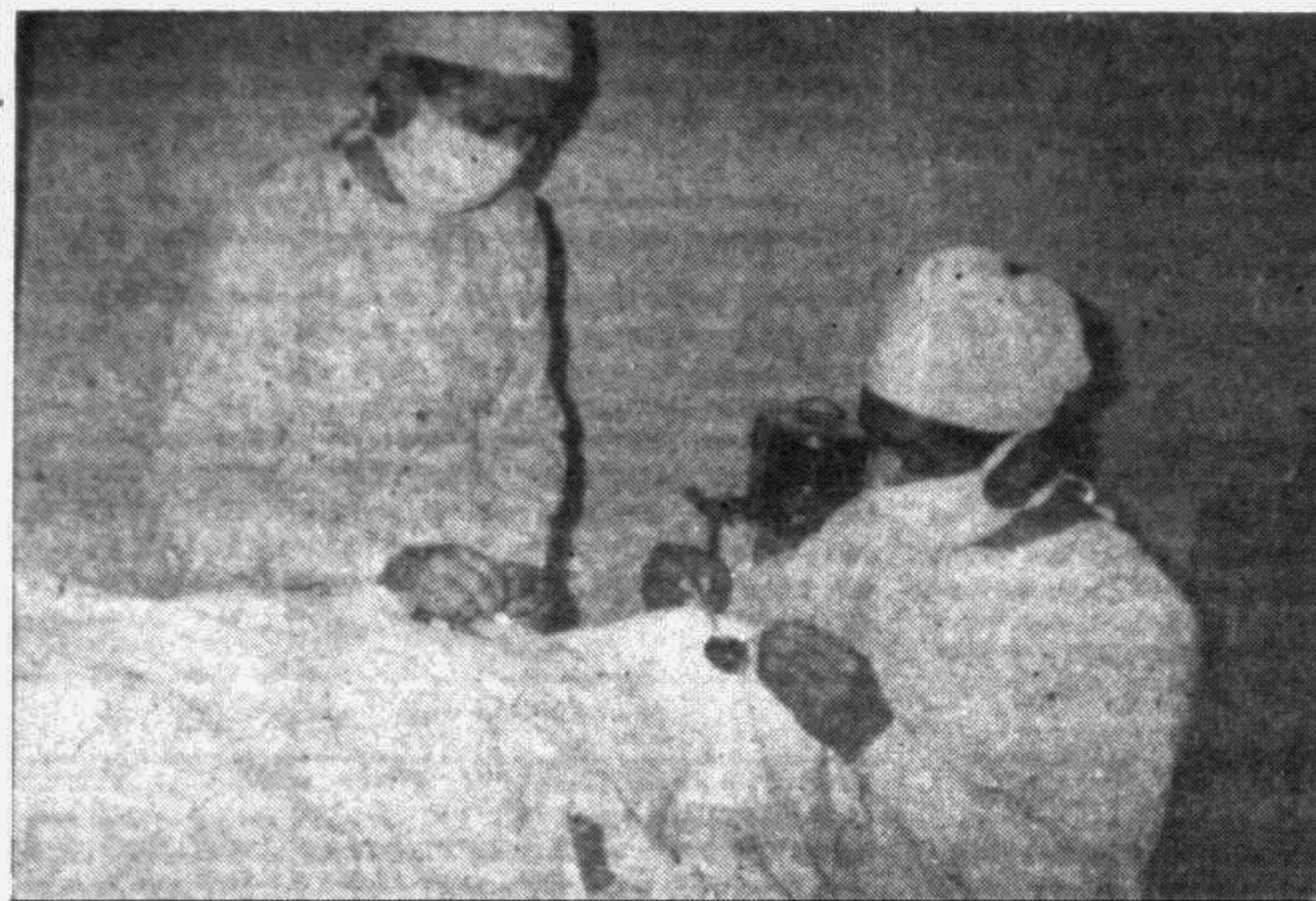


Dhaka Day by Day

Combating the Scourge of Blindness

by Rahat Fahmida



A patient undergoing surgery at a sight saver funded camp.

