

Dhaka Day by Day

Dhakeshwari: A Shade of Past Glory

by Lamis Hossain

Dhakeshwari, Dhaka's renowned temple, is not hard to find but the directions from enthusiastic passers-by are likely to confuse you. "Turn right, then you'll see an orphanage, then turn left towards the banyan tree, then take another left, then there's a wide road, then turn right..." Hopefully, you won't need to ask anyone the way this week — the throng of visitors for the Durga Puja from the 10th to the 14th should guide you to your destination.

The temple grounds, located at the end of Orphanage Road in Lalbagh, are not as impressive as one would expect, but rather derelict and neglected. On the right is a guest house replete with maroon arches and butter-milk walls, which suggest a past beauty despite the current decay. The interior is completely run down and yet remains the home for several families. A sign on the edifice warns: "This structure may fall down at any time."

The temple, itself, is not much better. There are no heavily decorated statues as is common in Hindu places of worship, or any other embellishment except one figurine kept behind locked doors.

The 'shobait' or caretaker of the temple, Prodip Kumar Chakroborty, offers

an explanation for the state of affairs. "We haven't had the money required to restore everything that was destroyed during the October 1990 attack. That month the guest house was gutted, the main statue and eight gold medals were stolen and the throne was set on fire. We feel that we should get some government aid to restore the grounds since this is not just a place of worship but a historical structure that was built more than 200 years ago." Meanwhile, some small repairs and painting have been started with funds collected from devotees.

But the temple's shortcomings will not prevent the Durga Puja celebration for peace and tranquility. The sablat's son-in-law informs, "At least 10,000 to 15,000 people pass through

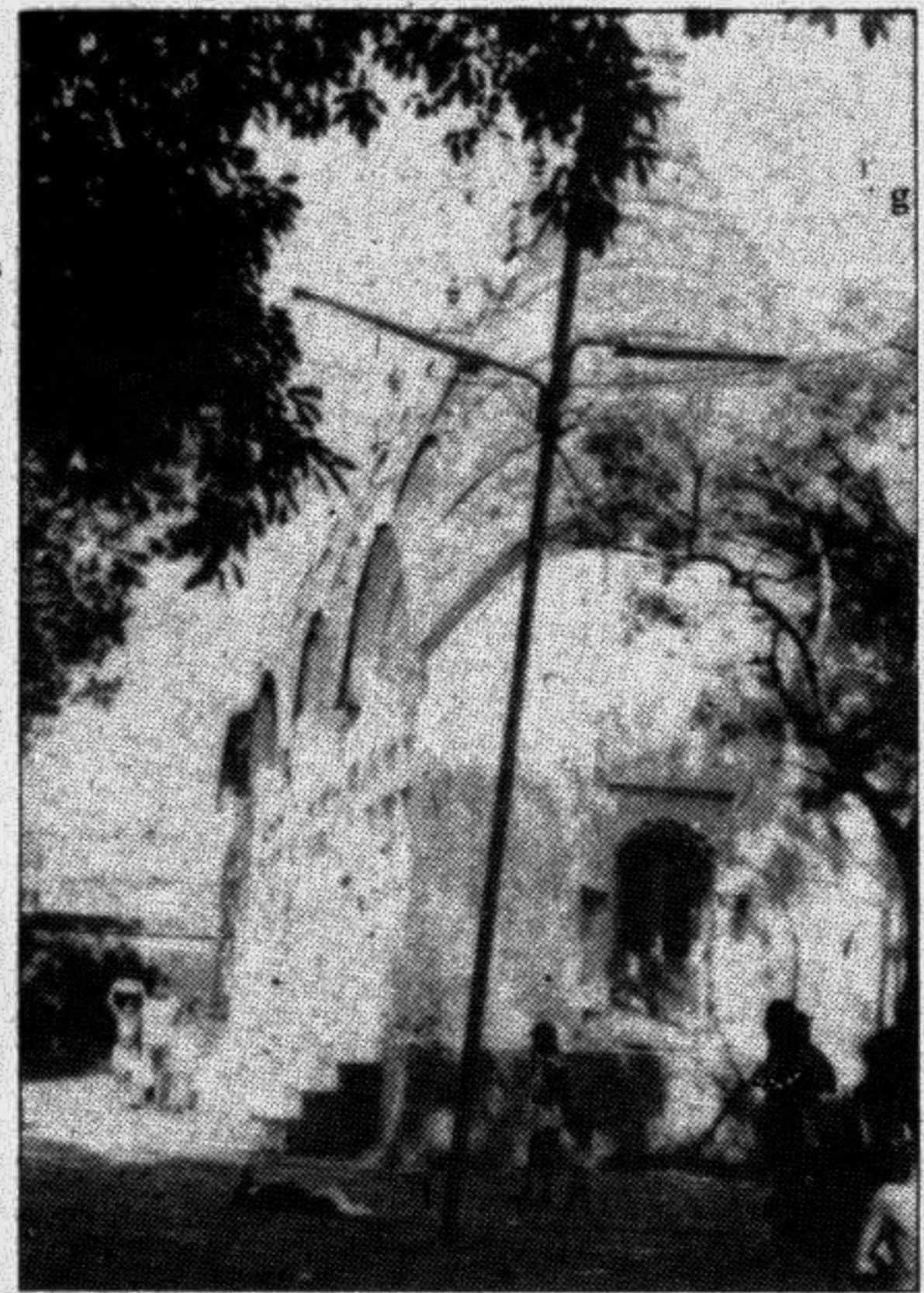
Dhakeshwari during the festivities. The second largest gathering is at the Ram Krishna Mission. Most people turn up at the 'dashomi' for the immersion of the image of Goddess Durga." Many come from the towns and villages near Dhaka. "The occasion is for everyone. There is no religious restriction on participation. After all, it is done for peace. We get a lot of cooperation from everyone. Unlike India, we have never had much trouble."

