

## LAW AND ORDER

### We Can Delay Only at Our Own Peril

by Mizan Ali and Chandra Shekhar Das

*Why people have become so easily prone to violence? Why people cannot wait for law to take its own course? Apparently, people have lost faith in police completely though not irrevocably*

THE hauntingly horrid image of three charred bodies in the newspapers is too fresh yet to be put behind. Terror still strikes the heart at the thought that the unknown, indifferent faces of the crowd in the street are wont to swim past so thoughtlessly and effortlessly can snowball, all on a sudden, into a group of blood-thirsty vengeful mob if only someone takes the trouble of yelling, playfully or intentionally, *chhele dhora chhele dhora* (child lifter), hijacker or any name for that matter to describe any species from the lexicon of anti-socials.

In the absence of data-base maintenance of past records it might sound arbitrarily assertive to say that deaths due to mob violence has recorded sharp rise of late. But an appeal from the office of the country's highest executive exhorting people not to take law in their own hands, immediately after the Badda incident in which mob lynched three suspected child-lifters and another died in police firing aimed at quelling the violent mob, was an indirect but unmistakable recognition of frenzied mob wrath as an escalating factor in unattributed killings.

People going spare at the cost of law and order, more alarmingly at the cost of other freedoms and liberty is no new thing in Bangladesh. Not long ago, in the aftermath of the semi-final victory of the Bangladesh cricket team in the ICC Trophy in Malaysia, wild spree of celebration marked by mindless spraying of coloured water, harassment of women commuters and in the worst cases, settling of old scores in the smokescreen of row over the

protest against this 'joyous behaviour' created quite a bit of furor. Resentment went to an extent where annoyed people were forced to think that since we do not know how to give vent to our emotions and feelings without hurting that of others, it would perhaps be better for the cricket team not to be a source of joy in future. But the picture that looked so gloomy and depressing at the first trial of our reaction to a truly unanimous occasion of joy, improved dramatically by the time Bangladesh emerged as the unbeaten champions of the tourney to write a whole new chapter in the game's history in this country. What by the demonstration at the earlier stage seemed to be fearful prospect of a massive deterioration in law order passed off so serenely and calmly that even the most confirmed cynics were left in a state of appreciating wonder.

The reason a potential occasion for chaos and anarchy was averted so effortlessly was the government urgency in making its intention clear about strict enforcement of the laws to protect civil rights. Coupled with the public awareness heightened through the extensive use of the media, this resolve almost performed a miracle in restoring sanity of the man in the street.

An anatomy of the incident at Badda or the preceding one at a place called Dasderkandi in Demra where villagers beat six

suspected cattle-lifters to death in a show of demonic ferocity have given rise to a very disturbing question. Why people have become so easily prone to violence? Why people cannot wait for law to take its own course? Apparently, people have lost faith in police completely though not irrevocably. It is not only a matter of confidence being at the lowest ebb as far as people's confidence in the system of criminal justice is concerned, but there has also been a drastic fall in law enforcing agency's public relations.

As it is evident in the Badda case, mob has proved that the primitive tactic followed by police to overpower people by massive showdown does not work. Police in this particular case, has failed to prove its skill in understanding the behavioral pattern of the people of the locality. Its lacking in negotiating capabilities and the understanding of the art of interpersonal relationship has been crudely exposed through these incidents.

This goes to highlight once again how important an issue it has become for the authorities to rethink and reorganise the whole system of police training. Already suggestions have come from concerned quarters that in order to equip the police force both physically and psychologically, the government should give active consideration to the idea of using the

open university. This directional aspect would have definitely been better addressed had the intelligentia and academics of the country bounced new ideas about creating a system for an improvement in police efficiency. For reasons best known to them scholars of the country have always fought shy of the challenge of spelling out constructively for police reform.

