

News

What's on today . . .

Concluding ceremony: The concluding function of Millennium Get-together organised by Dhaka Medical College Alumni Trust will be held. Venue: Shaheed Dr Milton Auditorium, Dhaka Medical College premises. Time: 4pm.

Chief guest: Khaleida Zia, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson.

Lottery draw: The draw of lottery of Rangoli Sarees will be held. Venue: Bishal Centre at Moghbazar. Time: 10am.

Discussion: Jatiya Nagorik Forum will hold a discussion meeting on Past, Present and Future of Democracy in Bangladesh. Venue: Jatiya Press Club auditorium. Time: 10 am. Chief guest: Former Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf.

Weather

Cold wave may continue

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country during next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.
The moderate cold wave sweeping over the northern and central parts of the country may continue for another 24 hours, said Met office.
Little chance in night temperature is expected over the country, it said.

The country's highest temperature 30.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and the lowest 08.5 degree at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:27 pm and rises on Sunday at 6:43 am.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	20.5	12.8	76	60
Chittagong	24.6	12.0	73	73
Rajshahi	19.1	09.3	83	76
Khulna	22.8	09.2	89	--
Barisal	23.0	09.4	89	78



Indonesian Vice-President Megawati Soekarnoputri called on President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday. -PID photo

Pakistan completes troop pullback along Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Jan 5: Pakistan has completed a partial troop withdrawal along the unofficial border in divided Kashmir, which was announced last month as part of a peace initiative, a top military official said today, reports AFP.

"The number of troops withdrawn is substantial," Major General Rashid Qureshi told reporters, refusing to divulge classified details.
Qureshi, who is press secretary to military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, said he was not aware of any reciprocal pullback by India. The Pakistani withdrawal was announced on December 20 immediately after India's four-week extension of a ceasefire to militants fighting against its rule in Kashmir in a peace gesture.
Kashmir is split between India and Pakistan, which both claim the Himalayan territory and have fought two wars and a bitter border conflict over it since their independence from Britain in 1947. Qureshi said India's reported willingness to allow leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC), Kashmir's main separatist alliance, to visit Pakistan was an "encouraging sign."
The APHC delegation is expected to visit Islamabad later this month, amid optimism here that their talks would facilitate the start of a meaningful process to resolve the 53-year Kashmir tangle.
"APHC is the representative organisation of the people of Kashmir and we are looking forward to have talks with them," Qureshi said.

Megawati

From Page 1
stressed the need for setting up an effective joint commission for strengthening existing cooperation.
Seeking enhanced trade with Dhaka, the Indonesian Vice-President said the last three years' two-way trade clearly demonstrated a rapid increase in its value.