His sentiment is shared by Joyanta Sen Dipu who says, "We call our programme 'Sharadiya Durga Utsob', autumn festival, instead of 'Durga puja'. Dipu is on the Central Puja Committee which has been busy planning the occasion for the last month. "The committee has to take care of several aspects such as fund collection, requesting political parties to curtail their agenda for the week, asking the law enforcement agents to be vigilant, making sure we get adequate water and electricity supplies and also deciding on the sculptors," he explains.

The sculptors are an integral part of the whole affair. "There are a few well known ones around. This year we have chosen Shankar Dhor who also makes statues of the

freedom movement." Dipu reveals, "The competition between various temples can easily escalate. Sometimes sculptors are paid up to Tk 40,000 for one 'protima' (image) but we try to maintain an affordable standard. This year ours cost Tk 18,000."

Last October there were no Durga festivities as a precaution to the tense Babri Masjid situation, but the temple anticipates no trouble this time. The 6,000 posters printed by the committee will hopefully attract the desired crowds. One other detail would make everything perfect. "This year's Durga holiday is marked on Friday. We have requested the government for another date as it is one of the most important festivals for the Hindu community."



Dhakeshwari Mandir

ACCU director meets Sircar

Director of Asia and Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) Dr Shijil Tajima called on Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar at his office in the city yesterday.

They discussed matters relating to the 12th regional workshop on development of literacy follow-up, materials on agricultural vocational training for adults in rural areas to be held in Dhaka from December 17 to 28 under sponsorship of ACCU the condition of women and rural people also came up for discussion in the meeting.

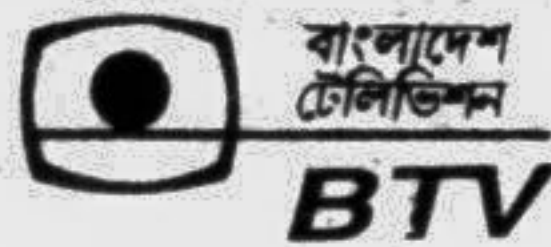
Secretary of Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU) SM Saifuddin Ahmed was present.

Govt hailed for not extending term for Anti Terrorism Act

The Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB) yesterday welcomed the government decision not to extend the term of the Anti-Terrorism Act, reports BSS.

The CCHRB in a press release said, it believed that this decision was a step forward for the human rights situation and movement of the country.

The long-standing hope of the human rights groups and activists of the country is that the Special Power Act be scrapped.



