

● What's on today ●

Bakharkhani festival: Dhakabashi, a soico-cultural organisation of Dhakaites, will hold a festival on *Bakharkhani*. Venue: Hazaribagh Park premises. Time: 4 pm.

Nat'l workshop: A three-day experience sharing meting and national workshop to combat trafficking in women and children will begin. Organiser: Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS). Keynote paper: Prof Ishrat Shamim, President of CWCS. Venue: BIAM premises, 63, New Eskaton.

● and tomorrow ●

Symposium: Department of Women's Studies of Dhaka University in cooperation with Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA has organised a symposium on 'Empowerment of Women Through Democratic Process'. Senator Paul Simon, USA, will present the keynote speech. Venue: CIRDAP auditorium. Time: 9 am to 5 pm.

Weather

Cold wave to continue

Dry weather will prevail over the country during next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over Northern to central part of the country, Met Office said adding that moderate cold wave may continue over Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and at places over Dhaka and Chittagong divisions for another 12 hours.

Little change in night temperature is expected over the country, it said.

The country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 26.0 degree Celsius at Teknaf and the lowest 07.9 degree at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:27 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	19.8	10.9	97	68
Chittagong	23.2	11.0	80	68
Rajshahi	20.6	08.5	87	82
Khulna	21.6	09.2	84	-
Barisal	21.7	08.6	91	83
Sylhet	21.8	09.2	70	74
Cox's Bazar	25.5	13.0	71	63

Criminals go scot

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Commission.

Autonomy will be given to medical colleges and institutes. No attempt to break the BCS health cadre will succeed, she said.

About health policy, Khaleda said a modern health policy is necessary to improve the public health.

She said a parliamentary

committee was constituted during her government under the supervision of the Deputy Leader of the House accommodating all the parties in Parliament to formulate a national health policy.

Although they had made a good progress, the present government scrapped it and adopted an "anti-people" health policy in the name of implementing HPSS.

Trial of Bulgarians postponed again

Musharraf to begin visit to 3 Arab countries Today

SOFIA, Jan 6 : The trial of six Bulgarians and a Palestinian who face the death penalty if found guilty of deliberately infecting nearly 400 Libyan children with AIDS has been postponed again, Bulgarian radio said today, reports AFP.

The trial will resume on February 10. It is the eighth postponement since the trial opened in February last year.

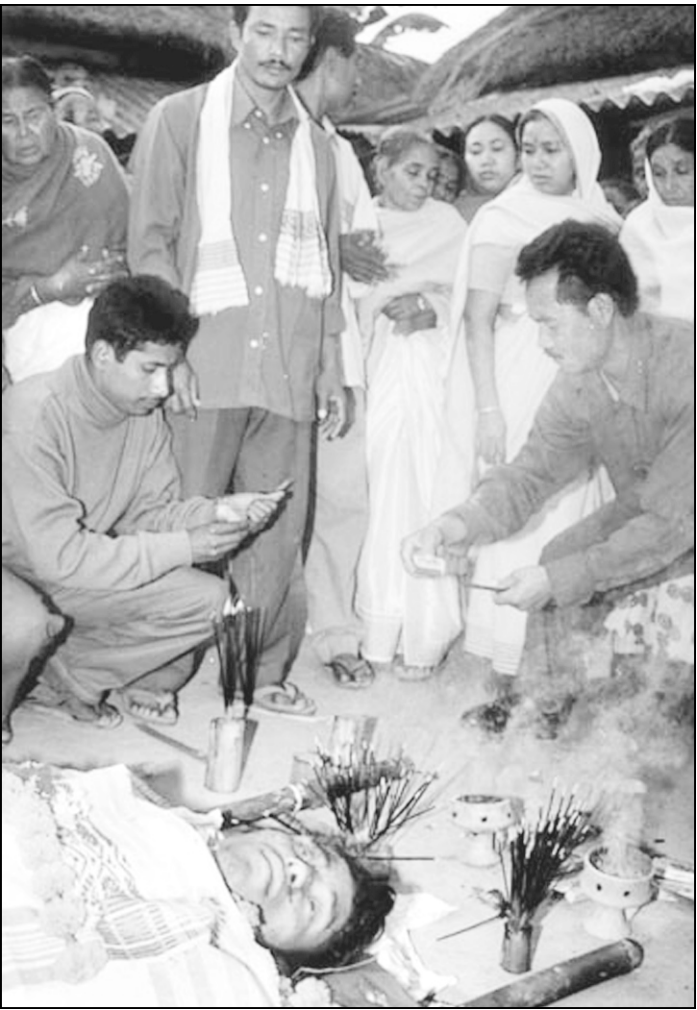
Defence lawyers had asked for the adjournment because of the absence of the lawyer for the chief accused, a Palestinian doctor, the paper said.

