

Dhaka Day by Day

Those Making the Miracle Possible

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

In this age of overpowering cynicism, there are still a few who believe in miracles. Amena, a 14-year-old girl from Chapainawabganj is one of them. Amena, who was born into a poor family lost her mother at the age of two and her eyesight at three due to malnutrition, and vitamin A deficiency. But with the help of an organisation, Amena has regained her eyesight at 14, thanks to a successful corneal transplant, and can now see the world that is waiting for her to discover.

Shandhani National Eye Donation Society or SNEDS is the organisation dedicated to make such miracles happen. Purely on a voluntary basis, Shandhani has so far restored eyesight to hundreds of blind people, most of them children.

This has been possible through an International Eye Bank in Dhaka Medical College Hospital established by Shandhani. Eight additional eye banks have been set up, one in each medical college hospital of the country. The banks provide all arrangements for aseptic enucleation, and processing preservation and transport of eye tissues.

At the headquarters of the Eye Bank, a tiny office in the ground floor, amazing work is being done. A 24-hour telephone answering service enables Shandhani staff to immediately call patients waiting for eye operations as soon as a donor is found. When this happens, the staff on duty will call the doctors for collection and preservation of the eyes and eye surgeons are contacted to prepare for surgery. Time is a crucial factor in this process since with the present technology, the eyeball must be collected within six hours of death of the person whose eyes will be taken. Once collected, the eyeball is preserved in a small container in the refrigerator at about 4°C. The normal saline solution at the bottom of the container preserves the eyeball for about 18 hours although doctors prefer not to wait that long.

Surprisingly, the procedure that restores eyesight is relatively simple, says Dr Tareq Reza Ali, secretary general of SNEDS. Since almost all the cases Shandhani deals with are related to cornea damage, the first thing the doctors do is test the patient if cornea grafting is possible. Once that is ensured the damaged cornea of the patient is cut out and replaced by the good cornea of the donated eyeball. The cornea is a transparent tissue which acts as the window of the eye. If the operation is successful — and in most cases they are, the patient who was completely blind before, will be able to see. Usually, the cornea of a 40 to 45-year-old person is used

but even a 90-year-old cornea if in good condition, can be used, says Dr Reza.

Although, Shandhani and other organisations have been working tirelessly to promote posthumous eye donation in the country, getting enough eyeballs is still a major challenge. So far out of the 16,497 pledges by donors, only 13 pairs of cornea have been collected. The reason for this, says Dr Reza, is that even though a donor has pledged his eyes, when it is time to