Wednesday

4:30	Opening
4:45	Sports programme
5:10	News in Bangla
5:25	Magazine for children: Moner Katha
6:00	Unmesh
7:00	Open University
7:25	Tagore Songs
8:00	News in Bangla
8:30	Sangbad Parikrama
9:00	Mini series: Mysteries of the Dark Jungle
10:00	News in English
10:30	Magazine: Kathamala
11:40	Khabar: The News
11:45	Tomorrow's programme summary
11:50	Closing



President Abdur Rahman Biswas addressing the inaugural ceremony of Integrated School for Hearing Impaired Children at Mahakhali in the city yesterday. — PID photo

School for deaf children opens in city

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday appealed to all concerned sections of the society to help build up an effective and coordinated medical system so that people do not have to go abroad for treatment, reports BSS.

He said this while inaugurating the Integrated School for Hearing Impaired Children, a project of the Society for Assistance to Hearing Impaired Children (SAHIC), at the premises of National Centre for Hearing and Speech at Mahakhali in the city yesterday morning.

SAHIC and the school are being funded by the German philanthropic organisation 'Andherie Hilfe'.

President Biswas said that all should work unitedly in removing poverty and illiteracy from the society and put in their best efforts to establish institutions like this school.

Presided over by Prof Rabiul Husain, president of the society, the function was addressed, as special guest, by State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman, founder-director of the centre for hearing and speech and the school Prof MN Amin, president of 'Andherie Hilfe' Rozl Golman, general secretary of the society ZBM Bakht and the students of the school.

Death of Sultan condoled

Jatiya Party secretary general Khaleedur Rahman Tito has expressed his profound sorrow at the sad demise of internationally acclaimed painter SM Sultan, reports UNB.

In a message of condolence yesterday, Tito said the country had lost a great artist in his death causing a vacuum. As a human being, Sultan devoted himself to love of nature.

Tito prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the members of bereaved foster-daughter and other relatives.

59 arrested

Police rounded up 59 people on various charges from different parts of the city in last 24 hours, reports UNB.

The arrested, who included eight wanted criminals, two held under the Anti-Terrorism Act and three accused of stealing, were produced before the court.

Malaysian mass media highlight PM's visit

The visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to Malaysia got wide coverage in the Malaysian print and electronic media yesterday, according to a message received in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

RTM, the national television network of Malaysia, gave a wide coverage of the Prime Minister's arrival, reception and dinner hosted by Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Bin Mohammad and her royal audience with King Yang Di Pertuan Agong.

The vernacular dailies published stories highlighting the significance of Khaleda Zia's visit to Malaysia, praising her leadership in restoring democracy and leading Bangladesh towards economic progress.

The New Straits Times in its report captioned "Bangladesh PM's four-day visit to boost bilateral relations" said the visit would strengthen trade and investment ties, ensure closer rapport and foster greater South-South cooperation.

Appreciating the economic programmes of the government of Begum Khaleda Zia, the daily said "her economic programmes are bearing fruit and after decades, Bangladesh is now at the threshold of achieving self-sufficiency in food."

"Khaleda Zia's daal-bhaat (lentil and rice) approach received both regional and international acceptance as a tangible programme for

Employees team meet Biswas

A 22-member delegation of the executive committee of Bangladesh Adha Sarkari Karmajibi Kalyan Samity called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday, reports BSS.