The six Bulgarians, five nurses and a doctor, and the Palestinian doctor, stand accused of "triggering an AIDS epidemic by injecting contaminated products" and premeditated murder at a children's hospital in Benghazi.

They have all denied the charges. Two of the nurses initially admitted guilt but then withdrew their confessions saying these had been obtained under duress during police questioning.

Eight Libyans have been accused of "negligence" in the same case.

Bulgaria has been lobbying Egypt to support endeavours to ensure a fair and objective trial.



Relatives of Gautam Das pay their last respects to his remains during a wake in Guwahati January 5. Das, the brother of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) member Basanta Kumar Das, was gunned down by unidentified gunmen January 4, as ULFA and former ULFA militants have been targeting each other recently. -AFP photo

Four Pak girl students die in roof collapses

LAHORE, Pakistan, Jan 6 : Four Pakistani girl students were killed and 30 others injured when the newly-built roof of their rural primary school collapsed today, an official report said, says AFP.

About 70 girls were attending the minority Christian-run community school in Jalalpur Jattan in central Punjab province when the incident occurred, the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan said.

The injured students were hospitalised, it added.

Khaleda's reply

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repeatedly requested the Speaker to take steps to restore a congenial atmosphere in the House, but it "deteriorated further".

The Leader of the Opposition expressed her frustration over the way the Speaker conducted business in the House.

In the letter it has been alleged that the government continued its "repression" on Opposition MPs, leaders and activists by filing false cases against them abusing the Public Safety Act.

About voting right of expatriates Bangladeshis', the letter said the demand was already rejected by the Prime Minister and the Election Commission. Moreover, constitutional amendment is not required to enlist the expatriates in the voter list, it said.

Thai party

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Chuan the scrupulously honest but unexciting leader of the Democrats said he would "humbly respect the people's" large vote for his opponents.

"Brothers and sister," the 62-year-old leader said. "We did our best. Now, people desire political change and we have to respect the people's decision.

The vote is regarded as a test of the country's reformist 1997 Constitution. (Earlier story on Page 9)

Opposition

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area. The APAC supporters chanted slogans demanding withdrawal of the case against Morshed Khan under Public Safety Act (PSA).

On the other hand, pro-ruling party ward commissioners of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) led by Jubo League leader and brought out an anti-hartal procession carrying sticks today.

They held a rally at GEC crossing and vowed to resist hartal. As a result, the programmes announced both by the supporters of opposition and ruling parties sparked off a tense situation in the port city.

Purbachal project

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said that Rajuk had initiated the project with its own money and not borrowed anything from outside.

Purbachal project envisages construction of a satellite town along the eastern side of Balu and Buriganga rivers over an area of 6,150 acres.

Cold wave

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usual. People did not venture out of their residence without urgent business.

The chilly wind also had its effect among the city's legions of poor who live in shanties or sleep under porches or the open sky.

Anwarul Kabir, director of the met office, said that the moderate cold wave spread all over the country since its advance elements took over the north-west on Wednesday.

From Thursday the wind became chilly and started moving towards central, southern and north-eastern Bangladesh.

The weather will start getting warmer from Sunday and fine weather would continue until January 12.

But it will start chilling down again from January 12-14, preceded by a light shower, he forecast.

But this will be the final bite of the winter, he said about the third wave since cool weather settled in from last month with a mild cold wave.



