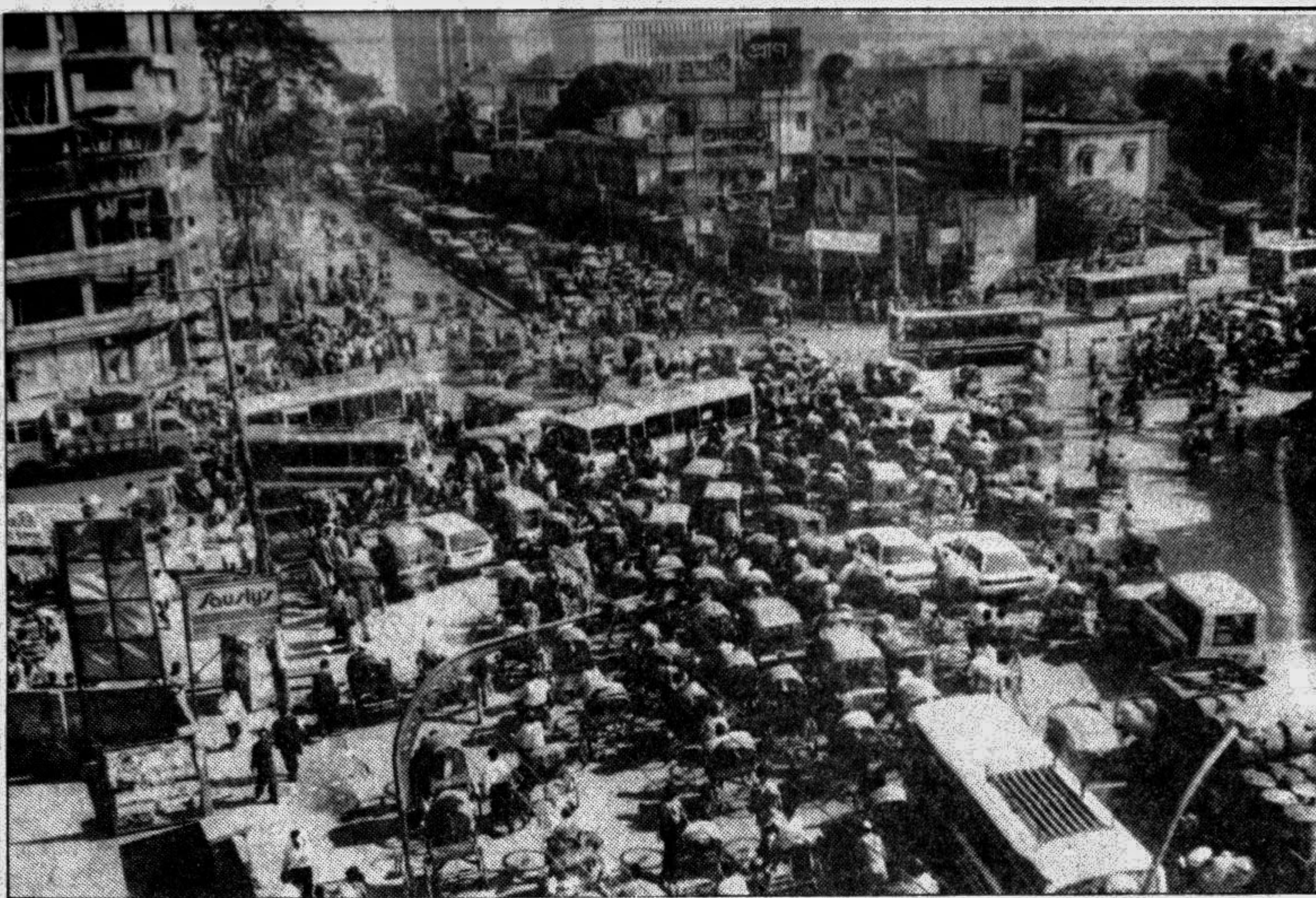




Unusual traffic jam at Purana Paltan area in the city yesterday due to road excavation.

— Star photo

Gold ornaments, wrist watches seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs surveillance team seized about 1 kg of gold ornaments and 2434 pieces of wrist watches worth about Tk 20 lakh from two suitcases at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

Customs authority said two suitcases marked by a tag for Chittagong reached the Zia International Airport by a Bangladesh Biman flight BG-020 from Abu Dhabi in the morning.

Surveillance team found the suitcases at the airport baggage belt area and waiting for two persons, Ayub and Habib, who were waiting in the bag.