This country is troubled with various health problems both minor and major. The clinics and hospitals are in a deteriorating position, and very little is noticed to be done to improve health care facilities. In this sort of a situation, it is a relief to see a special effort by certain bodies to reform and improve the existing condition.

Sight Savers—Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, since its inception in Bangladesh 19 years ago, has been playing a leading role in combating the scourge of eye diseases that are gradually blinding thousands of children and adults every year. It has taken up manifold programmes not only to cure and prevent blindness, but also educate and train the incurable blind so that they could regain their economic as well as social position in the society.

From 1973 to August 1992 the Sight Savers has enabled over 700,000 blind people to get back their eye sight through cataract operations in Bangladesh. But, according to Dr. S.M. Munirul Haq, country representative of Sight Savers, "in a country where over 30,000 children go blind every year due to malnutrition or what is termed as deficiency of Vitamin A and common childhood diseases such as diarrhoea, and at least 60,000 people become blind annually due to cataract, apart from other eye diseases like glaucoma and corneal ulcer, it is difficult to tackle the problem without a permanent eye care system." Haq is also an eminent eye specialist in the country.

The number of the child patients treated at the **Under-5s clinics, run by the Sight Savers** since 1989, in three districts of Bangladesh, is steadily growing. In these clinics, mothers are made aware of health and hygiene in general. A new method has been introduced of not only to educate them about the child health care needs but also create an awareness in society of the benefit of immunising the children in time against possible attack from deadly diseases.

Whatever may be the cause, once the eye sight is lost, it is gone for ever and that is why the Sight Savers is committed to set up a comprehensive eye care programme with the collaboration and cooperation of the Government and relevant organisations in Bangladesh as elsewhere in South Asia and Africa.

It is felt and Sight Savers believes that there

is a need for a strong national coordination body, comprising representatives from concerned government and private agencies, for Prevention and Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment in Bangladesh. It is expected that this body would come to a reality in near future.

In the absence of a national level coordinated programme, Sight Savers has helped the Eye Infirmary and Training Complex (EITC) of Chittagong BNSB and extended financial support to it to organise Primary Eye Care (PEC) centres at Rauzan and Mirsarai. The success achieved at these two centres in the field of eye treatment and motivation for prevention of blindness was so encouraging that the EITC opened yet another centre at Fatikchhari in September this year. The CEITC model of PEC involves training of village doctors and continuous monitoring and referral from village level to PEC centres and to CEITC.

Up to September 1992, PEC centres at Rauzan and Mirsarai handled 14,974 eye patients locally, and out of them, around 500 were referred to EITC Chittagong for operations and treatment. They also assist work for community-based rehabilitation for the blind through Assistance for Blind Children (ABC). So far they have helped to rehabilitate 711 people for what is termed as basic rehabilitation and 494 people's economic rehabilitation. Sight Savers, Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, is a non-governmental organisation with its headquarters in the United Kingdom. It has been working for the last 43 years in 50 countries around the world for the cure and prevention of blindness and education and rehabilitation of the incurable blind people. It also provides funds, technical know-how and logistic support to the local partner and organisations and government, in order to materialise the projects in its fields of activities.

Sight Savers is committed to support a co-ordinated eye care system ensuring Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Eye Care in this country. As Haq said, "We would like to support our partners for comprehensive eye care programme, by establishing a permanent eye care project. This would provide service to the patients round the year. This is our main objective at the moment."

HERE and THERE

Lekhok Shibir

Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir (yesterday) condemned the activities of the Jammal-Shibir clique capitalising on a recent statement of Dr. Ahmed Sharif. In a statement, President and General Secretary of the Lekhok Shibir Azizul Haq and Anu Mohammad said the undemocratic and fascist forces were trying to fish in troubled waters making it an issue.

