

Inside Today

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Parliament to be Effective Must Have an Active Opposition

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by MM Rezaul Karim
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Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today (Thursday) on the occasion of Holy Shab-e-Barat. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Friday).

NEWS BRIEFS

AL discussion meet tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent
The city unit of Awami League will hold a discussion meeting and a cultural function tomorrow in celebration of the Silver Jubilee of Liberation War victory. AL presidium member and Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad will attend the function as chief guest. With city AL president and Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Hanif in the chair, the function will begin at 3 pm at Bangabandhu Avenue, says a party press release.

Thakurgaon TV relay centre opens Saturday

The Thakurgaon relay centre of Bangladesh Television, 12th relay centre of BTV, will be commissioned on Saturday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally open the relay centre at Salanda at 10 am. State Minister for Information Abu Sayeed will preside over the function, reports UNB.

Young man shot dead in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Dec 25: A young man was shot dead in an attack at his residence at village Tetulia in Shaikhpura thana at about 8 tonight. Police said unidentified assailants attacked Parnesh Mandal, 16, at his house and killed him. Another inmate, Debendra Nath Mandal, was injured in the shooting. Shaikhpura police brought the body to the thana and registered a case, reports UNB.

Gournadi turns Poursava today

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Dec 25: The Gournadi poursava of Barisal district will be inaugurated tomorrow. Chief whip Abul Hasanat Abdullah, MP, is expected to inaugurate the poursava. The Gournadi poursava will be the 3rd in the district and the 14th in Barisal division.

Chandrika on pvt visit to India

NEW DELHI, Dec 25: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga began a holiday in India today after Tamil rebels began an undeclared Christmas truce in their 13-year-old war, sources on both sides said.
"There is peace in the air. We are confident 1997 will bring good news," one source close to her told Reuters. "Right now she is thinking more about peace than about war."
Indian and Sri Lankan officials played down reports of a link between Kumaratunga's visit and rumoured peace initiatives with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Deadline for legalising stay expires Dec 31

Fate of over one lakh Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia uncertain

By M Anwarul Haq

The threat of deportation is looming large over one hundred thousand Bangladeshis in Malaysia who reportedly do not possess valid work permits. The Malaysian government's deadline of a four-month amnesty to have their jobs regularised expires on December 31. Although the government is concerned about the ultimate fate of the Bangladeshi workers, there seems to be no visible attempt to pursue the Malaysian government about getting the workers regularised or extending the amnesty deadline which ends in another five days.

Last week, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad met Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Maha-

thir Mohammad in New Delhi on the sidelines of the SAARC Foreign Ministers' meet and requested him to extend the amnesty deadline. Dr Mahathir was learnt to have expressed his personal sympathy for Bangladeshi workers.

However, his government's intended crackdown involves citizens from several other countries, including a bulk from Indonesia and the Philippines.

Diplomatic sources in Dhaka and Bangladesh mission in Kuala Lumpur hinted that Bangladesh should immediately despatch a high level emissary to the Malaysian capital to avoid an unpleasant deportation procedure that is go-

ing to ruin the lives of thousands of families who have invested their last savings to go to that country in quest of employment.

Indonesian President Soeharto met Dr Mahathir in Kuala Lumpur recently to discuss the issue of workers from his country, sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury said, "My fear is that a large number of our fellow countrymen who do not have valid permits will be greatly disadvantaged if the deadline of December 31 is not extended."

The State Minister, who visited Malaysia on December 13 and 14 said that the Bangladesh

High Commission has nothing to do with the procurement of temporary work permits, popularly known as 'yellow cards'. He said the embassy is re-issuing 200 to 300 passports every day and new passports are being issued "on the date it is supposed to be issued."

When asked if that was enough, Chowdhury said: The foreign ministry would shortly be sending a team of senior officials to investigate complaints received from different organisations in Bangladesh about the functioning of the visa section in Kuala Lumpur mission which has been accused of being 'apathetic to the woes of the workers'.

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Pro-peace CHT leader gunned down

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 25: Unidentified assailants today gunned down a top tribal leader in Champaknagar area in Rangamati hill district, official sources said.

Subinoy Chakma, 40, Secretary General of Parbatya Chattagram Jatiya Sommonoy O Shanti Parishad (CHTNCPC), was fired from behind from a close range while he was returning home from a market at Rangamati town at about 6:15 pm, police said.

Subinoy instantly succumbed to bullet wounds. Police later recovered the body.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night directed the district and local administration to round up immediately the persons responsible for the assassination of Subinoy Chakma, an official handout said, reports BSS.

The assassination took place a day after the peace talks held between the new government and Shantibahini leaders for a lasting solution to the long-drawn CHT issue.

