutch eager to show off his country's cultural heritage.

Wrong — on both counts. The life-size copy is executed by a Bangladeshi, Aminul Hassan, who has confessed to The Daily Star: "I have no pretensions of being an artist". He is in fact, an engineer with the Department of Telegraph and Telephone at Gazipur, who fell in love with the renowned Dutch masters of the 17th century and was specially drawn to Rembrandt's paintings, in particular to the "Night Watch". Unlike others who make a living out of copying famous works and try to pass them off as "originals" — known in the art world as "forgers", Hassan's passion for the artist's work and his honesty is indisputable — as vouched for by his art lecturer and the country's leading dramatist, Sayeed Ahmad.

As a way of relaxation, Hassan attended a course in western art at the Shilpakala Academy in 1987. Little did he know then what hard work this would eventually mean for him! A year later, he spent three months in Belgium, attending an engineering course. It was during this period he had the opportunity of visiting Amsterdam where he ventured to the Rijksmuseum. There, he saw "The Nightwatch" and his artistic fate was sealed: "The moment I saw that great masterpiece, I was dying to reproduce it", so captivated was he.

Hassan knew very well that the task he had set himself was a formidable one and he set a bout it painstakingly and meticulously by first doing extensive research on the subject, to the

extent of studying each individual figure in the painting, as they were all historical personages who had each paid Rembrandt to include herself/himself in the picture. He delved long and deep into what had gradually become an obsession — to reproduce the "love of his life". He carefully studied the delicate brushwork of this massive tableau together with the colour mixing, as part of the painting's beauty lay in the rich contrast of red and yellow and most importantly, the play of light and shade which was Rembrandt's hallmark.

At the end of hundreds of man-hours and countless sleepless nights trying to figure out how to execute the huge task he had given himself, Hassan's project was finally completed. Its enormous size meant that special arrangements had to be made to house it. This problem was solved by the help of a well-wisher who arranged for him to keep the painting in between two buildings, with a roof over the exposed part of protect it from the elements. At one stage, he slept there for many nights. Hassan used the best quality canvas and oil paints available and spared no cost or pains for the project of his life.

When he felt it was ready, he got in touch with his mentor, Sayeed Ahmad, who was simply bowled over at the thought that a Bangladeshi, and not an artist by profession, would dream of an undertaking of such magnitude. As Ahmad told The Daily Star: "Art lovers have seen it in Amsterdam, but to see it in Dhaka, is beyond one's imagination. This painting will be of great educational value to young people here who would not normally have a chance to go to Amsterdam". So excited was he that he contacted the Royal Netherlands Ambassador, Henricus Gajentaan, who was initially curious as to how a Bangladeshi engineer could accomplish such a "dream". Hence, they took off in a group to view this attempt. According to Ahmad, all of them were astounded and "it was certainly a breathtaking experience". Hassan's dream was fulfilled and he felt exhilarated at their reaction.

Normally a quiet, modest young man of few words, Hassan has no problem with words and his face lights up when he speaks of the object of his admiration, Rembrandt and art in general. This prompted this writer to remark that he has taken up the wrong profession! At this, he laughingly replies, "It's a matter of *dal bhar*". He would like to do similar projects if sponsorship is forthcoming — as he had dug a big hole in his savings for this one. But as viewers will most definitely agree "It was well worth it".

Keep up tradition of service to humanity: Biswas

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday called for keeping up the tradition of service to suffering humanity through cooperative efforts, reports BSS.

In a message on the eve of the celebration of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, at both the national and international levels, the President expressed the hope that this year's slogan 'Dignity for All' will be reflected all through the dynamic programme of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.

President Biswas said that he felt particularly happy that the 165th anniversary of birth of Henry Dunant, the founder of the International Red Cross Society is being simultaneously celebrated with due respect worldwide.

In today's world, he said, humanity was virtually continuously feeling helpless due to disasters.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, he said, was extending its hand of cooperation to the distressed and the helpless as part of its uninterrupted service to the suffering humanity.

The contributions of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society are gradually getting further strengthened through friendship, cooperation and the efforts to revive peace and fraternity among all the nations of the world, he said.

JU Masters exams postponed

By JU correspondent

The Jahangirnagar University authorities have postponed the Masters examinations of the 1990-91 academic session.

