

# DOWN TO EARTH

## An Altruistic Institution with a Difference

**By A S M Nurunnabi**

It is no easy task to set up an institution with private initiative and funds in the service sector. Though in Bangladesh such institutions are rare, the Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation, situated at Maghbazar in Dhaka, is dedicated to the services of disabled children of Bangladesh. Set up in 1977 on the initiative, drive and commitment of Sultana S Zaman, a senior psychologist and Professor and Chairman, Department of Special Education, Institute of Education and Research, University of Dhaka, with a group of similarly dedicated personages, the Foundation offers a number of core programmes and some supportive services to help disabled children in the functioning and development of their limited faculties.

The more important aims and objectives of the Foundation include, among others, the promotion, co-ordination and sponsoring of activities for the well-being of the mentally and developmentally disabled in Bangladesh.

The core programmes of the Foundation cover a wide range of activities. Following are some of the highlights of such activities.

The Foundation runs a diagnostic clinic for screening all types of childhood disabilities. The clinic comprises a medical assessment unit, conducted by a qualified paediatrician, a psychology unit conducted in the light of the prevailing theories of intelligence tests as adapted for Bangladesh, and a physical assessment unit for individual observation of such physical aspects as posture of the child, reflexes, deformities, if any, muscle tone, etc.

Based on all the assessment results, the professional staff of the clinic come to a consensus and make the final decision about the diagnosis and advice for the management of the patient.

Children diagnosed as intellectually disabled and living in Dhaka city are enrolled in the special school known as Kalyani. The age range of the children of this school is 4 years to 17 years. The children are placed in different classes according to their age and ability. Each class is named after local flowers, such as Kamal Koli, Champa Koli, Karabi and Madhobi.

According to the needs of students in each class as per age group, the curricula are specially designed with emphasis on developing appropriate behaviour and social skills and basic survival skills (such as eating, toileting, dressing and community living skill) so that they can be self-reliant in their adult life. In the classes for the higher age group, the handicapped children are trained in functional academic skills such as reading, writing, counting which are related to every day living skill.

In addition to all the training imparted to the age group 13 to 17 years, each and every student is given training in some vocational and pre-vocational skills.

Besides, the Foundation runs a regular class for the cerebral Palsy children. The children in this class are mainly given physiotherapy, training in communicative and cognitive skills according to the requirement of the children.

The Foundation also offers a home-centre based training for the parents/ caregivers of the disabled children residing in the areas where no services for the disabled children exist. This programme known as the Distance Training Package Programme offers such services as physiotherapy, speech therapy, cognitive and academic skill training and social and self-help training. This

### No compromise on caretaker govt issue: Nasim

Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim yesterday said the Awami League will not make any compromise on the question of a neutral non-partisan caretaker government to conduct general elections, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at Fatullah in Narayanganj in the afternoon, he warned that the people would resist the government's plan to hold another "vote dacoity" election like that of 1988.

