

News

What's on today . . . .

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 key-note speech. Venue: CIRDA auditorium. Time : 9 am to 5 pm.

Weather

Dry weather likely

Dry weather is likely to 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, said Met Office adding that fall in night temperature is expected over Sylhet division and northern Chittagong division for another 12 hours. Little change in night temperature is expected over the country, it said. Mild cold wave may continue over northern and central parts and at places over southern part of the country. The country's highest temperature 26.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and the lowest 6.8 degree at Srimangal. The sun sets in the capital today at 5:28 pm and the sun rises on Tuesday at 6:43 am. Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)

BNP iterates demand

From page 1 revised in March 1998 provided for withdrawal of 'political cases' against MPs and other opposition men, BTV's impartial coverage of the parliamentary proceedings, neutrality of the Speaker and proportionate representation of parties in the parliamentary standing committees. In his latest letter, the Speaker sought BNP's cooperation for passing the 14th constitution amendment bill seeking retention of women's reserved seats in parliament and making arrangement for the Bangladeshi expatriates to get enrolled as voters. The opposition leader felt that there was no need for the opposition to be in parliament for the two purposes. Because, she argued, the existing provision for the reserved seats can be retained if the government resigns immediately and the next parliament is elected before April (when the provision for reserved seats expires). She also shared the women organisation's view that the existing provision did not ensure proper representation of the women folks in parliament. A change in the mode of election of the women MPs and an increase in their number are needed.

JS body From page 1 The committee was also informed that 56 soldiers died while discharging their responsibilities in peace keeping missions abroad. The committee decided to pay several visits to the UN peacekeeping missions to see the condition of Bangladeshi troops. The meeting also decided that the entire committee would visit Korea from where a naval frigate is being procured and East Timor to see Bangladeshi troops there. The tentative time for the visits is second or third week of February. The committee expressed its satisfaction over the appointment of the Chief of Staff, saying the recent appointment was made for bringing professionalism in the armed forces. The four-hour meeting was marked by heated debate between an opposition lawmaker and a ministry official. Meeting sources said expelled BNP lawmaker Akhteruzzaman blasted the official as he did not provide information asked by him. The Chair finally settled the matter. Among others, committee members Faruk Khan of ruling Awami League, Rezaul Karim of BNP and Golam Mohammad Qader of Jatiya Party attended yesterday's meeting. High military officials were also present.

Probe textbook From page 12 ing and distribution of textbooks for the current academic year. They also staged a noisy sit-in demonstration in front of the NCTB building at Motijheel to protest widespread corruption in awarding the printing job of several crores of textbooks to three concerns of Beximco Group Free Press, Shuktara and Pustaka by ignoring 750 experienced printers. Students, leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF) attended the sit-in demonstration. Later, they brought out a procession in the city chanting slogans against the NCTB and the Education Ministry. Meanwhile, country's leading intellectuals yesterday expressed concern over the non-availability of the textbooks despite the fact that the new academic year is already on. Many schools in the capital Dhaka as well as elsewhere in the country have started taking class with old books despite changes in contents. Students and guardians are flocking to bookshops for old editions of the textbook to begin study. "We have to buy two sets of book in a single academic year, one student complained. He said the government should take action against the persons responsible for the textbook trouble.

Megawati in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7: Indonesian Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri arrived in Malaysia today for her first official visit since being chosen as her country's No. 2 leaders, reports AP. Megawati's three-day trip, meant to boost bilateral ties, is at the invitation of Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar greeted Megawati upon her arrival from Bangladesh at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. This was Megawati's last stop on a three-nation tour that started in Saudi Arabia. BSS adds: Megawati left Dhaka this morning for Kuala Lumpur at the end of her three-day official visit to Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accorded a hearty send off to Megawati at the airport. Senior members of the cabinet including Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman, and Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, high civil and military officials were present to see off the Indonesian Vice President.

Gias Kamal manhandled

By Staff Correspondent Unidentified youths allegedly manhandled senior journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury at Eskaton in the city yesterday. Witnesses said about five youths intercepted Chowdhury at Eskaton near Ramna police station at about 2pm and manhandled him. He was walking on the road at the time. The youths, allegedly belonging to the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), also chased the journalists, the witnesses added. Ramna police, however, expressed their ignorance about the incident.

