

# DOWN TO EARTH

## Traffic tangles, passenger sheds and telephone etiquette

By A S M Nurunnabi

Dhaka's traffic situation at present is a shambles. Instead of our noticing improvement in this respect, we have been observing gradual deterioration in several important areas.

One particular aspect which is a constant eyesore and a terrible strain on one's patience is the constant traffic jams on important roads. The principal factor causing them is the slow-moving cycle rickshaws. Most of the time and particularly at peak hours, the vast panorama of these primitive vehicles inching their way through crowded roads in busy areas presents a mind boggling spectacle. In a megacity which Dhaka is poised to be, it is absurd to think of a primitive vehicle like rickshaw operating in its traffic system. Yet no indication is available that traffic authorities are serious in planning discontinuation of this archaic transport in the interest of an efficient transport system. In most South Asian countries, this transport has either been abolished or in the process of dying out. But here in Dhaka, we find its number increasing day by day.

It is inexorable that sooner or later, speedier transports will replace rickshaws. It, therefore, behooves the transport authorities to frame a suitable perspective plan in this behalf without delay. In that case, those whose subsistence depends on this conveyance may have time to prepare themselves for alternative sources of living.

Road congestion is reportedly a common problem of important urban areas of Asia. Intolerable road congestions have prompted governments from Philippines to Indonesia to go for mass transit systems. Likewise, many megacities like Calcutta, Tokyo and Hong Kong, because of space limitation, have pushed upward from street level or downward below ground to set up light railway systems. All this is because their road networks — and booming populations — have made commuting for both motorists and pedestrians almost impossible.

Similar situation is fast developing in Dhaka city. In view of this it is just a question of time when solutions will have to be found in similar mass transit facilities.

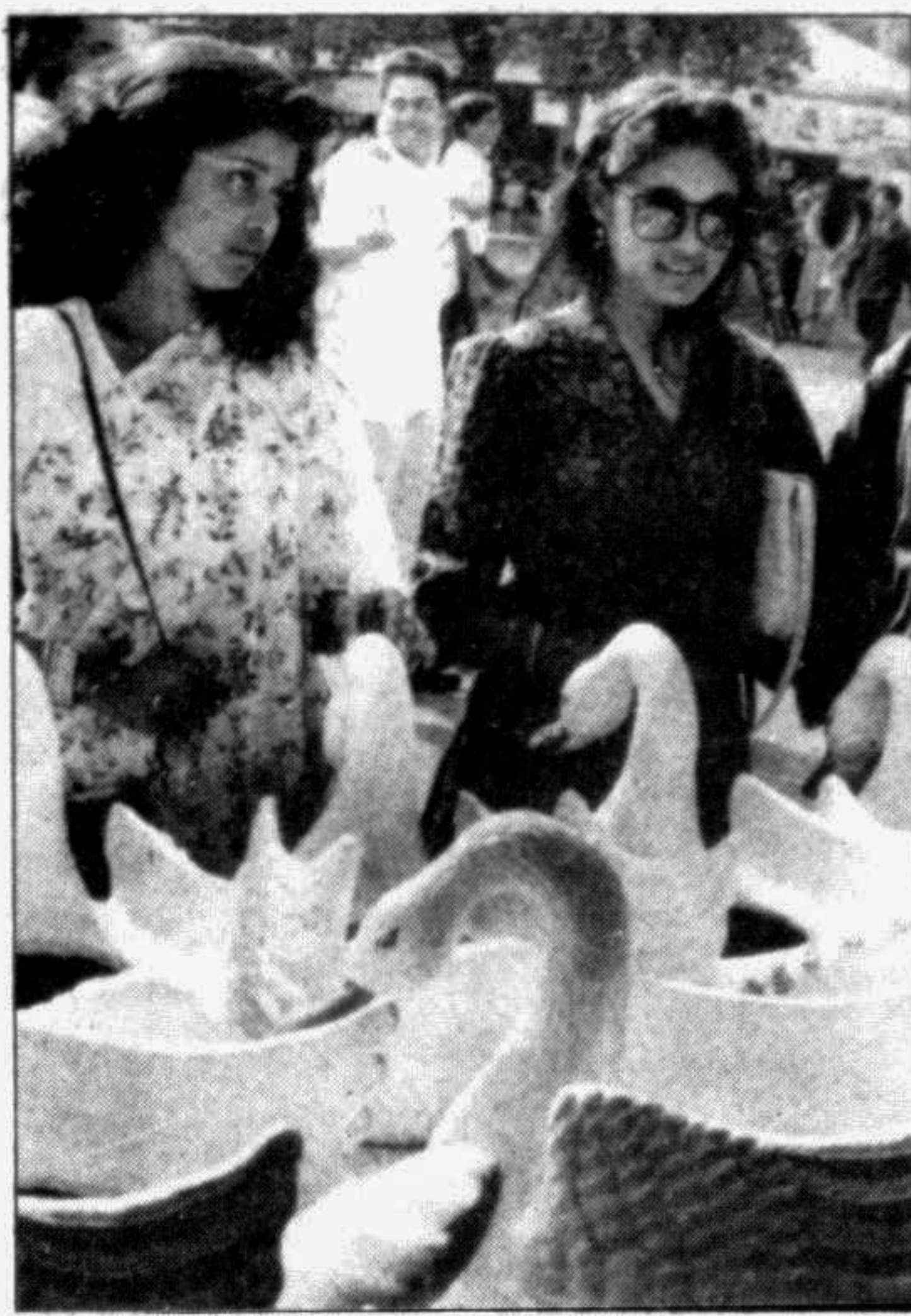
A number of passenger sheds have been erected at important bus stands to protect passengers from sun and rain. Lately it has been observed that these sheds are not serving the purpose for which they were set up. They have now become haunts of beggars, destitutes and stray cattle. Some of these beggars and destitutes have set up impromptu family establishments at these places, where they are seen cooking, bathing and lounging. The result is that waiting bus passengers remain outside the protection of these sheds in times of need.