Though the idea of reforming the law enforcing personnel has been in the air for quite some time now, implementation of any effective measure still seem to be long way off, quite in keeping with the appalling police failure in putting people in the picture regarding the horrendous tale of mob violence in Dasderkandi of Demra and Badda, utterances and assurances have so far been ineffectual. Although it is difficult to lose sight of the problems making light of the intention of reform measures, few easy simple and common sense experiments, many feel, can be tried right now. In order to give a boost to the sagging relation between police and people, authorities can use the electronic media, more precisely - didactic mini drama highlighting the problem and scope of police in our society can be run in both television and radio. Then, bill boards bearing exhortations and visuals portraying the bad and good of police-people relationship can be mounted. In short, instead of waiting for the implementation of sweeping time-consuming reforms, authorities should take these up immediately so that the signs of a society slowly slipping into the grip of disintegration and chaos do not spread further.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### For a Pro-people Institution

An Interview with Activist Ravi Nair by Nurul Kabir

RAVI Nair, director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, maintains that prior to enactment of a law seeking to set up a Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh, the government should circulate a draft bill among the public and incorporate their views to make sure that the institution is really a pro-people one.

Nair, 43, a well known human rights personality in the South Asian region, made the observation in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star recently. He came to Dhaka to attend an international seminar in the city.

Welcoming the government announcement for setting up of an HRC in the country, Nair said: Before setting up of an HRC, the government should circulate a draft law regarding the planned institution among the public, especially among those involved in the civil liberties and human rights movement and incorporate their views into the legislation concerned. "When it so happens, the institution in question stands a fair chance of becoming independent as well as a pro-people".

On the question of an HRC being effective, Nair said that the commitment and credibility of those who are to steer the Commission is very important. "If proper persons are selected to run such a national level institution, the chances for it to contribute towards protecting and promoting human rights in a country really brighten".

Speaking on the genesis of the Indian Human Rights Commission, Nair told that it was set up on a Presidential ordinance. "But of late, thanks to fresh political pressure, some changes have been made in the law relating to the HRC of India".

Talking about the weaknesses of the HRC of his country, Nair also said that it had so far been unable to address the human rights violations by the armed forces in different states of India. In this connection, Nair recalled that the government of India enacted the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in 1958 that granted the army a lot of impunity to deal with what it calls insurgencies

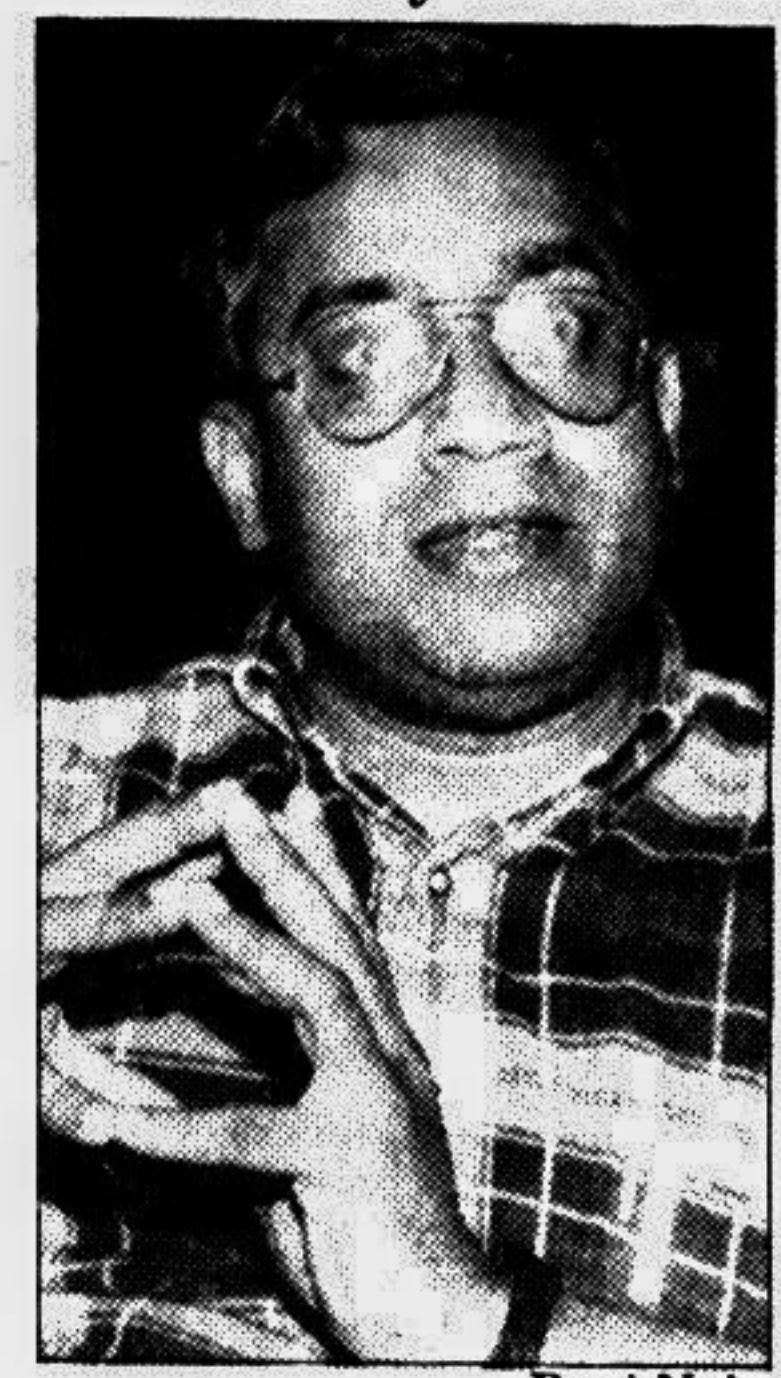
threatening national security. Initially, the law was enacted for one year and that to be applied in a single state. But the law is still there after 29 years of its enactment and presently it is being applied in seven states of India.

