

Not only traffic jams, such unplanned work for sewerage lines — which has been going on for long in Swamibagh area — adds to the suffering of the city dwellers. — Star photo

### 3 Western Zone trains placed under private management

PABNA, Jan 17: Services of three passenger trains in the Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway have been placed under private management, sources in the railway said, reports APB.

The Padmarag Mail, running in the Santahar-Lalmoharhat route, has been leased out to Islam Brothers at a rate of Tk 9.77 lakh per month.

Two local trains, 481-UP and 482-DN, both running in the same route, have also been leased to the same company for Tk 10.65 lakh per month.

The three trains will start operating under the new management soon, the sources said.

Services of inter-city 'Mohananda' running in the Khulna-Chapainawabganj route and inter-city 'Nakshikantha' between Khulna and Goalundo Ghat would also be leased to two other companies, the sources added.

The Mohananda was earlier leased to another company for Tk 11 lakh per month but the lease was cancelled after five months.

### Acid thrown on teenage girl in Sylhet

SYLHET, Jan 17: A teenage girl received burn injuries when a shunned suitor allegedly threw acid on her at Kulumchahara village in Gainghat early today, reports APB.

Sonara Begum, 18, with severe burn injuries on her face and eyes is now being treated at Osmani Medical College Hospital.

According to family sources, a local youth hurled acid on Sonara through the window of her room while she was sleeping around midnight.

The youth, whose proposal of marriage was turned down by Sonara, then fled the scene.

### UP Chairman held in Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, Jan 17: Police here today arrested a Union Parishad Chairman allegedly for his involvement in the activities of an outlawed political party, reports UNB.

Haribar Biswas, 45, chairman of Atgharkuria union parishad of Swarupkathi thana, was picked up from Sadar road in the morning. Police said he is also an Indian citizen.

He was produced before the court and sent to jail.

### Transport worker shot dead in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Jan 17: A transport worker was shot dead by some armed men at Porahati village in sadar thana here Saturday night, reports UNB.

Police said the men called Firoj, 25, out of his house at about 1 am and killed him in the courtyard.

Meanwhile, another man was reportedly killed by members of an outlawed party at Shubhodia village in Kachandpur thana Tuesday night.

Police said Kheder Ali, 32, owner of a grocery shop, was shot dead while he was eating at about 8 pm. A former member of the outlawed party, Kheder was leading a normal life, police said.

A case was filed with Kachandpur thana in this connection.

### Crackdown on terrorists: 18 arrested

PATUAKHALI, Jan 17: Police have arrested 18 'terrorists' in a drive to curb terrorism in the town, reports APB.

All the arrested were produced in court which gave them detention for varying periods.

Police said they have a list of 45 'terrorists'.

Most of the 'terrorists' belong to different political parties and the main reasons behind terrorism are intra-party feuds and groupings over local leadership, police said.

They are also often involved in teasing and assaulting girls. Six such cases were filed with police last month and another two during the current month.

## Khmer Rouge refugees look forward in search of new lives

PHNOM PENH, Jan 17: For most Cambodians the darkness of Khmer Rouge rule ended in 1979 when an invading Vietnamese army ousted the murderous guerrilla group from power, reports AP.

Thousands of others, however, were trapped by the Khmer Rouge as the rebels clung to pockets of territory in the mountainous jungles of northern Cambodia. "The Pol Pot time," as Cambodians refer to the radical communists' 1975-79 reign of terror led by Pol Pot, is now finally coming to a close for those unlucky few.

With the back of the Khmer Rouge now broken, refugees that fled fighting last year at the rebels' final bastion at Anlong Veng are being repatriated to their villages in eastern Cambodia. Many have not seen their hometowns since wild-eyed soldiers fleeing the Vietnamese advance rounded them up and marched them by foot to jungle strongholds along the Thai border.

"I'm so happy to be returning. This is what I've always wanted to live in my native land with my parents again," said 47-year-old Kuot Kim as he unloaded his family from a Red Cross truck at a pagoda on the outskirts of Phnom Penh.

Kuot Kim is one of the first batch of 395 people to leave Phu

Nol refugee camp in Thailand, just over the border from Anlong Veng. They crossed into Cambodia on Tuesday, and after a brief stay in the capital, left Sunday for their birthplaces in Mondulkiri province to begin new lives free from the Khmer Rouge.

Bang Poen, 40, said he expects starting over again to be hard, perhaps harder at first than going back to Anlong Veng.

But he and his family did not hesitate to take the offer from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to escape the bizarre doctrine of Khmer Rouge army chief Ta Mok, whose brutality has earned him the nickname "The Butcher."

