

Dhaka Day by Day

Exploring Past through Theatre

by Raffat Binte Rashid

A man's thoughts, expressions and understandings bring out only his inner entity. At any level of consciousness, he displays the childhood lessons learned from his surroundings or the circumstances that influenced him in the formative period of life.

In fact man responds theatrically to his environment, his every expression is an image of the environment in which he grows up or is cultured. A child growing up in a particular space has the psychology of that space. And this very idea is Ashish Khandker's new formula of theatre and work.

Ashish Khandker, an actor, playwright and a director, is a graduate from the National School of Drama, New Delhi, in 1991.

Basically a freelancer, he is now experimenting with new forms of theatre. Helped by his insights and findings he launched a different line of work — *Paribesh Theatre*.

Paribesh Theatre is different from Richard Schkneer's environment theatre, Khandker explains his own discovery.

In environment theatre, the stage can be any place, and the place or space chosen will be changed suiting to the time and culture of the script. For example, Hamlet can be staged anywhere, with spectators sitting all around the stage. But this space will be changed to fit in towers and castles as the play demands.

"But my work or *Paribesh Theatre* is different from this theory," he claims.

"Initially I followed Schkneer but now I have worked out my own formula," he continues.

The space will talk about its own story, the characters will bring life into it and the situations will turn the play real, he believes. The open space is his stage and the actors in it are his set, the space creates each character, he feels.

"For a particular play a specific space is chosen and not changing its scenic principles or space language the performance takes place."

Khandker's first requirement is to see whether the place would have history or space language that brings about an artistic stimulation. For nearly three to three and half months, basic materials are collected to prepare a script with action.

"Unlike conventional documentaries — only talking about history, action or its politics," he tries to clarify his points. In his organised play and space, the audience, like in Schkneer's, is free to sit and observe from anywhere.

He is more concerned with the archaeological, social and anthropological background, a new concept of theatre involving a particular space. "It is like discovering a sub-culture from within," he adds.

"In my *Paribesh Theatre* there is no space within space, the situations create their own

space and smell. A scene, five years ago, is being played now, without rearranging the present space to the five-year old sequence, the play will be played, significant psychology will be showed."

His experiment with his work continues and by the end of April he will stage a play, depicting the legendary *Madhu Da's* humanism, his canteen's historical background vis-a-vis the university campus and political crisis.

The first part of his play will depict the *Darbar Mohal* (inner quarters) of the 19th century. "In you turn the pages of history you'll come to learn that the space of *Madhu's* canteen was used as an entertaining quarter in the early 19th century or at end of the 18th century," he says.

"Just at the entrance of the canteen a part of the floor is mosaiced black and white, exactly like a chess board. Here singers or

Bajfis as they were called, were brought from Lucknow to entertain the Nawabs.

These *Bajfis* played classical music, sang classical songs and danced, they did everything to entertain them here, except going into any sort of physical relation.

"In this way, I would think they were very honest with themselves, tolerant, patient, somewhat like Draupadi or Sita," Khandker explains his show.