In this regard, Nair was also critical about the role of Indian Judiciary. "A writ petition challenging the Armed Forces Special Powers Act has been pending with Supreme Court since 1983. The court is yet to hear the contention of the petitioner".

Pointing out to another limitation of his country's HRC law, a critical Nair said that a certain section of the legislation has granted the Commission the role of mere a post office. "After receiving the allegations of human rights violations, it can only forward the complaints to the Ministry of Defence or Home; it can neither investigate into the allegations, nor can it take any actions against the violators".

Asked to make comment on the overall human rights situation in India, Nair said that in general they have human rights problems in terms of custodial violence and treating of the prisoners, especially the juvenile prisoners in the jails of the country. "Besides, the state machinery of India feels that its sovereignty is being threatened in Kashmir and the north-eastern states of India, while the state does not necessarily conform to the benchmarks it has set for itself in the Constitution and other instrumentalities".

On the issue of the self-determination movements in Kashmir, Punjab and the north-eastern states of India, Nair said that usually the question of self-determination is not easily understood by either of its proponents or by those who oppose it. It could range from de-



Ravi Nair

volution or decentralisation of power to cession or separation of a territory. In this regard, each society needs to decide as to what its priorities are.

"The Indian state has historically been extremely myopic in terms of looking at the safeguards for ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and such other groups not belonging to the mainstream Hindi speaking population," Nair said adding, "But with the rise of regional level political parties, and thanks to the mass movements and political pressure seeking enforcement of the popular will of the people, the state and other establishments have started making some adjustments".

Analysing the human rights situation of Bangladesh, Ravi Nair said that the existence and application of the Special Powers Act, 1954 is a big problem in this field. "It seems, from a recent statement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the act will remain in the statute book" Nair said. "We hope that she will invest within the act certain legal safeguards that would check its arbitrary application".

Talking about the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Nair said: "As human rights activists, we are happy that the government of India and Bangladesh have reached an agreement on the process of repatriation of the Chakmas and others. "But a bit serious study of the 20-point agreement reveals that none of the governments have applied their minds in the financial costs involved in the issue. Besides, the land issue involved in the rehabilitation of the ethnic minority people concerned is still undressed".

Giving a brief account of the impediments to a sound human rights situation in other South Asian countries, Nair said that in Nepal, there are pre-trial detentions and the prisoners receive unsound treatment in the jails.