Citizens' rally demanding arrest of Moulana Amini tomorrow

A citizens' rally will be held on the Central Shahid Minar premises at 2:30 pm on Tuesday demanding arrest and punishment of Maulana Fazlul Haq Amini and his associates for threatening two Judges of the High Court, reports UNB. National Professor Kabir Chowdhury will preside over the rally to be attended by intellectuals, lawyers, teachers, journalists, artists, NGO activists, women leaders and freedom fighters. Moulana Amini and some other fundamentalist leaders threatened the judges branding them as "Murtad" for declaring all types of "fatwa" illegal.

Schoolgirl abducted in Manikganj

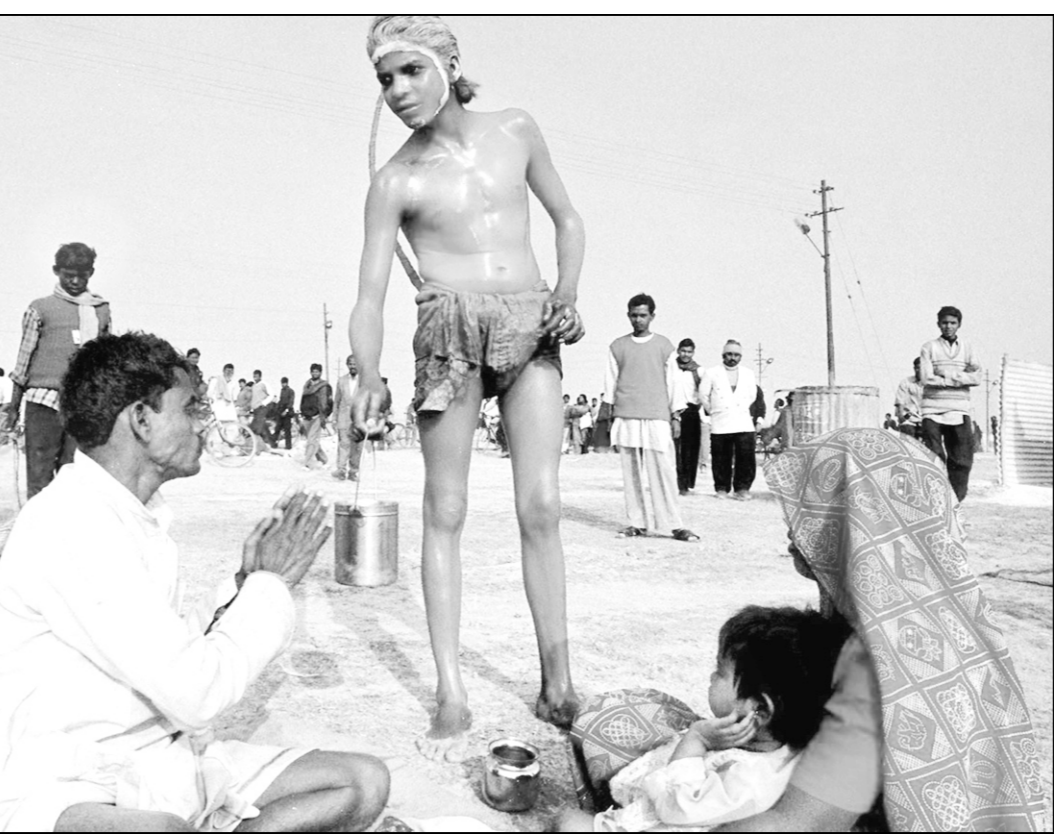
MANIKGANJ, Jan 7: A group of youngsters abducted a 16-year-old schoolgirl from village Burundi of Sadar upazila yesterday, reports UNB. On complain from her father, police today arrested Rawshan Ali of the same village, but the girl could not be rescued till this evening. Police said father of the victim filed a case against six persons including women for the abduction. They were trying to rescue the girl and arrest the accused.

9 held for killing Dumuria Jubo League leader, 6 policemen closed

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, Jan 7: Six officers including SI Emdad of Dumuria thana were closed to police lines today following murder of Jubo League leader and UP chairman Kabirul Islam. They are sub inspectors Rafiqul Islam, Shahadat Ali, Mohammad Mostafa and Emdad Ali, ASIs Lutfar Rahman and Abdul Malek. Police today arrested nine people in connection with the murder.