The identity of the killers could not be ascertained. None was arrested in this connection till 9:30 pm.

Subinoy Chakma was an active leader of the Shantibahini. He surrendered about 10 years ago. He was actively involved in the peace process in the area, according to agencies.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tonight expressed her deep shock at the killing of Subinoy Chakma. She recalled his role in establishing peace and stability and strongly condemned the killing.

Local Member of Parliament Dipankar Talukder, chairman of Local Government Council

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Shab-e-Barat tonight

Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune, will be observed all over the country tonight with due solemnity and religious fervour, reports UNB.

The religious festival will be marked by night-long prayers, seeking divine blessings for the emancipation of the mankind in this world and the world hereafter.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the

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Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia have given separate messages on the eve of holy Shab-e-Barat.

Qurankhwani, Milad Mahfil, Zakir, Waz Mahfil, offering of feteah at the graveyards and feeding of the destitute will also be held to mark the occasion.

The city have already made elaborate arrangements to facilitate the attendance by the devotees on the night.

The Dhaka Metropolitan

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Biswa Ijtema begins tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

All preparations have been completed for the three-day Biswa Ijtema beginning tomorrow at Tongi, about 25 Kms north of the capital.

Devotees from home and abroad have started arriving at the venue on the eastern side of the river Turag to join the Ijtema, the second largest congregation of Muslims after the Hajj, according to sources in Tablig Jamaat, the organiser of the gathering.

The Ijtema field stretching over a three square km have been prepared and all necessary facilities arranged for holding the mammoth gathering. A large pandal has been erected to accommodate hundreds of thousands devotees. A special pandal with better accommodation facilities has been set up at the north side of the venue for devotees coming from abroad.

Every year, a large number of devotees attend the Ijtema from almost all the Muslim countries from USA and some

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Realistic action programme soon, Khaleda says on return

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, on return home yesterday, said her party will announce a 'realistic action programme against the government's repression and hypocrisy'.

She was briefly addressing party workers who thronged the Zia airport in their thousands to give her a rousy reception on her return from Saudi Arabia after treatment. She underwent an operation on the right knee for arthritis at the King Faisal Hospital during her 27-day stay there.

The former prime minister criticised Tuesday's police action on BNP processionists, protesting government's filing of a corruption case against her and killing at Jessore Central Jail.

"I was not fully aware of the situation here since I was out of the country for many days. Have patience, I'll sit with top party leaders. I'm ready to announce any realistic action programme after discussing with them", she said from an open-roofed jeep outside the VIP lounge.

She called upon all patriotic and nationalistic forces to force unity against 'all acts of repression, injustice and hypocrisy' by the government.

But the BNP chief did not make any comment on filing of the corruption case against her. Responding to a demand for calling a hartal, raised from the crowd, Begum Zia, also Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad said, "I was with the people, I'm with them and I'll be with them."

She also accused the government of snatching the democratic rights of the people and oppressing political opponents.

Thousands of cheering BNP workers and supporters showered flowers at the party leader and raised full throated slogans.

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Post book closure circuit breaker relaxed

By Shehab Ahmed and Inam Ahmed

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has directed the Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges to relax the circuit breaker for issues for three consecutive days after book closure.

The decision to be effective from December 28 has been taken to allow adjustment of prices of shares after book closure.

Earlier, it was found that issues that reached a peak price before book closure could not go into needed correction because of the five per cent circuit breaker. But the five per cent circuit breaker for other issues would remain unchanged. SEC Chairman Dr Haroonur Rashid told The Daily Star last night.

The SEC order sent to the bourses on Tuesday said: Where a book closure has been declared by a listed company to determine the right of its shareholders arising out of its

bonus and/or right decisions, the total variations in market prices at Dhaka and Chittagong stock exchanges for the three market days during the post book closure period shall not exceed the maximum adjustment in market price allowable on the basis of bonus and/or right decisions.

Explaining, it said: The maximum allowable adjustment in market price shall be computed by the exchange taking into consideration the average rate on the last day prior to the book closure, and bonus and/or right decisions.

If average rate of a share of a listed company on the last day prior to the book closure is Taka 225, and bonus share is declared by that company at 2:1 (i.e. at 50 per cent), the maximum allowable adjustment in market price shall be Taka 75," it pointed out.