When the surveillance team could not find anyone claiming for the luggage, they became curious and searched the luggage. They recovered about 1 kg of gold ornament along with 2434 pieces of wrist watches worth about Tk 20 lakh, an official said.

Two separate departmental cases were filed in this connection.

JASPCB convening committee formed

By Staff Correspondent

An 11-member convening committee of the Jatiya Alokechitra Shiksha Protisthan Bastobayan Committee (JASPCB) was formed at a meeting at its Magbazar office in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Noted photographer Quamrul Huda was made convenor of the committee, while Manowar Hossain Manik, Mortuza Toufique Islam, Khurshid Alam, Mortuza Ali, Golam Rahman, Bulbul Ahmed, Golam Mostafa, Kausar Alam and Manowar Ahmed were made joint convenors. Fazlur Rahman Jhinu was made member secretary and Abul Fazal was given responsibility of chief adviser.

'World theatre can help build friendly ties among nations'

A day-long international seminar on 'Encounter between East and West' was held at the Russian Cultural Centre auditorium in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

The discussants in the seminar pointed out that it is important to find out the problems of using the eastern theatrical elements in the theatre of the west and the methodology of the western theatre, in both theory and practice, in the east. The world theatre, thus, can be meaningful in building up a friendly relationship among nations by conveying the human characteristics all over the world.

The Centre for Asian Theatre, Bangladesh with the support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka organised the seminar.

In the first session, Haukur J Gunnarsson, Artistic Director of Haalogaland Theatre, Tromsø, Norway, presented the keynote paper, titled 'The Use of Asian Theatrical Elements in Nordic Theatre'.

The paper was discussed, among others, by Dr Syed Jamil Ahmed, Associate Professor, Drama and Theatre Department, Dhaka University, Ataur Rahman, theatre director, Tarek Anam Khan, theatre actor, and Kamaluddin Nilu, secretary general, Centre for Asian Theatre and Professor of Chittagong University, with the renowned poet and playwright Syed Shamsul Haq in the chair.

Noted playwright and theatre director Mamunur Rashid presented the keynote paper, titled 'The Use of Western Theatrical Elements in Our Theatre', in the second session.

Eminent theatre director and chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation Nasiruddin Yousuf in the chair. Discussants included the outstanding theatre teacher and film director of India, M K Raina, Director of the Department of Dramatic Art and Film of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy S M Mohsin, and the theatre critic Bhashwar Banopadhyaya.

Workshop on HIV/AIDS Steps underway to screen blood samples before transfusion

By Staff Correspondent

The government is taking measures to screen all blood samples before transfusion with a view to preventing spread of HIV that causes AIDS.

This was disclosed at the inaugural session of a day-long workshop on 'Conceptualisation and implementation of the national HIV/AIDS/BCC strategy' organised by Directorate of Health Services held at a city hotel yesterday.

The Director General of Health Services, Prof Nurul Anwar who was the chairperson of the workshop, said, "Though Bangladesh is a low prevalence area surrounded by high risk zones, the number of HIV cases is gradually increasing."

He said, "We must ensure that people are informed about the consequences of the disease in the right time."

UNB adds: Dr Shamsul Haq, Director of Primary Health Care and Disease Control, in his key-note paper, said that spread of the devastating disease AIDS can be prevented in Bangladesh by providing clear and frank information, appropriate services and essential supplies.

Health Minister Salahuddin Yusuf inaugurated the workshop while Prof M Tawhidul Anwar presented a paper on findings of HIV/AIDS BCC situation in Bangladesh and experts took part in the discussion.

Prof Tawhidul Anwar referred to the preliminary report of the National Sentinel Surveillance and said cases of HIV infection are significantly

high among one key population that of drug users.

He said Bangladesh's advantage is having the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and delays of other countries and to take early effective action.

Terminology Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is relatively a new concept in Bangladesh, Dr Haq said in the context of HIV/AIDS recognition is given to the importance of behaviours and situation which may place a person at risk of infection.

"Although new drugs to manage (not cure) symptoms of AIDS are now available, they are extremely costly and not without problems. Prevention still remains the most important strategy," he suggested.

The objective of this strategy development workshop are to develop a framework and broad guide lines for strategy and formulation of a task force.

The task force is expected to develop draft HIV/AIDS BCC strategy in keeping with national policy and strategies regarding HIV/AIDS by the end of January.

The final draft will be placed for government endorsement by March and the endorsed document would be presented at a donor mobilisation meeting.