Terming it as a pre-meditated conspiracy, they said the speech of Dr. Sharif was first published in a distorted form in a newspaper which had been brought out by a "killer-collaborator" of 1971 by misappropriating the fund of madrasa teachers' association.

FUNSA

Federation of United Nations Staff Associations (FUNSA) organized a discussion meeting yesterday on "The Role of UN" in Bangladesh at 10-30 am at the Shishu Academy Auditorium to observe the UN Day.

The meeting was chaired by Mahbubul Alam, Convener of FUNSA and was participated by Charles H. Larimont, UN Coordinator in Bangladesh and the heads of FAO, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNFPA and ILO.

Information Minister Barister Najmul Huda was the guest of honour.

Gandaria High School

Gandaria High School yesterday became the champion in the school debate competition defeating St. Gregory's School in the final.

Charter President of Supreme Lions Club Ratna Rahmatullah distributed prizes among the winners. 22 schools took part in the debate competition organised by the Leo Club of Dhaka, Gandaria.

Blooming Buds School

The science exhibition at the Blooming Buds School in Dhanmondi ended yesterday with a large number of visitors enjoying the shows presented by the tiny tots.

Education Secretary Shaful Alam had opened the fair last Thursday.

SIGA

A seminar on "Physical Mental and Surrounding Conditions for Meditation" was held here at Scout Bhaban on Friday.

Organised by Silva International Graduate Association (SIGA), Bangladesh, noted astrologer Syed Al-Bokhari (Mahajata) read out key note paper at the seminar.

It was presided over by SIGA-Bangladesh President Sharif Ul Haque.

Among others, noted magician Jewel Aich took part in the discussion.

About 100 Silva graduates including physician, engineer and other professionals participated in the seminar.

Rotary Club of Dhaka North

The Rotary Club of Dhaka North has recently organised a seminar on "an overview of the current situation and suggestion for improvement" which was presided over by club president Aftabul Islam while LK Siddiqui MP, district governor of the Rotary District 3280 was the chief guest.

The seminar was participated by Home Secretary Manzur-ul-Karim, Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, Mahbubur Rahman of FBCCI, Morshed Khan of MCCI, Nazrul Islam Khan and Gias Kamal Chowdhury.

Change in family planning campaign strategies stressed

By Staff Correspondent

Experts in a workshop Saturday revealed that the rate of contraceptive use in the country rose from 31.4 per cent to 40 per cent in last two years.

Appreciating this rise, the experts stressed the need for changing family planning campaign strategies for further increase.

It was pointed out in the day-long workshop on the occasion of Presentation of the Key Research Findings for the National Family Planning—Mother and Child Health (FP-MCH) Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy.

The workshop, jointly organised by the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programmes and USAID, Dhaka, was attended by Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal ibne Yusuf as chief guest in the inaugural session.

Speakers at the workshop also revealed that presently 93 lakh couples were using family planning methods.

The researchers revealed their findings that family planning strategies need to be changed for its success in the Chittagong region where family planning was not as popular as other regions of the country.

Director General of the Directorate of Family Planning A K M Rafiquzzaman, and Director of USAID William R Goldman were present as special guests while it was chaired by Joint Secretary M Fazlur Rahman of the Health Ministry. Country Representative of the Johns Hopkins University Edson E Whitney spoke and Dr Barkat-e-Khuda and Anish K Barua presented the key findings.

"I think we have many miles to go (in family planning achievements)" the Health Minister said, "the people needs more motivation (to

take up family planning... the most important aspect of family planning is education, motivation and information."

Fazlur Rahman said that for a successful family planning achievement, allocation by donors in this field must be continued along with the due

importance to be given on IEC.

The Johns Hopkins University research revealed an increasing dependency on foreign assistance in health and family planning programmes in the country which rose to 67 per cent in 1988 from 46 per cent in 1980.