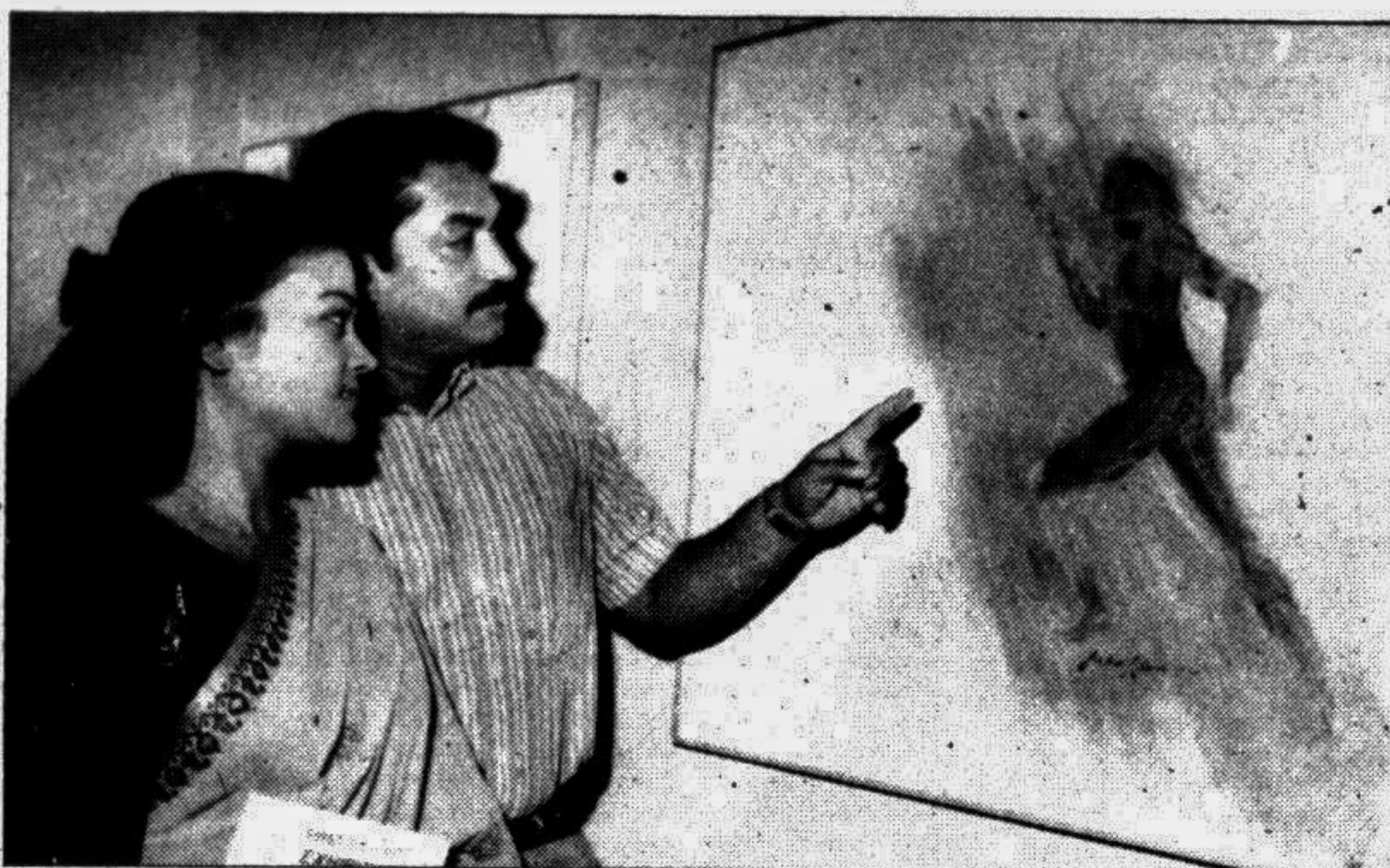
This *Eshrat Mohal* (deep night show) is the first part of his play where the audience will sit on the floor. The second part, after a 15-minute break will be performed at the other remaining space which includes the canteen counter and now the audience will sit at the chequered space where the first part was performed. The second part will deal with the uprisings from 1947 to 1994.

"The two parts of my play are different because of the architecture and content of the space. It is divided into past and present," he says.

Yet there is a similarity between the two parts, he feels. "The performance of the *Bajfis* and their art are related to economy and the chess-like floor shows politics. Well, politics is still there, only the body anatomy has changed. In place of *Nawab Gani*, I am here now."

This new form of theatre is a discovery but lack of sophisticated education in theatre here, does not enable the common people to appreciate the form, Khandker thinks.

Composed and very much dedicated to his work Ashish Khandker defines his *Paribesh Theatre* as space theatre where play arrangement is devoted to selective space. He has an organisation called Space and Acting Research Centre (Theatre and Education) where he is working relentlessly to show that, 'space and man alone speak of their roots and past, no stage is required to bring him out.



Visitors looking at an art work by Jishu Tarafder at the Jojon Contemporary Art Gallery in the city. An 8-day show of paintings by the artist opened yesterday. — Star photo

Re-excitation work of Khuder Khal opens

KHULNA, Apr 1: Jatiya Sangsad Whip Md Ashraf Hossain said today that providing of irrigation facilities was not only the objective of government's canal digging programme but to ensure manifold mass participation in development and nation building activities, reports BSS.

He said this while formally inaugurating the re-excitation work of more than two kilometers long Khuder Khal under Khulna City Corporation area.