The bus passengers, by and large, feel that for the sake of presenting a cleaner urban look, and for meeting the needs of waiting passengers, these waiting sheds should be cleared of encroachments.

Entry formalities in to the Bangladesh Secretariat often involve frustrating experience. Those who have relatives, friends or acquaintances in the upper echelons of the ministries and could manage to get entry passes beforehand, have an easy sailing. But those who have no such advantage suffer great inconvenience and long wait. Under the rules, only the officers of the rank of Joint Secretary and above are entitled to issue entry passes. The personal staff of the ministers are also similarly authorised.

But it is no easy task to reach an officer of the appropriate level by telephone for the purpose of making an appointment. When the calls are first received by the PAs or Private Secretaries, the result is often abortive initially, although the official wanted may be very much present in his office. The PAs/ Private Secretaries perhaps play their negative role under instructions.

In the interest of healthy public administration, proper telephone etiquette not only for the purpose of obtaining entry passes, but also for other purposes should be developed by way of helpful responses from the personal staff of the concerned officials. It is seen that public officials, by and large (of course with infrequent exceptions) seem to be impervious to elementary courtesy in their verbal communication with the members of the public whose business is pending with those officials.



A view of the Meena Bazar arranged by the Women Volunteer Association at Gulshan in city yesterday. —Star photo

## Malnutrition, disease claim 250000 children a week: UNICEF

NEW YORK, Dec 18: Twenty-five billion dollars a year are needed to provide the world's children with adequate nutrition, drinking water, basic medical care and a primary education, according to the United Nation's Children's Fund, reports AFP.

Pneumonia kills 3.5 million children each year. It is caused by a bacteria that in 80 per cent to 90 per cent of all cases can be treated in five days with a cycle of antibiotics that costs 25 cents.

Diarhoea takes the lives of three million children annually. Half of those deaths could be avoided by teaching parents an oral rehydration technique. Measles kills 800,000 children a year, though the vaccine to prevent it costs 50 cents per child.

### Iodized salt

Physical capabilities, according to the State of the World's Children Report 1993. People get iodine from the food both plant and animal. The people in areas that experience seasonal flooding and rains suffer from iodine deficiency, because the waters wash out the iodine from soil.

According to a booklet on iodine deficiency published by the UNICEF, there are some places in the northern region of the country where people are mentally slower and weaker. The booklet terms these pockets 'islands of inaction' and says that it is hard to train the people of areas as their production capacity is also lower than that in other regions. Even the livestock in these areas suffer from the IDD.

More than 30 per cent of the total populace in greater Rangpur, Dinajpur and Mymensingh districts are victim to IDD.

Ten per cent of the total 115 million population of the country are iodine deficient, the booklet says. Iodine is essential to the hormone that regulates normal growth and development of the human body.