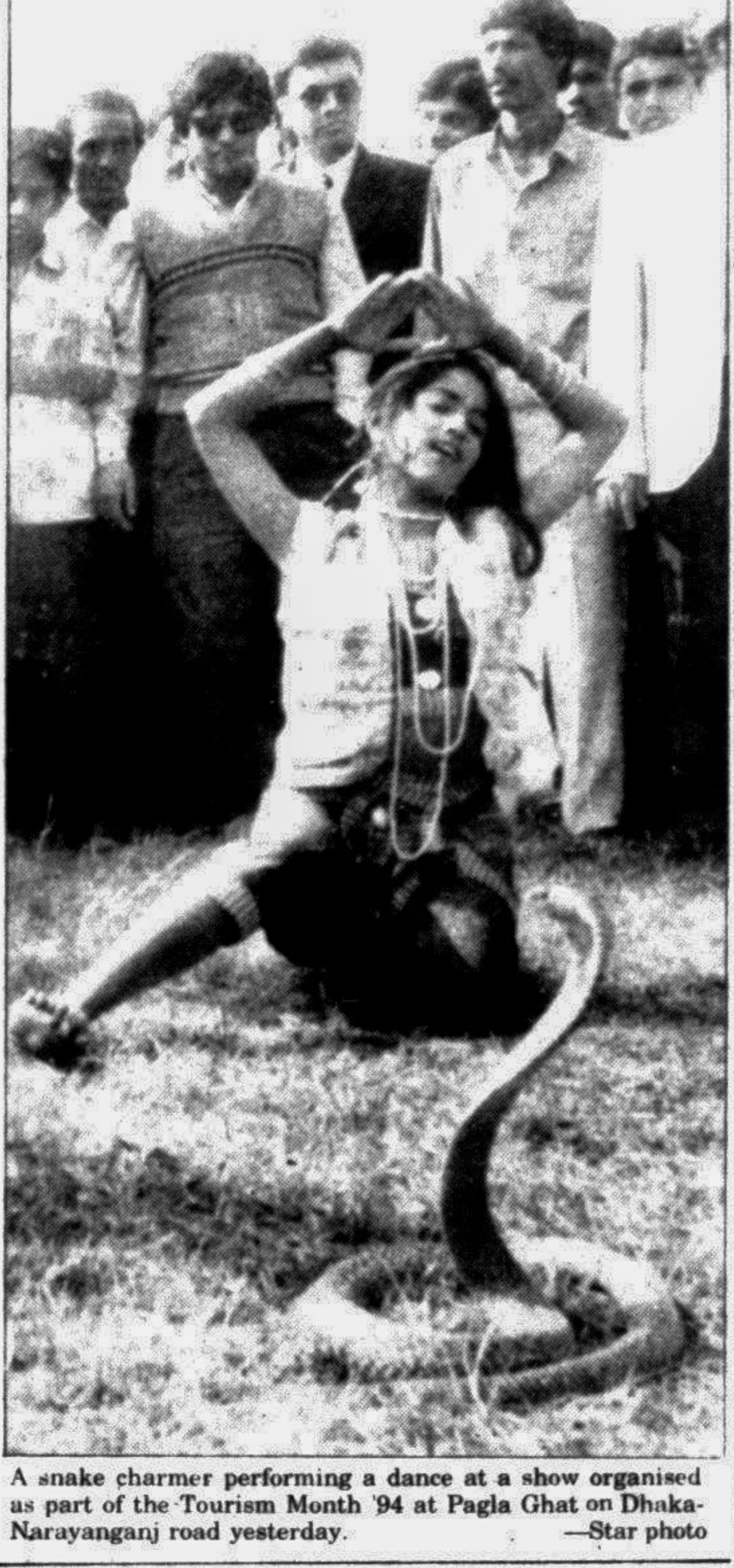
"The Awami League is ready to make any sacrifice for the interest of the people," Nasim, who is also the Organising Secretary of the Awami League, told the rally.

He said Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will make an important statement on December 6 on the current agitation for caretaker govt.

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A snake charmer performing a dance at a show organised as part of the Tourism Month '94 at Pagla Ghat on Dhaka-Narayanganj road yesterday. —Star photo

# The Midnight File

## Yeltsin urged to halt air strikes in Grozny

GROZNY (Russia), Dec 2: A group of Russian deputies visiting the breakaway region of Chechnya today appealed to President Boris Yeltsin to halt air strikes which have killed at least nine people in and around the capital Grozny. "Please do anything possible to stop the bombing of Grozny. If this happens again while we are here then what happens next?" read the appeal, issued after the delegation met Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, reports Reuter.

## UN peacekeepers ask NATO to stop patrolling over Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Dec 2: UN peacekeepers said today they had asked NATO to stop patrolling Bosnian air space to avoid any confrontation with Serb missile batteries tracking western warplanes with radar. But US Secretary of State Warren Christopher insisted NATO would not be deterred from its mission to enforce a UN no-fly zone over Bosnia, aimed mainly at grounding Serb jets, reports Reuter.

## Ferry with 600 sinks in Manila Bay: 34 killed

MANILA, Dec 2: A ferry carrying more than 600 people collided with a Singapore-registered freighter and sank before dawn Friday in Manila Bay, killing at least 34 people, the Coast Guard reported, reports AP.

Coast Guard spokesman Amado Samante said 449 passengers had been rescued and the search was continuing for others. The bodies of 34 people who had drowned were recovered, he said.

The 2,452-ton ferry, the Cebu City, sank 30 minutes after the collision.

There was no immediate official report on the cause of the accident, but the company which owned the Cebu City said it had been rammed by the Singapore-registered freighter Kota Suria.

Eugene Espedino, vice president of the company, said it was preparing a request for the coast guard to detain the freighter and its crew.

The 12,500-ton Kota Suria, with a crew of 26, was damaged in its bow but joined the rescue effort, carrying 230 of those saved.

President Fidel Ramos ordered an investigation into the cause of the accident, which occurred in calm seas under clear night skies.

Maximo Calamba, 38, who survived with his wife Veneranda, 30, and 1-year-old son Marcelo, complained that the ferry crew failed to inform them about the approaching freighter and did not help people evacuate the ship after the collision.