"If average rate of share of listed company on the last day

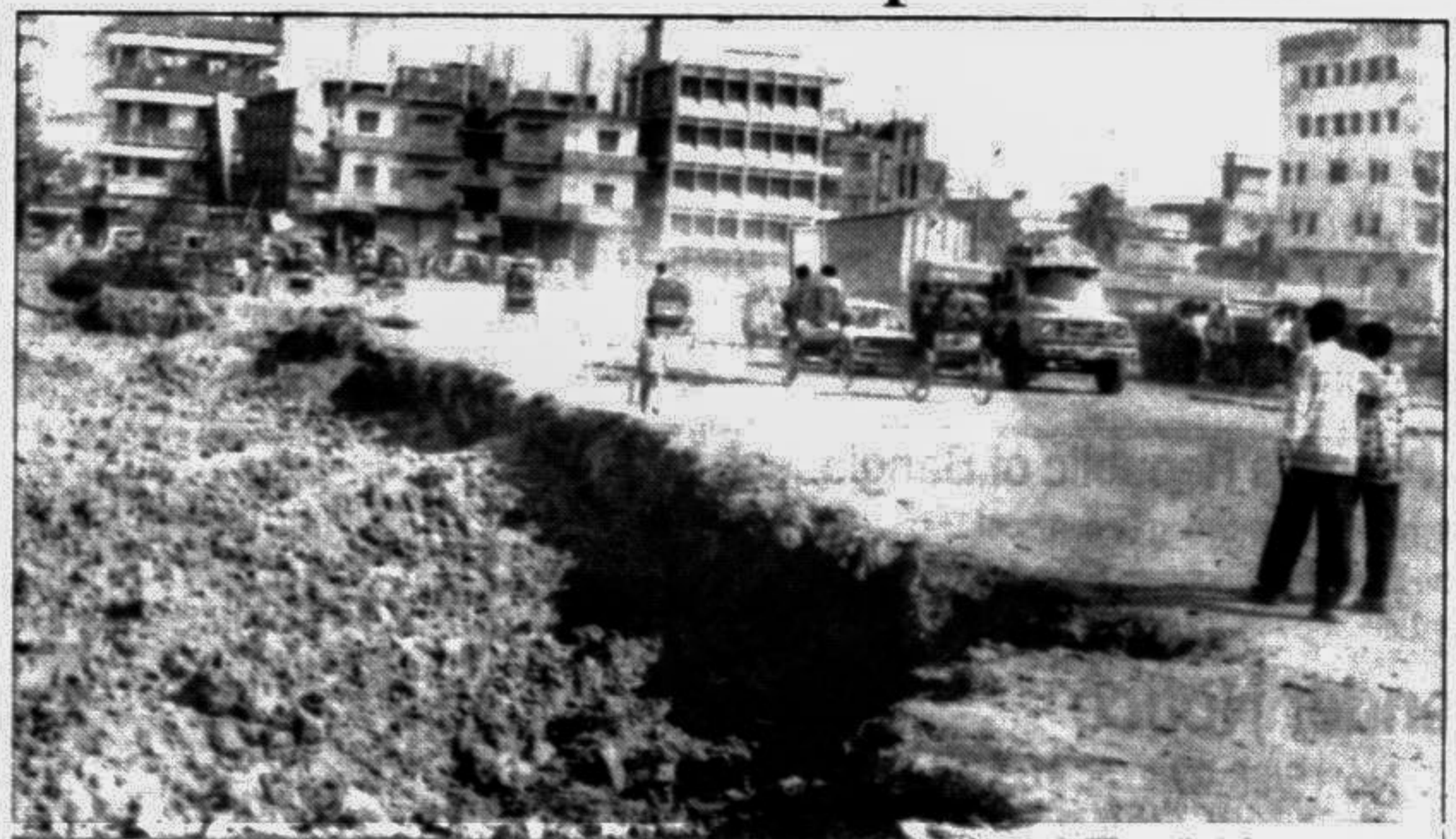
prior to the book closure is Taka 225, and a right issue is declared by that company at 2:3 at Taka 150 (i.e. at a premium of 50 per cent per share, the maximum allowable adjustment in market price shall be Taka 45," the SEC order said further explaining the mechanism of the adjustment.

The SEC guidelines added: Where a book closure has been declared by a listed company to determine the right of its shareholders arising out of its dividend decision, the total variation in market price for the three market days during the post book closure period shall not exceed 15 per cent plus dividend per share.

The complex rules expected to tackle some of the problems of the market to some extent follows the arithmetics of the capital market allowing for maximum adjustments through the bonus, right share and dividend.

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People resist BR move to close link road thru' Kamalapur Station



Earth removed from Railway land along the link road through Kamalapur station in the city for expansion of Inland Container Depot.

— Star photo by Anisur Rahman

By Reaz Ahmed

Work for the expansion of Inland Container Depot (ICD) of Bangladesh Railway (BR) at Kamalapur station in the city has been suspended since Tuesday in the face of resistance from people of the nearby areas.