On completion of this project long time water logging problem of Khulna city area will partly be solved and an additional eight hundred tons of crops will be produced a year. It will also provide irrigation facilities to about six hundred acres of cultivable land.

Seventyfive per cent of this project will be done Food for Work Programme and the rest on voluntary basis. Seventy tons of wheat has already been sanctioned for the project.

Md Ashraf Hossain called upon the people to avail of the facilities being provided by the government for alleviating poverty through self-employment opportunities.

Six orphan girls get married

UNB adds: Six orphan girls of the Government Child Home in the city got married on Thursday.

Social Welfare Directorate arranged the wedding of Fatema Khatun, Hawa Khatun, Nilufar Yasmin, Rokhsana Khatun, Hosne Ara Beauty and Abeda Khatun.

The Directorate presented each of them with a sewing machine and other gifts as a means of their self-employment.

Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman was present at the wedding function and wished the newly married couples happiness and success in their new life.

Obituary

Begum Farrukh Banoo Begum, wife of late Shamsuddin Chowdhury (Abu Mia), Zamindar of Ulania of Barisal, died of old age ailment at a city hospital yesterday. She was 67, reports UNB.

She left behind four sons, two daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

Her quikhwani will be held at her residence at 57, Hussaini Dalan Road on April 4 after Asr prayers.

JS body on Ministry of Post, Telecom meets

The 15th meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications was held at the Sangsad Bhavan Thursday, reports BSS.

The meeting formed a three-member parliamentary sub-committee with Barkatullah Bhulu as its convener to recommend for development of telephone distribution system. The committee will submit a comprehensive report examining the present telephone distribution system within next three months. The other members of the committee are Mohammad Azizur Rahman and Shah Mohammad Rafiqul Bari Chowdhury.

The meeting also discussed the activities of Bangladesh Postal Department and Telegraph and Telephone Board.

Members of the committee Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Salahuddin Ahmed, Barkatullah Bhulu and Mohammad Azizur Rahman of BNP, Advocate Fazle Rabbi and Shah Mohammad Rafiqul Bari Chowdhury of Jatiya Party and Nasir Uddin of Jamaat attended the meeting.

State Minister for Establishment Minister Aminul Huq presided.

Post and Telecommunications Secretary Dr AMM Shawkat Ali and Director General of Bangladesh Postal Department Sultan Ahmed were present.

'Move to remove PIO unjust'

By Staff Correspondent

The Information Directorate Employees' Welfare Association in a meeting Thursday, said the current move for the removal of the present Principal Information Officer (PIO) from his post for being a non-cadre person is unjust.

The association adopted a resolution which said the PIO represents not only the 70 information cadre officials but also over 300 non-cadre officials of the directorate.

The resolution said the association is not employed with the present movement of the information cadre members.

Haji pilgrims asked to obtain health certificates

The intending Haji pilgrims for 1994 have been asked to contact their own district medical board for obtaining health certificate and meningitis vaccine immediately, reports UNB.

The Haji pilgrims would not be given visas for performing Hajj in Saudi Arabia unless the necessary health document and certificate is collected from the respective district medical board, said a PID, handout.

The district Medical Board was constituted under the supervision of respective district civil surgeon.

Four million children involved in child labour

To abolish child labour or at least bring it down to a tolerable limit, the country needs to alleviate poverty and increase social awareness besides amending and enforcing laws, said a legal expert, reports UNB.

"The country has no specific law on children's rights," said Additional Sessions Judge Zinat Ara at a seminar on "ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973" jointly sponsored by Bangladesh government and International Labour Organisation.

She said the Constitution speaks of principles like women's participation in national life, human rights, free and compulsory education but these principles do not include anything specially on children's rights and their proper upbringing.

Presenting a paper on "The National Legal Situation Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Work and the Work of Children" at the three-day seminar that ended in the city Thursday, the woman judge pleaded for including provisions on children's right.

Nearly four million children of the country are directly or indirectly involved in child labour, including farm works, industrial works and many odd jobs.

According to ILO statistics, more than 18 per cent children between 10 and 14 years are working in developing countries, 7 per cent in Latin America and 18 per cent in Asia. In Bangladesh, it is more than 40 per cent.

Zinat Ara said there is no single law prescribing a minimum age for admission to any kind of employment, rather various minimum ages have been fixed by different laws on related sectors depending upon the nature of work.