Prior to the postponement, 19 examinees belonging to Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) declined to submit their examination forms protesting the punitive measures against two of their fellow activists.

According to sources, this refusal reportedly pressurised the authority to defer the examination.

The authorities, when contacted, however, held the prevailing campus situation responsible for the postponement.

Earlier, following the expulsion of two students, the JU normal situation was hampered as activists of JCD have been demanding withdrawal of punishment by blasting crackers; ransacking rooms of the teachers and holding syndicate members hostage.

Md. Moazzem Hossain, Organising Secretary of JCD, JU unit, and SM Abu Yousuf were expelled from the university for one year for their misdemeanour with a teacher, on November 28 last.

But the same teacher assaulted the JU Vice Chancellor on April 26 demanding omission of two candidates' name from the professorship list.

Dr Golam Hossain, an associate Professor of the Government and Politics Department was a candidate for the post of professor.

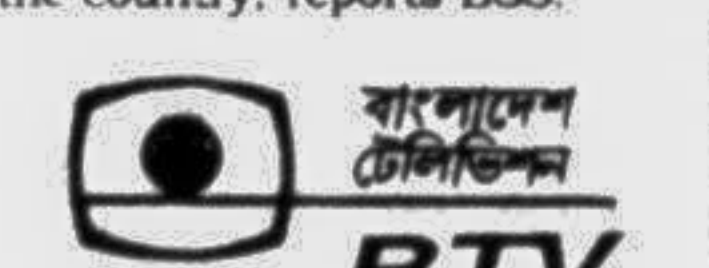
The university Syndicate disciplined the teacher by temporarily suspending him from the university and relieving him of other academic duties.

Following this incident, JCD had resurfaced their expulsion issue and demanded immediate withdrawal of the punitive decision, campus sources said.

Another source, however, opined that this movement would have direct impact on the JUCSU election to be held on June this year.

Govt firm to build up planned communication network: Mannan

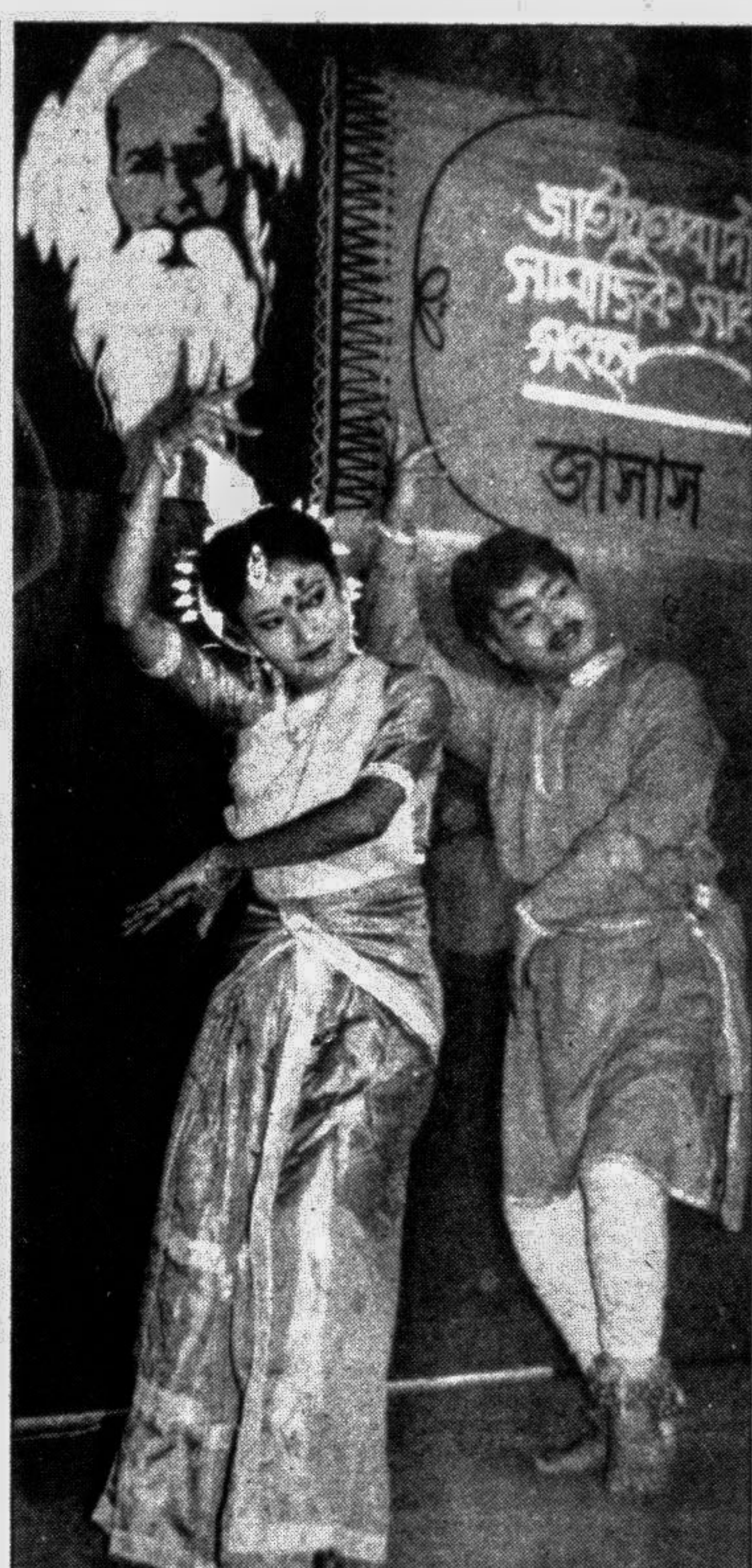
State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof M A Mannan yesterday said that in the light of implementing 19-point programmes of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, the present BNP government was firm to build up a strong infrastructure through creating a comprehensive and planned communication network throughout the country, reports BSS.