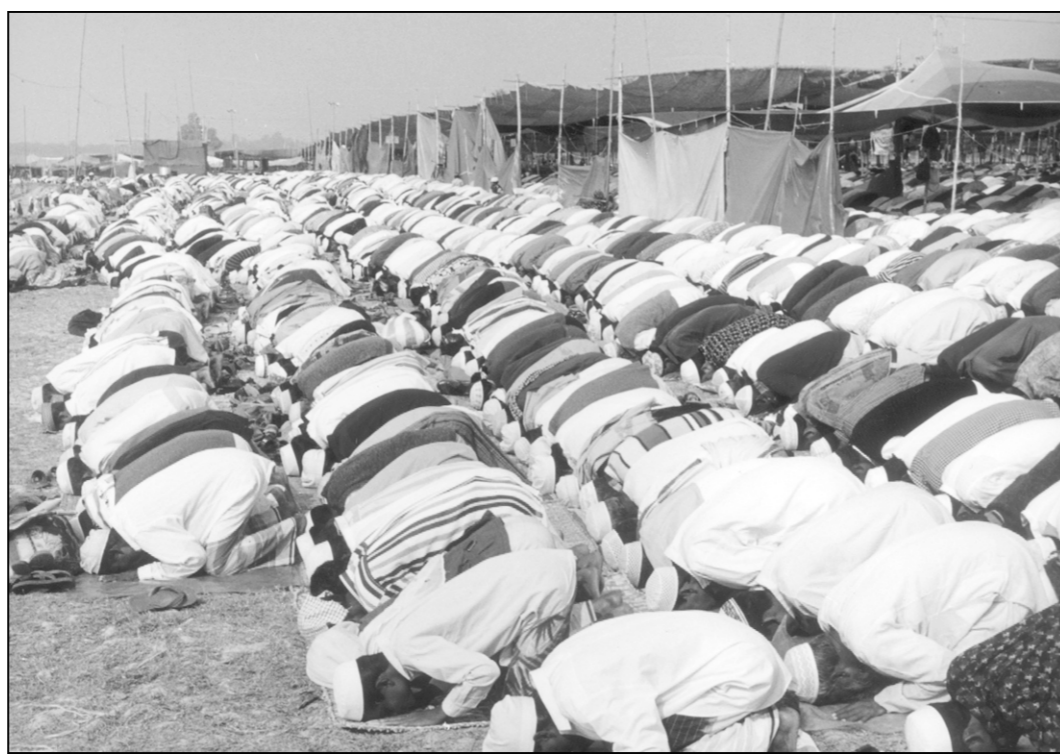
Deadlock

From Page 1
of C&F Association at Hilly, told the news agency that importers would be able to recoup their financial losses if the government exempted some customs duties on their perishable goods.

Big shots

From Page 12
Prime Minister said import duties on essential drugs and medical equipment were either reduced or withdrawn for improving the standard of treatment in the country.

Referring to appointment of new doctors and increasing infrastructure facilities in the health sector, Hasina said a new unit of Dhaka Medical College with 600 beds would be set up and a dormitory for 200 female medical students constructed to meet the growing demands. She also mentioned the establishment of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Medical University at Shahbagh. Hasina said the government also took steps to send trained nurses to foreign countries where the demand is high. Hasina assured that the government would provide fund to the Alumni Trust if it takes up good projects for the benefit of poor and meritorious students, library and research works. Later the Prime Minister opened a unit of National Blood Transfusion Services under Safe Blood Transfusion Programme at Dhaka Medical College and went round its different sections.
Sheikh Hasina received Megawati, daughter of Indonesia's founding father Soekarno, at the tarmac of Zia International Airport (ZIA). Two tiny tots presented her bouquet as she alighted from her special flight Garuda Indonesia at 8.05 am from Saudi Arabia.



Devotees offering Juma prayers at Tongi yesterday ahead of the Bishwas Ijtema that opens at the venue today. -Star photo

Hasina recalls her emotional attachment to DMC

She didn't study medicine nor was a medical student, but the Prime Minister got intrinsic emotional attachment to Dhaka Medical College that stands out as witness to the nation's political history in the making, reports UNB.
It is here from where her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had directed under captivity the 1952 Language Movement as well as the anti-Ayub agitation and where she had child-birth during the Liberation War under close watch by both the vigilantes of junta and the freedom fighters.
"I was not a student of this college, but I have a lot of memories" both of political and emotional attached to Dhaka Medical College, she said recalling her eventful days at the millennium get-together of DMC last morning.
Making a flashback on the days in Pakistan times, Hasina said she had the opportunity of seeing the tin-shed thatched houses of Dhaka Medical College from where medical students played a historic role along with Dhaka University students during the great Language Movement.
The Prime Minister said she had an appendicitis operation in 1968 at DMC. At that time, the college authorities did not want to allocate a cabin for her as Bangabandhu was leading a six-point movement. But she got the cabin and was operated upon in the face of stiff pressure from medical students and doctors at that time.
She said her first son Joy was born in cabin no. 3 of the DMC during the Liberation War in 1971. The Pakistani military junta put strong guard around her cabin and prevented or misbehaved with her relations and family admirers, including poet Begum Sufia Kamal, who came to see her in those crucial days.
The Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) also kept a close watch on her cabin so that the occupation forces could not harm her. The freedom fighters exploded bombs in celebration when her son Joy was born.
She said Dr Wadud and Dr Shaila took care of her and got moral support from doctors of Dhaka Medical College. She also mentioned the name of Prof Nurul Islam for extending cooperation taking all the risks.
Hasina said her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Dhaka Central Jail from time to time when he used to give instructions for carrying forward the anti-Ayub movement.
Hasina said Bangabandhu was on hunger strike in Dhaka Central Jail to expedite the 1952 Language Movement. He was brought to DMC at that time from where he gave necessary directive to students for the strike to be observed on the 21st February. For this he was immediately transferred to Faridpur Jail.
As Hasina narrated her experiences and emotional attachments to the Dhaka Medical College, doctors and students listened to her stories of historic importance at the jam-packed Doctor Milton auditorium.

