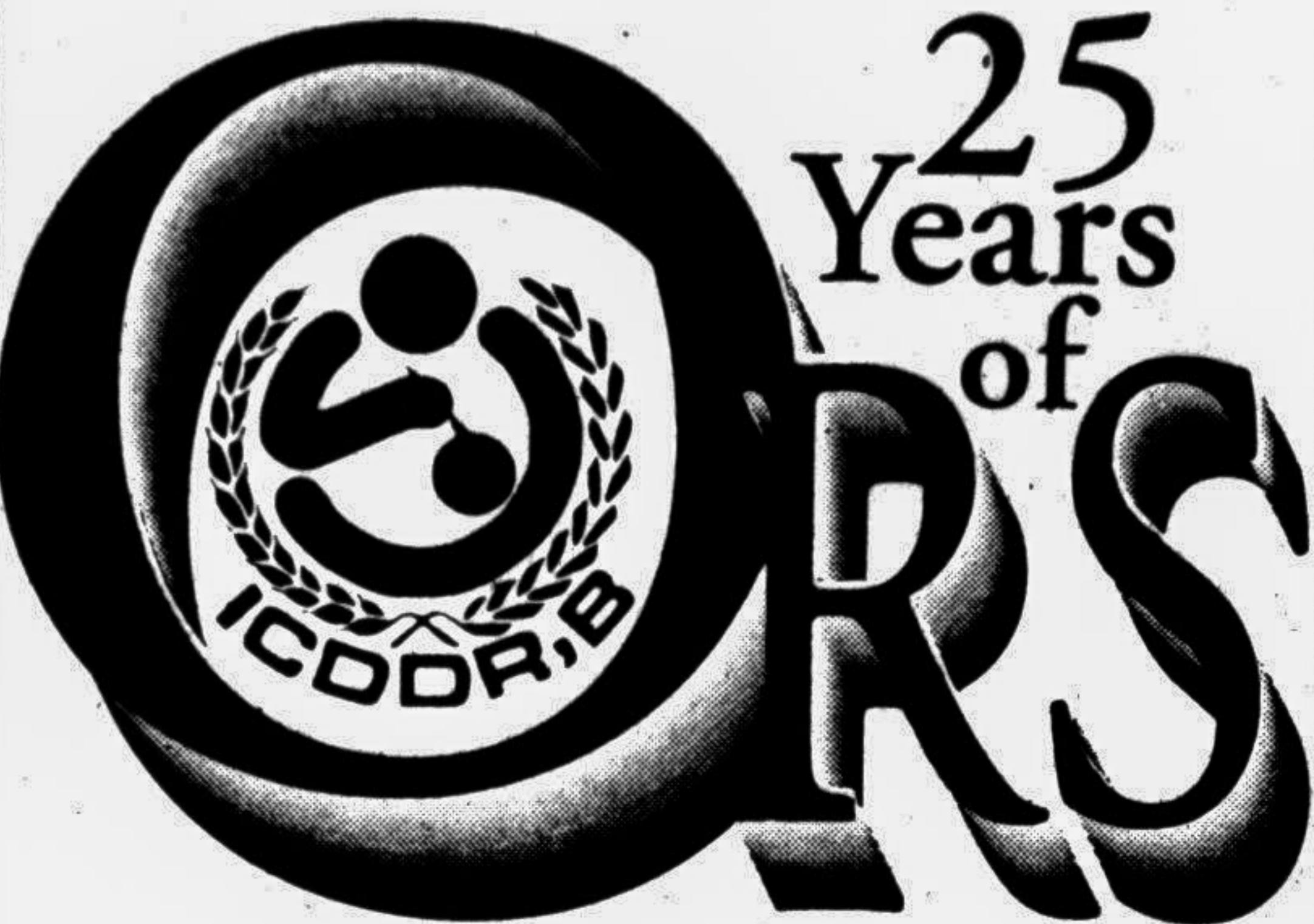


Dhaka Day by Day

Medical Advance with Few Parallels

by Rashed Mahmud Titumir



Saving a million lives each year

Simple and innocuous Oral Re-hydration Solution (ORS), hailed by the prestigious British medical journal, *The Lancet*, as potentially the most important medical advance of 20th century, marked its 25th anniversary in November last with no fireworks and fanfare.