Khaleque's poetry book published

A collection of revolutionary poems of poet Muhammed Abdul Khaleque titled Biplabi Agune Saitry Ato Jaluk (Let the truth glow in the fire of revolution) has been published recently, reports UNB.

Poet Muhammed Abdul Khaleque was awarded the International Man of the Year 1992-93 from England for his works.



JASASS organised a cultural function to mark Tagore's birthday at the National Museum auditorium yesterday. —Star photo

Red Crescent Day observed

The World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day was observed in Bangladesh yesterday as elsewhere in 157 countries around the globe in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

All the units of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society at the district level observed the Day to pay homage to the founder of the movement Jean Henri Dunant whose birthday May 8 is observed as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.

The theme of the day this year was "Dignity for all" and the programmes reflected the slogan.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has planned a four-day programme beginning with a cultural competition among the youth members of the Society, distribution of gifts among child patients in the Shishu Hospital and distribution of prizes among the winners of the youth competitions.

Chairman of the Society Syed Shahidul Haque Jamal, MP, inaugurated the programme with the hoisting of flags at the Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital premises. This was followed by a route march by the youth members of the BDRCS from the Shishu Park to the Jatya Press Club.

In the evening the Youth Red Crescent members held a cultural function at the BA Siddiqui Auditorium of the

Nursing School attached to the Holy Family Hospital. The Chairman of the BDRCS was the chief guest. It was attended, among others, by members of the managing board of the BDRCS, representatives of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and officers of the Society.

An elaborate programme has been planned in Rajshahi city in observance of the World Red Crescent and Red Cross Day and the 165th birth day of Jean Henry Dunant, founder of Red Cross.

The main slogan of the day is "dignity for all".

The day's programme included hoisting of national and Red Crescent flag at Rajshahi City Corporation campus, rally, procession, blood donation and distribution of relief to children ward of hospital and destitutes.

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day was observed here today through various programmes.

Chittagong City unit of the Juba Red Crescent distributed food stuffs among children and donated blood at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Peace procession, discussion and cultural functions were held on the occasion at the Red Cross Maternity Hospital at Andarkilla.

'Tagore's works inspired us during Liberation War'

By Staff Correspondent

The 132nd birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore was observed in various parts of the country yesterday.

Shazadpur Kutcharybari Saturday.

Tagore, who drew the world's attention to Bangla literature by winning the Nobel Prize for Literature and enriched the language with his versatile genius, was born on this day in 1861 in Jorashanko, West Bengal.

