



Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf speaking at a 2-day international workshop on 'Arsenic problem and water resource management in Bangladesh' at the Dhaka Community Hospital auditorium yesterday.

## Seminar on arsenic problem ends

# Call for urgent actions, integrated programme

By Staff Correspondent

Experts from home and abroad have stressed the need for expediting the identification of safe drinking water sources and expansion of mitigation programmes in the affected areas of the country to check arsenic contamination.

The suggestions were made in "Dhaka Declaration" adopted yesterday at the end of a two-day international workshop on 'Arsenic problem and water resource management in Bangladesh', organised by Dhaka Community Hospital.

Calling for urgent actions, the declaration urged all concerned including the government, NGOs, UN bodies and the World Bank to work together and share all information, knowledge and resources to have a sustainable and integrated programme aimed at lessening the sufferings of the affected.

It also called for participation of the stakeholders in developing appropriate strategies to achieve a successful model for mitigation of arsenic contamination.

Recognising the need for community participation in implementing various mitigation alternatives, the experts felt that it is a must to decide the best possible options of strategies.

The declaration emphasised an urgent need for research to understand presence of arsenic in the food chain.

Government and non-government organisations, UN bodies, the World Bank and development partners should support scientific programmes to achieve proper understanding. There is an urgent need for setting up an information centre to disseminate information quickly, it said.

The declaration urged both the print and electronic media to create awareness in support of the arsenic mitigation programme.

Among the experts who presented their technical papers during the workshop were Professor Richard Wilson of Harvard University, USA, Dr Dipankar Chakraborty of Ja-

davpur University, India, Dr Tony Fletcher of London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Professor Allan Smith of University of California, USA, Shahida Azfar, UNICEF representative in Bangladesh, Dr Shibtosh Roy, consultant of Dhaka Community Hospital, Dr A Z M Ifukhar, project director of UNDP-funded emergency arsenic project, David Kinniburgh of British Geological Survey.

Earlier, the health and family welfare minister Salahuddin Yusuf addressed the participants yesterday. He said, "The cause of arsenic contamination of groundwater is not yet known. So we must develop a mechanism to provide safe water to the people. For this we need more awareness programmes."

The World Bank's Water and Sanitation chief Babar N Kabir said, "We realise the magnitude of arsenic problem... the Bank is ready to give an estimated US dollars 300 million in addition" to tackle this problem.

## BNP delves into Pabna debacle as discontent in the party brews

From Page 1

also on by-election duty insisted on boycotting the vote much earlier citing irregularities. Many others were found missing from election duties, party sources said.

Following conflicting reports, the party top brass in Dhaka had to wait until 9:00 pm that day to reject the vote. As explained by the BNP secretary general on Sunday, they would have rejected the results at 2 pm had the EC not assured them of looking into the alleged malpractice.

Angered by the outcome of the Pabna by-polls, Khaleda came to her Minto Road office the day after the election and discussed the issue with Manann Bhuiyan and others. In the evening meeting, she was furious that the election monitors sent "misleading reports", party insiders said.

Taking note of the dissatisfaction among the party rank and file, Khaleda had meantime directed the party secretary general to talk to those assigned in Pabna and submit a "comprehensive report" to her "at the earliest". Bhuiyan has already started working.

"We want the partymen responsible for the debacle identified," said a top BNP leader who was on duty at the EC.

The sources hinted punitive steps against those found guilty by the secretary general.

According to party sources, more than 100 BNP leaders including standing committee members and MPs were assigned to deal with the by-polls. Allegations have it that many of them did not do their job.

There are also allegations that polling agents were not nominated for many centres. But the leaders on duty claimed

that the BNP agents were ousted by the ruling party activists who also placed their men as BNP agents in some centres.

Inside the party, there is a lot of discussion. Some veterans of the Pabna battle say the "win-or-not-win" dilemma in fact turned the table against the BNP.

One group believed that a victory would not mean anything at the moment, they say. Rather, a defeat would hand the party a good issue to agitate against the government.

Many of BNP's election monitors are also being criticised for "not guarding" against alleged rigging and other irregularities in the elections and bringing those to the notice of the authorities in time.

Controversies abound within the party, meanwhile. According to insiders, the BNP is now divided into three camps on the by-election issue -- the central leaders who remained in Dhaka, those assigned to go to Pabna and local leaders. The groups are now blaming each other for the debacle.

Election co-ordinator Patil, candidate Habb and others are being blamed for misleading the central leadership that a BNP win was on the way. While others assigned to monitor the vote are being charged with lapses in their duties.