Two foreign cos keen to invest in backward linkage garment

Two foreign companies, one from Canada and another from Taiwan, are willing to invest Tk 100 crore in the backward linkage sector of garment industry in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

They have decided to send a "complete" team here in January next for conducting a feasibility study to assess the future of the sector.

Representatives of the two companies told BGMEA president Mostafa Golam Quddus during a meeting yesterday.

During the meeting, Steven Tseng of Canada-based Linmark Western Group and James Y R Hsu of Reliable Source International of Taiwan enquired about the prospects of investment in fabrics, weaving, dyeing and printing.

The BGMEA president said although Bangladesh's garment industry has gained a strong position in international apparel market it has to import 85 per cent of fabrics.

He stressed the need for developing backward linkage industries to give Bangladesh's apparel industry a strong footing to survive in the quota-free open market beyond 2005.



Haukur Gunnarsson, Artistic Director, Haalogaland Theatre, Norway, addressing a seminar on theatre in the city on Saturday.

Last date for depositing Hajj expenses Dec 22

Persons interested to perform the coming Hajj under government management have been requested to deposit Taka 84,400 — fixed as total expenditure per pilgrim — with the selected banks by December 22, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

Those who have already deposited Taka 16,000 as house rent have been requested to deposit the remaining Taka 68,400 with the selected banks.

UP Chairman suspended

The government has temporarily suspended Mohammad Jahangir Hossain, Chairman of the 11 number West Hatla Union Parishad under Hajiganj thana of Chandpur district, a press release of the Local Government Ministry said yesterday, reports BSS.

The press release said Jahangir Hossain was suspended on December 10 for his alleged involvement in corruption and other cases and for the interest of the Union Parishad and people under the Article 65 (1) of 1983 (Union Parishad) Act of the concerned ministry.

JU incidents Action demanded against those responsible for rapes

By Staff Correspondent

Some 330 expatriate Bangladeshi scholars and professionals from across the world have demanded exemplary punishment of the persons responsible for rape incidents on Jahangirnagar University campus, a moratorium on student politics and a revision of curricula with an emphasis on moral teachings.

The expatriates in a memorandum urged the President, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and the parliament members to unite to take necessary steps immediately in this regard, said a press release.

The memorandum was an outcome of a signature campaign conducted by DAHUK, an Internet-based group that provides a mailing list of expatriate Bangladeshis, while other Internet-based groups JBANGLA, ALOCHONA, Witness-Pioneer, PROBASHI, SCB, NABIC and South Asian Milan and Internet newspaper The News From Bangladesh provided support and assistance in their drive.

Expressing grave concern and deep shock at the "disastrous deterioration of academic environment on the university campuses," the expatriate scholars and professionals said that the "life and dignity of students and teachers in Bangladesh now depend on the whims or mercy of a few gangsters who managed to infiltrate the student wings of major political parties."

They also urged the President to personally take initiative to meet their demands and arrange a referendum on these issues, it said.

A three-member delegation on behalf of the expatriate Bangladeshis submitted the memorandum to the Bangladesh Consulate General in New York on November 2 for conveying it to the government, the release mentioned.

The memorandum also mentioned that if the government fails to take the actions suggested, they would bring it to the attention of the human rights groups and other pressure groups in the USA, the release said.

Among others, Ahsanul Karim, Software Engineer of Motorola, Chicago, Cashifa Cazi of London School of Economics, Dr Farid Ahmed of Penn State Erie, Hossain Dider, Associate Editor of The Quarterly Dishari, Japan, Sabir Ahmed, Research Engineer of National University of Singapore, Economist Mainul Haque from Canberra and Yusuf Ali, Lecturer of International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, signed the memorandum.

Three killed in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Dec 20: Three persons were killed in separate incidents in sadar thana of the district recently, reports BSS.

According to police and eye witness sources, one Alek Sheikh (33) of village Auradanga under Jhenidah sadar thana was allegedly beaten to death by his uncle, one Mugla at Kalekapur in sadar thana on December 12. Mugla was arrested in this connection.

In another incident, one Rongo Lela (32), of village Achintanagar under sadar thana was allegedly killed by miscreants on December 11.

Another person, Abdul Ghanai (55) of village Kamarkunda under sadar thana was killed after falling from the bicycle in a road-side drain near Girls College at Jhenidah town on December 11.

Separate cases were filed with Jhenidah police station.