"Internal displacements of citizens—both Tamils and Sinhales—is the prime human rights concern in Sri Lanka these days," Nair said adding, "over a million Sri Lankans have so far displaced from their homesteads over the last few years. Besides, custodial violence is also there".

"With authoritarian monarchy, Bhutan has been witnessing ethnic tensions since long," Nair said. Besides, they have a big refugee problem with around 90 thousand Nepaleese taking refuge in the eastern part of Bhutan. On the other hand, three thousand eastern Bhutanese have moved to Andhra Pradesh of India.

Situation in Pakistan is equally bad, Nair observed and said Pakistan has witnessed extra judicial killings and incidents of disappearance in the recent past. "The issue of repression of the landless peasants, especially the Biharis is also there".

Replying to a question in this regard, Ravi Nair opined that the continuous efforts to increase public awareness by civil liberties movements and mobilising public opinion against the human rights violations at national, regional and international levels could help resolve the problems.

## HEALTH

### US National Library of Medicine Announces Medical Information Website

Helen Pettigrew writes from Washington

BA NGLADESHI with access to the Internet can now have access to free medical information through MEDLINE, a website operated by the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the world's largest medical library.

Previously users had to register and pay a fee to use MEDLINE and other NLM services. The new service was announced by Vice President Al Gore at a news conference hosted by Senators Arlen Specter and Tom Harkin on June 26. The vice president was the first to conduct a free search of the MEDLINE website.

The MEDLINE database holds the most extensive collection of published medical information in the world. It allows individuals and organizations to search the NLM's computer reserve of journal articles

on a variety of topics. Currently the website contains more than nine million medical articles from 70 countries, and is growing at a rate of over 1,000 articles per day.

The vice president noted the experience of the website to the average citizen, and even to physicians, referring to MEDLINE as a "homepage that makes house calls".

"From a computer in the comfort of your own home or from one in your neighborhood library, you will be able to access timely and accurate medical information. Already 30,000 people a day are using MEDLINE. By making it more accessible, free and private, we can increase that number many times over," he said.

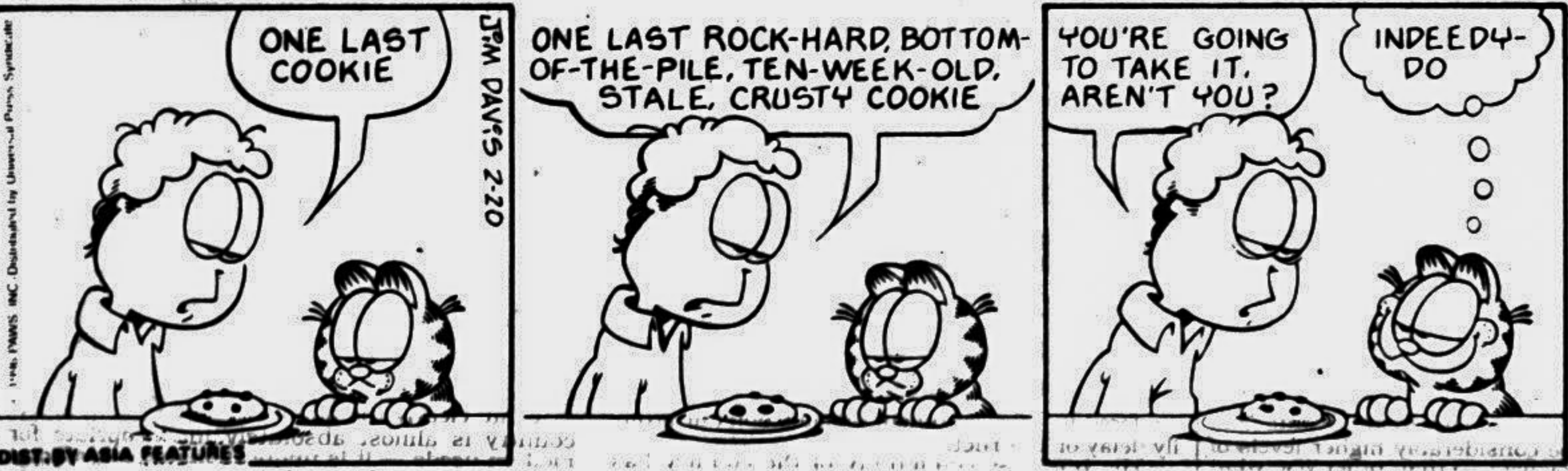
Also present at the conference was Suzanne McInerney, a book editor from Pennsylvania who created MEDLINE eight years ago, before the World Wide Web had been invented.