In a violent refusal to sacrifice a 30-year old road linkage between the areas on the east and west of Kamalapur station for the sake of ICD expansion, hundreds of people from these localities forced labourers to stop work after two weeks of extensive spade work.

Protesters allegedly ransacked three excavators, a number of vehicles and smashed window panes of a train Ekta Express, to stop the work. When contacted, BR sources confirmed the damage and said separate FIRs were lodged with Railway Police and

Motijheel and Sabujbagh thanas.

The sources, however, said last night that the authorities invited local elite and representatives of the protesters to a meeting with Divisional Railway Manager Saleh Ahmed at 4 pm today. Confirming the suspension of work, one source said, "We will try to make the protesters understand that the existing road linkage would not be closed till an alternative road is constructed and opened to public."

The protesters turned down the authorities' offer for using an alternative road, to be constructed side by side the expansion work of ICD.

Around half a million people of Muga, Mandia, Mayakanan, Ahmadbagh, Sabujbagh,

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213 artists to take part in 12th nat'l exhibition

The three week, 12th National Art Exhibition organised by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy begins at its gallery tomorrow, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the exhibition at Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 4 pm. She will also distribute prizes among the best artists.

The programme of the national art exhibition, which is coinciding with the Silver Jubilee of country's Independence and Victory Day, was announced at a press conference at the Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

The press conference was addressed by State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader, DG of the academy Shamsuzzaman Khan and its Directors Subir Chowdhury and SM Mohsin.

A total of 258 art works of 213 artists will be displayed in the exhibition. Of those, 13 works are of 13 invited artists.

Of the 200 competitors, this year four artists will be given

best award while another four will receive the award of honour.

The best awards are: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Award, Bhorer Kagoj Award and AB Bank Award each of Tk 50,000 and Pacific Group Gold Medal. The four award of honour will be of Tk 10,000 each.

A five-member jury board has selected the art works for the awards. The members of the board were Qayyum Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Kazi Abdul Basel, Hashem Khan and Abul Mansur.

Names of the award winners will be announced at the inaugural function of the exhibition which will remain open till January 16.

Before Ramzan, the exhibition will remain open for public from 2 pm to 7 pm everyday while during the Ramzan from 10 am to 4 pm.

Shilpakala Academy will also arrange a seminar titled '25 Years of Independence'.

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Arsenic pollution: Bangladesh needs watershed management

Arsenic calamity in Bangladesh may be more serious than West Bengal's and to combat the problem, it needs a proper watershed management immediately, reports UNB.

The apprehension and also the suggestion, were made in a report of School of Environmental Studies (SOES) of Jadavpur University in Calcutta.

Dipankar Chakraborti, Director of the SOES, who has been working to fight against serious arsenic problem in West Bengal of India for long, prepared the report following a survey.

Laying emphasis on watershed management, Dipankar

said: If it is not done, Bangladesh has to face a serious consequence with respect to arsenic problem.

After a one-year preliminary survey in Bangladesh, SOES found arsenic in ground-water in only four districts out of studied 24, in safe limit less than 0.01 mg/litre.

In one district, arsenic was between 0.01-0.049 mg/l while in rest 19 districts it was above 0.05 mg/l to 2.9 mg/l. The WHO's recommended limit in drinking water is 0.01 mg/l.

The SOES in the 19 districts looked for arsenic patients and found people suffering from arsenal skin lesions including

cancer in 16 districts.

The total population of the districts where arsenic patients were found was 23 million. But it does not mean the whole population is drinking arsenic-contaminated water, the report said.

"But it may be said they are at risk," apprehended the SOES Director Dipankar Chakraborti.

The SOES conducted the survey for Bangladesh for last one year in collaboration with NIPSON, Geology Departments of Dhaka and Rajshahi Universities, and Dhaka Community Hospital.

During the survey, SOES

analysed 1343 water samples, 214 hair, 222 nails, 118 skin-scales and 26 urine samples. Four hundred people were identified as arsenic patients having arsenical skin lesions.

The districts where the SOES survey found arsenic-contaminated water are Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Pabna, Kusthila, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Faridpur, Rajbari, Narayanganj, Comilla, Chandpur, Laxmipur and Noakhali.

Arsenic patients were found in these districts excepting Natore, Khulna and Rajbari. The other districts where

arsenic is apprehended are Narail, Manikganj, Dhaka, Madaripur, Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Feni.

For Dhaka SOES, analysed only 98 water samples and out of those 11 samples contained arsenic between 0.01-0.049 mg/l and none of the water samples contains arsenic above 0.05 mg/l.

So, Dipankar Chakraborti said, considering the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendation, Dhaka is also not safe.

For West Bengal, arsenic affected area is in the region where sediment deposition took

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Thursday night party...



...together.



I'll be there.