

What's on today....

Classical music & dance festival: Classical vocal recital by Veena Sahasrabudhde of Gwalior Gharana, organised by the High Commission of India. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 7 pm.

Group Theatre Federation meeting: Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation will hold a meeting to discuss its upcoming drama festival and other programmes. Venue: Theatre Centre, 144 New Bally Road. Time: 5 pm.

..... and tomorrow

Exhibition: A three-day exhibition of different products evolved by the organisations under the Ministry of Science and Technology will begin. Venue: BCSIR premises. Time: 10 am.

Weather

Moderate cold wave

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB. Met office said thick fog could blanket Rajshahi division and the river basins, while light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere this morning.

Moderate to severe cold wave may sweep over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and the region of Srimongal and mild to moderate cold wave may sweep elsewhere during the period. Night temperature may fall by 1-3 degree Celsius over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 26.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Tekna and the lowest of 6.6 degrees at Sathkira and Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.35 pm and rises tomorrow at 6.43 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.6	11.9	69	52
Chittagong	25.0	12.4	78	47
Rajshahi	23.0	08.0	60	56
Khulna	24.2	08.3	56	53
Barisal	24.0	08.8	75	59
Sylhet	25.5	09.7	83	62
Cox's Bazar	25.6	16.5	40	52



Police swung into action on illegal occupants at Segun Bagicha in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Spl trains for Biswa Ijtema

Railway arranged 24 special trains to carry devotees as preparations neared completion for hosting a three-day Biswa Ijtema, beginning January 29 on the bank of river Turag at Tongi, reports UNB.

Nearly two million people pour into the Ijtema, the second-largest annual Muslim congregation after Hajj.

Muslim devotees from all over the world converge on the outskirts of the capital to attend the congregation of the World Tablig Jamaat.

The authorities also will operate sorties of live special trains from Kamalapur Railway Station to Tongi on January 31 facilitating devotees to join the Akheri Munajat or final prayers, a railway source told UNB.

The 24 special trains will start plying from January 27, while all other normal inter-city and mail express trains, except two inter-city ones — Subarna Express and Mahanagar Godhuli — will touch at Tongi from January 27.

There will be two special trains running between Mymensingh and Tongi. The first one will leave Mymensingh at 11:30 am and next one at 6:10 pm for five days from January 27.

Hartal at Sylhet: 2 JCD activists arrested

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Jan 18: The first day of the two-day hartal enforced by the All-Party Action Committee (Opposition) passed off peacefully in Sylhet district today.

Two JCD activists — Rafiq and Shippin — were arrested by the police from Shibganj area this morning. A motorbike was also seized from their possession. Hartal paralysed normal life in the town. All modes of transports were off the streets while offices and educational institutions remained closed.

The action committee enforced demanding withdrawal of the names of different halls and buildings of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

Massive hunt for killers of Dilip, 292 more picked up

JHENIDAH, Jan 18: Police picked up 292 people and seized 100 unlicensed motorbikes in a massive hunt during the last two days for the killers of Ilias Hossain Dilip, Editor of the daily Bir Darpan, and timber trader Alfazuddin, reports UNB.

Sources said the number of people picked up in the combing operation rose to 492. But the killers were still at large, they said.

Police have been interrogating the arrested people. Three persons arrested particularly in connection with the killing are Asad, Motaleb and Liaquat.

Dilip also general secretary of left-leaning Samajbadi Mukti Andolan, was gunned down along with Alfazuddin by unknown assailants in Jhenidah town on Saturday evening.

Police is likely to interrogate some terrorists now in jail. Dilip acted as coordinator for surrender of armed terrorists and outlaws in south-west region of the country.

Another micro-credit laurel SafeSave thrives on small savers in slums

By Nazmul Ashraf

SafeSave, a Dhaka-based microfinance co-operative, is expected to receive the 1999 Worldware Award for Financial Innovation at a ceremony in London today.

The co-operative provides door-to-door banking to about 3,500 people in six of Dhaka's largest slums.

It was founded in August 1996 by Stuart Rutherford, a UK writer and microfinance practitioner who has lived in Bangladesh for 15 years, and Rabeya Islam, a housewife and experienced manager of traditional ROSCAs and other saving clubs.