Illegal immigrants Malaysia detains 58 on first day of crackdown

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7: Malaysian authorities have embarked on a blitz against illegal foreign workers, arresting 58 people on the first day of the operation, reports said today. The detainees included 13 Malaysian employers and foreigners including 40 Indian nationals, three Bangladeshis and two Indonesians all in their 20s, the AFP quoting Sunday Star newspaper said. Immigration enforcement director Nasir Ahmad was quoted as saying an estimated 5,000 Malaysians were hiring foreign labour without permit. He said the department would step up surveillance and conduct raids targeted at the construction and services sectors. The detainees would be housed in eight deportation camps in the country which can hold some 15,000 people, he said. "Last year, the immigration department repatriated 97,281 people, mostly Indonesians, and this year we are targeting 100,000 for deportation," he added.



A boy dressed as Hanuman, the monkey-god, begs from Hindu devotees waiting for accommodations at Prayag in Allahabad yesterday ahead of Maha Kumbh Mela, a religious gathering. Sadhus and pilgrims have begun gathering on the banks of the Ganges river for the 42-day-long religious pilgrimage, world's greatest gathering of mass humanity. - AFP photo

Zhao opposed crackdown on Tiananmen protesters

BEIJING, Jan 7: The former Secretary General of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Zhao Ziyang, pleaded in vain against using force to crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, according to a document published today by a Hong Kong-based human rights organisation, reports AFP. In his "self criticism" speech Zhao explained his objections had been rejected by Deng Xiaoping: "A storm is unavoidable, the sooner it comes the better," Zhao quoted Deng as saying. After that Central Committee meeting Zhao was officially removed from the helm of the CPC and replaced by Jiang Zemin, the current Chinese president. Now aged 80, Zhao has been living under house arrest since then, denied all contact with the outside world. The Information Centre said the text of Zhao's speech had been secretly smuggled out of China and its contents corroborated other documents that first came to light on Friday in the United States, due to be published in the next issue of the journal "Foreign Affairs." Those documents show that Zhao had been accused by Deng of having encouraged the demonstrators, and reveal the fierce power struggle fought out among the top echelons of the country's commu-

Khaleda tells editors

From page 1 liament and was attending meetings of Parliamentary Standing Committees. She said BNP was only refraining from attending sessions as the Chair did not allow its MPs to have a say. "We're willing to return to the House. But a congenial atmosphere for us to speak there must be created in the first place," Khaleda said the government is inviting the opposition to join parliament in one hand and destroying the required atmosphere on the other.

Megawati's press confce

From page 1 room was reserved by the Indonesian Embassy for yesterday morning's press conference and the booking was cancelled only an hour before the scheduled time, 8 am. Notice for the press conference was removed from the hotel's display board at around 7:30 am. Annoyed reporters sent messages to officials accompanying the Visiting Vice President wanting to know about the fate of the press conference but no response was received till two minutes before Megawati left the hotel. Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr Alwi Shihab suddenly appeared and without giving any reason for cancellation of the news conference said that the visit was useful and fruitful. He also said that their President Abdur Rahman Wahid is likely to visit Bangladesh and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina may also visit Indonesia again. He reiterated that Indonesia would support Bangladesh for the holding of NAM Summit in Dhaka. Asked about the scheduled press conference, he evaded a direct reply and said, "I am here." It was 8:40 am and most of the newsmen who had come were loitering in the lobby of the hotel or had left. As the foreign minister was speaking, the Vice President proceeded to the waiting limousine bound for the airport. Then without finishing what he was saying, he also left.



A 24-member students delegation of the Depauw University of the USA led by Prof. Terri Bonebright called on Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof. A. K. Azad Chowdhury at the latter's office yesterday.

Sixth FYP to be commissioned in 2002-03

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the Planning Commission to start preparatory work on the Sixth Five-year Plan incorporating her government's policy for socioeconomic development in the present perspectives of globalisation, reports UNB. The sixth five-year plan will be commissioned in 2002-2003 on expiry of the current Fifth Five-Year Plan the performance of which was reviewed in a meeting yesterday. Presiding over the Planning Commission meeting at her office, the Prime Minister asked the ministries concerned to take practical steps for quicker implementation of development projects aimed at improving socioeconomic status of common people. Hasina, who is chairperson of the Planning Commission, took stock of the performance of five economic sectors and asked for prioritising implementation of projects relating to poverty alleviation. Briefing newsmen, Planning Secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury said the meeting lasting nearly two hours discussed funneling of additional funds for completing the ongoing schemes in different sectors. He said the meeting noted with satisfaction that 80 per cent of some 1299 projects have already got government approval. Chowdhury said the rate of implementation of ADP projects during this fiscal year is good with already 30 per cent of project funds spent by December. "The Prime Minister was happy with quick implementation of projects, including those on rural roads, electricity, school enrolment and women empowerment," he told newsmen. He said despite severe natural disaster, growth rate of nearly 6 per cent is quite encouraging. Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, State Minister or Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir and five members of the Commission were present in the meeting.