At least eight patrol boats, a search and rescue ship and several other inter-island ferries were trying to recover survivors, it said.

The Cebu City sank near the mouth of Manila Bay near the town of Rosario, about 50 kilometres southwest of Manila in Cavite province. It had left the port of Manila bound for Tagbilaran, the capital of Bohol island, about 560 kilometres southeast of Manila.

Quirimon Tan, William Lines vice president, said each of the dead passengers was covered by 50,000 pesos (dhs 2,173) in insurance. He said the company would also pay for medical and funeral expenses.

The Philippines' worst peacetime ferry disaster was in December 1987, when 3,537 people died in the collision of the ferry Dona Paz with the oil tanker Vector off Mindoro Island, about 130 kilometres south of Manila.

## Maldives

From Page 1 Col 3

polling stations had been set up across the Maldives, a chain of 1,190 sun-drenched coral islands spread across the equator.

Polling began at 7:30 am (0230 GMT) under the clear blue skies which, along with its palm-fringed beaches, have made the Maldives a top tourist destination.

In Male, voters turned out early to cast their ballots in the privacy of 50 blue canvas tents erected in the narrow streets of the cramped capital of just 1.8 square kilometres (1.1 square mile).

Polling stations were to close for three hours after midday to allow the faithful in this devout Muslim country of 225,000 to attend the Friday prayers. They were to reopen for three hours in the afternoon.

## BMA polls

From Page 1 Col 8

2378 votes while Dr Gazi Abdul Haque trailing with 2096 votes.

Joint secretary candidate, Dr A Z M Zahid Hossain of Majeed panel also leading ahead of his nearest candidate Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan. Organising secretary candidate Dr Md Sharifuddin of the Chowdhury panel is also leading, his nearest candidate is Dr Farhad Halim Donar. Publication secretary Dr Abu Mansur Sakhat Hasan Jibon of Dr M A Majeed's panel is also leading, his nearest candidate Dr Hossain Toufique Imam (Liton) of Dr T A Chowdhury's panel. Some of the executive committee members are also leading in BMA polls, those are Dr Syed Modasser Ali, Dr Md Iqbal Arsalan, Dr Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy, Dr Obaidul Kabir Khan, Dr A K M Anwarul Azim and Dr Firoz Mahmud Iqbal.

Poll observers believe none of the panel will get absolute majority in Dhaka some 3133 BMA members out of 3835 cast their votes.

Other three presidential candidates Prof Nurul Islam, Prof Sirajul Islam and Dr Mujibur Rahman received very few votes. Secretary general candidates Dr Mahbubur Rahman Chowdhury and Dr Rafiq Chowdhury are running neck and neck.

## Suu Kyi

From Page 1 Col 7

peoples in achieving democracy through free expression of ideas and fair and just electoral processes.

The permanent secretariat of the FDL-AP, which will be based in Seoul, will coordinate, oversee and promote the objective of the organisation.

Former Philippine President Corason Aquino, former President of Costa Rica Oscar Sanches Arias and South Korea's human rights activist Kim Dae-jung have been elected co-presidents of the Forum.

A seven-member ad hoc commission for Myanmar and 40-member Board of Directors of the FDL-AP have also been formed in the concluding session of the conference. Former foreign minister of Bangladesh Dr Kamal Hossain has been included in both the bodies.

Over 500 participants including statesmen, parliamentarians, academicians, journalists and representatives of international organisations from 30 countries attended the FDL-AP conference jointly hosted by Corason Aquino and Kim Dae-jung, chairman of a foundation bearing his name.

## Bosnia

From Page 1 Col 3

Thant said Bihac, scene of heavy fighting for weeks, was quiet overnight. But strong Serb forces, which have seized 30-40 per cent of the UN-declared "safe zone" encompassing the town of Bihac and environs, remained in the area.

The United Nations has said the Serbs, from both Croatia and Bosnia, appeared strong enough to capture Bihac if they wanted.

There were signs that frontlines south of Bihac were heating up.

Bosnian Croats, allied with Muslim-led government forces against the Serbs, claimed they captured three villages north of the town of Kupres in central Bosnia. A Croat militia and the Bosnian army took Kupres from the Serbs in a joint attack last month.

# Ansars' agitation

From Page 1 Col 7

said they had a plan to go for agitation from December 5, but it began Thursday morning when a junior Ansars officer, Azharul Islam assaulted a sepoys, Manik Mia, when they were getting ready for a parade to salute the Director General of the Ansars who was scheduled to visit the academy Thursday morning.