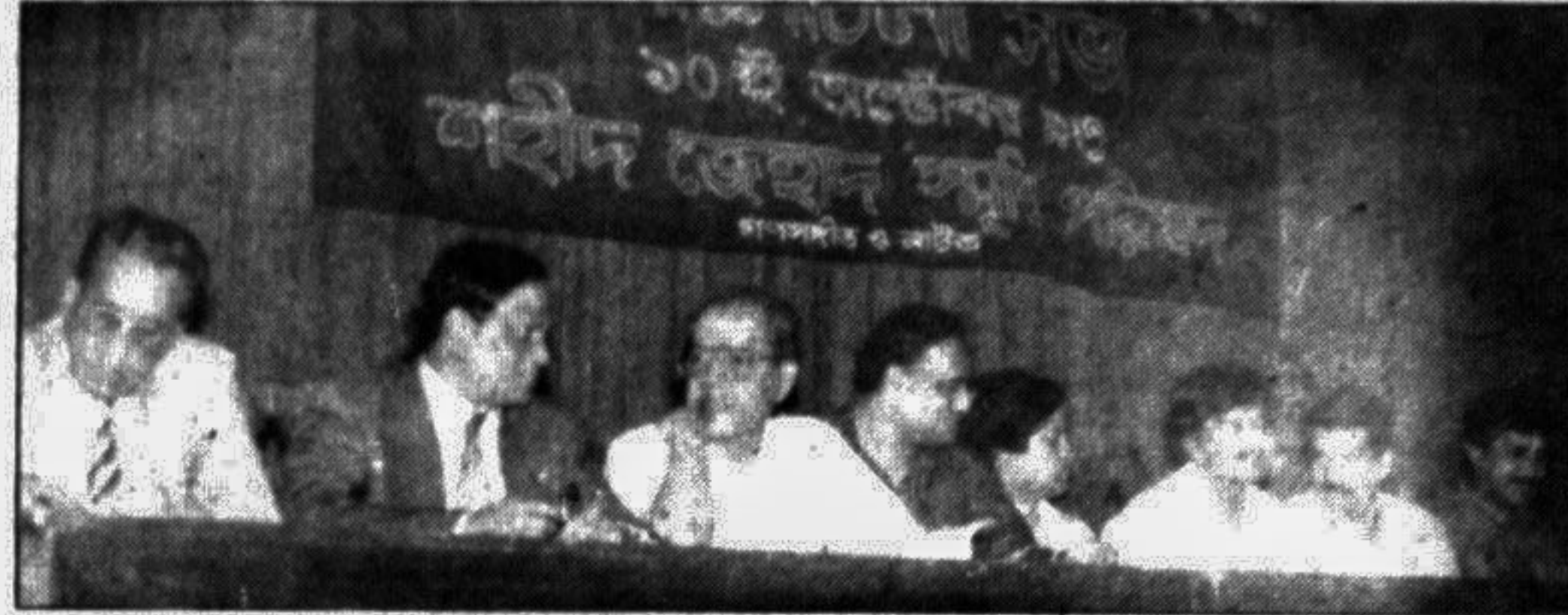
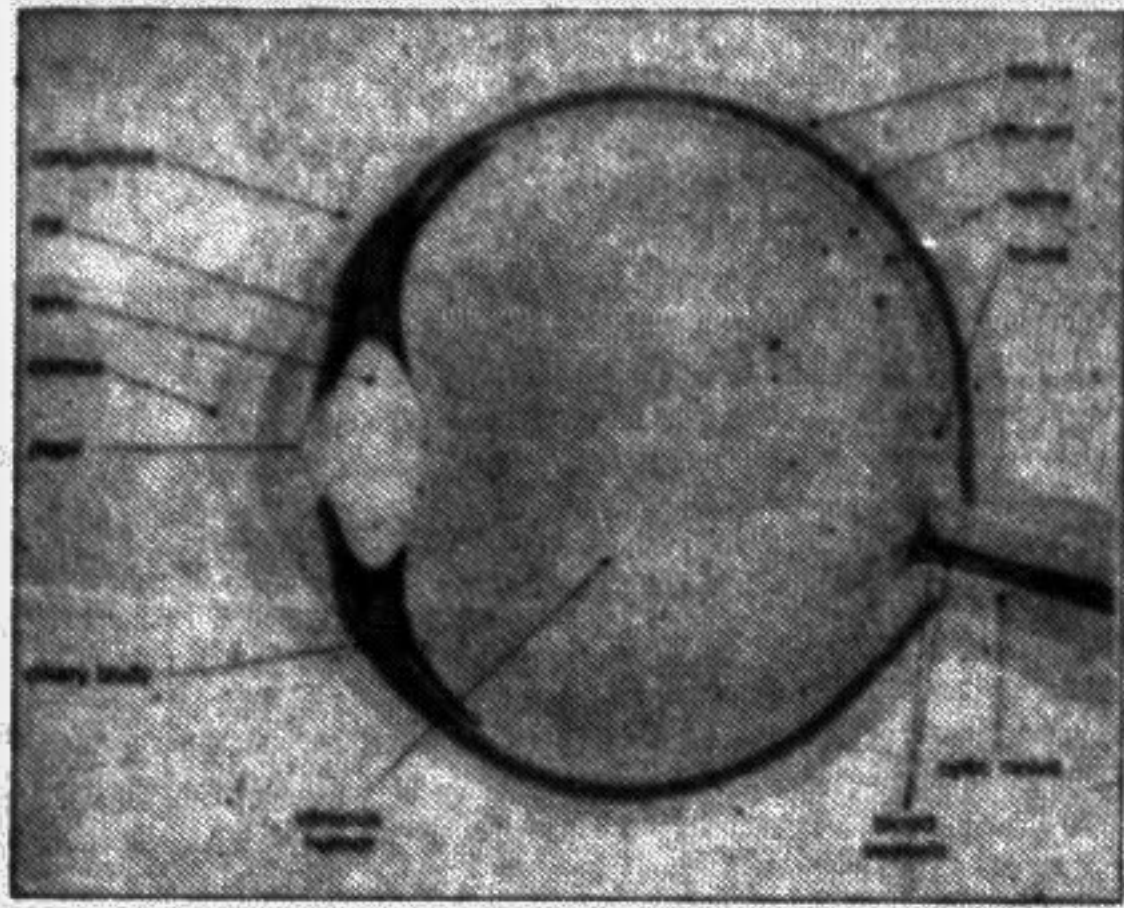
collect the eyeballs the family members either do not allow it or do not inform the eye bank when the donor dies. Most of the eyeballs are collected therefore, from unclaimed bodies. According to the Eye Donation Act of 1975, if a body is not claimed within two hours of death then the eyeballs can be collected by eye banks. Since 1985, Shandhani has collected 412 corneas out of which 393 have been used in successful cornea grafting operations.