McInerney used MEDLINE to research her 74-year-old mother's cancer. "My search of the medical literature in MEDLINE led me to an innovative surgery for liver tumors being performed by a doctor in Ohio," she said. "I feel that the surgery helped my mother live an additional four years".

Later, when McInerney's daughter was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, she again used MEDLINE to research treatment options, and with the help of her doctor, was able to enroll her daughter in experimental therapy available only through clinical trial. Now, two years later, her daughter is free of lymphoma and had returned to her university studies.

## Garfield®

## by Jim Davis



## IAN FLEMING'S James Bond

DRAWN BY JOHN MCLUSKY



### Dhaka, Manila agree to cooperate in oil, gas exploration

Bangladesh and the Philippines yesterday agreed to cooperate in the fields of oil and gas exploration, petrochemical manufacturing, air services, agriculture, horticulture, agribusiness science and technology and in pharmaceuticals, according to a message received here, reports BSS.

The agreement was reached at the end of the second meeting of the Bangladesh-Philippines Joint Trade Commission in Manila.

Leader of the Bangladesh delegation Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed and leader of the Philippines delegation Trade and Industry Minister Cesar B Bautista signed the agreed summary record of discussions for their respective countries at a simple ceremony.

The two-day meeting was attended by government and private sector representatives from both sides.

The two sides exchanged views on the economic situation in both the countries and existing bilateral trade and investment relations and reviewed the progress since the first JTC meeting was held in 1989 and the trade agreement of 1980.

After the signing ceremony the two leaders addressed a joint press conference during which Tofael Ahmed said the visit of the Philippines President Fidel V Ramos to Bangladesh in last March opened a new chapter in the history of bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

Ahmed said Bangladesh has a liberal foreign investment policy which provides various supportive facilities and incentives to investors including full separation of capital and profit. He said that a delegation from the National Board of Revenue

(NBR) is now in Manila to finalize the agreement on the avoidance of double taxation between the two countries.

"We have exchanged our request lists for tariff reduction and elimination of non-tariff measures for further boosting bilateral trade between the two countries."

Speaking at the press conference, Cesar B Bautista said on the basis of agreement reached in Dhaka last March, the Philippines sought Bangladesh's assurance that repatriation of capital and profits for Philippines investment in Bangladesh would be allowed.

He said Manila also requested Dhaka to facilitate the issuance of visa for Philippine technical workers employed by Philippines companies engaged in construction projects in Bangladesh. He said, "we have got full assurance from Bangladesh side on this two issues."

Bautista said the Philippine expressed keen interest to participate in oil and gas exploration in Bangladesh. He said the outcome of the JTC meeting is the concrete manifestation of "our future plan to develop bilateral relations, especially in the field of trade and investment."

Earlier, Tofael Ahmed visited the Philippines Aerospace Development Centre (PADC) where he received by the president of PADC. He was briefed on the activities of PADC.

PADC was set up in 1973 and so far 67 aircraft, 44 helicopters, 24 jets and a good number of small aircraft were manufactured here.

In the afternoon, the minister visited a petrochemical plant under Philippine National Oil Company at Subic Bay.

### 3 seriously hurt as extortionists attack ghee shop

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of extortionists attacked a ghee trader and his relatives with sharp instruments at Rama Kanta Nandi Lane under Kotwali thana in the old part of the city Sunday afternoon, police said yesterday.

The victims, identified as Shudhir Chandra Ghosh, his brother Dilip Kumar Ghosh and nephew Uttam Kumar, sustained deep cut wounds over their bodies as the attackers used razors. The injured were admitted to the Mitford Hospital.