Worldware is an independent educational charity in Britain that supports innovative efforts in developing countries. Richard Caborn, Britain's minister of trade, will

present the award to Rutherford.

Banking services are provided to individual households rather than groups, and anyone is eligible to become a SafeSave client irrespective of sex or age.

Client recruitment and loan disbursement is done by 'collectors', many of whom live in the slums themselves.

Clients earn the automatic right to a loan, and the rules for loan eligibility and value are clear to everyone. Although loan disbursement responsibility is delegated to the collectors, they don't decide who receives loans, reducing the risk of fraud.

Clients may save as much or as little as they like daily. They may also withdraw savings, deposit cash, or repay a loan.

The organisation charges a

monthly interest rate of 3 per cent on loans. There are no other fees or charges.

SafeSave is a pilot project that demonstrates the poor have a strong desire to save their money, especially if they can turn those savings into usefully large lump sums through withdrawals or borrowing.

This microfinance co-operative shows clients need discipline to help themselves save. The opportunity to save small amounts of day-to-day earnings provides that discipline, which is just as powerful as the obligation to repay used by Grameen Bank and others micro-credit providers.

SafeSave aims to move on to other slums within Dhaka and Gazipur, and also other outskirts by the end of 2000.



Anwara Begum (middle), a SafeSave collector, epitomises the success the Dhaka-based organisation has brought for itself. — SafeSave photo

Khaleda

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She remarked that when a government loses people's confidence it becomes more vindictive and tries to cling to power through repression.

"But the government would not remain in power by using the Public Security Law indiscriminately against the people as the earlier Awami League government in the post-liberation period could not protect itself from public wrath by enacting the Special Powers Act, 1974 and introducing one-party rule," Khaleda said.

She asked the government to refrain from enacting such "black laws."

Bus accident

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nagar and Shafuluddin, 54, of village Taichuli. The identity of two others could not be known.

Of the injured, four were admitted to CMH at Comilla, two to Comilla sadar hospital and others to different hospitals and clinics.

JCD protests public Safety Bill

By DU Correspondent

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of main opposition BNP, brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday to protest the proposed Public Safety Bill.

Following the procession, JCD held a rally at the Apejeyo Bangla on the campus at noon.

Addressing the rally, JCD leaders strongly demanded the withdrawal of the bill which has been approved by the cabinet on Monday.

"Ruling Awami League is trying to introduce the act to foil the opposition's democratic movement," they said. The JCD leaders announced that they would stage demonstration at the Apejeyo Bangla at noon and hold a meeting at the party office in the evening tomorrow demanding cancellation of the Public Safety Bill.

Presided over by Manir Hossain, the rally was addressed, among others, by Monjur Elahi, ABM Mosharrar Hossain, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, ATM Abdul Bari Dany, Farhad Hossain Azad, Nurul Islam Nayan, Amirul Islam Alim and Asaduzzaman Asad.

In a statement signed by Prof RIM Aminur Rasheed and Ferdous Hossain, the president and general secretary of DUTA respectively, also expressed grave concern over the attack on the residence of Prof Roy.

FM: Hijack bid a hoax

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ceived a secret information about a plan for hijacking a plane of the Biman and sought help of the West Bengal government to offset it.

The DHC also informed the Biman manager in Calcutta and the government authorities in Dhaka of the reported hijacking plot to be attempted soon.

But the 11 were later released on January 13, as an investigation by the intelligence in Calcutta could not prove the allegation of the bid to hijack the plane, he said.

Azad, however, said the Bangladesh authorities cancelled the landing permits earlier issued for those 11 people, as a precautionary measure.

He said that the DHC had granted the 11 people of Arab origin landing permits, who were scheduled to fly to Dhaka from Calcutta with Biman on January 11. This was done after the Delhi Tablig Jamaat had requested the Bangladesh mission in the Indian capital to issue them landing permits for attending the Biswa Ijtema of the Tablig Jamaat at Tongi, set to begin on January 29.