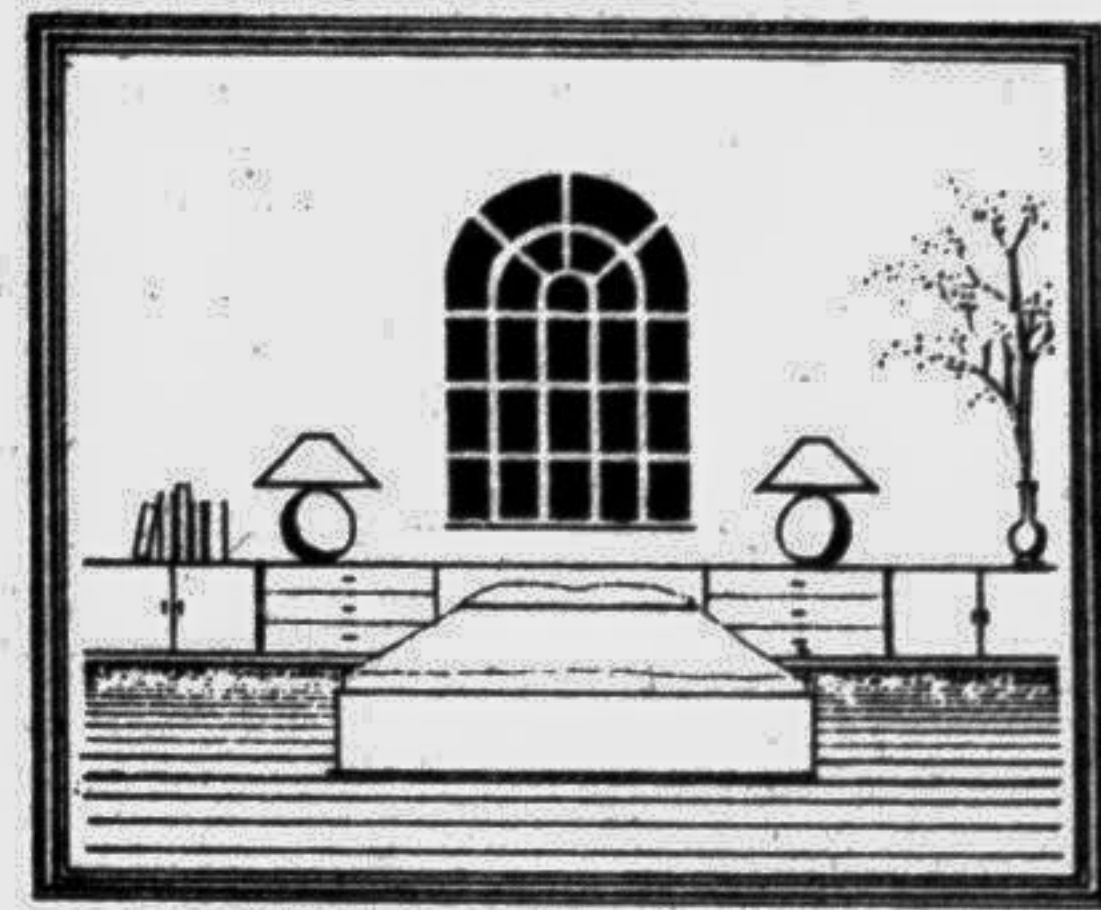
The delegation led by Barrister Abdur Rob, president of the samity, discussed some of their problems with the President and placed a memorandum seeking solutions to them. President Biswas gave them a patient hearing.

Among others, Abu Jafar, Captain (Rtd) Dr Masudur Rahman, Abdur Rob Patwary, AKM Mostafizur Rahman, Shah Alam Manik, Ali Akkas, Toslim Uddin Khan, ABS Khan Mojlish, Abdul Hannan, Kutubuddin Ahmed, AFS Raes Ahmed and SK Barua were present on the occasion.

Land for Sale

In Tongi Municipality at Pagar Mouja a 5 bigha plot of land on the Eastern side of Christian Housing Society will be sold. The land is on the North side and adjacent to pucca road with access to electricity, gas & telephone. Contact phone : 837446 S-541

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Weather

Dry weather likely

Light rain is likely over the regions of Chittagong and Sylhet in the next 24 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

The Met Office says weather may remain mainly dry with partially cloudy sky elsewhere over the country during the period. No appreciable change in day temperature is expected.

The country's maximum temperature 34.5 degree Celsius, was recorded at Jessore and the minimum, 22.4 degrees, at Srimangal.

The sun sets today at 5.35 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.55 am.

Temperature and humidity measurements of different districts during the period is given below:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.0	23.0	76	69
Chittagong	32.0	23.7	82	74
Cox's Bazar	31.3	25.0	90	83
Rajshahi	32.5	24.7	77	77
Khulna	34.0	25.5	85	74
Barisal	32.5	24.2	80	75
Sylhet	31.1	24.4	84	75
Dinajpur	31.6	23.5	81	73



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