Local RMG

From Page 12
because "we sell the stock or the rejected lot of these products stitched here," revealed Shamsuddin, a salesman at Banga Bazaar.
Powel market at Bijoy Nagar also attracts shoppers with multi-dimensional options. From foreign footwear to garments almost every fashion item is available there.
Shoes World, a new store, offers world class shoes while Indian brand Woodlands shoes, garments, travelling items, etc are sold at its local outlet at Elephant road.
One Stop Mall at Banani has brought about a mini revolution in this regard. Such famous brands as Guy La Roche, Marks & Spencer, Ralph Lauren, Polo, Gucci, Givency are available under one roof there.
This 'brand mania' has, however, failed to make any impact on the businesses of high-profile local dressmakers Arong, Nipun, Grameen, Kay Kraft, OG, Probortana, etc.

Unfair practice

From Page 1
sources in the embassies denied the allegations. Aviation sources said Biman offers cheaper fares than Saudia in its Dhaka-Jeddah-Riyadh routes. But still it is not getting business due to its unfair practice. Biman once used to get about 70 per cent of the business in these routes. The matter was taken up at diplomatic level. The Malaysian Airlines has taken some corrective measures and the Saudia has brought down the ratio to 50:50. The sources claimed that the unfair practice in the Dhaka-Jeddah-Riyadh routes is done through a travel agent who has links with the Saudia for its business outside Bangladesh. But an official of Saudia, dismissed the allegation. A spokesman of Saudi Embassy said if any allegation is brought to their notice, they would investigate it.

Khulna BNP

From Page 12
meeting of his group at the same party office today, where similar provocative speeches were delivered, the insiders said. They threw a 'challenge' to the 101-member new district committee. They said the new committee was formed violating the party constitution and disregarding the leadership of Khaleida Zia. Leaders of Ashraf-Manju group however called upon their opponents to resolve the intra-party dispute or to face a 'serious consequence'. Tension also prevailed in today's meeting of Ashraf-Manju group. Riot police were also deployed near the party office. City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman kept away from meetings of both the factions. He has been assigned by Khaleida Zia to unite the factions by resolving the contentions issues. A five-member team formed by Khaleida Zia with central leaders including the party's Joint Secretary General Ashraf Hossain is trying for a reunification, said some insiders who claim themselves to be founder members of BNP in Khulna.

Wage earners

From Page 1
agencies in the country for getting contracts, Bangladesh workers have to sell their labour at cheaper rate.
"We recommended a minimum pay of 600 Rials per month for any Bangladeshis working in Saudi Arabia. One would be astonished to know that presently many of our people are selling their valuable labour at as cheap a rate as 250 Rials only," said a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee concerned.
The parliamentary team suggested that the Ministry should reactivate BOESL, the lone public sector manpower recruiting body, so that more Bangladeshis could go abroad with guaranteed foreign jobs through government channel, avoiding the risk of being victimised by fraudulent private recruiters.
Workers going to Middle East countries should be taught English and Arabic beforehand, it said. The team also suggested that the country's missions in manpower recruiting countries should confirm that those recruited would get jobs.