Patil has his points to defend himself. "There was no lack of preparation on the part of the party. In fact, a congenial atmosphere for election was not there," he told reporters in the city on Monday.

Charges against some partymen are more serious. There are reasons to believe these people collaborated with the ruling party," said one party leader, without elaborating.

## Seven held while looting jute godown

By Staff Correspondent

Seven persons were arrested while looting a jute godown at Mirpur Section-10 in the city early yesterday.

Local people chased the youths who were looting jute from the godown at around 2:30 am apparently with an intention to unload the godown for occupying the land, police said. The arrested were identified as Touhid, Mashur, Abdur Rahman, Zakir Hossain, Mohammad Shafiq, Jahangir Hossain and a constable of the Special Branch Bablu Rahman.

Owner of the godown Shah Piar Ahmad lodged a case with the Mirpur thana.

## Post-'75 govts used students for vested interest: Tofail

By DU Correspondent

Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed has said successive governments after 1975 had used students for vested interest.

Addressing a meeting at the TSC crossing of the Dhaka University yesterday, Tofail said the military rulers were responsible for the present deplorable situation of the student politics.

The discussion meeting titled "Role of students in the Liberation War" was organised by the DU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in observance of the Victory Day.

He urged students to take concerted move against the terrorists. Only five per cent students were involved in terrorist activities at the university, he added.

Describing the role of student in different democratic movement, Forest and Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury said the historic six-point movement was organised by the students as the leaders were then detained in jail.

## Craft exhibit

A 3-day exhibition and sale of plants, terracotta pots, Christmas cakes and Bangladeshi rice cakes by Amy's Craft will begin in the city tomorrow, says a press release.

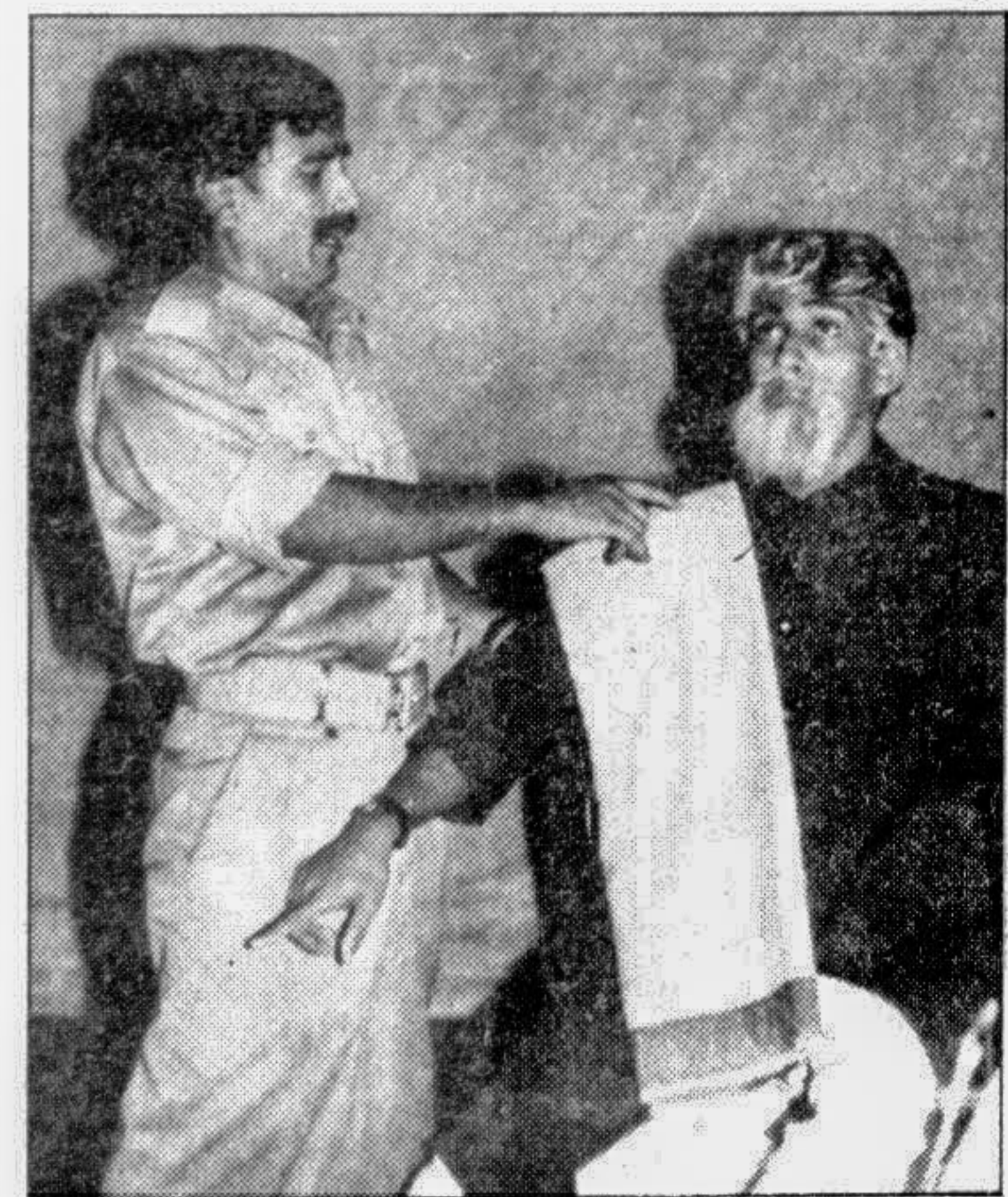
The exhibition will be held at House 20, Road 42, Gulshan and will remain open from 10 am to 5 pm.