Shaheda Obaed's appeal to govt

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Shaheda Obaed, wife of detained BNP leader K M Obaidur Rahman, yesterday urged the government to permit her to supply *iftar* and *sehri* for her husband at the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

In a press statement issued after meeting her husband yesterday, the professor said Obaidur Rahman was willing to fast during the month of Ramadan. "But he would not be able to fast, the authorities concerned does not allowed him to get *sehri* and *iftar* supplied from his house. There is no arrangement for the items at the hospital's prison cell."

She also alleged that the authorities concerned did not allow her to provide the detained leader with an electric pot, a radio and some books.

Obaidur Rahman is detained for his alleged involvement in killing three national leaders on November 3, 1975.

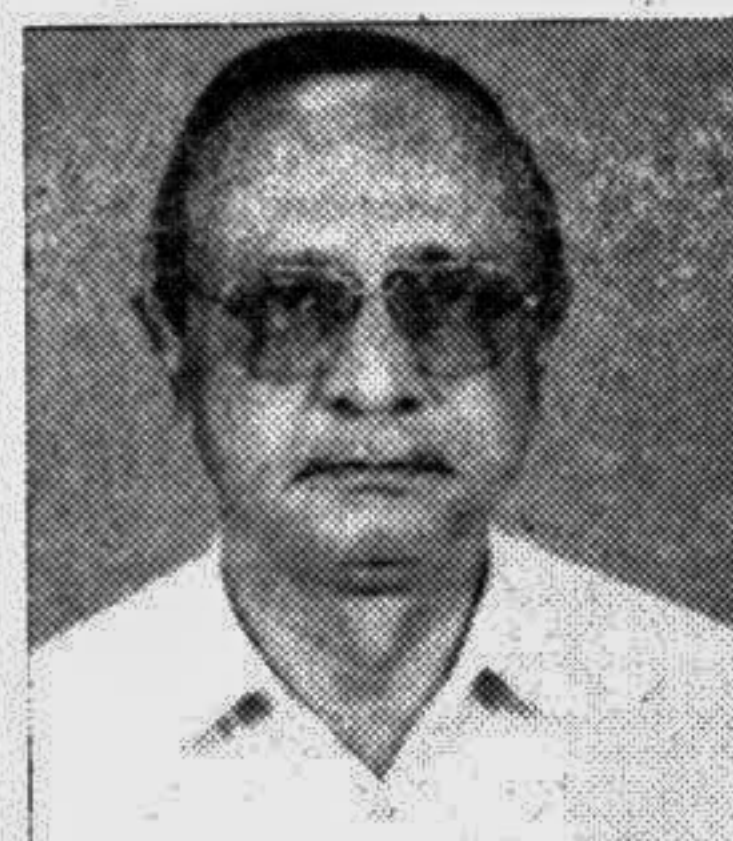
DU Officers' Assoc executives

The election to the executive committee of Dhaka University Officers' Association was held yesterday, reports UNB.

A K M Ruhul Amin Akhand, DU director (accounts) and Thander Abdul Hye, a senior section officer, were elected president and general secretary of the association respectively.

Other office-bearers are vice-president—Laakat Ali Khan and Motilal Sarker; cashier—Kabir Ahmed Chowdhury; joint secretary—Ramizuddin; cultural secretary—Sayed Hasan Karon, organising secretary—Muftul Islam; publicity secretary—Ashraf Ali Khan; office secretary—Kazi Fazlul Karim; and women affairs secretary—Selina Begum Chowdhury.

Members: A K M Golam Kibria, A S M Mozammel Haq, Golam Rabbani Sarker, A K M Abul Kashem Khan, Abdul Matin Beg, A K M Abu Musa Chowdhury, Abdur Rashid, Dr M Saiddullah, A S M Mozammel Hossain and Dewan Iftekharuddin Ahmed, said a DU press release.



Obituary

A retired Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests and freedom fighter Shah Ali Imam, S/o late Shah Ali Absar, died of prolonged illness at his Bailey Road government residence yesterday morning. He was 57, says a press release.

He also served as Undersecretary, Ministry of Defence, Mujibnagar Government.

Elder brother of Shah Husain Imam, Associate Editor, The Daily Star, he is survived by his mother, wife, three children, four brothers and three sisters.

His *qulhwani* will be held at his residence at 33, Bailey Road after Asr prayers on December 22.

Q A H M Obaidullah, a retired deputy magistrate and the first Secretary of Bangladesh Public Service Commission died at his Dhanmondi residence yesterday morning.