Strike in West Bengal

From Page 12
dared her to get herself checked by a panel of doctors.
"The CPI (M) will accept the findings ... without any reservation," he said. "If she had suffered a fracture, she would hardly have been able to walk." Tensions have been running high in Midnapore, where the Trinamool Congress is a powerful force.
The Trinamool and the CPI (M) have been bitter rivals since the TMC was formed in 1998.
The Trinamool and India's ruling Hindu nationalist BJP party today urged direct federal rule in the state alleging rampant misrule and intimidation by the Communists.

UN mission on depleted uranium in Kosovo to publish findings in March

GENEVA, Jan 5: The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which has been charged with looking into possible radioactivity left behind by the use of depleted uranium in NATO bombing raids during the 1999 Kosovo conflict will publish its full report in March, the agency said today, reports AFP.
But officials inspecting sites in Kosovo last November said they were surprised to find remnants of depleted uranium ammunition lying on the ground one-and-a-half years after the conflict.
NATO says projectiles are transformed by impact into a scorching vapour, leaving behind no threat to peacekeeping troops.
Analyses of samples collected by the UNEP team during a mission to the UN-run Serbian province November 5-17 are underway in five European laboratories, a press release by the Nairobi-based UN agency said.
The UNEP team, supported by NATO and the Kosovo Force

Rebels raid shopping mall in Meghalaya : 5 shot dead

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 5: Suspected tribal guerrillas raided a busy shopping mall and gunned down five shoppers today in the northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya, officials said, reports AFP. The surprise attack is one of the first in Meghalaya, one of the most peaceful of India's seven northeastern states. Four other people, including a woman, were injured when the guerrillas fired at an electronics goods store in the upscale shopping mall located in the heart of the state capital of Shillong, police said. The police in Shillong, a fashionable hill resort, described the attackers as members of the outlawed Hyntterweip National Liberation Council (HNLC) separatist group. "A group of about eight HNLC militants alighted from a car and entered the shop in the evening and fired from automatic weapons," Shillong police chief G. Raju told AFP by the telephone.
The militants might have hijacked the car and later dumped it by the roadside before fleeing maybe in some other vehicle", Raju added. The HNLC was banned by New Delhi in December after the separatist guerrillas, who had been dormant for years, launched attacks on security forces in Meghalaya last year.

One shot dead

From Page 1
Sadar Hospital while his wife Zarina to Sonagazi health complex. Police recovered Sattar's body at 11 am today and sent it to Feni hospital for autopsy. The relatives of the victims knew the terrorists but they were not giving their (terrorists) names to the police out of fear, said a source.
District Jubo Dal president Syed Mizanur Rahman said the two brothers, who had left the country following threat by the terrorists, were the activists of BNP.
District BNP president Mosharrar Hossain MP in a statement today, blamed ruling partymen for the killing. A case was filed with Sonagazi police station in this connection, but none was arrested till filing of this report at 6 pm today.

Shahabuddin

From Page 1
volume of trade between the two countries would increase in the near future. He wished that the two countries would work hand-in-hand in all multilateral fora for the unity of developing countries.
Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, his Indonesian counterpart Dr Alwi Shihab, Secretary to the President Muhammad Ismail Hossain, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami, Secretary to Indonesia Vice President Bambang Kesowo and high officials of both the countries were present.