The gang of four, reportedly led by one identified as Mintu of the locality, attacked Shudhir's ghee (clarified butter) shop, Badal Store, at about 1 pm as he had refused to pay a toll of Tk 15,000, hospital sources said.

The gang attacked Shudhir and his relatives, who were in the shop at the time. They also took away some cash from the shop and two gold chains from Shudhir and Dilip.

However, none was arrested in connection with the incident till the writing on this report Monday night. Two separate cases were filed in this connection.

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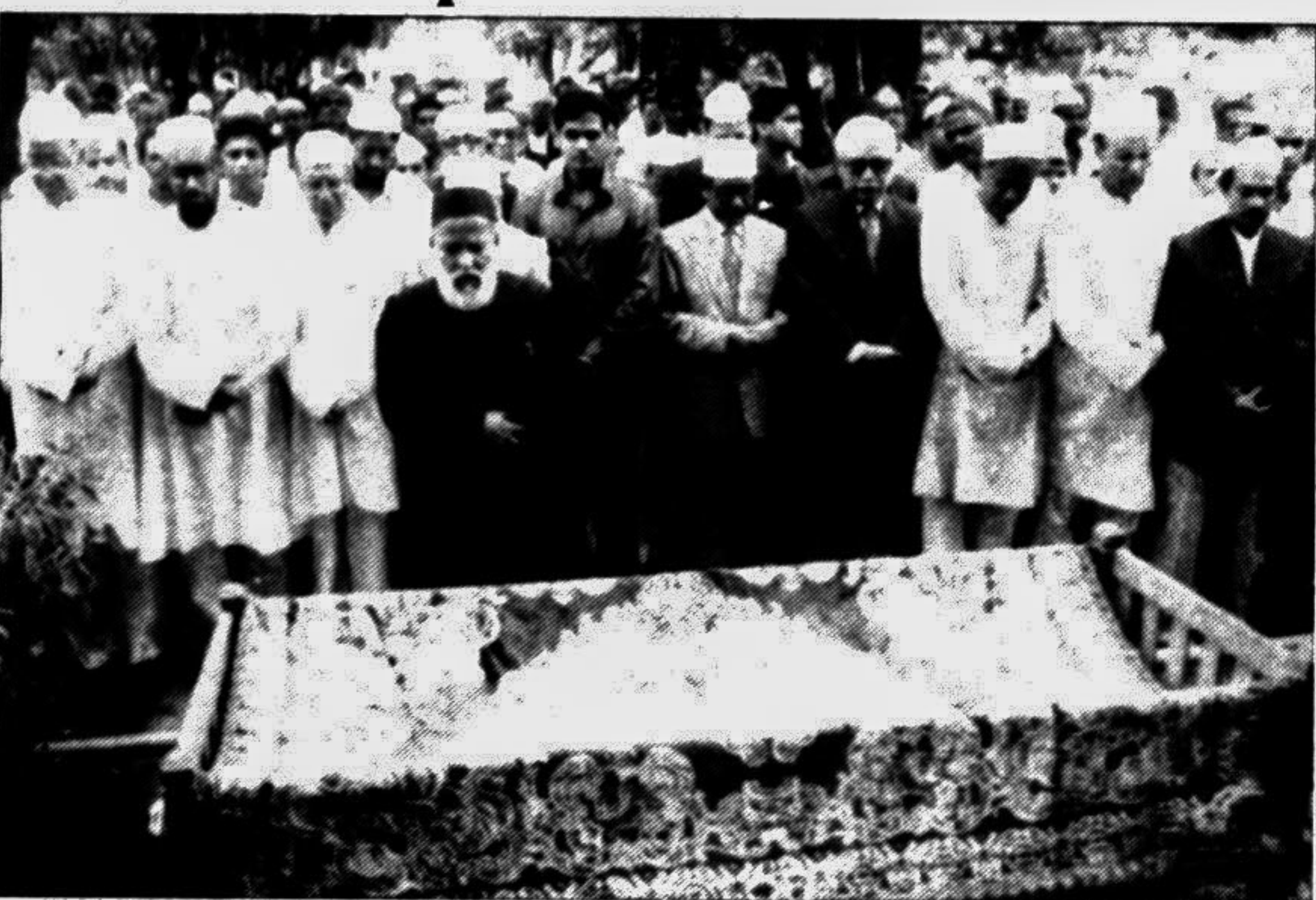
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### Bangladesh Samabai Shilpa Sangstha