Commerce Minister MK Anwar inaugurated the function as chief guest at 4:30 pm. Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj AZM Shafiqul Islam presided over the inaugural ceremony of the Rabindra Jayanti.

In the capital, the Lalan Parishad, a cultural organisation, held a discussion at its office. The programme, presided over by Dr Khandker Reyazul Haq, was participated among others by Md Abdur Rouf, NAM Iftekhar Rauf, Syed Obaidul Dayan and others.

Highlights of the day's programmes were recitations, cultural function and plays authored by the celebrated poet and staged by different cultural groups of Shazadpur.

Meanwhile, Irrigation Minister Majid-ul Haq inaugurated a three-day festival in Kuthbari, Kushtia, a country resort where the poet often retired. State Minister for Civil Aviation Abdul Mannan presided over the function.

The Minister went round the fair organised on the occasion and inspected the Kutcharybari, a riverside bungalow where Tagore used to often retire.

The Irrigation Minister said that Kuthbari where Tagore passed part of his creative life, bears special historical significance.

Today's programme will start at 10 am with a discussion on the life and works of Tagore. A cultural show will be staged in the afternoon by the Rim Thim Kanchikachar Mela of Ullapara thana.

The poems, songs and other literary works of Tagore inspired us during the War of Liberation and other democratic movements and gave us the strength to fight tyranny," Majid-ul Haq said.

The Strajganj Shilpakala Academy will hold a session of recitations, songs, dances and drama at 4 pm.

The minister also inaugurated a Rabindra-fair.

Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam said yesterday that the great poet Rabindranath Tagore occupied an impartial position in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh.

Garment workers urged to work hard

A 13 member delegation of Jatiyatabadi Garments Sramik Dal called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban Saturday, reports BSS.

Led by its President M Younus Talukder, the members of the delegation put forward some of their demands including their fixed minimum monthly salary and free training facilities.

Talking to them President Biswas observed the garment industry was major export earning sector and advised them to work hard with utmost sincerity and dedication, so that the export earning could be further augmented during the coming years. He assured them that he would advise the relevant authorities to look into their demands.

He was speaking at a discussion on the occasion of the 132nd birth anniversary of the great poet here.

Organised by Bangladesh Shishu Academy, the function was also addressed by Dr Abul Kalam Monjur Morshed, Chairman of Shishu Academy, Dr Kazi Anowara Mansur and Director of the academy Golam Kibria.

The Minister said poet Rabindranath reached the hearts of the common masses through his unparalleled literary works.

He pointed out that Rabindranath would have been grieved to see the present day narrow river Padma which was once mighty during his journey from Kushtia to Shilaidah by boat.

Islam stressed the need for advancement of our children in the path of truth and justice, which poet Rabindranath highlighted in his writings.

Dr Abul Kalam Monjur Morshed said Rabindranath Tagore was our pride.

He said the children could find themselves in innumerable writings of the poet.

Later, child artists of the academy rendered songs and poems of Tagore.



Shaikhul Hadith Maulana Azrul Haq addressing a gathering in front of the Dhaka Central Jail on his release yesterday. — Star photo

Boatman drowns in Buriganga

A boatman drowned in the Buriganga on Friday when a launch dashed his boat near Sadarghat terminal, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Jalaluddin, 45, of Swarupkathi thana in Barisal district.

Witnesses said Jalaluddin fell into the river when a launch, MV Karnaphul, hit his boat near where several passengers were boarding another launch.

The body was sent to Mitford Hospital for autopsy and a case was filed with Keraniganj thana.

In a separate incident on Friday, an unknown person, aged about 40, was electrocuted at Abdullapur village in Keraniganj thana near the Mawa road.

Draft guideline to promote tourism

A draft guideline has been formulated for promoting tourism in the country in conformity with the national tourism policy, reports BSS.

The guideline was adopted after a detailed discussion at a meeting of the sub-committee of the National Tourism Advisory Committee, held in Dhaka, yesterday with its convener M A Jannah in the chair.

Chairman of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Bazul Ghani Patwari and other members of the sub-committee were present.