Sandhani's policy is preferential to girl patients. "Usually," says Dr Reza, "we give one eye if both eyes are damaged but for girl patients we try to give both because we have seen that they cannot get married otherwise."

In spite of its noble intentions, Sandhani still faces many problems. It does not have proper equipment, an operation theatre, enough funds and the use of latest technology.

Dr Reza mentions that the preserving method now used by Sandhani is old and has limitations. Even in neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, the latest preserving solution known as 'MK media' is used which can keep an eyeball for six months he says. Bangladesh, says Dr Reza, is still far behind in the eye donation movement, compared to other countries especially Sri Lanka. People are still reluctant about donating their eyes due to superstition and the misconception that doing so would be against the doctrines of Islam. For this, Dr Reza suggests involving religious leaders in the publicity campaigns to reassure people that eye donating is allowed by Islam.

Another area Sandhani is concentrating on is disseminating information on the preventive part. Every year 30,000 children go blind because of severe vitamin A deficiency, chronic dysentery or diarrhoea. Such blindness is easily preventable. Sandhani's Primary Eyecare Programme this year supported by World Vision includes a five month training course in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chittagong and Barisal. The workshop will train 20 health workers on primary eye care.



Speakers at a discussion in memory of Naziruddin Jihad at the Shilpakala Academy yesterday. From left to right Barrister Aminul Haq, State Minister for Establishment, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Deputy Leader of the House Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury. Also seen in the picture Amanullah Aman MP, Habibur Rahman Habib, and Khairul Kabir Khokon. — Star photo

Discussion in memory of Jihad Call to establish society free from terrorism

Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday stressed the need for proper evaluation of the contributions of those who had shed blood for restoration of democracy, reports BSS.

Addressing a discussion, organised by the Shaheed Jihad Smriti Parishad, as the chief guest at the Shilpakala Academy in the afternoon, the Deputy Leader called for establishment of a society free from terrorism. He described terrorists as enemies of sovereignty and forces working against the country's interest.

Paying tributes to Nazir Uddin Jihad, JCD leader, who was killed during the anti-autocracy movement on this day in 1990, Prof Chowdhury said he had embraced martyrdom for the establishment of democracy and restoration of a society free from violence.

Presided over by Dr. Captain (ret'd) Masudur Rahman, president of the parishad, the meeting was addressed by Work Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, State Minister for Establishment Barrister Aminul Haq, M Akbar Ali, MP, Amanullah Aman, MP, DUCSU General Secretary Khairul Kabir Khokon, student leaders Habibur Rahman Habib, Zahir Uddin Swapan, Jahangir Sattar Tinku, Shaifur Rahman Shaifur, Jihad's sister Khondaker Chameli, Prof. Nurul Haq, Kamal Uddin Ahmed and Amar Halder Babul, general secretary of the parishad.

Our DU correspondent adds:

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders alleged that a section of people was trying to hinder democratic process by calling hartals.

The JCD held a rally on the Dhaka University campus yesterday morning to observe the third death anniversary of Naziruddin Jihad who was killed in police firing of an anti-autocratic demonstration near the Jatiya Press Club on October 10, 1990.

Jihad was a JCD leader of Ullapara College, Sirajganj.

The JCD leaders, in the rally yesterday at the Aparajeo Bangla at the DU, also urged all to help to uproot terrorism from the educational institutions.

"We shall have to materialise the dreams of Jihad who sacrificed his life for a democratic country", the leaders added.