Immediately afterwards, the aggrieved sepoys went on a rampage, breaking and burning office furniture.

Azharul Islam, however, left the academy immediately after the incident, leaving his family in the government-quarters in the academy compound, the sepoys said.

The agitating sepoys also demanded expulsion and punishment of Azharul Islam.

We've talked to the higher authorities to take disciplinary actions against Azharul Islam," said a BCS cadre Ansars officer (battalion commander), who did not want to be identified. Azhar's family was safe, he added.

While talking to this correspondent, the battalion commander was surrounded by several sepoys yesterday evening.

Several officers were injured during Thursday's incidents. Three of them — all deputy directors — Shahbuddin Mollah, Khalilur Rahman and Shamsul Huq — were admitted to the Ansars Academy Hospital, said a battalion commander and a sepoy at Shafipur.

Over 4000 sepoys took control of the academy. Some 42 officers and their families were staying in the academy compound.

The sepoys barricaded two kilometers of road adjacent to the academy placing logs. They did not allow anyone to cross the barricades.

They set up several checkpoints on the barricaded roads and were seen guarding those.

They claimed that none from the higher authorities except the Director General of Ansars yesterday came for negotiation. The DG went to the academy yesterday morning and asked them to withdraw their programme but the Ansars refused.

In spite of repeated attempts, this correspondent could not contact anyone over telephone at the Ansars headquarters or at the academy.

The sepoys, however, said that all phone lines were disconnected.

The sepoys threatened to go for a fresh programme from December 5 if their demands were not met.

The home secretary or any other senior officials of the Home Ministry could not be contacted for comments. The Home Minister is presently abroad.

The Director General of the Ansars was also not available for comments last night.

UNB adds: Delving an ultimatum to restore order, rebel Ansars sepoys continued their agitation in the Shafipur Academy and Ansars Headquarters in the city yesterday.

Authorities reportedly had given an ultimatum to the rebels to remove barricades from the Dhaka-Tangail highway by 1 pm and deployed huge contingent of police at the academy. The BDR were kept ready at Gazipur district headquarters to meet any eventuality.

Ansars sepoys posted under different police stations to guard important installations in the city joined the rebel Ansars at the Khilgaon Headquarters leaving their respective duties yesterday, the rebels claimed.

Panic gripped the Khilgaon area and the local people brought out a procession in the afternoon demanding removal of the head office from the residential area and punishment to those responsible for Thursday's attacks on them.

The Ansars pelted stones at the processionists from inside the headquarters. The processionists who also turned violent, blasted crackers and tried to break open the gate. They were later dispersed by the police posted in and around the headquarters.

In Lalmonirhat, Ansars brought out sporadic processions yesterday morning and chanted slogans in support of their demands for pay hike and other facilities.

Witnesses said about 300 Ansars shouting their demands took control of the armoury.

Deputy Commissioner Kazi Farid Ahmed and Superintendent of Police Mozammel Haque held discussions with the Ansars but failed to win over the agitators. Tension was prevailing in the town.

## 2 foreign newsmen expelled from East Timor

DILI, Indonesia, Dec 2: The government on Friday expelled two foreign journalists from Indonesia, accusing them of working in the disputed territory of East Timor without proper permits, reports AP.

## Adhikary

From Page 1 Col 5

withdrew, paving the way for Deuba to take the post.

Koirala and Bhattarai had both said they would act as the party's leader in parliament only if they were chosen unanimously.

Deuba, 48, an MP for Dadeldhura District in the far west, said that his election to the post "had helped to preserve unity and fostered the hope of all party colleagues to move ahead with the guidance of our elder leaders."

He was home minister under Koirala's government, which was defeated in mid-term elections on November 15 by the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML).

The NCP-UML, under Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikary heads a minority government but has formed a loose coalition with the pro-Indian Nepal Sadhavana Party and other left-leaning MPs.

The new government must secure the tacit support of either the royalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) or the NC to survive a constitutional vote of confidence on December 15.

Deuba joined the NC in 1963 while still studying and he was one of the founding members of the pro-democracy Nepal Students' Union (NSU).

## Indian scientist arrested on espionage charge

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: A rocket scientist involved in India's space programme has been arrested on suspicion of passing on secrets, newspapers reported Friday, reports UNB.

Nambi Narayanan was the second space expert to be accused in the spy case that was exposed after the October 20 arrest of a woman who allegedly seduced scientists and blackmailed them to give her designs of rocket engines.