Visiting Indonesian Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri visited Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the city's Dhanmondi area yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accompanied her. -PID photo

Indonesia offers zero tariff

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two Muslim countries which are also members of OIC, NAM and the D-8.

The two sides also discussed cooperation in service sector including banking to prepare a basis for economic cooperation.

Talking to newsmen after the talks, the two foreign ministers emphasised making the Joint Commission an "effective body" to increase bilateral trade.

Indonesia also assured that it would extend all possible support to Bangladesh to hold the next NAM Summit, due in Dhaka early next year.

Samad Azad said although the Summit will be held next year, it will be called NAM Summit, 2001. Delayed holding of the Summit because of election in Bangladesh has been accepted

by all the NAM members, he said.

Azad said that Dr Soekarno, the late leader and founder President of Indonesia, was one of the greatest champions of the Third World and an accomplished leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami, who was also present at the briefing told a questioner that Bangladesh had sent peacekeeping troops to Indonesia only after the Indonesian Parliament passed a resolution that East Timor was not a part of Indonesia.

The two sides at the talks viewed that both Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Indonesian Vice-president Megawati Soekarnoputri had fought long for restoration of

democracy in their respective countries.

Samad said, both leaders pledged to uphold the democratic tradition in their countries.

Bangladesh's trade gap with Indonesia is over a 100 million dollars now and its import-export ratio is 15:1.

In 1999-2000 financial year, Dhaka exported goods worth only 8.13 million US dollars against imports of goods worth 159.47 million dollars.

There is great scope to increase export of commodities like ceramics, silk, plastic goods, insulation materials, leather and leather goods, jute and jute products to Indonesia.

Bangladesh imports cement and various metals from Indonesia.

No hartal this month: BNP

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Ziaur Rahman's 18th Anniversary Celebration Committee with Professor AQM Badrudozza Chowdhury as its convener. Sadek Hossain Khoka MP has been made the member-secretary of the committee and Nazrul Islam Khan the co-ordinator.

The committee was formed at a joint meeting of BNP and its front organisations at 29 Minto Road with BNP secretary-general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

The meeting instructed all city, district, thana, municipal, ward and union units of the party and its front organisations to take up elaborate programmes, including discussions on Zia's life and works,

rally, cultural functions, etc.

The meeting in a resolution said that the parliament has turned into party forum of Awami League due to bias and partisan activities of the Speaker. The AL has created an unbearable situation in the parliament with frequent use of indecent and false remarks.

Undemocratic, anti-people, subservient and anti-national activities of the AL government has proved that independence, sovereignty, economy and life of people are not safe and the country will plunge further into crisis as long as it remains in power, the meeting observed.

The meeting also demanded immediate repeal of the "black" PSA. Besides, it demanded immediate withdrawal of the

case filed against Morshed Khan, Faisal Morshed Khan, Mujibur Rahman Sarwar MP and other party leaders and activists.

The meeting strongly protested and criticised the Prime Minister's speech delivered at a function of Dhaka Medical College on Friday.

BNP leaders Selima Rahman, Professor MA Mannan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Amanullah Aman, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Abdus Salam, Sirajul Islam Selim, Redwan Ahmed, Washimul Bari Rajib, Mujibur Rahman, Fazlul Haq Milon, and Mesbahuddin Ahmed Sabu attended the meeting among others.



A Lebanese artist paints on a tableau at the UNESCO Palace in Beirut on January 5. Arab artists are putting together a giant mural to dramatise the Palestinian uprising, with painting of everything from stone-throwing children to a sun shining over landscape.

Tens of thousands join Ijtema

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respect to Muslims, purity of thinking and preaching.

Shaikh Jahab said it is a divine responsibility to welcome people towards Islam and everybody should try to carry on that duty. He also urged the Mussallis (pious Muslims) to dedicate themselves to the salvation of mankind.

Most of the speeches were delivered in Arabic and Urdu languages, which were translated into Bangla and some other languages for the foreign delegates.

All activities in the Ijtema are conducted as per the decision of the Shura members of Tablig Jamaat. The members are Sirajul Islam, Azizul Maqsd, Mahmudul Huq, Mozammel Huq and Maolana Jobaer.