The JCD rally was addressed, among others, by its president Fazlul Huq Milon, Nazimuddin Alam, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Annie and Abul Khair Bhuiyan.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Chhatra Dal (BCD) held a discussion at its central office at Asad Avenue in the city yesterday to observe Jihad's death anniversary.

The BCD leaders alleged that the ruling BNP was destroying democracy which was achieved after the fall of the autocratic Ershad regime.

The discussion was participated, among others by Muzaffar Hossain Zakir and M A Hashem Razi.

Reception accorded to meritorious HSC students

The meritorious students who secured top positions in the merit list under Dhaka Board and Leos who made brilliant result in the HSC Examinations, were accorded a reception at a ceremony held at a hotel here yesterday under the sponsorship of Rotary Club of Dhanmondi, reports BSS.

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar attended the function as the chief guest. Chaired by Club President, Sheikh A Hafiz, the function was addressed by the club secretary AZM Hossain.

Addressing the function the Education Minister said the present government was making all-out efforts for flourishing of the talents of the students for making them worthy citizens of the country.

He said the well-to-do people of the society could help to flourish the latent talents of the poor and meritorious students through awarding scholarships and providing them with educational materials.

He also called upon the Rotarians to put in their best efforts for mitigating the sufferings of the down trodden people and alleviating poverty from society.

Earlier, the minister gave away prizes among the meritorious students, their parents and heads of the institutions.

Workshop on water, sanitation skill begins

A UN-sponsored six-day workshop on Water and Sanitation Skills and Strategy began at a local hotel yesterday, reports UNB.

Some 38 programmes and project officers working in the UNICEF offices in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives and host Bangladesh are participating in the workshop, sponsored by the UN agency headquarters.

The agenda include Sanitation and Hygiene Education, Health Impact of Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes, Gender Issues in Water and Sanitation, the Sector and the Environment and Technical Options of Water Supply.

World Bank keen to help in transfer of technology

The World Bank is keen on assisting Bangladesh in the field of transfer of technology and labour and manpower development, reports UNB.

Chief of the Bank's resident mission in Bangladesh Christopher R Willoughby said this when he called on State Minister for Planning Dr A Moyeen Khan at his office on Saturday.

Willoughby said the matter of open competition should be considered for private sector investment in the light of the government policy.

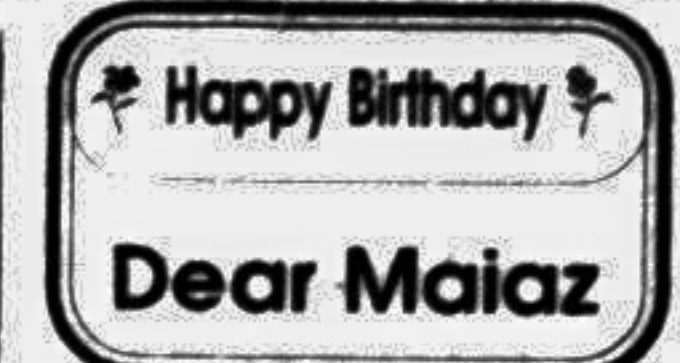
Various aspects of the country's next development plan also came up during the discussion.

Citing the low rate of savings in Bangladesh, Dr Khan said the government has taken massive programmes in the fields of poverty alleviation, mass education, human resource development for increasing the rate of savings.

Discussing various projects funded by the World Bank in the field of human resource development, the minister emphasised that administrative cost should be reduced and the money used for the target group.

The government has created a favourable environment of private sector investment and measures have been taken to simplify project appraisal and approval procedure so its implementation can be completed in scheduled time, he added.

Senior economists and officials of World Bank Mission and Dr Ekram Hossain, member of the Planning Commission, were present.



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Introduction of English as second language at all levels suggested

A parliamentary sub-committee has expressed the view that English should be introduced at all levels of education as second language, reports UNB.

Discussing the activities of ERD, the third meeting of the sub-committee of the standing committee of Ministry of Finance on the External Resources Division also opined that officers well conversant in English and brilliant should be deputed to ERD for further improvement of its function.

The meeting, held yesterday

at the committee room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Abdul Mannan in the chair, also discussed the foreign-aided development projects.

It gave some suggestions to be placed before the standing committee of the Ministry of Finance regarding both financial and administrative powers of project directors including check and balance.

The meeting confirmed the minutes of the first and second meetings of the sub-committee.