However, with the enviable records of ORS, and with a goal to improve the effectiveness of the solution, ICDDR,B arranged for, although belated, a celebration in the city on February 5, 1994. According to the Director of the centre, the observance is also expected to take place in Geneva and New York on the same day which would highlight the importance of raising global awareness of the role and cost-effectiveness of international health research. The observance of the day included the handing over of awards by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to BRAC, the government of Bangladesh, UNICEF, UNDP, USAID and WHO for their contributions to the development and promotion of ORS worldwide and in the villages of Bangladesh. Meanwhile, a stamp was released by the government to commemorate this event.

ORS was a resounding success in 1971, claims ICDDR,B, when it brought down cholera death rate from 50 per cent to one per cent among thousands of refugees of the war of liberation.

Also described in the prestigious British journal as 'perhaps the most low-tech medical advance of the century', ORS appears to be living up to its promise.

The direct and immediate effect of acute diarrhoea is loss of water and electrolytes through stool, causing dehydration. 'Treatment of dehydration is simple, it involves the replacement of the loss with adequate amount of fluid in appropriate composition', says the physicians at the centre. The physicians inform that in the beginning this was done by intravenous fluid, the discovery of which took many years of research. Further research has made this replacement therapy simpler by discarding ORS.

Scientific merit of this simple therapy has made it important in the management of diarrhoea, claim ICDDR,B's scientists. Controversy, however, remains and research therefore continues.

Over the past 25 years, the composition of ORS has undergone a number of changes. These are based, according to the scientists,

on physiological and clinical studies demonstrating what seemed to be the 'best' concentration of the individual ingredients.

Many studies reveal that diarrhoeal diseases are a major cause of illness and death among infants and young children, particularly in developing world.

It is estimated that there are 1.5 billion diarrhoea episodes and four million deaths in children younger than five years in the developing world each year. Most of the victims are aged between six months and two years.

Today, 25 years after its discovery, ORS forms the backbone of many countries' control of diarrhoeal diseases programmes, and is saving over one million lives and billions of dollars every year," says Demissie Habte, Director, ICDDR,B. "However, ORS has the potential to do more," adds Habte.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that the global access rate for ORS had risen to 73 per cent, representing a five per cent increase over the 1990-91 figure at the end of 1992. Efforts to improve the therapy continue, despite its recognition as one of the great public health achievements of this century. ICDDR,B, which is credited with the development of ORT, continues to lead in this task as it looks into other ORS formulations.

The present formulation only prevents dehydration but does reduce the severity of an attack," notes a centre's paper. "Rice-based ORS tends to reduce stool output and shortens the duration of this disease and also helps prevent nutritional deficiency caused by diarrhoea," it adds.

However, the scientists say, "rice-based ORS is more complicated to make and quickly goes stale in a hot climate. Researchers still have several technical problems to solve."

Moreover, before a new and better type of ORS is introduced, there is the need for making every family aware that with ORS, diarrhoea need not be a killer disease.

"There are still two to three million children dying of diarrhoeal diseases each year, largely due to our failure to find a way of persuading mothers to use ORS effectively and at the right time", says Demissie Habte, MD.

The challenge for international health researchers, experts and policy-makers is to bridge these gaps and thereby realise the full potential of ORS," concludes the centre's Director.

Seminar on women in management

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahan Ara Begum yesterday said that women could not be integrated into development process unless they were developed, reports BSS.

She said this while addressing a seminar on 'women in management' at the third regional conference of Association of Management Development

Institutions in South Asia (AMDISA) being held in the city under the auspices of AMDISA-Bangladesh branch in cooperation with Institution of Business Administration of Dhaka University.

Prof Jahan Ara Begum said, research work or formulation and implementation of urban-based women's programme in

city areas would not be helpful to solve the vast problem currently faced by South Asian women because eighty per cent of them live in rural areas.

Speakers at the function opined that many women of the South Asian countries do not want to involve themselves in the management but the management itself desired so.