"The road to freedom began last March when several of Ta Mok's generals in Anlong Veng mutinied and pushed the rebel leader's loyalists over the Thai border with the help of the Cambodian army a few weeks later.

"Most of us didn't know anything was wrong until we heard the explosions. Then we ran for the border," Kuot Kim said.

The rebellion splintered the already limping Khmer Rouge

movement. Longtime Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died of a heart attack last April as Ta Mok's troops were on the run.

Ta Mok's remaining commanders have since tricked out of hiding and defected to the government, leaving the rebel army chief with perhaps 100 diehard supporters.

Although Ta Mok no longer controls Anlong Veng, the refugees do not make distinctions between him and the mutineers.

Men described by Kuot Kan as loyal to Ta Mok have infiltrated Phu Noi camp and intimidated the 14,600 refugees there, telling them they will not receive any assistance unless they come back to Anlong Veng.

"The Khmer Rouge announced that if we went with the United Nations we would not get any food because the United Nations had no right to take us away," he explained.

The coercion does not appear to be working. A second batch of 610 refugees left Phu Noi on Friday, all of whom chose the UN repatriation programme over Anlong Veng.

"I want to give up this life of war," said Kuot Kan, who was a Khmer Rouge soldier until 1987 before being transferred to the village militia. "I will start my new life by being just a simple farmer."

### Russian security officials mum on whereabouts of Kurdish rebels

MOSCOW, Jan 17: Russian security officials Sunday declined to confirm or deny that Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan was in Moscow after leaving Italy, reports AP.

The Italian premier's office on Saturday announced Ocalan's departure from Italy without giving details. Turkish security officials and media reports in Italy and Russia said Ocalan was headed for Moscow.

"We have no comment on this," a spokesman for the Federal Security Service said.

Ocalan leads the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy in southeastern Turkey for 14 years. The conflict has killed around 37,000 people.

He arrived in Rome on Nov 12 seeking asylum from Turkey, which is trying him in absentia on capital charges.

The guerrilla chief had been staying at a villa on the outskirts of Rome, searching for another country in western Europe to take him in and serve as a platform for the Kurdish cause.

During his stay in Italy, Ocalan said repeatedly that he was ready to abandon the struggle for Kurdish autonomy if Turkey would enter into talks with the Kurds.

### Gunmen kill 4 shepherds in Algiers

ALGIERS, Jan 17: Armed men killed four shepherds and injured another in a weekend attack southwest of Algiers, according to a government statement, reports AP.

The gunmen attacked the shepherds Saturday evening near Ain Delfa, 75 miles southwest of the capital, the statement said.

The shepherds were returning home with their herd of sheep when they were stopped by the group of armed men, residents of the area reported.

There was no claim of responsibility and no further details were provided on the attack, which occurred in an area where Islamic insurgents are thought to be hiding.

Such attacks are blamed by authorities on the Armed Islamic Group, the movement that has been trying to topple this North African country's military-backed government since 1992.

The insurgency was triggered by the government's decision to cancel legislative elections that the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.

Some 134 people have been killed since the start of Ramadan Dec. 19. In the past, the Muslim holy month has seen increased activity by Islamic insurgents.

At least 75,000 people — civilians, soldiers and insurgents — have been killed in the violence since 1992.

### Bangladesh Book Corner set up in Jadavpur University

CALCUTTA, Jan 17: The third Bangladesh Book Corner has been set up in Jadavpur University, Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner Sheikh Ahmed Jalal handed over three hundred and three books on Bangladesh literature, culture, social science, history and Liberation War of Bangladesh to the Vice Chancellor of Jadavpur University Professor Ashoke Nath Basu at the university's Central Library at a simple ceremony in Calcutta on Wednesday last, said a message received here today, reports BSS.

Senior professors, teaching staff including Registrar Raja Thakumar Banerjee, Chief Librarian Ram Krishna Saha, students of various departments and officials of the mission were present at the function.

Expressing his gratitude to the vice chancellor for showing deep interest to set-up Bangladesh book corner, the Deputy High Commissioner assured that the mission would continue to send books on Bangladesh from time to time in future to cater to the needs of the scholars, researchers, and students of the university. He expressed his hope that the exchange programmes of books and publications could easily build bridges between the two peoples.

Speaking on the occasion Vice Chancellor An Bose expressed his deep gratitude for presenting books to the library. He stressed the need for more exchange of books, publications and other research materials among South Asian universities and special ties between India and Bangladesh.

### JSD for holding municipal polls on schedule

Leaders of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) yesterday said all necessary steps should be taken to hold the municipal elections as per schedule, reports BSS.

The elections to local government bodies are very important for democracy, they said at an emergency meeting of the central reorganisation committee of JSD at its central office in the city.