She said there is no law in certain sectors where the presence of child labour is remarkable including agriculture, forestry, fishery and household works. Proper laws should be enacted in these fields.

About 82 per cent of the total child labour of the rural areas are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

The additional district and sessions judge said law should not only be enacted but also strictly implemented, other-

wise such laws are no more than a paper works.

The seminar recommended that Bangladesh ratify the ILO child labour law for gradual elimination of child labour from the society. The ILO Convention has fixed the minimum age limit for employment at 12 years for developing countries and 15 years for the developed countries.

It further suggested that the government should consider formation of a high-power tripartite committee comprising representatives of employers, government and labour organisations for designing and implementing a general national policy to reduce and progressively abolish child labour.

The seminar, participated by employers, and government and ILO officials, also called for strictly enforcing the national legislation related to child labour.

The participants observed that child labour was responsible for unskilled and disable manpower which reflected negative impact in national economy and said that abolition of child labour was most important for the economic growth.

Replacement of child labour by unemployed adult can have a major impact on employment prospects in many developing countries, they said.

Heartiest Congratulations to Gazi Mashiul Mannan Uday on his HAPPY BIRTHDAY Abba-Amma

Koli!
'You have walked among us a spirit, and Your shadow has been a light upon our faces'.
Happy Birth Day to you.
—An unknown Bard

Discussion on Tazuddin

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a function recalled the contribution of Tazuddin Ahmed, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh in conducting the War of Liberation.

The function 'Tomakey Paor Jannya' (to get you) was organised Wednesday by Mukhtakar Abritti Academy.

Syed Hasan Imam recalling the days of struggle said without Tazuddin's contribution, it would have been almost impossible to start the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. He said the great leader had managed the mammoth task of organising the Liberation War and supervising the one crore Bengali refugees.

Poet Shamsur Rahman speaking on the occasion said Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra was a relief and the beacon of hope for the trapped Bengalis living in Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

Govt college teachers' strike Apr 5

Government college teachers will go on a strike April 5 to protest non-payment of compensation to the family of a colleague who was killed by a student, reports UNB.

Jayanta Kumar Dey, a teacher of Sunamganj Government College, was stabbed to death by an examinee during the last degree examinations.

The Education Minister had promised compensation to Dey's family but the authorities concerned were yet to fulfil his commitment.

BCS General Education Association called for the country-wide strike at a meeting of its central executive committee held at Teachers' Training College on March 26, said a press release.

The meeting chaired by the association's president Dr. Q A T M Habibur Rahman also decided to observe a 3-day strike on June 6-8 to press for 16-point demand of the association.



Saturday

- 4:30 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary
- 4:45 Suryamukhi
- 5:10 News in Bangla
- 5:25 Cartoon
- 5:40 Shikshagan
- 6:10 Angikar
- 6:45 Banashoree
- 8:00 News in Bangla
- 8:30 Matt-o-Manush
- 9:00 Dolan Champa
- 10:00 News in English
- 10:30 Drama series: Dallas
- 11:30 Khabar/The News
- 11:40 Tomorrow's programme
- 11:45 Closing



Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia addressing the Eid re-union 1994 of the Lions Club of Dhaka Progoti Greater as the chief guest Thursday evening. The function was attended by others by (from left) Lion Shaikat Rushdee, Dr Shaheda Rafique, Club President Lion Gautam Saha, and special guests Defence Secretary Lion Hasinur Rahman and Lions Vice District Governor Lion J L Bhowmick.



Artists of Baitalik performing Tagore songs at the auditorium of the Institution of Engineers yesterday. — Star photo

Weather

Rain, gusty wind likely

By Staff Correspondent

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

The Met Office forecasts, day temperature is likely to, fall by one or two degree Celsius over Chittagong division and nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

The country's highest temperature yesterday of 36.5 degree Celsius was recorded in Rajshahi and the lowest 17.4 degree in Sylhet.