A child artiste performing dance at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.



Sathi rendering song at a Sammito Sangskritik Jote organised function at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday marking the Victory Day.



A scene from Somoy Nattyadal's production 'Kabor' which was staged on the DU campus yesterday as part of the Sammito Sangskritik Jote's 5-day programme to mark the Victory Day.



National Crafts Council of Bangladesh organised an award ceremony for Jahanara Begum of Sarsha, Jessore at the UNDP conference room yesterday. Jahanara won the 3rd prize for her natural indigo Kantha piece in the UNESCO Crafts Prize competition in Thailand.

## Didar Bakht joins BNP

Former state minister for information and a Jatiya Party leader Syed Didar Bakht yesterday joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), reports UNB.

The Jatiya Party leader presented a bouquet to BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at 29 Minto Road last night and formally joined the BNP.

Welcoming the newcomer to her party, the BNP chief said his joining would further strengthen the party.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Ashraf Hossain, Mirza Abbas, Alamgir Kabir, Amanullah Aman, Nabibul Bashir Majumdar and Gias Kamal Chowdhury were present on the occasion.

## One arrested with firearm

By Staff Correspondent

A special squad of detective police arrested an alleged terrorist and recovered a pistol along with 80 rounds of ammunition from his possession yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a house at Sheorapara under Mirpur thana and arrested one Mohammad Ershad. The arrested is a leader of an organised criminal gang, police said. He had long been involved in different types of terrorist activities along with the members of his gang.

## 'Durjoy Pabna' inaugurated

PABNA, Dec 15: 'Durjoy Pabna', a memorial to the heroic struggle of the people of the district, was inaugurated here today, reports UNB.

Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim formally opened the memorial as chief guest in the afternoon.

Pabna district administration constructed the monument in front of the DC office at a cost of about Tk 8 lakh.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohammad Nasim said freedom fighters were neglected for long, particularly after the tragic assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

## Cultural extravaganza on DU campus

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka University campus and its adjoining areas filled up with the reverberation of melodious sound yesterday as different organisations carried out a variety of musical programmes on the eve of Victory Day.

The spirit of a festival engulfed the area as a series of attractive cultural programmes, mostly organised by the Sammito Sangskritik Jote, took place from Shahbagh to Doyel Chatter marking the V Day celebrations.

Various cultural organisations presented folk, patriotic and other songs and recitations echoing the spirit of the liberation war and freedom. Musical presentations and recitations were also seen on street corners. The programmes began at 4 pm and continued up to 10 in the night.

Streams of people from all parts of the city visited the venue, some with their families, and were seen moving from one stage to another stage to enjoy the various items.

The Sammito Sangskritik Jote began a 5-day cultural festival on December 12 at four places of Dhaka University -- the Fine Arts Institute, TSC,

Central Shaheed Minar and the university playground. On the fourth day of the programmes yesterday, leading artists, poets, dramatists and singers took part.

Other organisations also held a stream of other programmes. The National Museum authorities organised a discussion meeting at the museum premises which was followed by a musical soiree. Juba Union began a photo exhibition at TSC games room.