Rally for communal harmony in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Jan 7: Hundreds of students, civil servants, politicians and professionals rallied in the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu today calling for unity, development, communal harmony and peace, reports AFP. The rally was led by the Federation of the Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). The participants, wearing blue sashes saying "Peace, Development and Solidarity", paraded through the streets to urge an easing of tensions following recent riots in which five people were killed and hundreds of others injured in the capital and elsewhere. The Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist-Leninist (NCP) last week held a similar rally in the capital calling for a restoration of peace between the country's ethnic communities. Communal violence erupted in Nepal against ethnic Indians late last month after Indian film actor Hrithik Roshan allegedly made inflammatory remarks against Nepal and the Nepalese people in a television interview. Roshan denied making the comments. However, angry left-wing Nepalese students went on the rampage attacking Indian nationals and their property.

BAF jet crash

From page 1 involving both military and civil aircraft since 1975, in which 55 people were killed. Another Chinese built FT-7, which can be used a multi-role fighter, crashed in October 6, 1998 over Madhupur forest in Tangail, killing Flt. Lt. Hasan. It was on a training mission. F-7 jets are the mainstay of air defence of the BAF. It also included in its fleet eight Mig-29 fighter-bombers from Russia last year. Two of those are training aircraft. The BAF has a plan to acquire more Mig-29 aircraft, the sources said.

Faridpur Bar to boycott magistrate's courts from today

FARIDPUR, Jan 7: The District Bar Association today decided to boycott all the magistrate's courts here for an indefinite period from tomorrow following rejection of a bail petition of an APP and local Awami League leader, reports UNB. It was decided unanimously at an emergency meeting of the bar association held with its president Adv Syed Nurul Islam in the chair. First class magistrate Ahsanul Haq rejected a bail petition of Adv Shamsul Haq Bhola Master, an Assistant Public Prosecutor and district AL leader and chairman of Charamhadbia UP in the Sadar upazila. One Mamtaj Begum filed a case against Bhola Master.

Turkey

From page 12 travel abroad. The recent clampdown on illegal immigrants comes in the wake of a tragic sea accident in which a Georgian-registered cargo ship, loaded with an estimated 80 stowaways trying to reach Europe, sank off Turkey's Mediterranean coast after running into a coral reef. Thirty-two people were rescued after the disaster on Monday, and a Bangladeshi man was pulled alive from the sea on Tuesday. But Turkish divers have so far recovered only nine bodies and several mutilated body parts. Turkey is a major transit route for Asians and Africans trying to reach western Europe overland or by boat.

Quake shakes southern India

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: A child was reported killed and two people injured today when an earthquake shook the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Press Trust of India reported, says AFP. The child was crushed to death when a wall collapsed on him in Tamil Nadu's Kadayam town when the tremor measuring 4.8 on the Richter Scale shook the coastal region early Sunday morning, it said.

Ticket touts

From page 1 reached the cinema hall area, eight unidentified miscreants started shouting calling them brother of mugger Manik. They started beating Sajal and Rana suspecting them as muggers. Sajal's brother Badal Hossain filed a case accusing eight people but none was arrested till filing of this report last night.

Six die

From page 1 the Ijtema venue. Janaja of five of them was held at the Ijtema venue and janaja of one at Morkun graveyard. Adam Ali mentioned that many of those who come to the Ijtema are elderly people. A number of them, though ailing, come with the belief that if they die here, they would get divine blessing and their soul would rest in peace. Meanwhile, sources at the 50-bed Tongi Hospital said 123 people from the Ijtema venue came to the hospital for treatment since the congregation began on Saturday. Of them, 74 were given first aid and 43 were admitted. Six of them were referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and specialised hospitals in the capital.