Obaidullah who was suffering from old-age complications was 87. He was buried at the Mirpur graveyard after Zohr prayers yesterday.

Obaidullah is survived by three sons and a number of grand-children. His eldest son Eng S M Mamoon is a noted newscaster and a director of Concord Engineers and Construction Ltd. His second son S M Haroon is an Associate Professor of Dhaka University and the youngest one Dr. S Z Faruq is a Senior Lecturer at the National University, Singapore.

His *qulhwani* will be held on Wednesday after Asr prayers at House No 59, Road No 9/A, Dhanmondi R/A. Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the *qul*.

During his long career, Rahman worked with late Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq, Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy, Mohammed Ali Zinnah, Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Meanwhile, officials and photographers of the PID expressed deep shock at the death of Saidur Rahman and conveyed sympathy to his bereaved family members.

Qulhwani

Qulhwani of Advocate Abdul Gani Sarkar will be held today after Asr prayers at his 62, Purba Hajipara residence in the city, reports UNB.

Sarkar, a senior lawyer of Gazipur, died at Suhrawardy Hospital early Friday. He was 69. He left behind his wife, two sons and six daughters.

'Arsenator' can detect arsenic more efficiently, cheaply

Unicef Bangladesh is examining a new and innovative measuring device called the "Arsenator" that has the potential to significantly strengthen national capacity to accurately detect arsenic in water — an essential component of a comprehensive approach in addressing the arsenic challenge in Bangladesh, says a UNICEF press release.

The portable device is an improved version of an earlier model, according to its inventor, Dr Walter Kosmus, an eminent Austrian chemical analyst who has been working on arsenic-related research for two decades.

Dr Kosmus, from the Institute of Analytical Chemistry, Graz University, initially conducted research on arsenic in West Bengal in 1995, after which he visited Bangladesh several times to study the arsenic situation here.

"We realised that what was needed in Bangladesh was an instrument that would be useful in the field; would be easy to use, enable users to determine arsenic levels in water fairly quickly and also be cost effective," he said while demonstrating the "Arsenator" at the Unicef premises in the city yesterday.

The instrument runs on battery power and once charged, can conduct approximately 40 tests over a period of roughly two days, explained Dr Kosmus at the demonstration. It costs approximately 3,000 US dollars per unit.

Dr A B M Badruzzaman, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, BUET, said the Arsenator's approach is to remove human error in detecting the intensity of colour generated by arsine gas. It also seems very good in detecting low levels of arsenic in ground

water in field condition.

Based on the initial positive results of the Arsenator, Unicef Bangladesh is going to implement a series of evaluations of a number of similar devices. If

these show accuracy and fulfil other requirements, several Arsenators are expected to be placed in key institutions in the country in the near future, the release added.



Dr Walter Kosmus testing the arsenic contamination of water from a tubewell in Kalaroa, Sathkira, using the "Arsenator".

— Unicef photo

Australian surgeons bring hope to victims of oral deformities

Even two weeks ago, six-year-old Tajul needed his mother's help to take food, but now he can do so on his own, thanks to some Australian doctors whose contributions have raised hopes of those suffering from oral deformities, reports UNB.

"I am grateful to the surgeons for their tremendous performance. I'll never forget it," said Tajul's father, Nabi Hossain, crying tears of joy.

Tajul Islam, who hails from Daudkandi in Comilla, could not open his mouth since birth due to jaw-fusion. He was operated upon at the country's only Oral and Maxillofacial Department at Dhaka Dental College and Hospital (DDCH).

A group of Australian surgeons has been performing oral and maxillofacial surgery since 1991 under a joint Australia-Bangladesh project.

Apart from surgery, the project is also aimed at creating skilled surgeons in the country to cope with complicated oral cases.

Project Chairman Dr John Arvier of Australia told UNB that the main objective of the project is to coordinate a programme for training physicians specialised in jaw and mouth surgery.

Dr Matru Rahman Mollah, Associate Professor, DDCH Oral and Maxillofacial Department, is the local coordinator of the project.

Jaw and mouth surgery includes surgery of oral cleft and palate cancers, deformities in facial bones and jaw fusion, said Dr Arvier.

Dr Arvier and his compatriots conduct various complicated operations free of cost whenever they are in the city. They are usually here from October to February.

The team has so far performed over 500 operations, selected from difficult cases so that the students and surgeons at the department could develop their skills.

Dr Arvier, who arrived on December 7, said he himself has operated upon 80 patients in

Dhaka since 1991. This is his 7th visit.