Narayanan, who helped develop engines for India's satellite launch vehicles and defense missiles, was arrested Wednesday in Trivandrum on India's southern coast, the reports said.

He was the head of the liquid propulsion laboratory of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Police in the southern state of Kerala, where many of the space laboratories are located, began probing the spy ring after arresting Mariam Rasheeda, a citizen of the archipelago nation of the Maldives, the reports said.

Her interrogation led to the arrests of rocket expert D Sasikumar, Fousiya Hasan, who is a Maldivian, and K Chandrashekar, a businessman who claimed to represent the Russian space company Glavkosmos.

# Efforts on to eliminate leprosy by 2000

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh has an estimated 1.36 lakh people suffering from leprosy, and efforts are being made to eliminate this disease by the year 2000.

Health Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf told a press conference yesterday that the government had sought multi-lateral funding and allocated Tk 47 crore for leprosy elimination under the fourth Population and Health Project. The press conference was held on the eve of the two-day first national seminar on 'elimination of leprosy in Bangladesh' beginning in the city today.

The minister said that the government was now implementing a programme covering 89 thanas in 20 districts while some NGOs were covering 74 thanas in 10 other districts.

Leprosy treatment involves medicine worth Tk 3500 per person, over 99 per cent of the population in the country has adequate resistance or immunity against the disease, an expert said.

Project Director, TB and Leprosy, Dr M Ahsan Ali, told the newsmen that the majority of leprosy cases were non-infectious, only some 10 to 15 per cent cases were infectious.

Leprosy is mainly transmitted through the air, through droplets discharged from nose and mouth of untreated infectious cases. The disease affects peripheral nerves in skin which can be prevented, he said.

The early signs of the disease, for non-infectious type, are that a patient may notice patches on the skin with loss of sensations and thickening of peripheral nerves.

Persons affected by the infectious types leprosy germ may initially notice thickening or infiltration of skin all over the body, nodules on skin, numerous ill-defined patches all over the body and other symptoms.

Chief of leprosy unit of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Sk Noordeen, WHO representative in Bangladesh Dr Witjaksono Hardjotono and Health Ministry Planning Director Dr Kahirun Nahar were also present at the press conference. They called for a social movement against misconception, stigma and prejudices concerning leprosy.

The two-day national seminar would stress creating public awareness to detect leprosy early, treat the disease promptly and properly, achieve high cure rates, prevent deformities, prevent displacement and destitution of patients and accept leprosy patients into the community.

## Bhopal disaster anniversary: 11000 protesters arrested

BHOPAL, Dec 2: Police arrested 11,000 people heading toward Bhopal Friday to take part in a demonstration marking the 10th anniversary of the world's worst industrial accident, organisers said, reports AP.

The people were taken off trains at various stations outside this central Indian city and charged for travelling without tickets — a common practice in India usually punishable by a fine or a few hours in jail.

"Shame on you, government," said Abdul Jabbar Khan, of the Gas Victims Organisation.

On December 2, 1984, a cloud of toxic chemicals leaked from a pesticide plant owned by the Indian subsidiary of Union Carbide Corp. of Danbury, Conn. About 4,000 people died that night, and 3,000 more deaths were later attributed to the effects of the gas.

A half-million people are still seeking compensation.

Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, who is the chief executive of Madhya Pradesh state, admitted that many people were arrested on trains moving towards the city.

But Singh could not confirm the number and said he was not sure the arrests were related to the planned rally.

— AFP photo

## FBCCI

From Page 1 Col 4

meeting.

Meanwhile, FBCCI President Salman F Rahman told The Daily Star that he was hopeful about the meeting with the two sides. But he categorically said "It is not a political dialogue between the ruling party and the Opposition."

"We are not mediating to resolve the present political impasse. We will just express our concern to both the groups," he said.

The FBCCI planned such a meeting on November 22 and sent letters to the two camps. The opposition Awami League nominated a four-member team headed by Abdus Samad Azad for the meeting. The other members of the team are Tofael Ahmed, Abul Hassan and S A M S Kibria.

The FBCCI president also hoped that he would get a list of the ruling party representatives today.

## FFs clash

From Page 1 Col 4

hammad Nazimuddin at about 6:00 pm yesterday.

When Nazimuddin refused to comply with their demand a gang of about 15 hurried hand bombs and ransacked his house.

The miscreants damaged goods worth about Tk eighty thousand, Salim added. A case was filed with the Kotwali Police Station.



Hundreds of women affected by the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster demonstrate in Bhopal, India, yesterday demanding compensation on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the tragedy. — AFP photo