101-power lines snapped, 7 held

The Energy Ministry itself launched a massive drive against power theft in an apparent bid to slash a staggering system loss, snapping 101 illegal electricity connections on Saturday, reports UNB.

Seven people were arrested and Tk 66,500 was realised as fine during the operation conducted by the Energy Ministry's vigilance team led by Additional Secretary AM Jalaluddin Ahmed.

A total of 80 cases were filed against the unauthorised power consumers. The drive was made at Simpson Road, Rahmatullah Mansion, Akmol Khan Road, Chittaranjan Avenue, Prasanna Poddar Lane (Nayabazar) and the markets adjacent to Nawab Yusuf Market.



Police nab a picket during yesterday's hartal hours in the city. — Star photo

Deaths in launch capsized condole

Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed MP yesterday expressed his shock at the death of more than 50 people, including women and children, in the launch capsized in Bhola on Friday, reports UNB.

Stands first

S M Zayed Ahmed, a student of the Department of Library and Information Science of the Dhaka University stood first in first class in the BA (Hons) examination of 1991 (held in 1993).

He is the eldest son of S M Abu Ishaque and Gulshan Ara Ishaque of Narayanganj.

Discussion on newspapers held

CHITTAGONG, Oct 10: Speakers at a discussion here today said that newspapers would have to play a vital role in safeguarding national sovereignty and independence, reports BSS.

They said, newspapers as mirror of a nation could mould strong public opinion in favour of national integrity and unity which are indispensable for preserving national independence.

The discussion held under the auspices of Purbanchaliyo Sangbadpatra Parishad in celebration of its first founding anniversary at Andarkilla Jam-e-Masjid yard here with its Convener Motuiddin Quaderi Shawkat in the chair.

They said, any move to divide the nation with unnecessary issues will hamper national prosperity.

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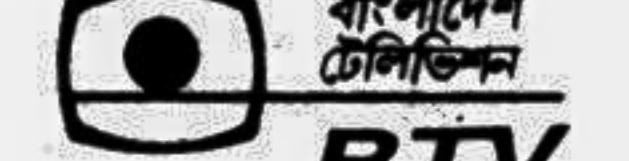
The status and grades of appointments will be according to qualification and experience. The last date of posting application is 30 October from within the country and 30 November from abroad.

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)
G.P.O.Box 459, Dhaka-1000. Fax 880-2-883959

New Dean of Postgraduate Medicine, Research

Dr SAR Chowdhury, Professor, Department of Pharmacology, IJGMR, has been elected uncontested the Dean of Postgraduate Medicine and Research for two academic years, says a press release.

Presently, he is the Editor of Bangladesh Medical Journal. Professor Chowdhury is a prominent member of the Research Team on Spirulina, a moss produced by the BCSIR to prevent diabetes, arthritis and hypertension.



Monday

- 5.00 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary
- 5.10 News in Bangla
- 5.25 Sports programme: Football Arsenal vs Manchester United
- 6.25 Moder Garob Moder Asha
- 6.50 Open University
- 7.20 Nazrul songs
- 8.00 News in Bangla
- 8.30 Population programme: Janomat
- 9.00 Special programme on Tagore songs — Git Bitan
- 10.00 News in English
- 10.30 Comedy series: Murphy Brown
- 10.55 Musical programme: Disco Rally
- 11.30 Khabar/The News
- 11.40 Tomorrow's programme summary
- 11.45 Closing.

Weather

No change in temperature

By Staff Correspondent
The weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country with partly cloudy sky over the coastal regions. The Met Office forecasts the south-west monsoon has withdrawn from Bangladesh. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Country's highest temperature of 34.6 degrees Celsius was recorded in Khulna and Rajshahi while the lowest of 22.0 degrees Celsius was recorded in Srimongol yesterday.

The sun sets today at 5.36pm and rises tomorrow (Tuesday) at 5.55am.

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

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degrees Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	9am	6pm
Dhaka	33.0	26.1	72	72
Chittagong	32.4	25.2	81	73
Rajshahi	34.6	26.0	78	77
Khulna	34.6	26.4	84	87
Barisal	33.5	26.0	78	68
Dinajpur	33.5	25.0	85	81
Cox's Bazar	33.0	25.2	72	75
Sylhet	33.6	24.2	89	80

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