The draft guideline, which would be submitted to the National Tourism Advisory Committee for confirmation, has set some criteria for encouraging competition among travel agents and tour operators.

Taka 2,709.35 cr earned from remittances

Bangladesh sent 1,58,855 workers abroad and earned Tk 2,709.35 crore from remittances in the first nine months of the current fiscal year (1992-93), reports UNB.

A total of Tk 2,364.40 crore was earned as remittances and 1,43,058 people were sent abroad with jobs during the corresponding period of the last fiscal (1991-92).

This was disclosed at the 10th meeting of Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Labour and Manpower held at Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with Labour Minister Abdur Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

The meeting also discussed the planned 72-hour nationwide strike of SKOP from May 11.

Committee members Whip Ashraf Hossain, Begum Khaleda Rabbani, Mirza Moraduzzaman, Md Helaluzzaman Talukdar, Lalul of BNP, Vice-principal Abdus Saheed of Awami League, Md Mozhar Hossain of CPB and Labour Secretary Dr Shah Mohammad Farid and other high officials were present at the meeting.

Khaleque's poetry book published

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Poet Muhammed Abdul Khaleque was awarded the International Man of the Year 1992-93 from England for his works.

Weather

Rain, gusty wind likely

By Staff Correspondent

Weather forecast for the next 24 hours commencing 6 am today (Sunday) says, rain or thundershower accompanied by gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at many places over the divisions of Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka and at one or two places over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over the country.

The Met office forecasts, day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The Met office adds, the prevailing wet spell is likely to continue for the next 3 to 4 days.

The maximum temperature of the country recorded yesterday (Saturday) of 35.1 degree Celsius was reported from Chuadanga and the minimum of 19.0 degree was reported from Bogra and Rangamat.

The chief amounts of rainfall recorded in 12 hours from 6 am to 6 pm yesterday across the country were Comilla 8 mm, Bogra 7 mm, and Dhaka, Chandpur, Jessore and Ishwardi recorded trace.

The sun sets today 6.31 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.19 am. The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity of some of the major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/ towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	29.0	19.8	82	77
Chittagong	32.6	20.6	80	76
Rajshahi	29.8	21.5	81	83
Khulna	33.0	20.5	83	89
Barisal	31.0	20.0	80	90
Cox's Bazar	32.7	21.0	78	73
Sylhet	28.0	21.8	88	78
Dinajpur	26.5	21.0	91	79

BTV Sunday

- 5:20 Opening announcement
- 5:25 Al-Ghurra Programme summary
- 5:30 Cartoon Film: The Secrets of Drawing
- 5:30 Sports programme: Cricket
- 5:40 Meyeeder Jannya
- 6:20 Open University
- 6:40 Rabindra Sangcet
- 7:20 News in Bangla
- 8:00 Natyalekhiya: Antarsale Aami
- 8:30 Film show: The Wizard
- 9:00 News in English
- 10:30 Chitryacharita
- 11:30 Khabar/The News
- 11:40 Tomorrow's programme summary
- 11:45 Closing

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bangladesh seeks applications from female and male Bangladeshi nationals for the post of **National Programme Officer**. Broad responsibilities include assessment of sector strategy/policies and programmes, identification, formulation, appraisal, monitoring, support and evaluation of technical cooperation programmes and projects in a wide range of economic sectors.

Salary ranges from Tk.308,490 - 431,050 net per annum plus children allowance and other admissible benefits as per UN rules.

Qualifications
Minimum of a Master's degree, preferably in the Social Sciences, Management, Public or Business Administration. A minimum of two years of professional experience is desirable in the field of development with adequate knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic and other relevant characteristics of Bangladesh as well as an understanding of the workings of the Government. Excellent English writing and analytical skills essential. Fluency in spoken and written English and Bangla required. Computer skills desirable. Proven expertise in working with cross cultural teams and skill in producing team documents also desirable. Candidates who applied earlier this year for the post of economist should not re-apply. Short listed candidates for that post will also be considered for this post.

Applications marked confidential, and including a curriculum vitae (no copies of references certificates or professional papers should be submitted at this time) should be sent to the Personnel Services Section, UNDP, PO Box 224, Dhaka-1000 by 27 May 1993.

Female applicants are particularly encouraged.