By Staff Correspondent

Md Abul Kashem and Md Enajur Rahman Chowdhury have been elected chairman and vice-chairman respectively of the management council of Bangladesh Samabai Shilpa Sangstha. The election was held on Monday, says a press release.

Other members of the council are: Mahtabuddin Ahmed, Alauddin, Abul Kashem Mia and Md Abdur Rahim.



Namaj-e-Janaza of former President Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem was held at the High Court premises yesterday.

### Dhaka, Warsaw sign 2 accords

Two agreements, one on reciprocal promotion and protection of investments and the other for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, were signed between Bangladesh and Poland in Warsaw yesterday, reports BSS.

The Ambassador of Bangladesh to Poland, Nazem A Chowdhury, and the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Economy of Poland, Jan Chalada, signed the agreements on behalf of their respective governments.

Bangladesh already has an agreement on technical and scientific cooperation, signed in 1974, with Poland.

## Weather

### Moderate rain likely

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind may occur at many places over Barisal, Chittagong, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

Met Office also forecast heavy falls at places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions during the period. Day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The country's highest temperature 34 degree Celsius was recorded at Dhaka and the lowest 24.5 degrees at Rangamati.

The sun sets today at 6.50 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.18 am.

Maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.0	27.6	81	86
Chittagong	29.6	25.5	83	95
Rajshahi	33.7	27.4	90	98

## What's on today....

- British Film Session:** "Educating Rita", directed by Lewis Gilbert, will be screened. Organisers: Chalachitram Film Society and The British Council. Venue: British Council auditorium, 5 Fuller Rd. Time: 5:30 pm.
- Rotary Club of Dhaka Buriganga:** The weekly meeting will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30 pm.
- Rotary Club of Dhaka North West:** The weekly meeting will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5:30 pm.

### Tender documents snatched 13 get Atish Dipankar Gold Medal '97

A business firm could not drop its tender schedule as its papers and documents were snatched in front of Nagar Bhaban Monday, reports UNB.

Police said Sheikh Muniruz-zaman and Jamil of Babul Construction went to the City Corporation office to drop a tender schedule.

But a group of armed miscreants took away their papers and documents while checking those at the Nagar Bhaban parking lot.

The City Corporation floated the tender for construction of road dividers along road marking from PG Hospital to Mohakhali in the city.

The business firm lodged an allegation with Mayor Mohammad Hanif and filed a GD with Ramna thana in this connection.

### Jamaat calls hartal July 15

Jamaat-e-Islami "Bangladesh yesterday called a countrywide half-day hartal on July 15 protesting the circulation of poster by Zionists that disgraced Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) and demanding punishment of their agents in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

The hartal call came from a protest rally held at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the afternoon.

The recipients of the awards are - Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury (journalism) Sayed Iqbal Mand Banu (social service), M A Manan Chowdhury (telecommunication), Md Helal Uddin, Md Yousuf Ali Howlader (banking), Syed Bazul Karim (narcotics control), Mohammed Awlad Hossain Mia (crime control), Shahabuddin Nagari (literature), Dr Iqbal Hassan Mahmud, Dr Arup Ratan Chowdhury (medicine), Md Idris Mia (engineering), Syed Ayub Ali (organiser), Abdul Kashem (customs management).

The recipients of the award will be presented the gold medals later this month.

### Army official joins UNSMA as Advisor

Colonel Mohammad Akramullah Khan of Bangladesh Army left Dhaka for Pakistan recently to join as military advisor in the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMIA), an ISPR press release said yesterday, reports BSS.