During his 10-day stay in Dhaka, the Australian surgeon conducted three complicated operations on fused jaws, tumour and cancer-related cases.

"I prefer complicated cases to build up confidence among the young surgeons," Dr Arvier said.

Anwar Hossain, 22, of Badda, and Ashraf Hossain, 23, of Bogra, were the two other patients treated by Dr Arvier.

Many more patients, mostly from poor families, are still waiting for their operations as the hospital has only 20 beds — 10 for male and 10 for female. It has no ward for children.

Teenager Fatema, suffering from palate tumour for nearly 6 years, said she was able to get admission into the hospital after two years of hectic efforts and hoped that her operation would be done by the Australian surgeons.

Fraising the young doctors of DDCH for their rapid development, Dr Arvier said, "They are doing an excellent job with limited equipment and facilities."

Meanwhile, the Australian government has sanctioned Tk 25 lakh for renovation and expansion of the DDCH Oral and Maxillofacial Department which has no air-conditioned post-operative room.

According to International Association of Oral Surgeons, one surgeon is needed for one lakh people. In Bangladesh's context, it needs one surgeon for 3 lakh people. But presently the country has only five oral surgeons in all.

People of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are most vulnerable to oral and maxillofacial complications, Dr Arvier said.

Replying to a query, he said, "We have selected Bangladesh as it is a densely populated country and we believe that it would be easier to achieve our goal if we concentrate on one country."

About oral cancer in Bangladesh, he said patients suffering from mouth cancers do not consult doctors in preliminary stages. "But they come to us when their condition takes a serious turn."

What's on today . . .

Film show: 'City of Joy' by Roland Joffe will be screened. Organiser: Zahir Raihan Film Society. Venue: Indian High Commission auditorium, Road-2, Dhanmondi. Time: 6:30 pm.

Lecture: Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui will speak on 'State of democracy in Bangladesh and likely challenges to governance in the coming decades' as part of BIIS Eminent Persons' Lecture Series. Open discussion will follow the lecture. Venue: BIIS office premises, 1/46 Elephant Road. Time: 10 am.

Roundtable discussion: On 'Promoting accelerated economic growth through more effective participation by Bangladesh in the international economy', organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs and USIS. Chief guest: Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed. Venue: LGED Bhaban, Argargaon. Time: 2 pm.

Rotary club meet: The Rotary Club of Dhaka North will hold its weekly meeting. Rtn Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhury will speak on 'Obligations of Muslims in Ramadan'. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 4:30 pm.

Railway's Western Zone Train accidents leave 350 dead since independence

JESSORE, Dec 20: At least 350 passengers were killed and over one thousand injured in train accidents in the Railway's Western Zone since the country's independence, according to sources, reports APB.

Of the accidents, nine were fatal, in which 333 persons died and about 700 injured, they said.

The Western Zone has 598.23 kilometres of rail track.

The first major accident after the independence took place at the railway station here in 1972. Some 150 people were killed and over 100 wounded as the engine of a train rammed a market breaking the buffer line.

In 1975, nine Army personnel were killed and 22 others injured when the vehicle carrying them collided with the Mohananda Express at the railway gate of the local station.

The Rocket Mail derailed near Joyrampur in Chuadanga in 1980, leaving 35 passengers dead and over 50 injured.

The same train again went off the track at Alamdanga in Kushtia in 1988. This time, 40 persons were killed and over 100 wounded.

In 1992, 36 passengers were burnt alive and about 100 injured when Simanta Express caught fire between Mirpur and

Bheramara in Kushtia.

Twenty-three people were killed and about 200 injured as two trains collided head-on near the front Hill station in Dinajpur in 1993.

In 1996, six passengers of a bus were killed and 20 wounded when a train rammed the vehicle at Bhanga Gate in Jessore.

A fatal collision between two trains at Singla in 1997 claimed 11 lives. Fifty others were injured.

The last accident occurred at Kashiipur rail gate under Kalgan thana in Jhenidah on December 18 last, in which 13 passengers of a bus were killed and over 50 others injured.

Besides, about 20 minor accidents were reported from different places in the zone over the last 26 years in which 20 people were killed and over 300 injured.

During the period, at least 40 possible accidents were narrowly averted at different places in the zone.

The accidents occurred mainly due to carelessness of the drivers, linemen and gate-men on duty, the sources said.

A high official of Bangladesh Railway told APB that accidents could be avoided if rules were followed properly and constant vigil is maintained by on-duty personnel.