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What's on today

Rotary Club of Dhaka West

The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka West will be held today (Sunday) at 5.30pm at Gulshan Club in the city. Dr Shanewaz Khan will be the guest speaker in the meeting and speak on 'Quality assurance of laboratory analysis in medical diagnosis'.

ADAB workshop

The Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) has arranged a two-day workshop on 'Cultivation of fish: Innovation of techniques to help the poor people' at the BMDC auditorium begins today (Sunday) in the city.

The inaugural function starting at 9 am, will be addressed by Md Fazlur Rahman Chowdhury, Director General of the Bureau of NGO Affairs, as chief guest.

Member-Director of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Nuruzzaman Khan will preside over while the ADAB Director Mahbub ul Karim will deliver the address of welcome.

UNAB

A symposium will be held today (Sunday) 5-00 pm at the Auditorium of the United Nations Information Centre, House No 25, Road No-11, (Old Road No - 32) Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Winston Temple, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP will be the main speaker.

Eminent Educationist Dr A M Sharafuddin, Vice-President, UNAB will preside over the function.

Bank Bima

The first anniversary of publication of the magazine Bank Bima will be observed today (Sunday) at 1 pm at the Dhaka Club through a discussion meeting.

Commerce Minister MK Anwar will attend the meeting as chief guest while State Minister for Finance Mojibor Rahman will attend as special guest. President of Bangladesh Sangbadptra Parishad Barister Moinul Hossain will preside.

National Heart Foundation

The officials of National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh will exchange opinion with the journalists at the foundation's hospital premises at Plot No 7/2, Section No 2 (opposite to Mirpur Thana) in the city today (Sunday) at 11 am.

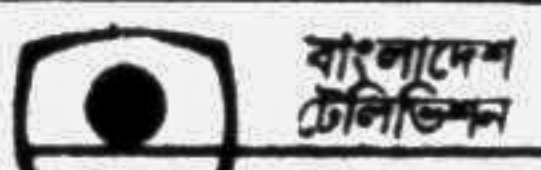
.... and tomorrow

BICPAJ

The 111th regular monthly meeting of BICPAJ will be held tomorrow (Monday) at 4-30 pm at the BICPAJ meeting room.

Rotary Club of North

The 1144th regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held tomorrow (Monday) at 5-30 pm at Sonargaon Hotel. Christopher R Willoughby, Chief of World Bank Mission in Bangladesh, will speak on 'The role of World Bank in the context of Economic Development of Bangladesh' as guest speaker.



BTV

Sunday

- 5.00 Opening announcement
- 5.10 Al-Quran Programme summary
- 5.20 News in Bangla
- 5.25 Recitation from the Bible
- 5.30 Sports programme
- 5.35 Cricket
- 6.20 Cartoon : I Want to Know
- 7.05 Tagore songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's speech in Rome on World Food Day
- 9.00 Drama series : Oshin
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.25 Parliament round-up
- 10.35 Sur-Lahri : Classical music
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.40 Monday's programme summary
- 11.45 Closing

Obituary

Zeenat Jabbar, wife of Major General (rtd) Abdul Jabbar, died of a heart attack at the CMH, Friday family sources, reports BSS.

Weather

No change in day temperature

By Staff Correspondent

Weather will remain mainly dry over the country during the next 24 hours commencing 6 am today (Sunday).

The day temperature is likely to remain unchanged over the country, the Met office forecasts.

The maximum temperature of 33.0 degree Celsius was reported from Jessore yesterday (Saturday) and the minimum of 18.0 degree was reported from Dinajpur.

The sun sets today Sunday at 5.24 pm and rises tomorrow Monday at 6.01 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity of some of the major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities /Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6pm
Dhaka	31.6	20.6	67	70
Chittagong	30.5	22.2	84	68
Rajshahi	32.4	19.4	60	79
Khulna	32.0	22.0	77	92
Cox's Bazar	31.0	22.5	78	77
Dinajpur	30.3	18.0	72	75
Sylhet	29.0	21.0	88	69
Barisal	31.5	21.0	86	84