BNP urges President

From Page 1
cles in the city following the High Court judgement in Bangabandhu murder case but not a single case under PSA was filed against them. Referring to AL's election pledge to cancel all black laws and establish rule of law, the BNP leader said that instead of doing those, AL was enacting new black laws to remain in power. "If BNP returns to power, it will cancel all black laws including the PSA."
He demanded immediate withdrawal of 'false cases' filed against Morshed Khan, his son and others. On BNP's joining the coming parliament session, Badriddoza Chowdhury said, "We are still ready to join it but a congenial atmosphere should be ensured and the four-point charter should be implemented." Asked about the Speaker's letter to the Leader of the Opposition in this regard, he said reply to the letter is being prepared and it is likely to be handed over today.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the case against Morshed Khan and his son on charge of looting Tk 45,000 from a shop is "unbelievable and politically motivated". It is nothing but a 'conspiracy' by the government to harass the prominent BNP lawmaker. PSA was enacted to curb terrorism but law and order in the country is deteriorating further, he said. The press conference was attended by Among others, Morshed Khan, Sadek Hossain Khoka, ZA Khan, MK Anwar, Col (Rtd) Akbar and Ehsanul Kabir.

Cold wave kills 34 in northern India

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: Cold winter weather gripping most of northern India for the past 10 days has left at least 34 people dead in the state of Uttar Pradesh, the Press Trust of India reported today, says AFP.

The news agency said 11 more overnight deaths from hypothermia took to the toll to 34 in Uttar Pradesh. Temperatures dropped to freezing point in the higher reaches of the state in the coldest weather to hit the area in several years, it said. Most of the victims were homeless people, officials said. The weather office in New Delhi said the cold spell would intensify over the next few days across northern India. "The winds coming from the northern region are chilly due to snowfall in Himachal Pradesh state and higher reaches of Uttar Pradesh," Meteorological Department director S. C. Gupta said. Mountainous Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir bear the brunt of the current cold wave, which has frozen water supplies and hit normal life for the past 10 days. Temperatures continue to hover between minus 15 and minus 22 degrees Celsius (six degrees Fahrenheit) in the Himachal Pradesh district of Lahaul and Spiti, which borders Tibet.

Reports of two cold-related deaths in New Delhi have yet to be confirmed by the authorities here. Chilly winds coupled with fog have hit life in Uttar Pradesh and disrupted domestic and international flights to and from New Delhi.

Europe, Africa to enjoy first total lunar eclipse of year

PARIS, Jan 5: Europe and Africa will have front row seats next Tuesday to enjoy the first total lunar eclipse of 2001, when the Moon could be turned ruddy red, astronomers say, reports AFP.

The phenomenon occurs when the Earth passes directly between the Sun and the Moon, casting a curved shadow that creeps slowly across the face of its airless satellite.

Partial eclipse will start at 00:42 BST, followed by totality at 1:50 BST, which is due to last 62 minutes. The process then goes into reverse, ending at 3:59 BST.

The shadow is initially black but turns a dull orange and sometimes a deep red because the Earth's atmosphere filters out all sunlight colours except for those tints in the spectrum. The depth of colour depends mainly on the state of dust pollution in the upper atmosphere caused by volcanic eruptions.

The timing of the eclipse means that skywatchers throughout Europe and Africa are best-placed to enjoy it, although Australia and Japan will catch the start of it and states in northeastern United States and Canada can see the end.
2001 is touted as a good year for eclipses around the world. Top billing goes to a total eclipse of the Sun, visible in a narrow band across southern Africa and Madagascar on June 1, while partial lunar eclipses will take place on July 5 and December 30, the first visible from the western Pacific and Asia and the second from most of the Western hemisphere.
Further details: astronomy.com and www.skypub.com.

3 die as merchant ship capsizes in Adriatic
ANCONA, Italy, Jan 5: Three men died and one was missing when a Croatian merchant ship capsized Friday in the Adriatic Sea after its 150-ton cargo of marble shifted, reports AP. The accident took place about 50 kilometers (about 30 miles) off the Ancona, a port city in central Italy, said coast guard Capt Edoardo Orrera. He said search-and-rescue teams were on the scene but chances of finding the missing man were slim. The other member of the five-person crew of the Nautika 74 survived and is in good condition, Orrera said. He said the crew was believed to be Croatian.
The Nautika 74 was bringing the marble from the Croatian port of Split to Italy.