Presided over by JSD president ASM Abdul Rab, the meeting was also attended by Hasnul Huq Inu, Noor Alam Zikri, Kazi Aref Ahmed, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Syed Zafar Sazzad and Moinuddin Khan Badal.

The JSD leaders said the recent announcement of opposition political parties to boycott the elections is a matter of concern. The crisis should be resolved through discussion, they added.

They urged the government and the concerned authorities to take steps to make the municipal elections meaningful.

Creating unexpected complexity to the path of empowering people is not desirable to anybody espousing democracy, they observed.

### Plea to help distressed people

State Minister for Jute A K Faezul Huq has urged the affluent section of the people to come forward in aid of the distressed people, reports BSS.

He was distributing winter clothes among the poor people at Banoripara in Barisal district and Swarupkati in Pirojpur district on Saturday. Huq distributed blankets, sarees, lungis and shoes.

Later, the state minister distributed documents of khas land among the 130 landless families.

### Singapore welcomes appointment of Malaysia's DPM

SINGAPORE, Jan 17: Singapore's education minister, Teo Chee Hean, on Sunday welcomed the appointment of Abdullah Badawi as Malaysia's new deputy prime minister, adding it could speed up economic recovery in the city-state's closest neighbour, a state-run television reported, reports AP.

"Any move in Malaysia which results in greater political stability and predictability and the return of confidence among investors and to assist in Malaysia's economic recovery is certainly something we would welcome," Teo was quoted as saying by Singapore's main news channel.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad named Abdullah, the country's former foreign affairs minister, his deputy last week, filling a spot that was vacated when Anwar Ibrahim was fired on September 2.

Anwar is now on trial for sex and corruption charges, which he denies.

Ties between Malaysia and Singapore have been strained by disputes over a water supply agreement, the location of a railway border post in Singapore and the cancellation of automatic flyover rights for Singaporean military aircraft in Malaysian airspace.

Teo, who was speaking at a local event, also warned Singaporeans that a regional economic downturn could be worsened by the outbreak of financial instability in Brazil, and said that the upcoming elections in Indonesia should be watched carefully.

Indonesia and Malaysia have been among the nations worst hit by the Asian financial crisis, the effects of which have been limited in small and affluent Singapore.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receiving donations to the PM's Relief Fund from individuals at her office yesterday. — PID photo

### US lawmaker for large-scale humanitarian aid to Myanmar

BANGKOK, Jan 17: A United States Congressman appealed Sunday for large-scale humanitarian aid to Myanmar, rejecting arguments that such aid would merely sustain the Southeast Asian country's harsh military regime, reports AP.

"Humanitarian concerns are taking a back seat in Burma. But I've always believed that human concerns and human rights go together," Tony P Hall, an Ohio Democrat, told a press conference.

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, with whom Hall met last week, opposes foreign aid to her country, saying some 50 per cent of it is siphoned off by the military.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate has also criticized some foreign aid workers for allegedly "collaborating" with the regime and promoting poorly conceived projects.

Hall quoted Suu Kyi as saying she would reverse her stance only if there was a 100 per cent guarantee that foreign aid would not go to supporting the government.

A longtime promoter of humanitarian causes around the world, Hall said he visited a number of successful grassroots projects in the Myanmar countryside run by the United Nations and non-government or-

ganisations.

Hall said Myanmar, also known as Burma, was plagued by malnutrition, disease, poor education and the rapid spread of AIDS. Myanmar is ranked as one of the world's poorest nations.

"If humanitarian aid is not provided a whole generation will be lost. The need is tremendous," Hall said, adding that waiting to provide foreign assistance until democracy is restored might take years and thus prolong poverty and suffering.

Hall said he brought up human rights abuses, political prisoners and brutality against ethnic minorities in his meeting with strongman Gen Khin Nyunt.

He also noted the political struggle between the military and Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy had resulted in neglect of basic needs among the masses.

"There is a saying in Burma: 'When the water buffaloes fight, the rice dies,' he said.

Hall predicted US economic sanctions against Myanmar would stand and did not foresee reconciliation between Suu Kyi and the military. He quoted Khin Nyunt as saying the regime would be 'gentle and lenient' with the opposition.



A two-day apparel exhibition jointly organised by 'Aurita' and 'Amar' began at the Alliance Francaise in the city yesterday. Journalist Faiz Ahmed inaugurated the show. It will remain open from 2 pm to 8 pm.

### Launch dacoity in Meghna

NOAKHALI, Jan 17: Pirates swooped on the passengers of a Tajmuddin-bound launch in the river Meghna in Ramgati thana this morning and took away valuables and Tk 10 lakh in cash, reports UNB.