Dhaka Community Hospital has set up a first aid centre at the Suhrawardy Udyan Gate, near TSC. Films based on Liberation War and short films are being screened at TSC road island and Public Library auditorium.

In observance of V Day, cultural programmes and discussion meetings were also held at different parts of the city. Joy Bangla Sangskritik Jote led a colourful rally from Bangabandhu Avenue upto Shikha Chirantan.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Shishu Academy organised separate musical programmes at its respective premises.

## Weather

## Dry weather likely

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

No appreciable change in night temperature is expected across the country during the period, according to Met Office forecast.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 31.4 degree Celsius was recorded at Sandwip and the lowest of 12.2 degree Celsius at Dinajpur.

The sun sets today at 5:14 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:35 am. Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.8	14.4	65	77
Chittagong	29.8	17.5	84	72
Khulna	29.0	16.0	84	76
Rajshahi	28.2	15.0	75	81
Barisal	30.5	14.8	82	—
Sylhet	28.6	15.5	62	62
Cox's Bazar	30.6	18.0	72	68



Prof Shaheda Obayed inaugurating a 3-day photograph exhibition on the life and works of President Ziaur Rahman at the Zia Academy auditorium yesterday. The Central Committee of Shaheed Zia Gobeshona Parishad organised the exhibition to celebrate the Victory Day '98.



President of the Rotary Club of Dhaka North West Rtn Nurur Rahman administering polio vaccine to a child at a camp organised by the club at Mirpur on Monday. About 400 children were given vaccines in this camp.



Advocate Amatun Noor Panna presenting Tagore song at a programme organised on the occasion of the Supreme Court vacation in the city recently.



Speakers at the symposium on Coronary Intervention organised by NICVD at the Sonargaon Hotel recently. Sitting from left are Prof M Nazrul Islam, Prof M Jalaluddin, Prof M A Zaman, Dr Charles Chan and Prof Sufia Rahman.

## JU programmes on Victory Day

By JU Correspondent

Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus takes a festive look today as different socio-cultural and student organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the Victory Day.

The day's programmes will begin with hoisting of the national flag by the Vice Chancellor of the university. Prof Alauddin Ahmed at 6:33 in the morning.

The teachers and students of the university led by the VC will pay homage to the Liberation War martyrs by placing wreaths at the Savar National Mausoleum at 7 am.

Besides, the final match of the 'Chancellor's Cup V-Day Football Tournament' between Al-Beruni Hall and Shaheed Salam Barket Hall and the final round of the handball tournament between Nawab Faizunnesa Hall and Shaheed Jahanara Imam Hall will be held at the university playground at 9 am.

Meanwhile, a two-day book and picture exhibition organised to observe the Martyred Intellectuals' Day and Victory Day ended yesterday.

## Gold worth Tk 36 lakh seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs authorities at the Zia International Airport seized 230 grams of gold bars and 2152 grams of gold ornaments worth about Tk. 36 lakh from three passengers yesterday.

A Customs surveillance team recovered the gold from Alauddin Al Azad, Dudu Miah and Shajahan Siraji, who arrived from Singapore on a Bangladesh Biman flight at about 4 am yesterday.

All three were taken into custody. Meanwhile, the Customs authorities also seized contraband medicine worth about Tk 20 lakh yesterday.

A customs surveillance team recovered the medicine from a carton addressed to Ruma Enterprises at New Elephant Road in the city.

## Zonta Club postpones Fun Bazaar

The Zonta Club of Dhaka-III has postponed its Fun Bazaar, which was scheduled to be held on December 18, at the Gulshan Club, due to some unavoidable reasons, says a press release.

All card-holders have been requested to retain their cards till further announcement and stall-holders requested to contact relevant club personnel.

## Obituary

By Staff Correspondent

Mahbubul Haq, a leading industrialist, social worker and Director of Voyager Garments Ltd. died on Monday night at his Dhanmondi residence. He was 50.

He left behind his mother, wife, three daughters, and a host of relatives and friends.

His quikhwani will be held on Friday after Asr prayers at his Dhanmondi residence. Relatives and friends have been requested to attend the quikhwani.



## বিজয়ের

## এই মহান

## দিনে

## বাঙ্গালী

## জাতির

## সাথে

## আমরাও

## গর্বিত

\* পানির অপচয় করবেন না। কাজ শেষে কলের মুখ বন্ধ রাখুন। পানি ব্যবহারে মিতব্যয়ী হোন।

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আপনার সেবায় নিয়োজিত  
**ঢাকা ওয়াসা**