Meanwhile, one person Shafar Ali (65) of Moheshpur thana under Jhenidah district

died yesterday morning on the Ijtema ground of cold he caught there, according to police sources.

Many devotees reportedly also felt sick after attending the Ijtema.

Tongi hospital sources said they treated 65 patients suffering from a good number of diseases. Of them, 18 have been hospitalised, said the sources.

Different socio-cultural organisations have also set up temporary camps to provide free treatment facilities to the pilgrims. Long queues were seen yesterday in front of some camps like Ibne Sina, Islamic Foundation and Hamdard Laboratories.

Traffic movement on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway was smooth as the plying of non-motorised vehicles was restricted from early hours yesterday.

Motorised vehicles will also be banned from Tongi Bridge to Joydevepur crossing from tonight until the end of Akheri Monajat (concluding prayers) to avoid traffic snarl-ups, police sources said.

With the ban on other vehicles, twenty big passenger buses will transport the devotees from Joydevepur crossing to the Ijtema venue after banning other vehicles, informed a senior police official.

Akheri Monajat (concluding prayers)

The three-day Biswa Ijtema will end on Monday noon through an Akheri Monajat. Tens of thousands of people will join the monajat along with the ruling and opposition political leaders.

The government's communication department has taken an initiative to install a number of loud speakers up to Cherag Ali

market in the north and Azampur in Uttara in the south to relay the concluding prayers.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed is due to be present at the main dais of the Ijtema while Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Khaleda Zia will take part in the monajat from separate places outside the Ijtema venue.

Hasina will offer her monajat staying on the roof of a nearby Bata Shoe factory building while Khaleda will be on the roof of a building of Ashraf Textile Mills.

Special trains and buses will be used to facilitate the conveyance of thousands of people from the metropolis and other places from the early hours of Monday.

Police sources said, Hamidul Haq and Muhammad Alam were abducted when they were fishing in Cokbru Khal in Naikhangchhari area. BDR authorities sent a protest letter to Nasaka.

Clinton is hoping to clinch a peace deal before he leaves office, and both Israeli and Pal-

4 killed as Somali faction tries to capture Speaker

MOGADISHU, Jan 6 : A Somali armed faction tried today to capture the transitional parliament's Speaker, Abdallah Derrow Issak, starting clashes which left at least four people dead and seven injured, the faction stated.

Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) deputy commander Mohamed Ibrahim Habsde told AFP from Baidoa in southern central Somalia that RRA forces battled the militia protecting a visiting team from Mogadishu.

"The RRA has offered a price of 3,000 dollars for the capture of Issak, who is on the run," said Habsde, a leader of one of the armed clan-based groups in Somalia opposed to the new central administration set up last year.

Habsde said the RRA had captured transitional education minister Mohamed Aden Kilai and seized four battlewagons and another vehicle carrying communications equipment.

The RRA claims could not be immediately verified independently.

Issak, escorted by 20 armed wagons and 150 gunmen, left the capital early on Friday for a tour of the volatile Bakol and Bay region of south central Somalia.

Tension had been high for a week at the RRA headquarters in

Baidoa, after Shatigudud reportedly removed Issak's supporters from his administration.

All communication links between Baidoa and other parts of Somalia were severed.

Supporters of Issak have also been chased away from Baidoa.

Issak was the secretary general of RRA, but fell out with Shatigudud because of his decision to support the transitional government headed by President Abdulkassim Salat Hassan.

Shatigudud initially backed Salat's administration, but later withdrew his support, saying some parts of Somalia were not represented at a reconciliation conference in Djibouti, where the president was elected by politicians last August 25.

The conference, held under the auspices of Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh, was attended by thousands of Somali delegates but spurned by most of the warlords who have carved the country up in the past decade.

Somalia has lacked an effective central government since the fall of president Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. Most infrastructure collapsed as various clan-based warlords battled for control of territory and resources.

PM: food security

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by government.

She said 32 per cent of GDP comes from agriculture and 60 per cent of the manpower are engaged in this profession. Considering the importance of agriculture, the government has taken massive, integrated and effective steps for overall development of agriculture.