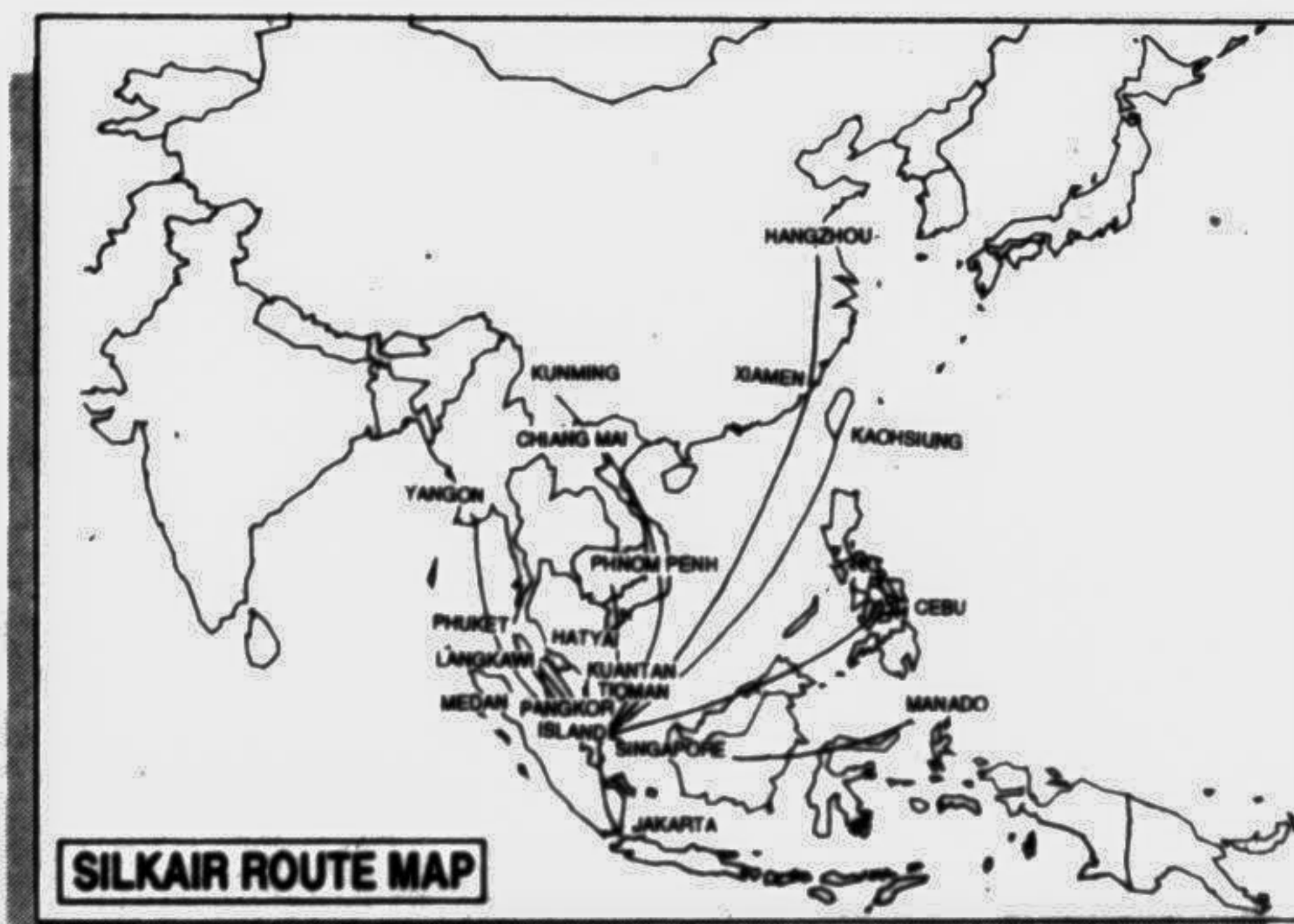
The amounts of rainfall recorded during day time yesterday are Srimangal 60 mm, Sylhet 34 mm, Comilla 20 mm, Patuakhali and Cox's Bazar 1 mm each. Rainfall recorded in Dhaka till 10 pm yesterday was 14 mm.

The sun sets today at 6.14 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.49 am.

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

Cities/Towns	Temperature in Degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	32.2	24.0	88	84
Chittagong	30.0	25.2	80	77
Rajshahi	36.5	25.0		60
Khulna	35.4	26.4	78	46
Barisal	31.0	25.0	85	82
Cox's Bazar	30.0	25.0	77	84
Sylhet	21.8	17.4	100	80
Bogra	34.8	23.0	63	77

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