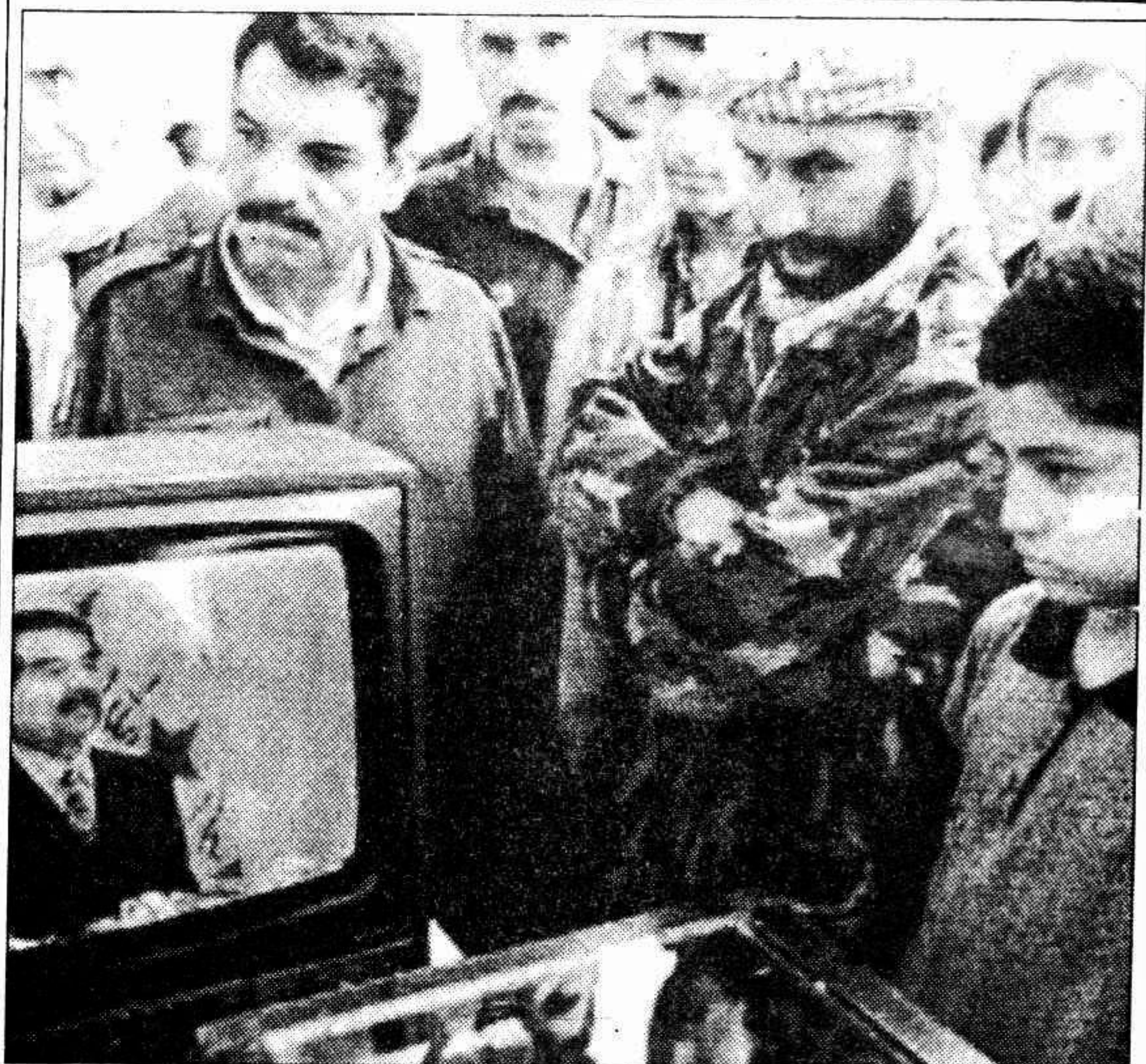
Witnesses said about 15 pirates in the guise of passengers boarded the launch at Bod-darghat in Ramgati. They took control of the MV Mofij at gun point when it reached Charpata area.

### Death condoled

State Minister for Information Prof. Abu Sayeed yesterday condoled the death of Rezaun Nabi Rubel, Chairman of the Dogachi Union Council under Joypurhat district, reports BSS.

In a condolence message Prof Sayeed expressed deep sympathy for the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Rubel died on Friday at Vellore in India at the age of 38.



Iraqis crowd around a television set in central Baghdad to watch and listen to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein deliver a speech marking the 8th anniversary of the Gulf War yesterday. On January 17, 1991, a US-led coalition began bombing Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion of neighbouring Kuwait. United Nations sanctions are still being imposed as a result of the conflict. — AP/UNB photo