Hasina said despite opposition by the World Bank and other donors, the government was continuing subsidy in agriculture and would continue it for the betterment of peasants and rural people.

"So far, we've given Tk 441 crore as agricultural subsidy and will give more for further success," she added.

She said the government has crossed the target of producing 2.5 crore metric tons of foodgrains, ensured food security and fair prices for the agri products.

Education Minister ASHK Sadique, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, agriculturist and Awami League publicity secretary Abdul Mannan, President of Old Boys' Association of BAI Mahabubuzzaman, Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council Dr Zahurul Karim and Member Secretary of the Diamond Jubilee Celebration Committee AFM Bahauddin Nasim also spoke at the function.

With the announcement of BAI as a university, the students burst into cheers. Earlier, the Prime Minister inaugurated the celebration programme by releasing balloons and pigeons.

The Institute was established in 1938 by the then Chief Minister of Bengal Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq. The Institute is now housed on 64 acres of land and has seven departments and over 1,000 students.

Arafat ready to talk with Israel under Bush admin

MUSCAT, Jan 6: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said today he was ready to negotiate with Israel under the administration of US President-elect George W. Bush if an accord was not reached before Bill Clinton leaves office January 20.

"We will continue (with talks) at the same rhythm as with Clinton, who wants to seal something before his departure. We will continue with Bush," Arafat said, stressing his side was "doing its best" to reach a peace deal before January 20.

"We are deploying all our efforts (to reach an accord) because we do not want to be accused of stalling," Arafat told journalists before leaving Oman after a one-day visit.

Arafat, accompanied by top adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina and Palestine Liberation Organization number two Mahmud Abbas, held talks Saturday with Oman's Sultan Qaboos on the situation in the Palestinian territories and the last-ditch US peace plan.

Arafat informed Sultan Qaboos "of the situation in the occupied territories and the efforts deployed to save the peace process," the official ONA news agency said.

Clinton is hoping to clinch a peace deal before he leaves office, and both Israeli and Pal-

estinian negotiators have accepted in principle a set of compromises he drafted.

But the two sides remain sharply divided over the status of holy sites in Jerusalem and the fate of 3.7 million Palestinian refugees and have expressed doubt about reaching an agreement in the next two weeks.

In Ramallah, Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo on Saturday denounced last-ditch US attempts to broker a peace deal, accusing Clinton's administration of favouring Israel.

"This is an attempt to get concessions from us on our rights over Jerusalem and the mosque compound, on refugees' right of return and on our sovereignty over the territories" captured by Israel in 1967, Abed Rabbo told Al-Ayam newspaper.

Since the intifada, or uprising against Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, erupted at the end of September, almost 370 people have been killed, the vast majority of them Palestinian.

DUJ Dainik Bikal Barta unit formed

Nasaka abducts 2 Bangladeshis

BANDARBAN, Jan 6: Myanmar border guards Nasaka illegally entered Naikhangchhari of Bandarban hill district and forcibly took away two Bangladeshi citizens on Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

Police sources said, Hamidul Haq and Muhammad Alam were abducted when they were fishing in Cokbru Khal in Naikhangchhari area. BDR authorities sent a protest letter to Nasaka.

Senior Sub-editor Shamsunnahar Chameli presided over the meeting.

DUJ president Altaf Mahmud, General Secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Vice President Ashraf Ali and Organising Secretary Mollah Jalal were present among others at the meeting.

Dipon Chowdhury was elected unit chief while Shamsunnahar Chameli deputy unit chief.

Cancer

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prevalence of this deadly disease in the country."

On an average, 189 people in every 100,000 develop cancer in Bangladesh, according data available from the DMCH and the Cancer Hospital.

Ashic: A shelter for helpless ill children

Mrs Salma Choudhury, 018-222922, 019-310099

Prof M A Mannan, 504821 (off)

Prof M A Hye (9123060), 8017151/2 delta

He was immediately taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries at around 11 am.

In another accident, Jamshed Ali, 45, of village Shantigram under Bogra district was injured when a bus hit him at village Lador Pukur under Sadar upazila this morning.

He was admitted to RMCH where he succumbed to his injuries at noon.

Road accidents