Tuesday

4:30 Opening announcement
Al-Quran Programme summary
4:45 Mass Education Programme: Esho Para Shikhi
5:10 News in Bangla
5:25 Cartoon show: Captain Planet
5:50 National TV debate competition
6:40 Open University
7:20 Modern songs programme: Sangeeta
8:00 News in Bangla
8:40 Fortnightly drama serial: Subarna Samoy (3rd episode)
10:30 News in English
10:30 Film show: Northern Exposure
11:30 Khabar/The News

Weather

Dry weather likely

By Staff Correspondent

Dry weather will prevail over Bangladesh with partly cloudy sky over the coastal regions.

The Met Office forecasts, night temperature may fall by one to two degrees Celsius over Rajshahi division and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Country's highest temperature of 31.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Teknaf and lowest of 10.4 degrees Celsius was recorded in Srimongol yesterday.

The maximum and the minimum temperatures and relative humidity recorded in some major cities/towns of the country yesterday are:

| Cities/Towns | Temperatures in degrees Celsius | Humidity in percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Dhaka | 28.4 | 13.0 65 56 |
| Chittagong | 28.0 | 14.9 71 58 |
| Rajshahi | 28.4 | 12.5 86 71 |
| Khulna | 28.6 | 12.4 80 57 |
| Bansle | 28.6 | 12.4 92 68 |
| Sylhet | 29.0 | 14.5 58 62 |

SOUTH ASIA AT THE CROSSROADS:
CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

BISS C-8 FEBRUARY 1994



Major General (rtd) M. Akbar (2nd from right) speaking at an international seminar on South Asia at the Crossroads: Conflicts and Cooperation at the BISS auditorium yesterday. Also seen (From right to left): Prof Syed Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University, Air Commodore (rtd) Jasjit Singh of Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi and Professor Lawrence Ziring of Western Michigan University, USA.

— Star photo

English language instts likely in 64 dist HQ

Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar said the government is actively contemplating to set up English Language Institutions in each of 64 district headquarters for imparting education on English to the schools and college students, reports UNB.

The minister informed this when Stephen Young, Director of UK-based Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in Bangladesh called on him at his office yesterday.

The minister said English has been made compulsory

subject from class one to degree level to improve the system of English teaching and make the students sound in English.

The VSO director showed keen interest in teaching of English language in Bangladesh and assured the minister to find out a device to provide cooperation in this field in the days ahead.

The VSO has been working in the field of education, health, fisheries and livestock since 1963.

Institute of kidney diseases to be set up

Deputy Leader of the Jatiya Sangsad Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said the government was considering to set up an institute of kidney diseases to strengthen preventive and curative measures against the ailments, reports BSS.

Prof Chowdhury was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of third national convention and scientific seminar on 'nephrology, urology dialysis and transplantation' held in the city.

Around 10 million people in Bangladesh are suffering from different kidney diseases and about 30,000 of them die every year with acute and chronic kidney failures, the seminar was told.

Dr Badruddoza said most of the kidney related diseases could be prevented if the knowledge about this prevention could be spread to people and make them aware of it.

Jointly organised by the Bangladeshi Renal Association, Bangladesh Association of Urological Surgeons, Bangladesh Kidney Trust and Bangladesh Kidney Foundation, the inaugural session was presided over by Prof. Matiur Rahman, Head of the Department of Nephrology, IPGMR, Dhaka. It was also addressed by president of the seminar organising committee Major General (rtd) KM Siraj

There are 35 dialysis machines in the country including 19 in the private centres and could treat only 200 to 250 patients a year, he said.

Dr. Rashid said IPGMR had the infrastructure to treat many more kidney patients with dialysis and transplantation if executed with proper planning.

Referring to the high cost of treatment of kidney ailments Prof. Matiur Rahman said unless the economic condition of the country is improved, the standard of medicine might fall by the turn of the century compelling the patients to seek treatment abroad and at the same time foreign experts would be required to provide high-tech medicine in the country.

He pointed out that the insurance policy holders had the freedom of choosing hospitals for their treatment but added, the Delta Co would also provide a list of suggested hospitals for the treatment. Payment of medical expenses would be made directly by the Delta Co to the respective hospital authorities.

The scheme is divided into two levels of benefits, namely 'Mastercare' which covers upto Tk 25,000 expenses for a premium rate between Tk 500 and Tk 1750 per year and 'Supercare' which covers upto Tk 45,000 for a premium rate between Tk 900 and 3150.

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