The solution to the IDD is simple and inexpensive, says the UNICEF report, because all humans eat salt and because iodine can be added to salt without affecting its appearance or taste, the IDD can be eliminated by iodizing all salts at the point of packaging.

With the cooperation of the salt industry, large and recurring public expenditures should not be necessary to solve the problem, the report adds.

Already, according to the report, 30 per cent of the salts for human consumption are now fortified with iodine.

## Serbs' promise to end war will fail: Owen

SARAJEVO, Dec 18: UN mediator Lord Owen predicted Friday that a promise by Bosnian Serbs to end war in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Christmas will fail because it doesn't provide "an honorable settlement" for Muslims, reports AP.

Owen said Bosnian Serbs had not achieved all their military aims and predicted they would continue fighting. "I don't think they have everything they wanted," Owen said. "And there will be no peace unless there is an honorable settlement with the Muslims."

Owen, traveling with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, arrived in Sarajevo from Zagreb for talks with military leaders. They will discuss removing heavy weapons from Sarajevo and opening safe relief corridors. Mortar and small arms fire sounded as his UN-operated Ilyushin jet touched down.

Sarajevo has no electricity, running water, telephones or heating and much of the population is surviving on tea with bread or macaroni.

Earlier Friday, UN spokesman Adnan Abdelrazek condemned Serbs for asking people who want to leave the city to gather at a church in Sarajevo. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan

Karadzic said the residents would proceed toward the suburb of Ildiza, where Serb forces would meet them. But no one gathered at the church on Friday.

The Bosnian government is suspicious of the Serbs' offer to let residents leave, believing no one would be left to prevent Serbs from taking over the capital.

UN officials condemned the move as exploiting civilians and political grandstanding. "This is not a UN plan and we will not be engaged," Abdelrazek said.

The declaration appeared to be an attempt to deflect criticism of Bosnian Serbs and head off preparations by the West to use force to stop Serbian attacks on Croats and Muslims.

Karadzic appealed to the American people not to allow Germany and Turkey to push the United States "into an adventure like the one in Vietnam."

In eastern Bosnia, United Nations and Red Cross convoys reached thousands of Serbian refugees between the government-held enclave of Srebrenica and the Serb-held town of Bratunac.

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## Central office looted, claims Jatiya Party

By Staff Correspondent

A group of unidentified armed men late Thursday allegedly looted the temporary central office of the Jatiya Party at Kawranbazar in the capital.

A press release of the party said that the group of 50 armed people entered the office at about 4 am Friday and looted the property of the party from inside the office.

The press release also alleged that late in the morning a huge contingent of police arrived at the spot and locked the entrances to the JP office.

The Tejgaon police also refused to accept a general diary filed on behalf of the party on the incident, the press release accused.

JP Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Tito in a statement Friday resented the incident and demanded of the police to open the locks immediately.

JP will bring out a procession today (Saturday) in the city to protest the alleged looting and sealing of their office.

## JP leader shot dead at Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Dec 18: Jatiya Party local leader and prospective candidate for the January 23 Pourashava election Mohammad Ali was shot dead by unknown assailants on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Police said a group of 12 armed men stopped Ali (38) on his way to Chuadanga bus stand at about 10 pm and sprayed four bullets on him. He was rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital where doctors advised to take him to Jessore hospital. But he died before reaching the hospital.

Witnesses said Ali was campaigning for ensuring municipal election at Hamdoba bus stand late in the evening.

## 25 injured as buses collide

By DMCH Correspondent

At least 40 passengers were injured when two buses collided head on near Shanirakhra at Demra Friday morning.

Of the injured passengers 25 were admitted at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Witnesses said that a minibus bound for Daudkandi from Dhaka collided with another bus coming from the opposite direction at around 11 am Friday.

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## India sends 3 warships to Somalia

BOMBAY, Dec 18: India today dispatched three warships and 180 marines to join United Nations famine relief and peacekeeping operations in Somalia, an Indian Navy spokesman said, reports Reuter.

## BJP apologises

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tricians and pull down mosque's three domes. The trainees were put through their paces in September in the remote western Indian village of Sarkhej, and were visited by arrested Hindu revivalist MP Vinay Katiyar. Pilot told the lower house. He did not name the Brigadier or cite the source of his information. Meanwhile, security around jathed leaders of the BJP will be strengthened after a newspaper reported they could be the targets of a death squad, the Indian government said today. Security will be tightened at the guest house where BJP leaders Advani and Joshi are being held, said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. The Indian Express newspaper reported today that they were shifted from a jail in the northern city of Agra earlier this week because the government had received reports that three death squads from an unnamed West Asian nation were out to assassinate the BJP leaders.