The foreign minister found most press reports on the incident as "not objective" and said, as per convention, landing permits are usually issued to nationals of those countries with which Bangladesh has no diplomatic relations for the purpose of facilitating businesses or religious activities.

On previous occasions, too, he noted, such landing permits were issued for attending the Biswa Ijtema at Dhaka. Besides, he added, such methods were also practised in other countries.

In response to a query from Latif Mirza, the minister told the House that the government was alert about any conspiracy to foil the execution of the court verdict against the killers of Bangabandhu.

The Civil Aviation Ministry had been alerted against any act of conspiracy or sabotage regarding execution of the verdict and such alarms were also sounded to all concerned through diplomatic channels.

In his notice, Latif Mirza had questioned how the Israeli citizens were given visa by the Bangladesh mission to travel to Dhaka.

Zia's birth anniversary

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Jateha at the mazar of Zia, Quran khawani, milad mahfil, discussion meeting, painting competition, musical soiree and rally. The party has already begun a 10-day programme yesterday to observe the day.

Today, leaders and workers of BNP led by party chairperson Khaleda Zia will place wreaths at the mazar of Ziaur Rahman at 10 am. BNP's front organisations will also place wreaths at the mazar. A milad mahfil will also be arranged at the mazar premises.

In the afternoon, the party will organise a discussion on "The Announcer of Independence and Freedom Fighter Ziaur Rahman" at the Engineers' Institution. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will attend the function.

As parts of the 10-day programme, Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal will organise a discussion meeting at BNP central office on Thursday, Zia Shishu Kishore organisation will arrange a children's painting competition at Shishu Academy premises at 10 am on January 22. The Jatiyatabadi Muktioddaha Dal will organise a discussion session on the same day.

Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, Sramik Dal and Chhatra Dal

will organise discussion meetings on January 24, 25 and 26, respectively. On the concluding day on January 27, BNP will bring out a colourful procession from the party's central office at 3 pm.

BNP's units in all cities, districts and thanas have also chalked out elaborate programmes marking the 64th birth anniversary of Ziaur Rahman, said a press release.

Meanwhile, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement has urged the countrymen to observe the birth anniversary of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman in a befitting manner.

Paying tributes, Bhuiyan said Shaheed Zia had built a self-reliant, modern and sovereign Bangladesh and given it an identity as a nation through introducing Bangladeshi nationalism.

He said the Shaheed President took Bangladesh to a dignified position in the comity of nations and sacrificed his life for establishing democracy, justice and a society free from exploitation.

BNP-JP dispute

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Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and the party's representative in the Liaison Committee, M Shamsul Islam MP and Anwar Zahid, to his residence yesterday. During one and a half hour's talks from 3:30 pm, Nazim withdrew his proposals, and the meeting okayed the previous APAC structure. Mannan and Nazim then signed a circular on guidelines for formation of APACs at all levels. Secretaries general of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikkya Jote signed it later on the day.

At the meeting, both the sides agreed that from now on, secretaries general of the four parties would attend Liaison Committee meetings regularly.

After the meeting, BNP hurriedly called a meeting of the Liaison Committee at the official residence of Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia to inform the committee about the developments.

The liaison body is expected to meet again in a day or two to discuss fresh agitation programmes to be announced from separate public meetings of the four parties in the city on January 23.

Cricket

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from the Super Eight with a successful defence of their Plate.

Bangladesh, led by Al-Sharif, incidentally out of the Cup race on poor run rate on that occasion too, won the Plate in South Africa two years back.

Bangladesh team, arriving in January 17, had a two-hour practice session in the morning today at a venue where they would also play their second group league match against Kenya on January 21.

"This is a flat wicket and there is no grass on the pitch which means it will help the batsman," said coach Dipu Roy Chowdhury in the afternoon.

"We will bat first if we win the toss. Although I have not seen Namibia playing in the meet, but I have heard that their batting is good," Dipu said.

Replying to a query, the bearded Bangladesh coach said that Kalim might play in place of Arman Hossain Sohag.

Weather permitting the match will start at 10 am.

Hons examines

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Chaired by Prof Aminul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of the National University the meeting was attended, among others, by Prof BR Jahangir and Prof M Lutfur Rahman, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Prof Nayer Sultana, Director of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board.