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## UAE departs many Pakistanis for protesting Babri mosque destruction

KARACHI, Dec 18: The United Arab Emirates has deported hundreds of Pakistani Muslims accused of staging illegal demonstrations there, Pakistani officials sources said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Relief workers helping the deportees said about 700 had been sent to Karachi by air and sea over the last three days. Two flights brought 320 deportees back on Thursday, airport officials said. More than 300 returned on the previous two days. The Pakistanis, most of them labourers, were deported after they held demonstrations earlier this month to protest against the destruction of an ancient mosque by Hindu fundamentalists in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya.

## Imported clothes worth Tk 70 lakh seized in city

By Staff Correspondent

A special team of Customs Intelligence Directorate seized foreign clothes worth about Taka 70 lakh from a wholesale cloth market in city Friday.

On a tip intelligence team held a truck at Babu Bazar and seized about 54,500 yards of suiting, poplin and flannel. Customs officials said that the clothes imported by a garments factory were being sent to open market for sale evading government duty. A departmental case was lodged in this connection, officials added.

## Palestinians in no-man's land

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they stopped the Palestinians entering their territory through Marj az-Zohour checkpoint in the Bekaa Valley. The Arabs then returned to Israeli lines aboard the trucks, which dropped them on the edge of the security zone. Witnesses said Israeli troops fired volleys of about 100 rounds over their heads and drove back the Palestinians who started a nine-km (six miles) return walk to Marj az-Zohour. The Bekaa Valley chief of the Lebanese Red Cross, Mohammad Al-Rifai, said none of the deportees was hit by bullets. Tired and hungry, the Palestinians abandoned plans to test the Lebanese troops' resolve a second time. They sat down in the mist-shrouded,

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## Hasina protests razing of tombstone at RU

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday protested the razing of the tombstone on the mass grave in Rajshahi University campus allegedly by anti-liberation Jamaat-Shibir elements in the late night of Victory Day, reports UNB.

In a statement, she said Jamaat-Shibir once again exposed their anti-liberation character by destroying the tombstone, largest mass grave in the country.

The Awami League President said Jamaat-Shibir was rehabilitated by BNP in post-75 era. These anti-liberation elements backed by the present BNP regime have been once again involved in conspiracy against the spirit and objective of the Independence War.

The BNP government remains silent and refrains from taking action against the evil activities of Jamaat-Shibir as Prime Minister formed her government with their support, she said.

## Arms accord: Eagleburger unaware

BRUSSELS, Dec 18: US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said today he was not aware that a US-Russian deal to slash their arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons had been reached, as announced earlier by Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Beijing, reports Reuter. (Earlier Story on Page 5)

## CHT polls

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Old Ahmed said, "now he should get mingled in the stream of development sinking all differences and contribute for the welfare of the country as well as nation." The people should understand that discipline, first of all, is needed for development, he said.

Raja Devashish Roy said the present government elected by the mandate of the people has been taking one after another logical steps for solving the existing problems of the hill tract districts, demonstrating its good intention.

Parijat Chakma said the government has shown sincerity in regard to solving the Chittagong Hill Tract problems from the political and economic points of view.

The Communications Minister later inaugurated the 5,900 meter-long Bagachhari Canal Project. The canal will be excavated on voluntary and food-for-work basis and it is scheduled to be completed by April next year.

## Malaysia

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The spokesman said that the Malaysian government was compelled to do it to check illegal entry into the country. He alleged that some unscrupulous agents were sending people illegally to Malaysia for employment.

The spokesman mentioned that one Bangladeshi manpower agent could manage to send 700 persons in one month illegally for employment in Malaysia. This practice of sending people illegally were being followed by many other agents, said the spokesman adding that the new visa arrangement will help to curb the illegal entry into Malaysia.

## BJC

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acquired property of Rally Brothers, losses at BJC reached record levels in recent years.

According to a World Bank report, the combined losses of the jute sector, including both the public and private sector jute mills, BJC, traders and spinners, reached a record level of Taka 700 crore in 1991 alone.