They also submitted a memorandum to the VC for taking necessary steps to implement their demands immediately.

The students will gherao the Ministry of Education and the office of the University Grants Commission (UGC) to realise their demands, a press release said.

The students also formed a 57-member convening committee to continue the movement and collect mass signatures in favour of their demands.

Hartal

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Sheikh Hasina spoke informally to BNP stalwart M Saifur Rahman at the wedding reception of the home minister's son, indicating a change in her approach to the stalemate. She was reported to have told Saifur that she was willing to hold early elections if BNP was ready to talk.

BNP leaders also admit that top government functionaries have indicated acceptance of some key opposition demands including ones related to elections and withdrawal of "political" cases.

BNP insiders say an intensified movement might yield more concessions in a possible negotiated settlement. But BNP has told Awami League leaders that it was unwilling to accept Speaker's mediation.



Obituary

Professor Dr Mazharul Haque, ex-director of the Institute of Education and Research (IER) of Dhaka University died of cardiac arrest on January 12, says a press release.

He was also a guest Professor of Bangladesh Institute of Special Education run by Bangladesh Protibonhi Foundation.

During his 34 years of service at IER, Prof Haque contributed to the examination reforms as a team leader, resource person and national expert. He contributed to the present system of objective testing at the SSC and HSC level examination.

A condolence meeting in his memory was held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Protibonhi Foundation on January 17 and a Milad Mahfil was held on January 18, for salvation of the departed soul.

Syed Abdul Monim, former Logistic Manager of Ciba Gaigy (now Novartis) and Alfa Agra Limited's Consultant, died on January 16. He was 66, says a press release.

His khalwahani will be held on Thursday after Magrib prayers at his residence in Tejpurbar.

Tigers disappearing

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Over 40 conservation specialists from 14 countries are attending the conference. They include representatives from China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Nepal. Representatives from the World Life Fund and International Union for Conservation of Nature are also attending.

Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Bangladesh's environment and forest minister, opened the assembly. Babul Marnadi, India's state minister for environment and forest, chaired the session.

BSS adds: Inaugurating the meeting Sajeda Chowdhury said apart from being the national symbol of Bangladesh Royal Bengal Tiger is an irreplaceable part of mangrove ecosystem of the Sundarbans.

She said the safari park at Dulahazra of Cox's Bazar will be helpful in conserving Royal Bengal Tigers through breeding.

Listing different official efforts of the government to protect wildlife in Bangladesh, the minister said positive initiatives were taken to conserve wildlife especially after the enactment of Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Order, 1973 during the regime of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The minister said Government of Bangladesh has launched a Biodiversity conservation project in the Sundarbans worth Tk 380 crore in

Nikunja murder

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would contact the police once they felt 'stable'.

Debnath, 55, joint secretary of the ministry of LGRD was stabbed to death by muggers near the Swadhinata Sangram sculpture at the road intersection between the SM Hall and Jagannath Hall on January 11 morning.

Khorsheed and Shahinoor, two other accused of the Nikunja Bihari Debnath murder case, were taken on a fresh four day remand by the CID yesterday.

Earlier, the CID took Mujib, Rana and Sohel on remand on the basis of Shukur's statement, sources said. The three were arrested on Monday.

Soon after taking over the case, the CID took Din Islam on a three-day remand on Sunday. The six were taken on CID remand on the basis Shukur Ali's information, who made a judicial statement involving himself and eight others for the killing.

Shukur Ali who made his judicial statement on Saturday was sent to jail earlier.

If there was any fear of an attack on my father from any quarter, he would not have travelled in a rickshaw," said Sumon, son of the victim.



Viqarunnisa Noon School and College organised a condolence meeting in memory of Begim Viqarunnisa Noon, founder of the institution, yesterday. Principal Hamida Ali addressing the students at the condolence meeting on the school premises.



A three-day international conference organised by Global Tiger Forum and Forest Department began yesterday in the city. Photo shows Minister for Environment and Forests Begum Sajeda Chowdhury (4th-R), Indian State Minister for Environment and Forests Babul Marandi chaired the conference. — Star photo