Which, the report points out, is just under 20 per cent of the project aid disbursements for the year and about one per cent of the nations Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The process of off-loading the property of the corporation has already been initiated. These include godowns, jute presses and other property around the country.

A tender was recently floated to sell the corporation's property located in Chittagong and offers were also finalised.

But, an order from the Prime Minister's office last week asked the Jute Ministry to stop all sale of the corporation's property.

Ministry sources said that the order came in the backdrop of poor response and low bid.

According to the corporation source, about Taka 18 crore worth of raw jute is currently stocked in the BJC godowns, proceeds from which will also help repay the traders.

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# The Midnight File

## Kim Young-Sam set to win

SEOUL, Dec 18: Majority party ticket-holder Kim Young-Sam looked set for victory in South Korea's presidential race today, taking a 7.5-point lead over rival Kim Dae-Jung with more than a quarter of the votes counted. Official figures carried by state television showed Kim Young-Sam, of the Democratic Liberal Party, had taken 41.7 per cent of the vote after 25.7 per cent of the ballots cast on Friday had been tallied. Kim Dae-Jung, of the opposition Democratic Party, was lagging with 34.2 per cent, reports Reuter.

## Uruguay Round of world trade talks moving forward: Dunkel

GENEVA, Dec 18: GATT chief Arthur Dunkel said today the long-running Uruguay Round of world trade talks were not stalemated but moving forward. But Dunkel, Director General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, also told the round's guiding Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) that the 108-state talks were "in a race against time," reports Reuter.

## France drops opposition to joint peace-keeping idea

BRUSSELS, Dec 18: NATO and its former Warsaw Pact enemies agreed today to prepare for joint peace-keeping missions in Europe, after France dropped its opposition to the idea, alliance sources told Reuters. A statement issued after a meeting in Brussels of the 16 NATO members, Eastern European nations and former Soviet republics said they agreed on a plan for cooperation. This would include "joint sessions on planning of peace-keeping missions, joint participation in peace-keeping training and consideration of possible joint peace-keeping exercises," the statement said, reports Reuter.

## MOU with China to develop herbal medicines

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) and State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SATCM) for the development of herbal medicines in Dhaka, reports ISS.

According to the MOU, signed at BCSIR yesterday, SATCM will train BCSIR scientists in the processing and preparation of herbal medicine from local plants and herbs.

## Germany ratifies Maastricht Treaty

BONN, Dec 18: Germany on Friday ratified the Maastricht Treaty on European unification, leaving only Britain and Denmark to rule on the embattled pact, reports AP.

## Hasina

From Page 1 Col 4

people who voted BNP to power were now repenting as Begum Zia's government failed to fulfill its election promises made to the people.

Corruption, bribe, nepotism, terrorism and inefficiency marked the two years rule of the BNP government, Hasina said.

Even this government failed to reconstruct the Karnaphuli bridge damaged by the cyclone two years back when the post-independent Awami League government reconstructed 700 bridges in only three and a half years.

Presided over by Bashkhal thana Al. President Habibullah Chowdhury, the meeting was addressed by Pulin Dey, Amir Hossain Amu, Ataur Rahman, Khan Kaiser, Akhtaruzzaman Babu, Sultanul Kabir Chowdhury, MP, Ishaq Mia, Idris B. Com, Moslemuddin and Chhatra League President Mainul Hossain Chowdhury.

SEEING IS BELEIVING  
SEE BANGLADESH  
Be a guest of  
Hotel Abakash and  
Restaurant



- Hotel Abakash, located at the heart of Dhaka's busiest commercial area, Mahakhali, offers you residential accommodation at an economy price.
- Parjatan Restaurant, located in this hotel serves a variety of fascinating Bangladesh Chinese European Cuisines.
- Hotel Abakash also houses an air conditioned Conference Room (45 seats) and a Banquet Hall (130 seats)
- To cater to your needs Abakash also has a Pastry Shop with a galaxy of delicacies.
- To serve you even better we have a outside Catering Unit. It can take care of your Tea, Lunch or Dinner Party whenever you need.

For details please contact:

- Hotel Abakash 83-88 Mahakhali, Dhaka Phone: 807085-9
- Tourist Information Centres:
  - Parjatan Head Office Phone: 317836, 325155-9
  - Dhaka Sheraton Hotel Phone: 509479, 863391/566
  - Sonargon Hotel Phone: 811005/4137

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